

GRAND HOLIDAY SERIES BEGINS NEXT WEEK! SEE WITHIN

The **NELSON LEE** **2D**

LIBRARY *And St. Frank's Magazine*



TEDDY LONG WATCHED THE VEILED FIGURE DESCEND THE STAIRS.

A Startling Incident from This Week's Enthralling Story
of the Boys of St. Frank's:—

THE SNAKE IN THE SCHOOL!

No. 476.

EVERY WEDNESDAY

July 19, 1924



"Oh, Barry, you've killed him!" came Mrs. Stokes' voice.
Dr. Beverley Stokes was bending over the still form of a short man who was outstretched upon the floor.



THE SNAKE IN THE SCHOOL!

AN ABSORBING STORY OF THE BOYS
OF ST. FRANK'S.

In this week's story the mystery of the Head's wife, Mrs. Stokes, is finally cleared up by the scotching of the reptile responsible

for all the mischief of the past few weeks, involving not only the good name of Mr. and Mrs. Stokes, but such innocent victims as Irene Manners and Archie Glenthorne. Towards the end of the story, sensational news reaches the school concerning the capture by a hostile tribe of Sir Crawford Grey and his brave followers, including two well-known St. Frank's juniors, Pitt and Grey. The explorers had set out on an expedition into the Great Sahara, and this disquieting news as to their safety may lead to the organisation of a rescue party, in which several Removites will want to figure.

THE EDITOR.

Related Throughout by Nipper and Set Down by E. Searles Brooks

CHAPTER I.

THE SAME OLD GAME!

TEDDY LONG, of the Remove, gave a little start of guilty fear, and squeezed himself frantically into the dim recess under the stairs. And he waited there like a shadow as Mrs. Poulter, the Ancient House matron, came into sight, and then vanished towards the kitchen. "My goodness!" breathed Teddy. "I thought she spotted me!"

It took him some moments to recover, for Master Long was not blessed with a very great amount of courage. The prospect of being hauled before the House-master made him tremble.

For, needless to say, he was transgressing the school rules.

Juniors had no right whatever in the domestic quarters. They were forbidden to enter these sections of the school, and if found there, were liable to punishment.

Of course, a fellow like Tommy Watson or Cecil de Valerie could wander kitchenwards with comparative impunity. Mrs. Poulter would probably order them off in a chaffing spirit, and then proceed to do some little service or other.

But Teddy Long was in a category of his own.

He was at his same old game—spying. It could be taken as an absolute certainty that his presence in the domestic quarters was not a legitimate one. And therefore, if discovered, his ejection would be swift and painful, and an interview with the House-master was an inevitable sequel.

So it behove Teddy to move with caution.

This was a simple matter to him—for he had reduced creeping on tip-toe, sliding round corners, flattening himself into recesses, and similar gymnastics, to a fine art. He got so much practice that it was like second nature to him.

In the present instance, Teddy Long was frankly and openly after food. He was stony, he had been chucked out of Study B by mutual agreement of his two study mates, and he had been too late for tea in the Hall. Something, accordingly, had to be done.

Teddy had certainly made one or two attempts to worm his way into other studies, but the results had been so distressing that he had abandoned cadging for the bolder practice of deliberate pilfering.

Teddy didn't regard it as wrong. He was only going to find some grub, and as his pater paid for all food in the school fees, he had a perfect right to anything he could

grab. In this way, Teddy satisfied his conscience—if, indeed, he possessed any.

It was rather quiet outside, and it was just the hour when the kitchen was deserted, too. Long considered that he had a fair chance of meeting with success in his enterprise.

It was something of a shock to see Mrs. Poulter sailing into the kitchen. Long had expected her to be in her own room, safely installed there for a full hour, at least. Just his luck that she should come butting in like this, blow her!

Teddy hated Mrs. Poulter with a fierce, burning hatred that now made itself apparent in his baleful glare. Mrs. Poulter should have been complimented, for Teddy Long's hatred was something worth having. It proved, if anything, that Mrs. Poulter was a good sort.

And she was, too—as nine juniors out of ten would readily testify. What, indeed, would the Remove do without Mrs. Poulter? Who would they go to with their torn bags, their rent stockings, and who would surreptitiously sew on buttons, and so forth? Many a time Mrs. Poulter performed these little services on the quiet, in order to save a chap from getting into a row.

But Teddy Long was different—he was an enemy. His presence in this forbidden domain was like an omen of evil. And if discovered by the matron, Teddy would receive short shrift.

"She's messed it up now!" he growled savagely. "Just like the interfering old rotter to come along! If I try to sneak near the pantry, it's a hairpin to a quid she'll roll out and spot me!"

He paused there, to consider. And he was by no means pleased to hear a creak just above him. Somebody else was descending the stairs! Teddy Long again squeezed himself flat, and waited. He was rapidly getting fed up—but to bolt was out of the question.

The newcomer was one of the maid-servants, apparently. Her slim figure was dressed in quiet black, and a close-fitting hat was drawn down over her face, a veil completing the head-dress.

Teddy could see her quite distinctly, although he, himself, was invisible. The maidservant paused at the foot of the stairs to open her bag and glance inside—unconscious of these prying, inquisitive eyes.

For Long, in the deep shadows, remained as silent as a ghost, and the girl stood in the full light from the passage window. Teddy heard the clink of money, and then he grinned to himself as he saw a small mirror produced. The girl lifted up her veil, and took a quick glance at her reflection—apparently making certain that all was right before venturing outside.

And Teddy nearly betrayed himself by giving a sudden gasp.

Fortunately, the girl failed to hear it, owing to the fact that Mrs. Poulter called to somebody at that precise second. The girl dropped her veil, closed her bag with a

snap, and walked with rapid strides to the side door. She opened it, and passed out.

"My—my only hat!" muttered Teddy breathlessly. "It was Mrs. Stokes! It was the Head's wife!"

Even Long could scarcely believe the evidence of his own eyes. But they were keen eyes, scarcely missing anything, and they were not likely to be mistaken.

But what on earth could it mean? The wife of the Headmaster leaving the school by way of the servants' hall, and attired in the obvious manner of a parlour-maid? That glimpse of her face had been sufficient for Teddy Long. And he thrilled with the dramatic nature of his discovery.

His very first thought, in all such cases as this, was connected with possible financial profit to himself. How much could he get out of revealing this secret to the other chaps? To keep the affair private did not even enter Teddy's mind.

Being a tale-bearer by nature, and the most contemptible sneak in the Remove, his chief desire was to blurt out his discovery to all and sundry. But it was as well to be cautious—he might make a bit.

All thoughts of food had now left him, and he hurriedly nipped down the passage, and was unfortunate enough to run full tilt into Handforth and Co., who were in search of Mrs. Poulter for rather obvious reasons. They had evidently been indulging in one of their usual scraps, and all three were somewhat the worse for wear.

"Oh!" said Edward Oswald Handforth grimly. "And where do you think you've been, my lad? Spying as usual, I suppose?"

He grabbed Teddy Long by the shoulder, and held him firmly.

CHAPTER II.

MAROONED!



"**L**EMME go!" gasped Long frantically. "I'll jolly well shout for help if you don't leggo! You rotter—you bully—"

"All right—shout for help if you like!" interrupted Handforth. "But if somebody comes you'll have to explain what you were doing in this part of the house. And take that for calling me a rotter!"

He gave Teddy a slight biff—just a mere featherweight blow, according to his own calculation, and Teddy roared lustily and staggered.

"Tain't fair!" he wailed. "Three against one! And you ain't allowed here, either!"

"Rats! The Head sent us here," put in Church. "He found us scrapping in the passage, and packed us off to Mrs. Poulter to get repaired! What were you doing, you young spy?"

Long suddenly became calmer.

"You don't know, do you?" he asked

mysteriously. "I've a jolly good mind not to tell you! But I've found out something—something pretty big, too! It'll make you stagger when I tell you!"

"You'll do more than stagger—you'll collapse if you tell us any of your rotten little-tattle!" said Handforth aggressively. "You miserable little worm! You sneaking spy! Who have you been listening to this time?"

"Look here, if you'll give me a couple of bob, I'll tell you the biggest secret you ever heard of—"

"Nothing doing, you young cad!"

"All right, then—a bob!"

"We don't want to hear your beastly tales—"

"Well, threepence, then!" said Teddy, in desperation.

Handforth regarded him glaringly.

"If you say a single word more, I'll pick you up and chuck you out of the nearest window!" he said indignantly. "You ought to be boiled in oil! You're always spying on people, finding out their secrets, and—"

"But I wasn't spying—I saw it by accident!" interrupted Long. "I saw Mrs. Stokes come downstairs, dressed like a parlour-maid. And she was wearing a veil, and she looked scared, and she squinted at herself in a mirror, and she went out through the servants' door, and she—"

"Whoa!" gasped Handforth. "My only hat! You keep on like a giddy waterfall! And what the dickens do you mean, anyhow? You say you saw Mrs. Stokes dressed like a servant girl? What absolute rot!"

"It's the truth, I tell you!" roared Teddy. "Piffle!"

"But I saw her—"

"Rubbish!" said Handforth contemptuously. "You must have been dreaming, or you mistook one of the scullery-maids for Mrs. Stokes. You're idiotic enough for anything!"

"But—but I saw her as plain as—"

"And don't you think you're going to escape, either!" interrupted Handforth significantly. "You've admitted that you've been spying on the servant girls! And you've got the nerve to say that one of them looks like Mrs. Stokes—and everybody knows that Mrs. Stokes is a jolly handsome, ripping sort of girl. You're going to pay for this, my son!"

"If—if you touch me I'll scream!" panted Teddy.

"You won't—because I shall gag you!" said Handforth. "Come on, you chaps—we've got to punish this young beast! Spying on servant girls! By George! He ought to be scalped!"

Teddy Long made a wild dive for liberty, but he was promptly seized, and Church dexterously jammed his cap over the prisoner's mouth. His cries became mere gurgles, and a moment later he was whirled outside, by the nearest door, and rushed breathlessly across the Triangle to the shrubbery.

"Good!" panted Handforth. "We did

that fine! Now, what are we going to do with the young toad?"

"Toads are generally chucked in the river!" said McClure.

"Not a bad idea—in fact, I'd already thought of it," said Handforth. "But it's not lingering enough. He'd simply get a soaking, and that's all. We want a more lengthy punishment—"

He paused, and his eyes gleamed.

"I'll tell you what!" he went on. "You know what they do to pirates and buccaneers and those chaps when they are caught, don't you?"

"Fathead!" said Church. "There aren't any pirates nowadays."

"Don't quibble!" snapped Handforth. "There were pirates at one time, weren't there? Well, they used to take 'em to a desert island, and maroon them! That's what we're going to do with this young scallywag!"

"Maroon him?" asked Church, staring.

"Yes."

"On a desert island?"

"Yes, fathead!"

"Well, of course, you know best," said McClure carelessly. "But, somehow, I thought we were in Sussex—not in the South Seas! But if you know of any desert islands, I'll shut up."

"I suppose you call that funny?" sneered Handforth. "As a matter of fact, I don't mean a desert island at all—"

"But you just said—"

"Blow what I just said!" roared Handforth. "What's the matter with Willard's Island in the middle of the River Stowe?"

"I don't know!" said Church.

"Eh? What do you mean—you don't know?"

"Well, you asked what was the matter with Willard's Island—"

"You—you grinning idiot!" snorted Handforth. "I mean, why shouldn't we take Long there, and maroon him?"

"Oh, I see!" said Church, nodding. "Not a bad idea, but it's hardly what you led us to believe. Long's only got to hail somebody, and he'll be rescued in a couple of jiffies."

Handforth smiled in a superior kind of way.

"That just shows your lack of brain!" he said loftily. "We'll put the beast ashore on Willard's Island, and leave him there. And even if he does yell, who's going to take any notice? The young reptile hasn't got a pal in the whole school, and the chaps will be only too glad to see him in a fix. He won't be rescued—you needn't worry."

As a matter of fact, Handforth's reasoning was perfectly sound. Once marooned on Willard's Island, Teddy Long would probably be there until it pleased Edward Oswald to release him. For nobody else was at all likely to lend a hand.

And so, having decided the point, the sneak of the Remove was hustled along be-

tween the chums of Study D until they reached the river side. Here they got into a boat, and rowed downstream. Long, by this time, was thoroughly scared and cowed, and his former threats had changed into appeals for mercy.

"Look here, you chaps, lemme go!" moaned Long. "It's a rotten trick to shove me on the Island and leave me there! It's dusk already, and it'll soon be dark."

"Good!" said Handforth.

"And—and there's hardly anybody about!"

"Fine!"

"And I may be there for hours!" wailed Teddy.

"Wonderful!" said Handforth calmly.

"For once, my lad, you've shown some brainy reasoning. I mean to leave you on that island until bed-time—so that you'll miss your giddy supper!"

"I didn't have any tea!" roared Long.

"Better still!" said Handy firmly. "Fasting's good for the digestion. And, look here, there's another thing. If you breathe a word of that fool yarn about Mrs. Stokes to anybody else, I'll leave you marooned on the Island all night!"

"I—I won't say a word!" gasped Teddy. "I say, please let me go! I—I made that up about Mrs. Stokes! I didn't see anybody, you know—not a soul! She was only one of the servants—"

"You're not even a good liar!" said Handforth contemptuously. "I'm blessed if I know why you were reared! Your people ought to have put you in a bottle, and preserved you in spirit!"

All Teddy's entreaties were in vain. And five minutes later he was bundled on Willard's Island, alone and alarmed, with no means of getting back to the mainland. He was marooned.

And Handforth and Co. vanished into the dusk.

CHAPTER III.

THE SECRET MEETING.



NERVOUSLY and fearfully, Teddy Long glanced over his shoulder.

Like many another weak-willed youngster of no particular character, he was extraordinarily nervous of being alone. Even in broad daylight Teddy was uncomfortable unless other human presence was near him. At dead of night, he would faint at the thought of going down any dark corridor or staircase.

There was nothing particularly gloomy or alarming about Willard's Island. It was just a long strip of land in the centre of the river, where the stream widened out. The central part of the island was heavily wooded, some of the trees being almost at

the water's edge. And Long gazed nervously and frantically about him.

The shadows were gathering, and the July evening was rapidly drawing in. It was dull, too, with heavy clouds in the sky, and with a soft breeze whistling eerily through the tree tops.

"Oh, the beasts—the cads!" moaned Teddy, shivering. "They've left me alone—and I can't swim! Oh, I shall die here!"

He gazed eagerly about, searching the meadows and peering along the towing-path. But there wasn't a soul in view. It seemed as though humanity in general had deliberately effaced itself so that Teddy Long could not be rescued.

As a matter of fact, it was quite usual for this spot to be deserted at such an hour in the evening—and there was very little chance of anybody appearing, unless by accident. And even if this did happen, there was not much hope for the sneak of the Remove. He was too well known. Any passer-by would be only too glad to rejoice over his predicament.

"Oh, it's no good—I shall be left here all night!" moaned Teddy, sitting down on a tree-stump, and trying to overcome his nervousness. "But I'll make it hot for those rotters to-morrow! Handforth will be sacked! I'd love to see him sacked!" he added viciously.

The thought put him into a better humour. For several minutes he toyed lovingly with the idea. He pictured what it would be like to live at St. Frank's without Handforth's constant menace. He imagined the scene of Handforth's departure—hounded out in disgrace.

Unfortunately, this was only a vision, and Teddy rose to his feet at last with a heavy sigh. It occurred to him that there would be more chance of being seen by a passer-by if he went to the other end of the island, and rose to the high ground in the centre where the old Folly raised its grim, granite walls from the grassy slope.

Long came in sight of the quaint building, and paused, nervous. The Folly, a curious edifice in the style of an ancient castle, looked very grim and sinister in the fading light, with its little towers and turrets and battlements.

The sight of the place recalled the Remove's adventure with William K. Smith—the American millionaire who had sought to enforce his will upon the neighbourhood some months earlier. On that occasion the Remove had held Willard's Island as a kind of fortress.

"My hat!" breathed Teddy Long, abruptly.

His face flushed as a sudden thought came to him. Thinking of that exciting period, he had just remembered that there was a passage down in the dungeons of the Folly—an underground tunnel leading, ultimately, to a spot beneath the playing-fields.

It was a stirring thought.

As far as Teddy knew, the passage was just as accessible as ever. If he could only open the secret door, and get along the tunnel, he would be able to cheat Handforth, after all!

He moved several paces towards the grey walls, and then checked.

His will wasn't strong enough. Already he was picturing the dungeons, and the dark passage—full of inky shadows and mysterious, uncanny sounds. He shivered, and gazed hopelessly across the river to the meadows.

"Oh, the beasts!" he muttered, almost tearfully.

He hadn't got any matches, and, although the tunnel was simple enough to negotiate, the thought of the darkness unnerved him; and he stood there, irresolute. But after a few minutes he plucked up a little more spirit, and entered the doorway.

He took one or two steps in the direction of the stairway which led to the cellars, but everything looked so black and gloomy that he caught his breath in, and nearly lost his nerve. His one desire was to rush headlong out of the place, into the fading daylight.

But the momentary fear passed, and he felt better. Any other junior, of course, would have entered the Folly without a thought; but there were certainly one or two who would have hesitated before penetrating into the dungeons. For Teddy Long the prospect was one that was full of horror.

And yet he moved nearer, knowing all the time that he wouldn't descend, but trying to fool himself that he was courageous. In his inner heart, he knew that he would soon bolt out into the open.

He reached the top of the stairway and gazed down. All was black and forbidding. And then Teddy nearly jumped out of his skin. For the dim reflection of a mysterious light flashed down there—a kind of weak radiance which moved.

"Oh, my goodness!" panted Long.

He tried to run, but couldn't move an inch. Terror seized him. He was held to the spot by sheer fright. All sorts of wild notions throbbed through his mind.

And then a voice came up—clear, mysterious, and eerie.

"This will do—we needn't go any further," it said. "Now, let me know quickly, have you brought it with you?"

Teddy Long could hardly believe the evidence of his ears. The voice was that of Mrs. Stokes! There was no mistaking the soft, refined tone, although her words were full of anxiety and impatience.

And Teddy's fright left him like a cloak.

His innate inquisitiveness came to the fore. Here was Mrs. Stokes, meeting somebody in secret! The Headmaster's wife—meeting somebody in the cellars of the old Folly on Willard's Island! It was certainly a staggerer, and for a few moments Teddy's mind was in a whirl.

A second before he had been shivering with fear. Now he was as bold as brass. All

thoughts of spooks and spirits had vanished. And the reason, of course, was obvious.

Just at the bottom of the cellar stairs were human beings, and one of those human beings was a woman. The nearness of such human presence gave Teddy Long a full and stout courage.

And his extraordinary facility for spying was here provided with one of the finest opportunities he had ever come across. Standing just as he was, without moving an inch, he could hear everything that was being said! And his presence was not even suspected—and would never be suspected unless he betrayed himself. And, being an old hand at the game, he was not likely to do that.

During those few brief moments, all sorts of thoughts sped through the junior's mind. Of course, this was where Mrs. Stokes had been bound for when she had left the servants' quarters so mysteriously! This was why she had gone out dressed as a servant!

And, obviously, she had reached the dungeons by means of that passage underground. Teddy congratulated himself on his wisdom in refraining from descending. He didn't admit that he had been afraid.

He listened with acute ears, and was sorely disappointed when he only heard a soft voice in reply to Mrs. Stokes—so soft that he couldn't understand the words. And yet Teddy's ears were singularly acute from long practice.

"You've brought it, then?" he heard Mrs. Stokes say. "Oh, that's good of you, Yen! Thank you so much—Why, why do you hold it back? Give it to me!"

"Me solly, Mrs. Stokes," replied the mysterious Yen, his voice now more audible. "I want money. Give me money, and I—"

"But I haven't got the money, Yen!" came the voice of the Head's wife, now filled with keen anxiety. "Oh, can't you trust me?"

"I want the money, Mrs. Stokes—not good unless I get it," replied Yen, who was obviously a foreigner of some kind.

"You shall have it to-night—I promise," said Mrs. Stokes.

"All right—you have this when I get money," came the complacent reply. "How do I get money to-night? Too much bother, Mrs. Stokes. I go away from district completely unless you pay. No money to-night, and I go—and I not return."

Mrs. Stokes gave a cry of alarm.

"You shall have it, Yen—the full twenty pounds," she exclaimed, her voice rising with anxiety. "You shall have it to-night—I will get it by hook or by crook! Come to the little square window at the end of the Ancient House at midnight, and I will let you in."

"It is good," said the other. "You promise?"

"Yes, I promise!" said Mrs. Stokes nervously. "And then, if I give you the twenty pounds, you will let me have—"

"Wait!" interrupted the other. "I come at midnight. If you have the money, everything all right."

CHAPTER IV.

IN DANGEROUS HANDS.



TEDDY LONG was bewildered and puzzled. What was it that Mrs. Stokes wanted so badly? And who was this mysterious man who spoke in such a queer way? These were interesting thoughts. But Teddy did not dwell on them for long.

The circumstances were admittedly remarkable—and it was these which caused Teddy Long to jump to such astonishing conclusions. In less than a minute he had firmly and finally convinced himself that the Headmaster's wife was an adventuress, hand in glove with a gang.

When it came to mischief, Teddy Long's capacity for invention amounted to genius. And he thrilled at the thought of recounting this glorious story to groups of breathless Removites. He would have the time of his life!

These pleasant notions were suddenly obliterated by a sound on the stone steps.

BOOKS OF SPORT, SCHOOL AND ADVENTURE

It's Well Worth Your While—to Give Them a Trial!

The Boys' Friend Library

No. 721. THE LEADER OF THE FOURTH.

A Jolly, Long, Complete School Yarn, introducing Jimmy Mack and his Chums. By JACK NORTH.

No. 722. CHUMS OF THE CHAMPION.

A Breezy Story of Life and Adventure on Board a Training Ship. By VESEY DEANE.

No. 723. THE SPACE DESTROYER.

A Magnificent, Long, Complete Story of Adventure on the Planet Mars. By LESLIE BIDSTONE.

No. 724. THE GENTLEMAN TRAMP.

A Grand Tale of Sport and Life on the Road. By S. S. GORDON.

The Sexton Blake Library

No. 339. THE CASE OF THE KIDNAPPED LEGATEE.

Another Magnificent Sexton Blake Story, featuring GRANITE GRANT and MDLLE. JULIE.

No. 340. FLAT No. 4.

A Romance of Strong Detective Work and Thrilling Adventure. By the Author of "The Boarding-House Mystery," etc., etc.

No. 341. The GAMEKEEPER'S SECRET.

A Tale of Mystery, Adventure, and Fascinating Deduction. By the Author of "An Amateur in Crime," etc., etc.

No. 342. THE CASE OF LARACHI THE LASCAR.

A Detective Story of Liverpool and London, introducing Sexton Blake, Tinker, and Topper.

Now on Sale.

Price Fourpence Each!

There was something else that attracted him far more.

Mrs. Stokes was going to admit this criminal—for Teddy already set him down as such—into the school at midnight! A burglar—a cracksman—who meant to rob the school! And she was his secret confederate!

Long already began to construct a startling theory upon the flimsy foundation of that brief conversation—which, in all truth, had been almost too obscure for any chance listener to thoroughly understand. If it meant anything at all, it was simply that the stranger had something to sell, and Mrs. Stokes couldn't pay for it.

They were coming up! Long gazed frantically round, and bolted like a rabbit into the nearest corner.

He crouched down, flattening himself against the wall, and rendering his short person invisible amid the gloom. He was a past-master at this sort of thing.

Out of the corner of his eyes, he caught sight of a dim figure. He badly wanted to see this man, but could only get a glimpse. The fellow was short and stumpy, and walked with a brisk stride. He went straight outside, and strode away.

On the instant, Teddy jumped from his corner, and slid to the door. He was

just in time to see the figure of the man bending amid some willows and rushes in a small back-water.

A moment later, the man pushed out a small canoe, got inside, and paddled silently away. And it was done so swiftly that even now, in the fading daylight, Long had not been able to see the fellow's face.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" he muttered indignantly. "And that canoe was there all the time! If I'd only known, I might have used it to get across with! But I'm glad I didn't know, or I should have missed this!"

It was clearly apparent that Mrs. Stokes had gone back by way of the secret passage, which, of course, was a direct route to the school. And Teddy only knew a half. And half a story is generally much more dangerous than the full truth.

In a way, the junior was certainly justified in being suspicious. If everything was straightforward and above board, Mrs. Stokes would never have met this stranger in such suspicious circumstances. She had taken every precaution—even to the length of disguising herself—but Fate had placed Teddy Long in her path this evening with a vengeance!

The junior was jumping with impatience. His one desire was to get off the island, and relate his story to the startled juniors. And he couldn't do a thing! He was a prisoner on the Island!

To go through the passage was unthinkable. He daren't attempt it, being too much of a coward. Mrs. Stokes had just gone, and she was little more than a mere girl, but Teddy was made of different material.

In the meantime, three figures were just entering Little Side from the Triangle—being, in fact, Handforth and Co. It was nearly supper time, and Church and McClure had reminded their leader that Teddy Long was still marooned on Willard's Island.

Left entirely to himself, Handforth would probably have forgotten all about it, and Long's predicament would indeed have been unfortunate. Edward Oswald had quite a knack of forgetting minor



The figure came near, and walked rapidly past without knowing that three juniors were so near by, and watching her movements.

details of this kind. His chums were always at him.

"Blessed nuisance—having to come out here now!" grumbled Handforth tartly. "The little cad ain't worth it!"

"But, hang it all, you can't leave him there all night!" protested Church. "Somebody's got to rescue him. And don't forget that we shoved him on the Island in the first place."

"If I had two real chums, instead of a pair of dummies, it wouldn't be so bad!" said Handforth gruffly. "It's a pity you chaps couldn't offer to go alone, instead of dragging me along!"

"Never thought of it," said McClure. "But it's all right—you can buzz back. Church and I will fetch Teddy off the Island."

Handforth glared.

"Oh, so you want to get rid of me, eh?" he asked sourly. "Well, you won't! I'm coming! It's like your blessed cheek to suggest such a thing."

"Well, my only hat!" exclaimed McClure indignantly. "I was only saying it to oblige you—"

But Handforth brushed the explanation

aside. It was just as well that Church and McClure knew him through and through. He was the most perverse fellow under the sun. But there was always something wholly attractive and likeable about him, in spite of his many obvious defects.

"Cave!" breathed Church suddenly.

Instinctively, he threw himself into the hedge, and Handforth and McClure followed his example. Although they were in the school grounds, they were, strictly speaking, out of bounds. It was well after locking-up, and the playing fields were not allowable at this hour of the night.

To be discovered there would only mean a matter of fifty lines or so, but the chums of Study D saw no reason why they should do any lines at all. They crouched silently into the hedge.

A figure had appeared from behind the junior pavilion—and, curiously enough, it was the figure of a woman. She was coming in this same direction, too, and would pass quite close to the waiting juniors.

Mrs. Stokes' luck was certainly out on this particular evening. In spite of all her precautions, she was almost continually under observation. And yet the circumstances had all come about in the most natural manner imaginable.

"It's all right—only one of the giddy servants!" muttered Handforth. "She wouldn't peach on us, even if she spotted us."

"Still, we'd better go easy," breathed Church.

The figure came near, and walked rapidly past without knowing that three juniors were so near by, watching her movements. She passed, and a few seconds later Handforth and Co. heard the gate click.

"I say!" exclaimed Church, in a curious voice. "Did you notice anything rummy?"

"Rummy?" repeated Handforth. "About that girl?"

"She seemed in a bit of a hurry, didn't she?" went on Church.

"What about it?"

"Well, it was her walk that made me think," said Church. "Exactly like Mrs. Stokes! And that veil, too! Don't you remember what Long said about Mrs. Stokes going out in a veil?"

"Oh, rot!" said Handforth uneasily.

"I'm not so sure," said Church. "Why should one of the servants come to the school across Little Side like this? The staff ain't allowed here, anyhow. She ought to have come up the lane, and gone in the giddy trademen's entrance! I believe it was Mrs. Stokes herself!"

Handforth thought deeply.

"Yes, that walk was her's all right," he agreed. "And I noticed something familiar about her figure, too. Come to think of it, there isn't any servant in the

school with a ripping figure like that! It was Mrs. Stokes!"

"I'm positive of it!" agreed Church.

"Well, don't you fellows say a word to anybody about my discovery!" went on Handforth. "This is what comes of having a trained eye! I spotted her in a tick!"

Church gasped, but said nothing. He might have expected it. Handforth had a wonderful habit of calmly robbing his chums of credit that was theirs. But he always did it unconsciously.

They hurried across the playing fields, reached the river, and landed on the Island. Teddy Long came rushing up, so thankful to be rescued that he forgot to abuse the trio. Moreover, his mind was filled to the brim with something else.

"I say, what do you think happened?" panted Long excitedly. Mrs. Stokes was on the Island here, and she met some man—a member of a gang! She's going to let him into the school to-night, so that he can rob the safe!"

Handforth and Co. stared.

"Have you got any other funny stories?" asked Handforth bluntly.

"It's not a funny story—it's the truth!" declared Long. "Mrs. Stokes came here by that underground passage—you know, the one that leads out behind the Junior Pavilion."

"My hat!" said McClure blankly.

He and his chums stared at one another. The same thought flashed into all their minds. The girl that had passed them by had come from behind the Junior Pavilion!

It was a significant corroboration of Teddy's story. For once in his life, Long was apparently telling the truth. But even now Handforth didn't seem fully satisfied.

"Are you sure it was Mrs. Stokes?" he asked.

"Of course I'm sure!" said Teddy indignantly. "I heard her voice as clearly as I can hear yours. Think I don't know her tone?"

He proceeded to go into details, explaining that Mrs. Stokes had promised the mysterious man twenty pounds, and that she would admit him into the school at midnight. Teddy added all sorts of embellishments of his own invention, until Handforth and Co. found it impossible to distinguish between the truth and the fiction.

They were convinced, however, that Mrs. Stokes had met somebody and had promised him money. But they didn't believe that the stranger was coming to the school at midnight. They set this down as a part of the fiction.

"Well, whether it's true or not, you're going to keep your mouth shut!" said Handforth grimly. "This story doesn't go any further, see? Breathe a word to any of the others, my son, and I'll scalp you!"

Teddy's dream of fame received a distinct jar.

"Oh, but look here!" he protested. "I'm going to tell everybody——"

"You're not!" snapped Handforth. "You'll keep it a dead secret, you little worm! We're not going to have any scandal going about concerning the Head's wife. Remember—one word, and you're going to be slaughtered! We're the only fellows who know, and if anybody else talks about it, I shall know exactly who's been blabbing! And you'll get slaughtered, my lad! Understand? Slaughtered!"

Teddy Long did understand, and his disappointment was complete.

CHAPTER V.

AT MIDNIGHT!



HANDFORTH was very thoughtful as he and his chums went into Study D after supper.

"I don't like that giddy yarn of Long's," he said gruffly. "I wonder what the dickens Mrs. Stokes was doing there, in those dungeons?"

"The best thing we can do is to forget all about it," said Church. "It's not our business, and we shall only get into hot water if we interfere. As for Long, he'll keep mum, because you scared him stiff. McClure and I won't say a word, as you know."

Handforth nodded.

"Yes, we'd better forget it," he said. "Let's go to the Common-room."

Out in the corridor they ran across Archie Glenthorne. The elegant junior was looking rather bored, and he greeted Handforth and Co. in characteristic fashion.

"What-ho! Another day gone, as it were," he observed. "Another good old chunk of time annihilated, what? And bed looms before us, dear old tea cups! Bally good, if I may say so!"

"It's a funny thing you don't get Phipps to wheel you about in a bath-chair!" said Handforth sarcastically. "I've never known such a lazy slacker!"

"Oh, I say!" protested Archie. "Come! No need to start the old quarrel, what? We have had a strenuous day, laddie, and the tissues are decidedly jellified. The only cure is a substantial slab of sleep. In other words, forty of the best are indicated."

"Oh, well, we can't bother with you now!" said Handforth impatiently. "You're a good sort, Archie, but you're too slow for this world. You ought to have lived five hundred years ago."

"As a matter of absolute fact, old orange, I believe you've hit the nail on the good old head," said Archie. "These times are somewhat too rapid for the Glenthorne constitution. By the way—and to change the old subject—you haven't by any chance seen

Mrs. Stokes trickling hither or thither during the evening?"

"We saw her just before supper," replied Handforth. "Jolly queer, too. She was coming in disguised as a servant, and she'd been meeting somebody on Willard's Island——"

He paused, and glared at Church.

"What are you staring at me like that for, you ass?" he demanded.

Church turned red.

"Nun-nothing!" he stammered. "But—but——"

"Don't interrupt!" said Handforth, turning to Archie again. "Yes, Mrs. Stokes was up to something pretty serious, by the look of things. And the worst of it is, Teddy Long saw her, so there's no telling who'll know now!"

"Good gad!" said Archie blankly.

"And what's more, she's going to admit this rotter into the school at midnight," went on Handforth indignantly. "Of course, I don't believe it—that's only Teddy's fairy tale! All the same, it's rotten!"

"Oh, rather!" said Archie. "You can trust me, laddie—I'll say nothing. The secret is locked in the old bosom, and positively barricaded."

He walked away rather hurriedly, and as soon as he had turned the corner of the passage, Church and McClure seized Handforth and nearly floored him on the spot.

"You blithering fathead!" said Church hotly.

"You blabbing duffer!" hissed McClure.

"Eh? Look here—— Oh, by George!" said Handforth, with a sudden gulp. "We—we said we wouldn't tell anybody, didn't we?"

"You're worse than Teddy Long!" snorted Church. "You threatened him with all sorts of horrible things if he opened his mouth, and the first chap you meet you——"

"Rubbish!" said Handforth, raising his voice in order to hide his confusion. "Archie's different—he's safe enough. I suppose you chaps think I forgot, don't you? What piffle! I knew Archie could be trusted, otherwise I wouldn't have told him!"

"Perhaps it'll be all right, then," growled McClure. "But you'd better be more careful next time. It'll be simply awful for the Head if chaps like Fullwood and Gulliver get hold of that story. The Head's one of the best, and he can't help it if his wife's a wrong 'un."

"A wrong 'un?" repeated Handforth. "Why, you insulting rotter! I won't believe a word against her! I'll bet anything you like there's some perfectly good explanation of all this mystery! Mrs. Stokes is as good as gold, and I'll smash the first chap who says otherwise!"

Handforth could have the blackest possible evidence of anybody's guilt put before him, but if he had made up his mind otherwise, he would calmly waive the evidence aside and stick to his own opinion. And, curiously

enough, when it came to a matter of judging his fellow beings, Handforth was singularly shrewd.

Archie had gone to his study, and was startled.

The information he had learned from Handforth was not so obscure as it appeared to be. For Archie knew more of Mrs. Stokes than any of the other fellows. Only a few days earlier the Head's wife had taken a considerable sum in cash out of Archie's study—and Archie himself had been publicly flogged on account of that unfortunate affair.

He had, in fact, accepted the flogging without flinching, in order to keep the unhappy lady's secret from her husband's ears. And Mrs. Stokes had revealed her gratitude afterwards, thanking Archie with tears in her eyes, and promising that he would be rewarded for his chivalry.

Nobody else had understood that flogging of Archie's, and although some of the cads had got up an agitation against the elegant junior, the rest had allowed the affair to drop.

So Archie had good cause to be startled.

"This is absolutely frightful," he told himself. "I mean to say, that bally Chinese blighter is absolutely coming to the school! Something will have to be done! This is where I need a vast amount of brain, but, dash it, the old gear-box refuses to wobble!"

And there was very little time to think, even if the gear-box had been in perfect order. For it was just upon bed-time. And Archie went upstairs worried and troubled—but not altogether without hope.

In the Remove dormitory, the juniors soon settled themselves down to healthy slumber. The day had been strenuous, what with lessons, and cricket, and various other outdoor recreations.

And by eleven-forty-five the whole dormitory was sound asleep—at least, it appeared to be. But a few moments later there was a movement from one of the beds, and a figure slipped out.

The junior slipped on a dressing-gown, and then felt for his slippers. In doing so, he leaned on the bed, and caused it to give a loud creak. It was quite sufficient to awaken one of the others.

This happened to be myself. I opened my eyes, raised my head slightly, and looked up. I could see the junior creeping silently towards the door, plainly visible in the moonlight.

"Who's that?" I asked softly.

The figure started violently and gasped.

"Oh, it's you, Long!" I said, recognising that sound. "What the dickens are you doing out of bed at this time of night?"

"I—I'm going to get a drink of water!" gasped Teddy.

"Rats! There's plenty in the tap at the end of the dormitory," I whispered, getting out of bed and moving towards him. I had only paused to slip on my dressing-gown, for there was a chilly draught coming in

through the window. And Long seized this opportunity to bolt out into the corridor.

I was after him in a flash, and caught him at the head of the stairs.

"What's your game, my lad?" I asked grimly. "It must be something exceptionally questionable, or you wouldn't be out of your bed at midnight! You're too much of a funk! Now, then—out with it!"

Teddy Long looked at me breathlessly.

"Mind your own business!" he growled. "I can do what I like, I suppose? You're not a prefect, are you?"

But this sort of bluff wouldn't work, as he knew. And while I was thinking of what to say, the school clock chimed out midnight—slowly and solemnly. I waited for the strokes to finish.

And just as they did so a loud and distinct creak sounded round the angle of the corridor.

CHAPTER VI.

SHORT SHRIFT.



PERHAPS Long's nerves were on edge, or perhaps it was the mystic hour of midnight that affected him. At all events, at the sound of that creak, he gave a little yelp of fear, and scooted back into the dormitory with the speed and agility of a rabbit.

But I wasn't so anxious to get back to bed.

I suspected that Long had arranged a meeting with somebody at midnight—but for what earthly purpose I couldn't imagine. He wasn't the kind of fellow to meet any other junior after lights out.

Very cautiously, I tiptoed my way to the end of the corridor, and peeped round. I was just in time to see a black shape materialise out of the dimness. It was upon me before I could know it, and I instinctively grappled.

My assailant fought fiercely, and without making a sound. Long's fellow conspirator was obviously a hefty fellow. More by accident than anything else, he got me down. My foot caught in a piece of linoleum, and I tripped. And the fellow took instant advantage of this mishap.

He floored me, and held me helpless for a moment. But I had plenty of fight left, and intended using some of it.

"And that, you blighter, is that," observed the enemy breathlessly. "I don't know who you are, dash you, but—"

"Archie!" I gasped, in amazement.

"Good gad!" he ejaculated. "That is to say, odds life! I thought you were a bally burglar, or something! I mean to say, this is something of a swindle, if you know what I mean!"

We sat up, staring at one another.

"Good man!" I grinned. "You fought like a professional, Archie! I didn't think you had it in you! No delay—no hesitation! You simply went for me baldheaded."

"Oh, rather!" said Archie, apologetically. "You see, I thought you were that bally Chinaman, and I didn't want to give you any rope, what? I mean, these Chinese chappies are dashed slippery, what? Sorry, old lad, but there it is, you know."

"What Chinaman?" I asked curiously.

"Oh, yes, of course," said Archie. "Now, that's somewhat poisonous. Awkward, you know. Without intending it, I've let the old kitten out of the basket, what?"

"I don't know what on earth you're talking about," I said. "I came out of the dormitory because Long got out of bed—What's that? Listen! I can hear—"

I paused, and we were both startled afresh.

From downstairs came the sound of voices—one speaking in quick, alarmed tones. Then the Head's—angry and violent. A sudden cessation. A crashing thud. And then a piercing scream.

"Gadzooks!" breathed Archie, huskily.

"That was Mrs. Stokes!" I muttered. "I say, we'd better nip down, and see what's wrong! Better be careful, though!"

We ran lightly downstairs, and were rather thankful that no other figures came from any of the dormitories. The surprising sounds from below had not raised any general alarm.

Archie and I found everything quiet in the lobby, and even after an exploration of the passages, we still lacked enlightenment. And we were just giving up the search as a bad job when I saw a gleam of light under the baize-covered door which separated the Head's private house from the rest of the building.

"We'd better not go any further," I murmured, as we crept up.

"Absolutely not," agreed Archie. "It wouldn't be the thing to—"

But he paused, for we could hear sounds of agitation.

"You've killed him, Barry—you've killed him!" came Mrs. Stokes's voice, in violent agitation. "Oh, Barry, you've killed him!"

The words electrified me. I thrust all scruples aside, realising that something very dramatic had happened. And with Archie at my heels, I tore open the baize door, and passed through.

Dr. Beverley Stokes was bending over the still form of a short man who was outstretched upon the floor. There was something rather terrible about that silent figure. The electric lights were full on, and Mrs. Stokes was standing near by, clutching at the hall table for support. She was fully dressed, but the Head was in his dressing gown.

"If I've killed him, I've rid this world of a snake—a poisonous reptile!" he said

passionately. "By heavens! I could cheerfully take the brute and squeeze every ounce of breath—"

He paused, checked himself, and stared at us.

"Can—can we do anything, sir?" I asked quickly.

"Oh, well, I suppose it can't be helped," muttered the Head. "How many more of you? The whole school's aroused, eh?"

"No, only Archie and I, sir," I said swiftly. "We heard Mrs. Stokes scream, and thought there was something the matter."

The Head glanced at the motionless figure on the floor.

"Yes, there was something the matter!" he said bitterly. "If you had come a little earlier, you would have seen me deliver one of the prettiest rights imaginable. I knocked this hound out with one straight drive! If his jaw isn't broken, I shall be surprised."

I took a glance at the felled man. He was an Oriental—a Chinaman—and he was quite beyond fighting. But before we could take any stock of his actual condition, Nelson Lee appeared at the end of the passage, having climbed through the open window. And behind him, to our further astonishment, came Inspector Jameson, of the Bannington Police.

"What has happened here?" asked Nelson Lee sharply.

"Upon my soul!" said the Head. "It seems that everybody is awake to-night! I can't knock out a housebreaker without stirring up a hornets' nest. Will you kindly explain this, Mr. Lee?"

"Certainly!" replied the gov'nor crisply. "This gentleman is Inspector Jameson, and he holds a warrant for the arrest of Yen Chung—this man on the floor. We were following the fellow, but the Inspector wanted to find out what his game was before serving the warrant. It seems that we shall have very little trouble with him."

"Is—is he dead?" asked Mrs. Stokes dully.

"It takes more than a well-directed punch to kill a Chinaman, madam," said Nelson Lee drily. "He'll be lively enough in a few minutes, I can assure you. You'd better handcuff him, Jameson."

"I will," said the inspector promptly.

Dr. Stokes looked on with relief and pleasure.

"That's the best piece of work I've seen for weeks!" he said grimly. "The infernal reptile! How on earth did you know anything about this, Lee?"

"I hope you'll forgive me, Dr. Stokes, but I have been taking quite an interest in this Chinaman for some little time," replied Nelson Lee quietly. "After a little investigation, I found that he is a man badly wanted by the police, and I gave information against him. I hardly wanted such a dramatic arrest as this, however."

Without the slightest warning, Mrs. Stokes suddenly lost her grip of the table, and fell to the floor in a crumpled heap—

having fainted without a sound. The Head gave one bound, and tenderly picked her up.

"Poor little woman!" he muttered. "I don't wonder!"

Without even looking round, the Head walked upstairs with Mrs. Stokes in his arms. And I tugged at Archie's sleeve.

"I think we'd better get back to bed, old man," I said softly.

"Absolutely!" agreed Archie. "The scheme, dear laddie, is not only ripe, but positively fruity!"

We both realised that we were not wanted, and we felt awkward. The last we saw, as we passed through the baize door, was Nelson Lee and the Inspector jerking the prisoner to an upright position, and examining his jaw.

The affair was not what I had expected it to be, but obviously a private matter which did not concern the school in the least. I hinted to Archie that it would be better to forget what we had seen.

"Oh, rather!" agreed Glenthorne promptly. "The fact is, I was just coming down to investigate when we bumped into one another. Under the circumstances, I'd better tell you the rest, what?"

He did so, and I was worried. So Teddy Long knew about this! And this was why he had attempted to sneak out of the dormitory! I foresaw trouble in the future.

Archie and I parted on the landing, and I slipped into the Remove dormitory, and was just about to get into bed, when I noticed that Teddy Long's bed was empty. So the young beggar had sneaked out, after all!

Without hesitation, I went in search of him, and it didn't take me long to find him crouching down one of the corridors, with his ear to a keyhole. I gave him short shrift.

Details are unnecessary. It's quite enough to say that within five minutes Teddy Long was in bed—but it is doubtful if he felt any particular comfort.

CHAPTER VII.

RUMCERS.



NEXT morning, everything seemed the same as usual.

The general routine of the school went on its customary, placid way, and although the Head wasn't publicly seen, nothing was thought of this. Sometimes a whole day passed without the Head showing himself.

There were only a few fellows who knew about the happenings of the night.

Handforth and Co. had heard Teddy Long's story, but had summarily dismissed it—and had been asleep at midnight, thus knowing nothing of Yen Chung's arrest.

The others in the secret were Archie Glenthorne and myself. And although we were rather concerned privately, and although

we wondered a great deal, there was no risk of the story going further.

But Teddy Long was not only in possession of the whole story, but he had actually witnessed the secret meeting between Mrs. Stokes and the Chinaman, and he had overheard their conversation, and he knew all about the Chinaman's arrest at midnight.

So there was a great deal to worry over.

It wasn't our business, and it wasn't the school's. The Head's private affairs were—well, private. But if hints of this extraordinary sequence of events leaked out, the school would seize upon them with avid eagerness. For there is nothing like scandal to excite comment—and schoolboys are no better than others in this respect.

The story, indeed, would probably become distorted and exaggerated out of all semblance of the truth and Mrs. Stokes would suffer. Goodness knows what she had actually been doing, but I was certain of her thorough genuineness that I was convinced that the affair had an innocent explanation. And I was not anxious to pry.

I made it my business, therefore, to get hold of Teddy Long even before breakfast, and to warn him solemnly and threateningly that one word of scandal from him would be more than enough to earn him the tanning of his life.

But I can't say that I was particularly hopeful. By what I knew of Teddy Long, threats were very effective when made, but they generally wore off, and the young bouncer would begin to talk.

Just after breakfast we were in the Triangle—quite a number of fellows, in fact, chatting with Irene and Co. of the Moor View School. The girls had looked in to calmly ask when we were ready for another cricket fixture! We could hardly help feeling a little sheepish.

For the memory of our defeat, the previous week, was still with us. And we were not likely to forget how the schoolgirls had challenged us to a match, to our keen amusement—only to beat us in slashing style. Of course, our licking had been mainly due to over confidence, and another match would probably have a very different result. But the girls were quite ready for a test.

And we were keen upon a second match and I promised Irene it would be fixed up for certain.

And while we were talking, a closed motor-car rolled up to the front door of the Head's house, and stood there. Most of the juniors took an interest in this proceeding—particularly Teddy Long.

Five minutes later, Mrs. Stokes was observed to enter the car. And, curiously enough, it was also seen that the car contained a nurse. Only a glimpse of her was obtained, but it was enough to set tongues wagging. And Mrs. Stokes, who was looking very pale and shaken, was gently assisted into the car by the Head.

And as soon as she had departed, a good deal of talk went round. Where had she

gone? Why had she looked so ill? What was the nurse for? Had she met with an accident?

The fellows found a surprising number of explanations. And Teddy Long found it quite impossible to keep his mischievous tongue still. But he displayed a certain amount of shrewd precaution, nevertheless.

Instead of taking his story to the decent fellows in the Remove, he selected Fullwood and Co.—feeling that any scandal he might report would fall upon ready ears. It was only necessary to get the start—and that proved a little difficult.

"Heard the latest?" he asked casually, as he approached Fullwood and Co., who were lounging under one of the chestnuts.

"No—and don't want to!" said Fullwood curtly.

"Oh, don't be so jolly snappy!" protested Long. "I suppose you're wondering why Mrs. Stokes has gone away, ain't you? Well, I know! She's been mixed up in a pretty disgraceful affair, and the Head's packed her off so that she won't be arrested."

"Oh, clear off—you're a fool!" said Fullwood curtly.

"But it's true—and I can prove it!" declared Teddy.

"Clear off before I smash you!" shouted Fullwood.

Teddy Long retreated, crestfallen.

"How do you mean—you can prove it?" asked Gulliver curiously.

This was quite sufficient encouragement for Long. In less than five minutes he had blurted out the whole story. And even Fullwood was now listening with intent, close interest. This was an unusual sort of story for Long. And he told it with complete conviction.

"If you don't believe me—ask Handforth!" said Teddy, at length. "He's too goody-goody to tell a lie—so he'll do some of his usual bluffing. That'll prove it, eh? There's Archie, too—he knows a lot more than you chaps believe! What was he flogged for the other day?" added Teddy cunningly. "There's a mystery there that's never been cleared up."

"I must say it looks pretty queer," said Bell, nodding.

"Queer! It's all as clear as daylight!" declared Long. "Mrs. Stokes is a member of a criminal gang, and she let that Chinese crook into the school. But the Head got wind of it, and spoilt the game. And so he's packed her off somewhere."

Fullwood looked intent.

"I don't take much notice of your yarns as a rule, but this one seems a cert," he said with pleasure. "But you must have got it wrong. In my opinion, Mrs. Stokes is insane!"

"By gad!" said Gulliver, staring.

"Just a bit touched, you know," went on Fullwood. "Didn't you twig the nurse in that car? And didn't you notice how rummy Mrs. Stokes was looking—and how the Head

held her the time? I'll bet a quid she's been taken off to a private asylum!"

"Whew!" whistled Teddy Long. "Perhaps that's it!"

And before the morning was out the rumours were not only going about the Remove, but throughout the entire school. - Fellows were talking in whispers, gathering together in knots, and when the Head crossed the Triangle just before dinner he was followed by the curious gaze of all.

I was soon aware that the cat was out of the bag. Archie knew it, too, and was intensely worried. Handforth was furious, but Teddy Long wisely kept in the background—now that he had done the mischief—and wasn't to be found. Even the Head himself noticed the change, and was beginning to suspect that the school was talking.

And so the rumours went on—growing more wild as they were whispered from study to study, in both Houses.

CHAPTER VIII.

WILLY, THE DOCTOR!



CHUBBY HEATH looked doleful.

"Not a giddy cent!" he said, gazing at the lining of his pockets with disgust. "I spent my last tuppence on one of Mrs. Hake's cream buns, and there wasn't any cream in it! I told her it was a swindle, but she had the nerve to push me out of the shop!"

Willy Handforth nodded sympathetically.



26 A WEEK
OR CASH
£4 15/-

Get the best cycle in the British Empire—a **JUNO**, sent on approval, carriage paid. Guaranteed by our 46 years' reputation. Money refunded if dissatisfied. Art List Free. Write Now. (Dept. U2), **METROPOLITAN MACHINISTS CO., LTD.**, 169 & 248, Bishopsgate, London, E.C.2.

JUNO



HEIGHT COUNTS

In winning success. Let the Girvan System increase your height. Send P.C. for particulars of our £100 guarantee to Enquiry Dept. A.M.P., 17, Stroud Green Road, London, N.4.

"I've had the same thing happen to me," he said feelingly. "Unless a chap's got money he's dirt! That's the way in this life. You're a piece of dirt, Chubby—"

"Look here—"

"Oh, don't get shirty—as a matter of fact, I'm a piece of dirt, too!" went on Willy. "And that means, in plain language, that I'm broke—so don't try to spring any of your borrowing stunts!"

"I was going to ask you to lend me a bob!" roared Chubby.

"All right—you can ask!" said Willy cheerfully. "This is a free country—no penalty for speaking. I spent my last half-crown on a couple of African beetles, and they were worth it! Ripping specimens, with lovely hairy legs, and—"

"Blow your rotten beetles!" growled Chubby. "We can't eat them for tea, I s'pose? What are we going to do?"

"Leave it to me!" said the hero of the Third calmly. "I don't usually borrow money—I regard it as an evil thing; but sometimes a chap has to put his scruples aside."

"Are you going to touch your major?" asked Chubby doubtfully.

"I wouldn't touch him with a barge-pole!" replied Willy with scorn. "Of course, if he was flush, I might make the attempt—but I happen to know he's nearly stony!"

He walked off without giving any further explanation, and made his way down the Remove passage until he came to Archie Glenthorne's study. Afternoon lessons were over, and it was nearly tea-time. And something, naturally, had to be done. By hook or by crook, the wind had to be raised.

Willy entered Archie's study, and paused, staring. The genial ass of the Remove was in an unusual attitude. Instead of lounging gracefully back in an easy-chair, he was sitting forward, with his head in his hands, rocking himself gently to and fro.

"Anything wrong?" asked Willy, with real concern.

"Oh! Sorry, laddie, I didn't hear you flow in!" said Archie dismally, as he raised his head. "Take a chair—in fact, take the bally couch, if you want it! But don't bother me, dash you!"

Willy nodded.

"It must be the strain," he said. "All the chaps are saying that your brain is a bit wonky, Archie, and the fearful ordeal of lessons is beginning to have effect. Anything I can do?"

"Kindly refrain from being a frightful young duffer!" said Archie severely. "I gather that you have come here for some legitimate purpose, as it were? I mean,

you didn't trickle in just to gaze upon the anguish of a martyr?"

"I came in to borrow five bob," said Willy frankly.

"Oh, rather! Only too pleased," said Archie, diving into his pocket. "In fact, between you and me, and just ourselves, I really think it's worth half a quid to get rid of you! So kindly take this note, and whizz forth. I would be alone! The old head is absolutely buzzing."

"Thanks!" said Willy, taking the note. "I'll pay you back on Saturday. I can safely promise that, because I'll get it off Ted. In fact, I'll tell him that he owes you half a quid," he added lightly. "That'll relieve me of all responsibility."

"A somewhat foul scheme, but no matter," said Archie. "It strikes me as being a dashed piece of poisonous impudence, but I'm too weak to protest further. Go, dash you!"

"Half a mo!" said Willy firmly. "About your headache. Is it very bad? Does it feel about twice its normal size?"

"Absolutely! It's throbbing horribly," moaned Archie.

"Oh, that's all right—I'll soon have you fixed up," said Handforth minor. "Leave it to me, old son, and I'll have you dancing about like a two-year-old within five minutes. I've got a headache cure that will do wonders. You'll have that Kruschen feeling in chunks!"

Archie looked doubtful.

"I don't wish to discourage you, laddie, but kindly depart, and leave me alone!" he said unhappily. "There's no cure—the old brain is absolutely worn out. New bearings and cones are required, so cease this idle chatter, and ooze silently away."

Archie was really distressed. He had been worrying intensely over the rumours that were now passing freely throughout the school. He was quite convinced in his own mind that Mrs. Stokes was a good sort, and it tortured his finer feelings to know that her name was being used in a scandalous manner by all the riff-raff of every Form.

"I never desert a pal in trouble," said Willy. "Are you game to take a powder?"

"Who? Me?"

"Yes, ass, you!"

"A powder?"

"One of those things you swallow," explained Willy. "You know, you shove the stuff on your tongue, and then swill down about a gallon of water—just to drown it. In ten seconds your headache's gone!"

"I positively refuse to swill down a gallon of water!" said Archie sternly. "Why, dash it, the old interior wouldn't accommodate such a frightful quantity. And I regard all powders with suspish. Nature, laddie, has its own way, so kindly allow me to wallow in my own dashed anguish!"

BUY THE
MERRY MAG. 7d

"I wouldn't like to be your doctor!" said Willy critically. "There's nothing worse than a patient who refuses to take medicine. My dear chap, this powder is miraculous. Perfectly harmless, and guaranteed to cure. I hate to see you like this, so let me—"

"You perfectly frightful young bounder, give me the powder, and go!" interrupted Archie. "Anything, in fact, to be free of your pestiferous presence. I regard you with— Good gad! That's dashed queer! The bally young bounder has vanished, dash it!"

But Willy had only hurried off to get the powder.

tion of a little incident that had happened the previous week. Irene Manners had given Handforth a headache powder, saying that it was a marvellous, instantaneous cure. And Willy knew for a fact that Handforth had put the powder away somewhere in the study.

But he didn't know that Irene had nearly been expelled from the Moor View School for introducing those powders—which, indeed, were nothing more nor less than dope. Their remarkable efficacy was understandable—but their remedial properties were but temporary. The continued use of such powders would be utterly disastrous.

Needless to say, Irene had acted in all



"I opened my eyes, raised my head slightly, and looked up. I could see the Junior creeping silently towards the door, plainly visible in the moonlight."

CHAPTER IX.

A COMPLETE CURE.



"Of course—naturally!" Willy made this remark with extreme sarcasm, and he stood in the doorway of Study D gazing contemptuously within. The room was

empty. And he particularly wanted to see his major.

"If I want to see Ted, he's never here—and if I want to sneak in for something on the quiet, he's always on the spot!" said Willy disgustedly. "Never knew such a contradictory thing as Life!"

In Willy's mind there was the recollec-

innocence—having obtained the powders, in fact, from Yen Chung, the Chinaman. It was Nelson Lee who had saved her from punishment and disgrace. And even now the full truth had not come to the surface.

Willy was acting in all innocence—really believing that powder to be good. He took Irene's word for it—not knowing that she herself had been deceived.

And five minutes later, triumphant and brisk, Willy dashed into Archie's study once again. He was so brisk, in fact, that he nearly sent Archie flying, for the latter was now pacing dejectedly to and fro.

"Oh, I say!" protested Archie feebly. "Kindly refrain from this rough stuff, old tomato! The tissues are feeling absolutely dithery, and I'm in no mood for violence!"

"Here you are—got the powder!" said Willy crisply. "Couldn't find it at first, because Ted wasn't there, but it's O.K. now. Got some water?"

"Oh, but really! I mean, a gallon——"

"Well, I didn't exact'y mean a gallon," said Willy, to Archie's relief. "Strictly speaking, about half-a-pint will be enough. All you've got to do is to take this powder, and swish it down with some water, and then lie quiet for two minutes. And then you'll feel a new chap."

"But is that really necessary?" asked Archie. "I mean, I'm not absolutely dying to cast aside the good old personality. What I mean is, I don't really want to be a new chap. What I need is to be myself, as it were. At the present moment I'm a sort of wet rag."

"Well, this powder will put some starch into you," said Willy promptly. "Now, come on—not so much fuss! Take it like a good little man! My hat! You're worse than a baby!"

Archie meekly gave up all protest.

"It'll work in two minutes?" he asked dubiously.

"Two minutes—at the outside!" replied Willy. "There's no mistake about it—it's a cert! If you don't feel better by the end of two minutes, I'll pay you back a quid instead of ten bob! That is, I'll tell Ted he owes you a quid!"

Archie began to get more faith. Willy was so earnest, and so full of enthusiasm, that he transferred it to the patient. Somehow, it was quite impossible to be in Willy's presence without feeling effervescent. He managed to liven things up wherever he went.

Archie took the powder—he couldn't help it. Willy ordered him to open his mouth and shut his eyes. And before the unfortunate Archie could realise what had happened, a flood of powder shot to the back of his throat and nearly choked him.

"It's all right—don't worry!" said Willy cheerfully. "There's nothing to be frightened about. Water's what you need now."

He swamped him a glassful of water into Archie's face—not deliberately, but in a fit of over exuberance. He had intended to pour it into the patient's mouth, but, unfortunately, Archie closed it at the wrong moment.

But the unhappy victim managed to swallow a further supply of water, and the powder was successfully washed down.

"This," moaned Archie, "is a dashed lot worse than the headache, dash it! I mean, you've drowned me, you frightful blighter! Phipps will be positively furious! The old waistcoat is ruined for good! Oh, I say! I'm in a most frightful mess, don't you know!"

Willy rubbed his hands together with satisfaction.

"Oh, that?" he said carelessly. "It doesn't matter about your silly waistcoat. You've taken the powder, and in two minutes you'll be cured. But you've got to lay back and think of nothing. Considering your brain's dead, it ought to be easy."

Archie moaned, and lay back. And Willy waited—not without a little anxiety. He was rather keen on this cure.

"Feeling better?" he asked, after three full minutes had elapsed.

Archie made no reply.

"Feeling better?" repeated Willy, peering keenly at his companion.

Still there was no reply.

"My hat!" muttered Handforth minor. "He's drugged! But he can't be!" he added firmly. "Hi, Archie!"

"Eh? What? Oh, rather!" spluttered Archie, starting up.

"You fathead! You went to sleep!" roared Willy indignantly.

Archie sat forward, shook himself, and slowly gazed round him in surprise. Then he rose to his feet, and felt his head.

"What did I tell you?" asked Willy promptly. "You're cured!"

"Good gad, so I am!" ejaculated Archie, in amazement. "The old life fluid is surging through the tissues like a dashed flood. I mean to say, the good old red blood of the Glenthornes is once more fulfilling its duty! Willy, laddie, gaze upon a new Archie!"

"No, the same old Archie!" replied Willy. "But you've got fresh vitality. If ever you're bad again, just put yourself in my hands, and I'll shove you right. Only too pleased to have been of service, Archie. Thanks for the half-quid!"

"Wait!" said Archie, his face flushed with delight. "I mean to say, half-a-quid is a somewhat paltry amount, when you come to think of it."

"It's a paltry amount when you come to spend it!" agreed Willy.

"Absolutely! So let me make it a quid, what?" suggested Archie. "And kindly regard it as a present, old dear. I mean, it's worth it! Here I am, fairly bursting with energy, and what not, and you're the chappie I've got to thank for it. A quid, as it were, is dashed niggardly! So kindly do me the honour of accepting the sum."

"Oh, well, if you insist!" said Willy, taking the other note before Archie could change his mind. "Any other time, don't forget to call me. I've got plenty of powders of the same kind. But they're a secret, you understand? So don't breathe a word to the others."

Willy marched out, highly pleased with himself. And as he left Archie just as pleased. Everything was smooth. In the lobby Willy ran into Chubby Heath.

"Any luck?" asked Chubby hopefully.

"Well, I don't know about luck—but I've got a quid," said Willy.

"A quid?" yelled Heath.

"Yes."

"Ripping!" chuckled Chubby. "How the dickens did you manage it?"

"Easy! I cured Archie's headache."

"And he gave you a quid for doing that?" asked the other fag blankly.

"Of course! The cure was worth it!" replied Willy.

His chum looked at him with keen suspicion.

"I believe you're spoofing me!" he said. "You can't cure anybody's headache, you fathead! You generally give people headaches—"

"I'll give you one, if you get cheeky!" said Willy darkly. "I can't cure a headache, eh? Well, it didn't take me long to put Archie in trim! And he's as pleased as punch, too!"

"I should think he must be—to give you a quid!"

"You see, I happened to know that my major had a rather special headache powder hidden away in his study," said Willy confidentially. "Well, it wasn't any good there, was it? I don't believe in wasting good things, and as Archie had a headache, I thought I might as well do him a good turn."

"So you gave him that powder?"

"No."

"But you just said—"

"I couldn't find it," interrupted Willy calmly. "I searched about a bit, and I came across a box of French chalk, so I gave Archie some of that."

"French chalk?" shouted Chubby, staring.

"It's all the same," explained Willy. "I wasn't going to waste my time in looking for that rotten powder. All these headache cures are the same. It isn't the powder that does it—it's the patient's mind. If he thinks he's going to be cured, he's cured. Just a case of auto-suggestion."

"My only hat!" gasped Chubby Heath.

"So now we'll go along and lay in some stock for tea," said Willy. "It was lovely, the way Archie took that giddy French chalk—and the poor innocent never suspected a thing! And now he's as lively as a giddy cricket! In this life, there's nothing like bluff!"

CHAPTER X.

THE VOICE OF SCANDAL.



DR. BEVERLEY STOKES walked briskly into the Triangle, and a slow, thoughtful frown appeared on his fresh, open face. He slackened his pace perceptibly, and his jaw became rather grim.

Two days had passed, and although every-

thing had been going on in the same old way, slow, gradual change had taken place.

The Head had always been regarded as a sportsman. When he had first arrived he had been known as "one of the boys"—free and easy, genial, and a thoroughly good sort through and through.

And his company had been eagerly sought after, particularly by the seniors. Fifth-Formers and Sixth-Formers had got into the habit of hurrying up to him when he appeared—just for the pleasure of a chat. For there was nothing stiff or starchy or formal about Dr. Stokes.

But since his wife had left the school under such mysterious circumstances, the rumours had been circulating into every nook and cranny of the old establishment. Set in motion first by Teddy Long's wagging tongue, the story had become exaggerated and distorted out of all recognition. And the voice of scandal was now far more than a mere whisper.

Dr. Stokes had never given anybody the slightest explanation of his wife's sudden departure. And this was regarded as significant—indicating, indeed, that the rumours were founded upon truth. Mrs. Stokes had left because of something unsavoury and discreditable. And the Head was naturally trying to hush it up.

There had been a slowly perceptible change in the attitude of some of the fellows. The Head had thought nothing of it at first—he had even believed that his imagination might have been at work. But this morning he was left in doubt no longer.

As soon as he started crossing the Triangle a group of seniors glanced at him, and then they deliberately turned their backs and walked away. The action was done in such a manner that the Head could never prove deliberate rudeness, but it was there, all the same.

These seniors had clearly shown him that his presence wasn't wanted. They had, in fact, cut him. And Dr. Stokes walked on grimly, a hard look creeping into his eyes.

He wasn't used to this kind of treatment.

His one desire—his one aim—was to be on friendly, chummy terms with his boys. And this cold attitude hurt him deeply. But, at the same time, it angered him. For he knew that the seniors' attitude was really an expression of contempt—against Mrs. Stokes.

It was characteristic of the Head to take the bull by the horns.

He walked up to the seniors with a brisk stride, and they all looked at him, and raised their caps.

"Anything wrong this morning, you fellows?" asked the Head quietly.

"Not that we know of, sir," said one of them.

"You haven't any grievance, by any

chance?" asked Dr. Stokes. "Because, if so, out with it. There's nothing worse than a misunderstanding. If you've got any little trouble that wants looking into, let me hear of it. I'll see what can be done."

"There's nothing, sir—there's nothing at all."

"We've got no grievance, sir."

The Head nodded.

"In that case, I won't press the subject any further," he said briefly.

He walked on, the seniors making no further comment. But their tone had been more than sufficient to convince the Head that his position in the school was not what it had been. The voice of scandal had done far more harm than the Head had imagined.

"What ho! Greetings, laddie, and so forth!" hailed a cheery voice. "That is to say, good-morning, sir! A dashed breezy morn, what? Health whizzing to and fro in the old atmosphere, as it were."

The Head glanced round, and saw Archie Glenthorne politely raising his cap.

"Good morning, Archie," he responded. "So you do not share the almost general disapproval, eh?"

Archie adjusted his monocle.

"Pray don't think me frightfully obtuse, sir, but I must confess that I don't grasp the old trend," he remarked. "The general disapproval? Kindly be good enough to expound, sir."

The Head glanced at the group of seniors rather bitterly.

"My popularity, such as it was, appears to be waning," he said.

Archie flushed.

"Good gad! That's frightfully poisonous, sir," he protested. "I mean, you don't actually assure me that these bally toads are disrespectful? I mean, that's a horrid thought, sir."

"Perhaps I may be mistaken, Archie—but I'm afraid not," said Dr. Stokes, his voice just a little sad. "Somehow, I had expected rather better of St. Frank's. But I am grateful that a certain number of fellows are fair and just."

Archie understood perfectly—although the subject was too delicate a one to be talked of openly.

"The fact is, most of these lads are dashed hasty, sir," he said apologetically.

"What I mean is, they leap at conclusions like the good old gee-gees leaping at the Grand National. They are dashed hasty, the frightful idiots!"

"I'm afraid they're somewhat lacking in fair play, too," said the Head. "Well, better not to discuss it, eh? How are you getting on, Archie? Preparing for the summer holidays?"

"As a matter of fact, the old brain box has been somewhat too busy to dash into the distant future—"

"Nonsense," laughed the Head. "We break up next week."

"Oddslife! So we do, by gad!" said Archie. "Next week, what? I'd no idea it was so near. I shall have to instruct Phipps to whizz about, and collect all the old trunks, and all that sort of thing."

The Head smiled, and walked on. He went to Little Side, and it was a rather significant fact that as soon as he appeared a number of juniors at the nets at once packed up, and hurried away.

"Shunned!" muttered Dr. Stokes grimly.

He had chosen the right word. Without doubt or question, he was being shunned—cut by his own schoolboys! And several other times during the day the same sort of thing happened.

By the rank and file, he was treated with the full respect that was due to him as Headmaster—but with cold, calculated indifference. In one or two cases it almost amounted to veiled insolence.

And Dr. Stokes was hurt—deeply.

He happened to come upon Handforth and Co. in the lobby. He noticed that they regarded him rather curiously—awkwardly. He had a fine opinion of Handforth and Co. He had always found them to be decent to the core, and he had a particular liking for the blunt, straight-from-the-shoulder leader of the trio.

And it would indeed be a big disappointment if they, too, shared the general unsportsmanlike attitude. Here was a good opportunity to put the matter to the test.

"Doing anything just now, my sons?" he asked briskly.

"Only talking, sir," said Handforth. "Is there anything we can help with? Do you want us to go to the village, sir? I'll send Church and McClure down for you—"

"No thanks—you needn't trouble," interrupted the Head, with a faint smile. "The fact is, I was wondering if you would care to join me at tea? In a quarter of an hour, eh? I'm a bit lonely these days, and we'll make a nice cheery little party. What do you say?"

"Thanks awfully, sir."

"We'll come, sir—rather!"

Handforth and Co. were unanimous in their acceptance, and the Head soon walked away, feeling relieved. It was refreshing to find that there were some who treated him as of yore.

"Good!" said Handforth. "The Head's coming out of his skin again! He's been a bit changed this week—"

"Rats! He's not changed—it's these rotten snobs and cads!" interrupted Church indignantly. "There's been so much scandal going about that over half the chaps are deliberately cutting the Head!"

"Better let me see any of 'em doing it!" roared Handforth. "My only hat! The awful nerve! The Head's one of the best—"

"Yes, but what about his wife?" asked Armstrong sneeringly.

Handforth turned, and observed that a number of fellows had come up from the

Common-room. Handforth slowly pushed up his sleeves.

"Well, what about the Head's wife?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing!" said Armstrong hastily.

He and the others marched out—not liking Handforth's war-like attitude. And soon afterwards the chums of Study D joined Dr. Stokes at tea.

Without actually questioning them, the Head gained a good deal of information about the general feeling in the school. And he was not only deeply concerned, but terribly worried.

For it wasn't his name and character being drawn through the mire—but his wife's. And something would have to be done.

That was a certainty.

CHAPTER XI.

STARTLING NEWS FROM AFRICA.



"HALLO! Hallo! This looks interesting."

I had just taken a bulky letter out of the rack in the lobby. It was the next morning, and quite a number of juniors were about. Most of them were opening or reading letters, or discussing arrangements for the coming summer vacation.

"What is it—a remittance?" asked De Valerie.

"No."

Then what else could be interesting?"

"I am not quite such a mercenary bounder as all that," I grinned. "This is from Reggie Pitt—I've been expecting it for two or three days."

"By Jove! Good!" said De Valerie. "Didn't you think about sending the Magazine to press without Reggie's letter?"

"Yes—but it's just come in time," I replied. "Hallo! This isn't Reggie's handwriting, though," I added, with a frown. "What a sell if we've made a bloomer!"

I hastened to open the envelope. At first I had merely glanced at the stamp and the postmark—the latter being Lagos. So I had taken it for granted that Pitt was the sender.

"I expect this letter was sent from somewhere in Northern Nigeria," I went on. "The expedition ought to be a good way from Kano by now, and getting up into the desert. But all the mail, of course, is brought down to the coast by the black boys."

One look at the letter was interesting. There was a fairly short epistle from an official in Lagos—one of the Government gentry who was, I knew, very friendly with Lord Dorrimore. He enclosed a ten-page letter from Pitt himself.

But there was something strange about the whole communication.

I didn't read it all there—for the noise was too great. I waited until I had got into the seclusion of Study C, with Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West. I told the others to wait until afterwards—not that they were particularly interested.

These letters from Reggie Pitt had been coming regularly, and were taken as a matter of course. Besides, there was nothing startling or adventurous about this African trip, and most of the fellows regarded it as a tame business.

"What are you looking so serious about?" asked Tommy Watson curiously.

"Wait a minute—this is pretty queer," I said.

My chums waited until I had finished—rendered impatient by my air of gravity. At length I laid the letter down, and looked up with a frown.

"Phew!" I whistled softly. "It certainly is queer."

"Dear old boy, you're frightfully aggravatin'," protested Sir Montie. "What is there queer about the letter? There has been nothing particularly startlin' about Reggie's earlier communications—"

"But this isn't from Reggie."

"I thought you said it was?" asked Tommy Watson.

"Well, so it is—the enclosure," I replied. "But I haven't looked at that yet. This letter I've been reading is from Major Townley. He's in some official position in Lagos, I think."

"And what does he say?"

"If you sit tight and listen, I'll read it out," I replied. "After that, we'll look into Reggie's report."

I picked up the letter again, and read it aloud:

"My Dear Nipper,

"As the enclosed letter is addressed to you, I am sending it direct. I have written to Mr. Nelson Lee under separate cover, by this same mail. I remember meeting you once in Mombasa with our mutual friend, Dorrie.

"I am afraid my present news is not very cheerful. Young Pitt's letter was brought down from a little-known oasis by natives, who told me a disquieting story. I have found it impossible to get anything definite from them, but it seems that Sir Crawford Grey's party was attacked by an unknown enemy—in considerable numbers.

The men who brought this letter managed to escape, and they came straight down to the coast, and reported. We have had no further news from Sir Crawford's party, and a little anxiety is felt here for the safety of our friends. But do not take too much for granted. We may have reassuring news any day, and if so I will immediately write again.

"It may be nothing more than an insig-

nificant scare, and let us hope that this proves to be the case.

"Yours very sincerely,
"HOWARD TOWNLEY."

I looked up, and found my chums very grave.

"Well, what do you think of it?" I asked.

"It's—it's absolutely alarming, dear old boy!" exclaimed Sir Montle, with deep concern. "How frightfully awful if those poor chaps have been eaten by cannibals, or somethin'!"

"But my dear ass, they don't have cannibals up there," I protested.

"Well, perhaps the whole party has been taken prisoners by roaming Arabs?" suggested Tommy Watson. "Anyhow, it looks pretty bad. How about opening Reggie's letter? Perhaps he'll throw some light on the mystery?"

We opened the letter, and scanned it eagerly.

It proved to be Reggie's usual chatty account of various happenings on the journey, with interesting descriptions of minor incidents and adventures. And it wasn't until the last paragraph that we received a clue.

Here, Pitt's writing degenerated into a mere scrawl, in which he mentioned that a sudden alarm had been sounded in the camp, and that he would have to close.

He did close, and with obvious signs of acute haste. Indeed, the letter was literally broken off. And, re-reading it, I noticed that in one or two places he gave little hints about rumours of an unknown enemy.

But there's no need for me to set Reggie's letter out in full, as it is published in this week's issue of the Magazine.

"This looks pretty serious," I said concernedly. "You see, Reggie himself mentions the alarm—and Major Townley tells us that the letter was brought down to the coast by natives who told a story of a sudden attack. To my mind, it doesn't look at all healthy. I'm going to see the gov'nor at once. Perhaps he's got more news."

I hurried straight off to Nelson Lee's study, and found that he had just finished reading a letter from the major. He read the communications I brought him without comment.

"Well, sir?" I asked at last.

"I can only repeat Major Townley's advice, and urge you not to get unduly alarmed," replied the gov'nor. "The whole affair may be nothing more than a mere rumour."

"But it looks rummy, doesn't it, sir?"

"I will admit that it looks decidedly disquieting," agreed Nelson Lee. "The major tells me no more than he has told you, and I am rather concerned about Dorrie and the boys. They have penetrated into a region that is devoid of all telegraph and railway communication. So any further news may be a long time in getting through."

"But these letters were sent off two or three weeks ago, sir," I pointed out.

"Yes," he agreed. "Further news ought to have arrived by this time, Nipper. I shall send a cable to Major Townley at once, with a request for all available news. I think it most probable that his reply will be a statement to the effect that everything is in order."

"Let's hope so, gov'nor," I said heartily. But, all the same, I was worried—and so was Nelson Lee.

CHAPTER XII.

STRAIGHT FROM THE SHOULDER.



RALPH LESLIE FULLWOOD shrugged his shoulders.

"What's the good of talking?" he sneered.

"Everybody knows that the Head's wife left St. Frank's because she was mixed up in some disgraceful scandal. The very way she went proved that. She was packed off at a moment's notice."

"Looks like it," agreed Bell, nodding.

"Looks like it?" said Fullwood. "Why, it's proved—the Head's silence is enough. He hasn't said a word—and when a man keeps quiet over such a matter it's good enough for me!"

Dr. Beverley Stokes paused at the door of the gymnasium. He had been about to enter, and he had overheard the words quite by accident. But they startled him beyond measure. Fullwood and Co. were unaware of the Head's proximity.

Dr. Stokes strode forward, and the juniors turned, startled.

"I heard what you boys just said," exclaimed the Head bluntly. "Don't think I was eavesdropping—it was quite accidental. But, having heard, I cannot allow this matter to end where it stands."

"We were talkin' privately, sir," said Fullwood boldly.

"I am aware of that—and we are still private," replied Dr. Stokes. "Is it a fact, boys, that my silence regarding Mrs. Stokes' sudden departure is responsible for all these vicious and slanderous rumours? Do you really believe these terrible things?"

Fullwood and Co. were silent.

"For myself I care nothing," went on the Head. "I am strong enough to stand any amount of scandal, but it is quite a different matter when Mrs. Stokes is concerned. She is not here to defend herself, and she is a woman. Are you boys not ashamed of yourselves for harbouring such evil thoughts?"

"It's all very well to talk like that, sir, but we happen to know the facts," said Fullwood daringly.

"Facts—what facts?"

"Why, sir, about Mrs. Stokes bein' a member of a criminal gang, and lettin' a

rotten Chinaman into the school to burgle the place—"

"Good heavens!" ejaculated the Head, aghast. "A criminal gang? Do you mean to tell me that this story is going round the school, and that everybody is believing it?"

"There's nothin' else to believe, sir," replied Fullwood. "One of the chaps overheard Mrs. Stokes makin' the arrangement with that crook, an' we all know that she admitted him into the school—"

"Enough!" broke in Dr. Stokes grimly. "I am thankful that I stumbled upon this

punishment. The headmaster wanted to address the school in its entirety.

Of course, a good deal of talk went round. Seniors and juniors alike wondered at this sudden order. It was all the more surprising, because afternoon lessons were about to start, and this congregation in Big Hall would upset the routine of the day.

"Something pretty important, anyhow," remarked Buster Boots. "Shouldn't be surprised if it isn't something to do with the holidays. Perhaps the Head's got a new stunt to spring on us."



Mrs. Stokes, looking very pale and shaken, was gently assisted into the car by the head.

so opportunely. So these are the stories that are being whispered from mouth to mouth? Thank you, Fullwood—I am grateful to you for your outspoken candour."

He turned on his heel and walked rapidly away, leaving Fullwood and Co. just a little puzzled. After what they had said, they had hardly expected the Head to go off without inflicting a heavy imposition.

Half an hour later a special order went round.

The entire school was instructed to collect in Big Hall without delay. There were to be no absentees, under penalty of severe

But the optimist of the Remove was wrong.

When Dr. Stokes appeared on the platform he was looking grave and rather pale. And he got to the point with characteristic bluntness.

"I'm going to have a confidential chat with you, my boys, and I want you to take this matter seriously," he exclaimed. "The subject is the most delicate one I could speak of, but by the time I have finished, I am convinced you will understand."

The school became very silent, impressed.

"During the past few days a number of scurrilous stories have been circulated re-

specting a lady you are very well acquainted with—Mrs. Stokes,” continued the Head quietly. “I have noticed that many of you have changed in your attitude towards me, and I have heard whispers that my continued presence in my position as headmaster is considered bad for the school.”

By this time, the listeners were tensely quiet.

“Under all the circumstances, I have decided that there is only one way in which to kill these libellous, scandalous stories—and that is to reveal the truth,” continued Dr. Stokes. “In doing this, I am laying bare a pitiful secret that I had hoped to keep locked away in my own family. But these scandalous stories compel me to explain the full facts, so that you will be able to judge for yourselves.”

“We don’t want to hear them, sir!” shouted Handforth.

“No, sir! We know everything’s all right!”

“Hear, hear!”

But these enthusiasts were in a minority.

“Thank you, boys, for your expressions of faith,” said Dr. Stokes. “Unhappily, there are many others who are of a different opinion. And while there is the slightest prospect of Mrs. Stokes being slandered, I have no alternative but to be absolutely frank, even at the cost of baring a secret that gives me only pain.”

The school felt that it was on the verge of a revelation, and it listened with eager, intense interest. And there was something about the Head’s manner that gave him an unusual dignity.

“Some months ago, Mrs. Stokes was very gravely ill,” said the Head quietly. “She contracted a contagious fever through her solicitude in nursing her own sister. And at one time her life was despaired of, and she was only saved, finally, by the continuous and prolonged use of drugs.”

The Head paused, and a pin could have been heard to drop.

“Most of you are aware, I think, that morphia, and such-like drugs, are used in grave cases of illness,” said the Head. “It is also a well-known fact that once the habit is formed, it is a terrible habit to break. When Mrs. Stokes finally recovered, and was convalescent, she was left with this drug habit as a legacy of her sojourn near death’s door. Left entirely alone, there is not the slightest doubt that she would have conquered her craving. But there are snakes waiting in the path of all such unhappy convalescents.”

Even the fellows who had listened with open disdain were now losing their sneers, and they listened to the Head’s story as intently and as spellbound as the rest.

“It is not necessary for me to go into all the unhappy details,” went on Dr. Stokes gravely. “It will be sufficient if I tell you that a Chinese reptile—a veritable beast of prey—secretly got into touch with

my wife, and provided her with morphia and other dangerous drugs. And she, with the craving still upon her from her prolonged spell in hospital, was a ready victim to this man’s accursed wiles.

“She had been improving—getting better rapidly, and you can easily imagine my joy,” said the Head. “For, as you all know, Mrs. Stokes is quite young, and her health is a matter that concerns me closely. Well, I noticed a change—a change for the worse. And soon afterwards I learned about this Yen Chung—this Chinese hound who pestered my wife with his horrible wares, and tempted her to buy them.

“It was with the greatest joy and relief that I accepted this appointment—as headmaster of St. Frank’s, for I at once realised that it would bring my wife to the country,” continued Dr. Stokes. “She was improving, Yen Chung having been kept away by various devices. The pure country air, and the quiet life of St. Frank’s, would soon have a lasting effect. I was convinced that Mrs. Stokes would rapidly recover her full health and strength. And so I was the happiest man alive at the beginning of this term.”

“We know that, sir.”

“We could all see it, sir!”

“Can you picture my horror, therefore, when I came face to face with Yen Chung, the Chinaman, in Bellton Lane?” asked Dr. Stokes, his voice still quiet, but quivering with the intensity of his emotion. “After all my precautions—after all my endeavours to shake off this devil in human form—he was here again—plotting and planning to drag my dear wife down by his infernal drugs until death was the only release.

“I took that foul creature, and I knocked him down with one blow,” went on the Head passionately. “I kicked him across the lane, and I hurled him into the ditch. Would any one of you, in similar circumstances, have done less?”

“No, sir!”

“By George! He deserved slaughtering, sir!” roared Handforth.

“You weren’t severe enough, sir!”

“And yet, because my actions were witnessed by certain boys, I was criticised at the time,” said the Head bitterly. “Later, I discovered that Yen Chung had utilised all his Oriental cunning, and had got into touch with my wife—conspiring with Mrs. Stokes’ maid. But this girl acted in all innocence, having no inkling of the dreadful truth. And with my wife’s craving for drugs revived, she gave way to the Chinaman’s persuasions. You may think she is weak, but any physician will assure you that it would have been superhuman had she resisted.

“And so it went on,” continued the Head fiercely. “Subterfuge and cunning, trickery and treachery, with always this Chinese reptile in the background. At last this snake actually got into the school itself, having brought a fresh supply of

drugs for Mrs. Stokes. And I knocked the hound senseless, and might have gone to even greater lengths but for the fact that Mr. Lee arrived with the police, holding a warrant for Yen Chung's arrest. The Chinaman, I may say, is now in prison—

"Hurrah!"

"He ought to be hanged, sir!"

"He is known to be one of the most dangerous criminals in the country," concluded the Head. "I may add that he nearly succeeded in entrapping one of the girls from a local establishment that you all know—but he was happily prevented by the prompt interference of Mr. Lee. Now, boys, you have the full truth of this unhappy affair, and I have only told you this because the truth is better than all these vile and slanderous rumours."

He was interrupted by a storm of cheering, for the school had been worked up to a high pitch by his rousing speech—which had, indeed, come as a complete surprise to most.

When he was allowed to speak again, he explained that Mrs. Stokes was now safely recuperating from her experience in a convalescent home on the East Coast—and that when she left that establishment, she would be completely cured.

And from that minute onwards the popularity of Dr. Stokes leapt far higher than it had ever been before. For the boys appreciated his frankness—his confidence, and if any fellow dared to breathe a word of scandal, he was promptly seized and severely punished.

Some of the seniors were very grave and concerned. They considered it a terrible thing for the Head to humiliate himself by descending to explanations. But these seniors made a mistake. There had been nothing humiliating in Dr. Stokes' speech. On the contrary, he had proved that he trusted to the school's sense of fairness and justice.

And it was not as though he had revealed a secret that would not otherwise have been made public. He had, indeed, merely forestalled the newspapers. For at Yen Chung's trial the whole sordid business was destined to come out. And the Head, by preparing the school in this way, had done the best possible thing in all the circumstances.

And St. Frank's honoured him.

CHAPTER XIII.

DISQUIETING NEWS.



NELSON LEE was looking grave.

"I'm afraid the news is somewhat bad, Nipper," he said quietly.

I was in the gov'nor's study, anxious and eager.

Shortly before, a telegram had arrived,

and I had guessed—rightly—that it was a cablegram from Major Townley.

"Has anything bad happened, sir?" I asked quickly.

"That's just it—nobody knows what has happened," replied Lee. "The Major's telegram states that no information has come to hand. Every possible inquiry has been made, but to no purpose. Sir Crawford Grey and his party have completely vanished!"

"Vanished!"

"Since that letter came down from Pitt, no word has been received," said Nelson Lee. "Search parties have been instituted, but their reports are devoid of all hope. Aeroplanes have been sent out by the Government, but they have failed to find the slightest trace. In some extraordinary, unaccountable way, Sir Crawford's expedition has apparently disappeared into thin air."

"Phew! This is a lot worse than we imagined, sir," I said breathlessly. "Poor old Reggie! And Jack Grey, too! What on earth could have happened, sir!"

"I cannot form any opinion on the matter," replied Lee. "As far as I know, the party disappeared from a small oasis which is fairly well known by the natives—although little frequented. But there are no hostile tribes in that region—at least, no hostile tribes that are known to the officials. The affair, therefore, becomes all the more mysterious. The Government has now taken the matter fairly in hand, and a serious search is being made. We may hear further news at any hour."

There was a great deal of excitement in the Remove when the fellows heard this latest piece of startling information. Most of the juniors had been so busily making plans for the holidays that they had paid scant attention to the news from Africa.

But now that the disappearance of Sir Crawford's party had assumed such a grave aspect, the junior school was aroused. The seniors took a mild interest, but nothing more.

Handforth was inclined to be excited.

"It's no good staying here, and talking!" he declared firmly. "Something ought to be done!"

"But they're doing it, I pointed out.

"Doing it? Doing what?" snorted Handforth. "And who are 'they'? These blessed Government officials! Do you think I trust any giddy officials? They'll take weeks and months before they move a yard—and in the meantime Reggie Pitt and Jack Grey will be eaten by cannibals!"

"Well we can't do anything, can we?" asked Church.

"Yes, we can!"

"And how O oracle?" I asked sarcastically.

"How? By getting up a rescue party, of course!" roared Handforth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth glared round ferociously.

"You rotters!" he bellowed. "All you can do is to cackle! You stand there, and laugh at the plight of two Remove chaps—and two of the best, too! Even now they might be going through tortures."

"Go easy old man," protested Singleton. "We're as concerned as you are, but how on earth can the Remove do anything?"

"I'll tell you how!" snapped Handforth grimly. "We're just at the beginning of the summer holidays, aren't we? Well why shouldn't we get up a big party—all the Remove in fact! And why shouldn't we go out to Africa, and go off in search of the missing expedition? Remove to the rescue! That's what I say!"

"Fathead!"

"Idiot!"

"You're off your rocker!"

A storm of yells went up.

"Oh, of course!" sneered Handforth. "I don't expect anything else from a crowd of senseless dummies! But why shouldn't the Remove go to the rescue? If we can get our people to agree, a trip to Africa would be as fine a holiday as anybody could wish for."

"My word! He's right there!"

"Besides, haven't we been to the far corners of the earth at other times—for our summer vacation?" demanded Handforth grimly. "And if before—why not now?"

"But—but—"

"There's no such word as 'but,' you spineless rotters!" roared Handforth. "On other occasions, we've buzzed off to the South Sea Islands, and other places, just for the adventure of it—or looking for treasure, or something. But this time it's different! Two of the best chaps in the Remove have mysteriously vanished in the desert! And it's the Remove's duty to get up a big search party, and go to the rescue!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RESCUE PARTY.



I SLAPPED Handforth heartily on the back.

"It's an idea!" I declared. "By jingo, it's a brain-wave!"

"Nothing new for me!" snorted Edward Oswald.

"My dear chap, it's so new that I'm still recovering!" I said. "After all, why can't we get up a search party? If we leave it to these officials, they'll mess about, and waste weeks and weeks of time."

"That's what I say!"

"But it'll take weeks and weeks to get there!" protested Church.

"Don't you believe it!" I replied. "There are plenty of boats to Africa, and it's not a long journey. Besides, there are such things as aeroplanes in these days. If only we can get permission—"

"I'll answer for my pater, anyhow," interrupted Handforth. "He'll agree like a bird!"

"Rather!" put in Willy, who was eagerly listening.

"How do you know?" I asked.

"It's a cert!" replied Willy. "My pater would give his consent to anything—provided it got Ted out of the way through the vacation! You don't know what an unholy terror he is at home!"

"What about you?" roared Handforth.

"Oh, don't argue—I'm worse!" said Willy calmly. "I don't mind admitting it—and that's where we're safe. The pater will agree to our going—"

"Our going?" roared Handforth, glaring.

"Yes."

"You're not going, you young lunatic!" retorted his major. "This is a Remove rescue party, and you're barred!"

"Try to bar me—that's all!" said Handforth minor aggressively. "It's no good—you can't keep me out of it! I don't care if you use chains and padlocks—I'll still come!"

"Well, we won't have you!" said his major flatly.

"Peace, children—peace!" I broke in.

"You're speaking as though this rescue expedition is a certainty—and it's just about as mythical as anything can be."

None of the juniors really thought that the affair would develop into anything beyond idle talk. The idea had caught on, but it was probably doomed, like many other ideas, to a natural death.

Curiously enough, Nelson Lee had an important visitor that very same day. He was none other than Mr. Pitt—Reggie's father. And he was intensely troubled and worried.

He had had full details of the mystery, and was deeply concerned for the safety of his son. And Nelson Lee could do little or nothing to quieten his fears.

"The news is altogether scanty and unsatisfactory," said Nelson Lee quietly. "I am expecting a further telegram at any hour, Mr. Pitt, but I do not entertain any lively hope."

Reggie's father wrung his hands.

"And this rescue party that is being sent up country?" he asked. "Have you any great faith in it, Mr. Lee?"

"Frankly, I have not," replied the House-master detective. "You see, there is nobody on the spot who is fully capable of leading such an expedition. The officials themselves are tied to their posts, and there will probably be a series of prolonged delays before anything is really done."

"And in the meantime I could get to Lagos myself!"

"Undoubtedly."

"Then, by heaven, I will go!" declared Mr. Pitt, with sudden resolution. "But I am a child in these matters, Mr. Lee—I am

entirely unversed in exploring the forest and desert. I wonder—I wonder—"

He paused, and looked at Lee eagerly.

"Would you come with me, Mr. Lee?" he asked abruptly.

"Gladly," replied Nelson Lee. "As a matter of fact, Mr. Pitt, I had already decided to leave for Africa within the next few days. You see, I have a very personal interest in this disquieting affair. Lord Dorrimore is my oldest and firmest friend—and two of my Remove boys are also among the missing. In a way, I regard it as my plain duty to hasten to Africa."

"Then I will come with you!" exclaimed Mr. Pitt anxiously.

"I do not mind telling you, Mr. Pitt, that I have grave apprehensions," went on Lee. "As you know, Lord Dorrimore is one of the most famous explorers in the world, and for him to disappear in this way is startling, indeed. It makes me suspect the worst. But no news is better than bad news. There is still the chance that the whole party may have been captured by some nomad tribe of Arabs, and taken to a secret oasis. Many parts of the Sahara Desert are totally and absolutely unexplored by the white man."

"We must go—we must find out the truth for ourselves—on the spot," said Mr. Pitt. "Money, of course, is no object. I am a rich man, Mr. Lee, as you know, and—"

"There is hardly any necessity to discuss that aspect of the matter, Mr. Pitt," put in Lee. "Lord Dorrimore is a millionaire, and his legal advisers will finance any rescue party that I care to institute—quite apart from any expense that we entail on our own account. As you say, money is no object."

"Guv'nor! Are we really going to Africa?"

I asked the words breathlessly, having entered the study a moment before—to stand in the doorway listening with eager interest.

Nelson Lee looked at me gravely.

"I suppose you will be with us, Nipper—yes," he said.

"And what about the other fellows, sir?" I asked, striking while the iron was hot.

"The other fellows?"

"Handforth and Church and Archie and Boots and—"

"Good gracious! This is no holiday adventure, my boy!" put in the guv'nor sharply.

"I know it, sir—that's all the more reason for a big party of us to go," I declared.

"The more the merrier—and you've just said that money is no object. We're terribly anxious about Pitt and Grey—and about Dorrie. We're all concerned in it, sir."

Nelson Lee looked dubious.

"I am afraid it is a wildcat suggestion, Nipper, and this is hardly the time for delays—"

"But there will be no delay, sir," I interrupted. "If you want to leave within three days, I'll have the crowd ready."



But most important of all, a belt had been found—a worn leather belt with Lord Dorrimore's name stamped upon it—and three words scratched upon the hide: "All safe, prisoners."

"Upon my soul, Mr. Lee, I rather like the idea," put in Reggie Pitt's father. "There is something romantic in the idea of these youngsters going out in search of their chums. And it would do them good, too. And certainly they would be a help rather than a hindrance."

Of course nothing was settled then. Nelson Lee pointed out that parents would have to be consulted, and a hundred-and-one other details arranged.

But the news I took back to the Remove set everybody agog.

There was a chance—a possibility that the juniors would be included in the big rescue party.

And two days later another wire came from Major Townley, containing startling news. A scouting aeroplane had reported the discovery of the remains of a big camp in the desert. Everything indicated that this camp had numbered hundreds and hundreds of men.

But, most important of all, a belt had been found—a worn leather belt, with Lord Dorrimore's name stamped upon it—and three words scratched upon the hide—"All safe, prisoners." At last something definite had been discovered.

It was known that Dorrie's party had been safe and sound at the time of this big camp. But they were prisoners! In whose hands? And where had they been taken to? And for what reason? And were they still safe?

The mystery still remained impenetrable—the latest news, indeed, only tending to intensify the extraordinary nature of the adventure.

The juniors had been writing to their people—sending telegrams by the dozen, and it was only now that a certain amount of order was appearing out of the chaos.

But by the time the old school broke up for the holidays, one thing was assured.

A large number of Remove fellows would accompany the search party! It was even hinted that Sir Edward Handforth himself would accompany his two sons! This piece of news, needless to say, was received with some consternation by Edward Oswald and Willy.

"There's no need to worry, you chaps—we're going," I said, on the last day of term. "Everything is being fixed up, and we shall probably sail one day next week."

"Good!"

"But don't forget that this is a serious affair—and not a picnic," I went on. "And if we can only rescue Reggie and Jack, and all the others, we shall have something to pat ourselves on the back for."

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "Of course I feel frightfully nervous about the whole bally

trip, because these hot climates are so dashed hard on a chappie's wardrobe! I shall absolutely insist upon Phipps coming along, you know—"

"Bring Phipps, by all means," I agreed. "He's one of the handiest chaps under the sun. Things are a bit unsettled at present but they'll be smooth enough within the next few days. The great thing is—we're going!"

"Hurrah!"

"And we're not coming back until we've found those missing chaps!" said Handforth grimly. "Even if we have to search the Sahara from end to end, we're going to succeed!"

But the majority of the juniors could only look upon the expedition as a pure holiday adventure, and they all made up their minds to thoroughly enjoy themselves.

If we had only known what lay ahead of us, we might have hesitated before leaving the peaceful shores of England. For out there, in the vast desert, we were destined to meet with adventures that no living being could possibly imagine!

Our trip, in fact, was to be the most amazing adventure that the St. Frank's Remove had ever entered upon—and that's saying a lot!

THE END.

By Your Editor:



My dear Readers,

One of the most remarkable and outstanding series of stories that has ever appeared in this paper will start next week, when Nelson Lee will lead the famous Remove of St. Frank's on their quest in Nigeria. Their adventures will take them to a remote part of the Great Sahara Desert. Here they come across the most wonderful discovery of modern times, a discovery that will create an enormous interest throughout the world. I am not referring to the desert ship. That you already know something about. This wonderful discovery is a secret which will be revealed in about the third story. I can assure you, however, that these are not fairy stories, but something real, gripping and convincing, that will even make your elders sit up and wonder. Look out then for "THE CAMP IN THE DESERT!" which is the first story of this enthralling new series.

HOW YOU CAN SHOW YOUR APPRECIATION.

Now I am confident that these coming stories are going to prove that really good stories are appreciated by boys of to-day as in their father's time, when Manville Fenn, Jules Verne, etc. were all the rage. You, my chums, can show your appreciation by obtaining as many new readers as you can. You need never be afraid of recommending these stories to all your friends, and they will thank you for it.

A NOVEL COMPETITION.

Next week I am beginning a series of competitions relating to the stories I have referred to above. Space prevents me from describing these contests, but for simplicity, novelty and interest, they will be difficult to beat.

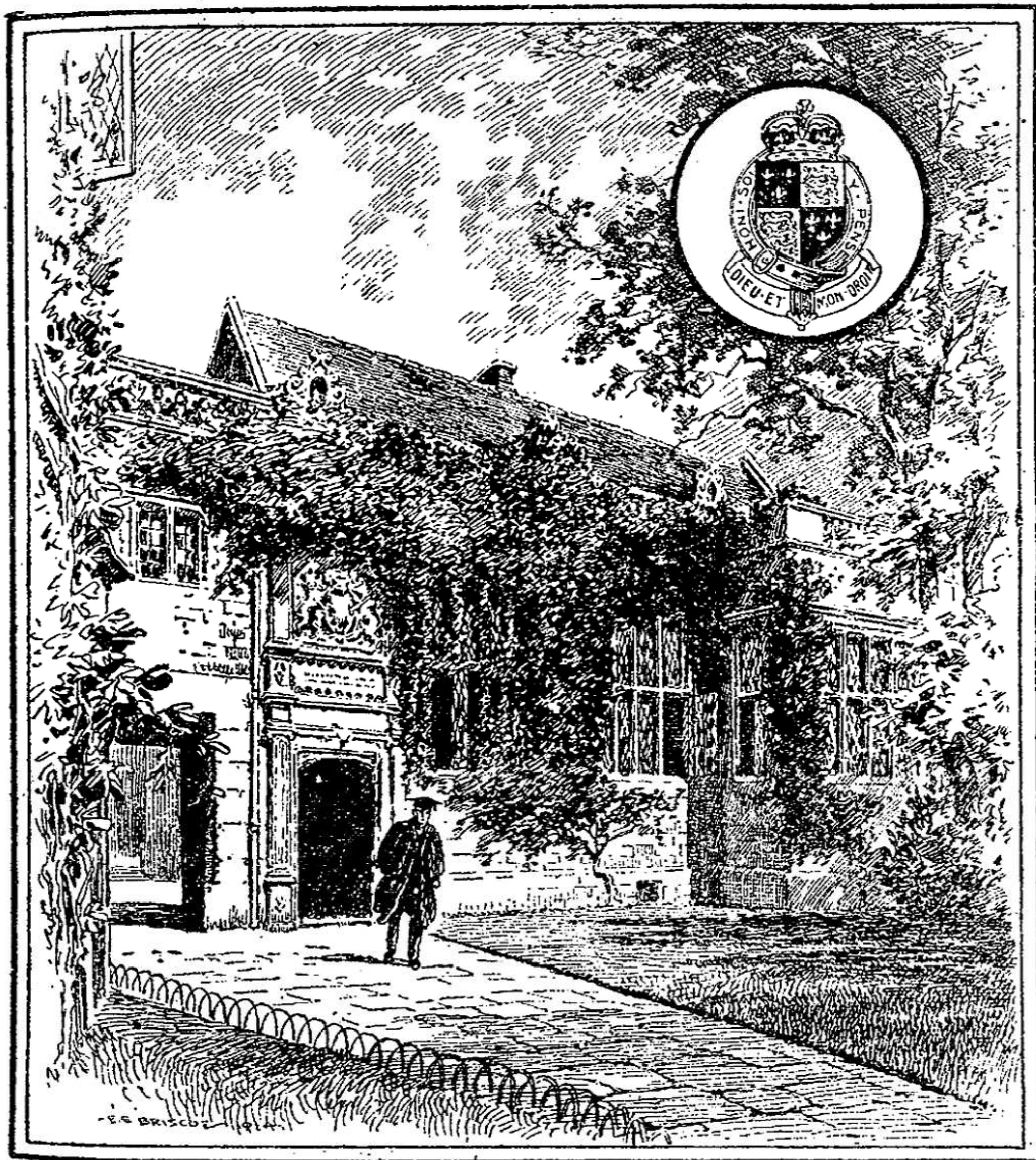
Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.

OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

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

No. 36. SHERBORNE SCHOOL.



The history of Sherborne School is probably unique among public schools in its long and continuous association with the past. There is every probability that it came into existence as long ago as the eighth century, in the time of St. Aldhelm. The earliest documentary evidence relates to Thomas Copeland, who was a master at the school in 1437. The school was refounded by Edward VI on 13th May, 1550. The school buildings occupy the site of the Benedictine Monastery of Sherborne, the chapel, library, and study buildings, which

adjoin the Abbey Church, having been one time part of the old monastery. Besides a large school-room, there are twenty-two class-rooms, science laboratories, art school, gymnasium, swimming-bath, and other modern educational requirements. The cricket-ground comprises some thirty acres. Under the Endowed Schools Commission of 1870, by which the school was reconstituted, the object of the foundation is "to supply a liberal education with the principles of the Church of England." There are about 300 boys at the school.



MY AMERICAN NOTE-BOOK

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



No. 33. SUNNY CALIFORNIA.

IT was pleasant to realise that after three nights and two days on the train, the journey from Chicago to Los Angeles would end on this particular afternoon. The train had left Chicago at eight o'clock on the Sunday evening, and it was now Wednesday morning—with Los Angeles a tangible reality, instead of a kind of myth.

I can't express how heartily thankful I was that on this night I should, with all reasonable certainty, sleep in a stationary, rational bed—and not in a coupled up berth on an American railway train.

I was tired of the train, too, and I could not help wondering that the Americans should be so satisfied with their so-called efficient railroad system. Curiously enough, the Americans are apt to boast very proudly of their railways—but I must confess that they always struck me as being singularly inadequate.

True, they carry you over vast distances with a reasonable certainty of getting to your destination on schedule time. But the actual lack of comfort en route astonishes me.

The dining car service is good, and the observation car is interesting. But the actual trains themselves are positively the most jerky and jolty trains I have ever travelled in. There's far more noise in an American coach than in an English coach, and the swaying and jolting is so severe that writing is an extremely difficult matter. And one notices the devastating jerks more particularly at night—or when one is in the dining car.

For example, when the train starts, instead of gliding smoothly away, as the Scotch Express will do, the train gives one fearful lurch forward—with disastrous results, sometimes, to one's cup of tea, or any similar liquid.

I intended this article to be about Sunny California, but I have felt impelled to give the above remarks concerning railways.

Well, on this Wednesday morning we were already in California, and the entire complement of passengers were agog with bustle and excitement—packing their bags hours before necessary, and all eager to gaze at the passing scenery. Native Californians were stoutly holding forth on the merits of their wonderful State, and

promising us all sorts of glorious surprises before long.

We were climbing—had been climbing for hours. For from a place called Cadiz to Barstow the railway track leads right up into the mountains in one continuous climb. And from Barstow the train then commences its long journey down towards the coast.

We arrived at Barstow slightly late—somewhere about ten o'clock, although we had been due shortly after nine. Our next important stop was San Bernardino, at about noon, and then we should proceed inwards to Pasadena and Los Angeles. We expected to step out of the train just after half-past-two.

It was by no means brilliant and sunny, but many clouds were visible, and after passing Barstow, we encountered a number of heavy showers. The Californians were greatly confused—for they had been promising us that nothing but sunshine would greet our entry into California.

But they were quite ready with the excuse that we were in the mountains, and therefore showers were only to be expected. When the train pulled into Los Angeles the sky would be cloudless, and the sunshine brilliant.

I was a little puzzled. I had long since got over any sense of disappointment—for the scenery had never been up to the standard I had imagined. Now that we were actually in California, however, and within a few hours of Los Angeles, I rather anticipated seeing great vistas of green, with those wonderful palms we hear so much about—orange groves, and so forth.

But from Barstow onwards throughout the morning there was little else but desert—drab, undulating desert with grotesque cactus bushes as the only examples of vegetation. However, I wasn't going to pass judgment too soon, and so I listened to everything, and said little.

But I was as keen as a schoolboy to see the land of sunshine and fruit. At present, it seemed as remote as ever, and I figured that something would have to happen pretty smartly, or all my preconceived ideas would be shattered.

Well, something did happen—and a glorious surprise awaited me—but that's for another article.

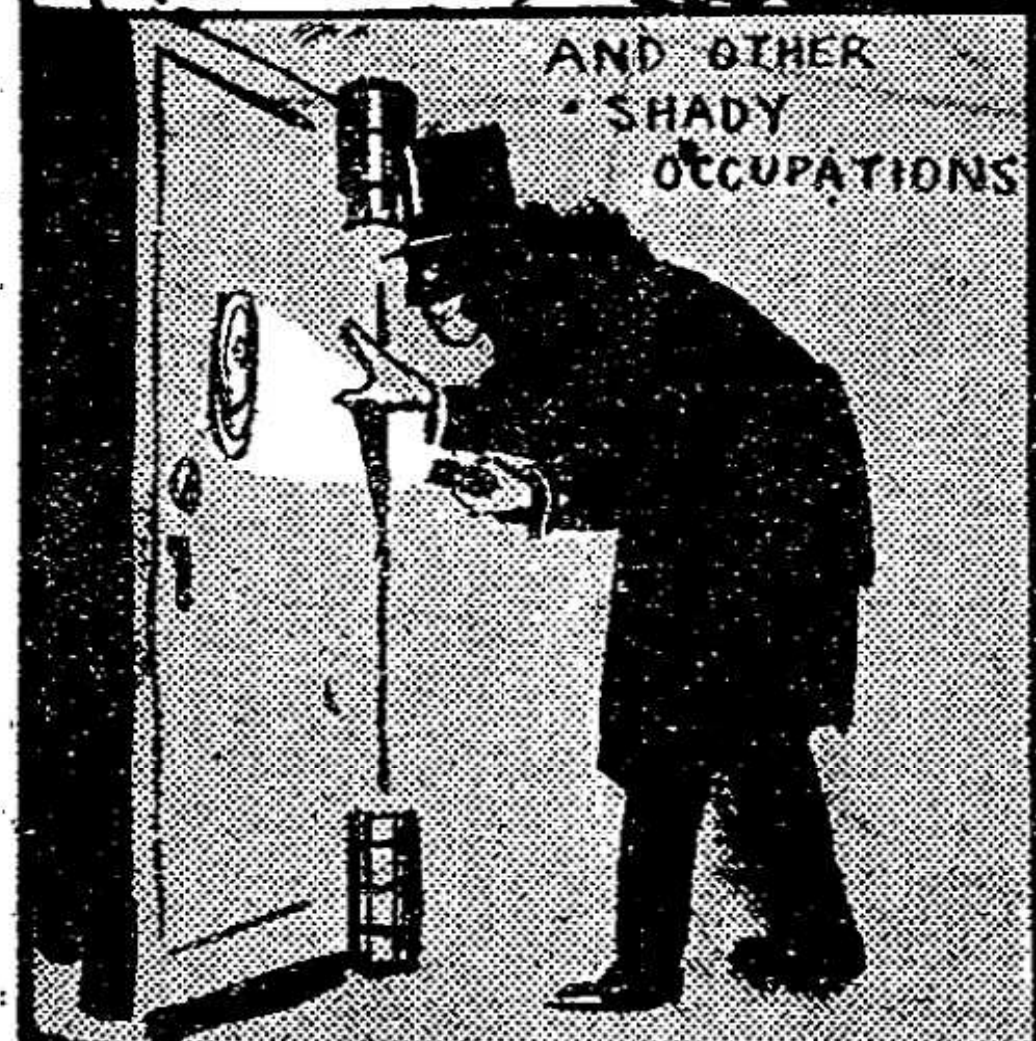
NEXT WEEK: "Entering Los Angeles."



St. Frank's Magazine

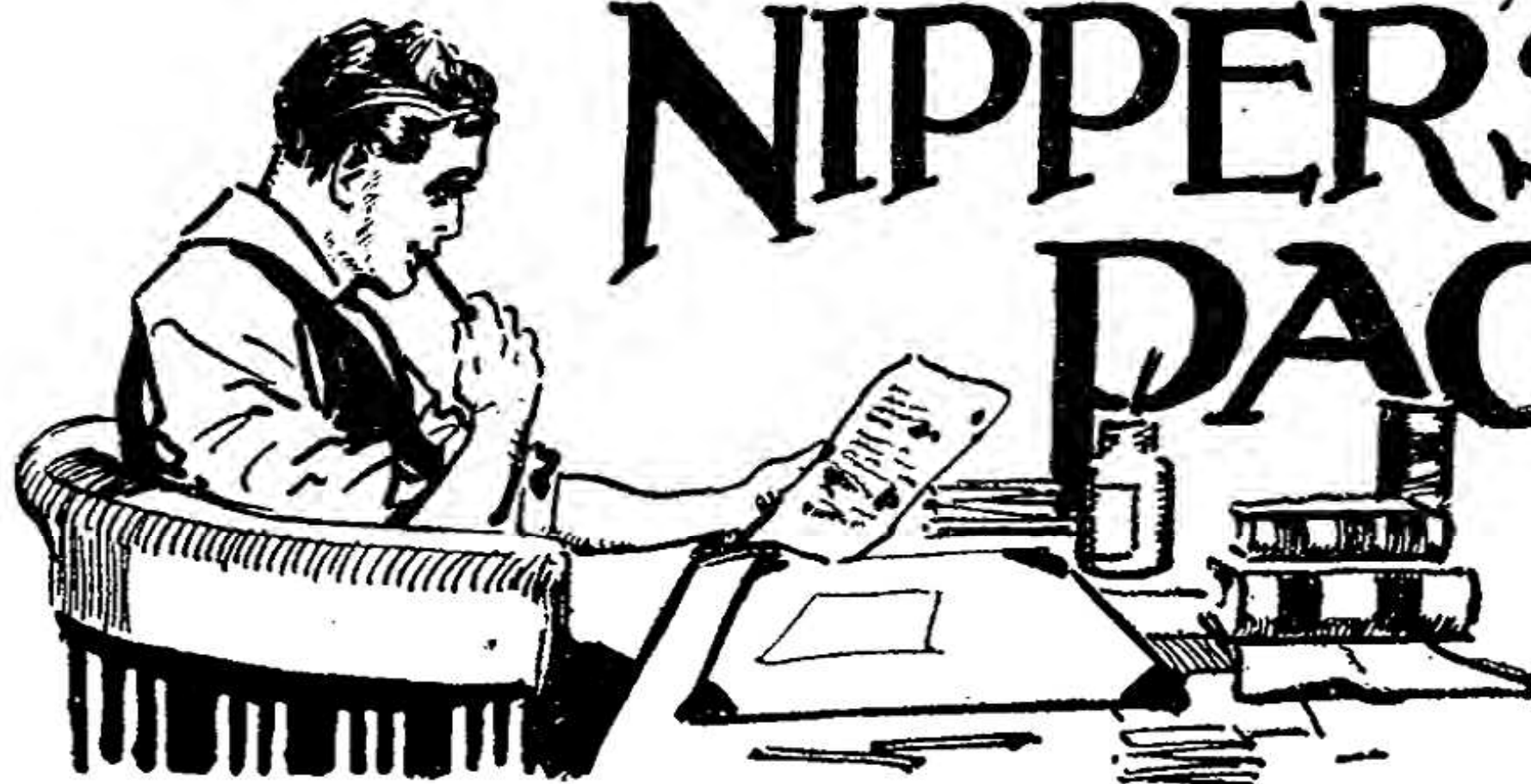


CAREERS IN CARICATURE No. 15.—RALPH LESLIE FULLWOOD



THE (C)ROOK'S PROGRESS.

We earnestly hope that Ralph Leslie will profit by the warning in the above sketches of what his end will be unless he alters his ways.—THE EDITOR.



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

My Dear Chums,

The unsigned document in Pitt's handwriting, now on view on the Common-room notice-board, has caused consternation throughout the school. Some of us knew that the brave, intrepid explorers, led by Sir Crawford Grey, were taking their lives in their hands when they set out on this quest into the heart of the Sahara. The conquest of the North and South Poles, and the attempt to scale Mount Everest this year have taken their toll of human lives in the cause of science and discovery. Now must we add the names of two members of the St. Frank's Remove?

THE GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION.

It is a terrible thought, and it is no use minimising the gravity of the situation, in spite of the reassuring message found on Lord Dorrimore's belt. We can picture the sudden interruption while Pitt was writing by the appearance of hordes of dusky Arabs; how, in a twinkling, they descended upon the small band of explorers, allowing them scarcely time to draw their revolvers. I can imagine that Umlosi gave a good account of himself before he was finally overpowered.

A RELIEF PARTY.

Until we hear news to the contrary, we must hope that it is not too late to send out a rescue party. In any case, we mean to exact reparation, and if those savage tribes have murdered Sir Crawford and his followers, there is not a Removeite worthy of the name who will not volunteer to form a punitive expedition. Already Nelson Lee and I have been busy preparing a relief party, and before another week passes we shall probably be on our

way to Nigeria. The Remove fellows are all keen to join in, and I am afraid there will be no holding them back. This is quite natural, seeing that two of their chums are among the prisoners.

THE SUMMER HOLIDAYS.

St. Frank's breaks up for the summer vac. next week, a circumstance which may have influenced the gov'nor in allowing a certain number of the Remove to accompany him. Such is the confidence placed in Nelson Lee that there will be probably no difficulty in most of the juniors obtaining permission to spend their holidays under his care. I hear also that some of the girls of the Moor View School may join the expedition, which seems to be taking on more of a holiday party character day by day. This will certainly add to the gaiety of the trip, although we shall not lose sight of the serious object of our quest.

HANDING OVER THE MAG.

Buster Boots, who is unable to come with us and is remaining at St. Frank's, will look after the "Mag." from next week onwards. Several of the popular features will be continued, including the "REPLIES IN BRIEF." Special arrangements are being made for Uncle Edward to keep a regular supply of replies throughout the holidays, and I am glad to say that we have quite a number of his Trackett Grim stories in hand to last until the autumn term.

I will now bid you all farewell, hoping you will give the "Mag." your continued support during the next two months. While I am away under the desert skies my thoughts will often travel back to those of my chums I have left behind in England.

Your faithful chum,

NIPPER.

REGGIE PITT'S AFRICAN :: LETTER ::

We print below a remarkable letter from Pitt. That some terrible catastrophe has befallen the explorers is clearly indicated.—THE EDITOR.

"Somewhere in the Sahara,"
AFRICA.

DEAR Old Nipper,
We have moved on since I last wrote, and although we're not exactly in unexplored regions, we're not far from them. And some of our bearers are getting a bit scared.

You remember, I told you they had a fright, and told some story about mysterious enemies. There may be some truth in it, but I doubt it. And Dorrie is thinking about sending one or two more Hausas back.

That's one of the main reasons why I'm writing this letter now—so that you'll be able to receive it. If these natives get back to Kano without any stoppages, it'll find its way down to Lagos, and then on to you by the ordinary mail.

I haven't got much to say about the scenery—because we've been out on the desert all the time, and everything seems very much the same, day after day.

Sir Crawford is hoping to reach some particular mountains in a day or two—a region which is spoken of as being rich in specimens. So we ought to have a regular orgy of hunting before long. I only hope that I shall be able to get some letters through to you.

We've camped at the moment, of course, and I'm now sitting in a comfortable tent, writing at a folding table. It's rather cool now, after the blazing heat of the day, and I've got a decent appetite. Now and again we get a waft of cooking in, so I'm not going to write very much.

It's a pity about these natives being scared. It makes everything so uncomfortable all round. They say they've heard things at night, and— That's queer! Jack's with me in the tent here, and a minute ago he jumped to his feet and said he heard something. I told him it was all rot, but I can't help an uneasy feeling coming over me that there's something mysterious about this particular camping place. I've just told Jack that I'm going to finish this letter before supper, so don't mind the writing. I'm getting a hustle on.

I'm a bit worried about Jack. He's look-

ing quite pale—not because he's ill, or anything, but he's catching the same complaint as the Hausas. And even Sir Crawford and good old Dorrie are as grave and solemn as a couple of owls.

Yesterday, we crossed over a most remarkable plateau. In every direction there were strange hills, too, of grey granite boulders—rough and majestic, and strangely suggestive of volcanic origin.

There are many things about the Sahara that prove surprising. These hills, for example, seem to have been heaved up out of the very earth in the distant ages of the past. Why, some of these cliffs and rock masses remind me of a sea coast—only there's no sea. And they make it very awkward for camel travelling, I can assure you. From the top of that plateau we could see for miles in every direction—rocks boulders, but no vestige of green stuff.

It's a bit better now, because we're on the desert itself. All the same, I must confess I expected things to be a bit different. Not that there isn't plenty to interest us. In spite of the drab surroundings, we're always coming across some new marvel of nature that arouses our wonder.

I should like to tell you all about a little ostrich hunt we had three days ago. There was a rather humorous incident when Umlosi tried conclusions with a young ostrich—

Jack has just rushed in, shaky with excitement, and he says that we are surrounded by enemies—hundreds of mysterious forms creeping up from every direction. This is a bit startling, and I'm going to finish up.

Natives just off. Hope you get this all right. Can't stop another second. Alarming sounds from outside the tent—looks like trouble. It may only be imag—

NOTE.—The letter is printed just as received, but I am afraid the type cannot convey the actual dramatic force of the handwriting. The last two paragraphs are scrawled so hurriedly as to be almost illegible, and the final word was not even completed. There was no signature.—EDITOR.

The Adventures of TRACKETT GRIM



The Affair of the Professor's Monoplane

An Amazing Detective Story of Deduction and Abduction. Brilliantly solved by Trackett Grim and his Brainy Boy Assistant, Splinter.

By
E. O. HANDFORTH,

"TEA is a most interesting thing," observed Trackett Grim, the world-famous incriminator. "This cup, for instance, is made of tea from China. Hot water is added, and the resultant fluid turns a pale brown. With some lumps of sugar put in, the liquid produces a sweet taste upon the palate!"

"Great pip, guv'nor!" replied Splinter, Grim's youthful assistant. "Is there anything in the world you don't know?"

The lad had listened spellbound to his master's wonderful conversation in which was displayed a vast amount of knowledge undreamt of by ordinary folk.

"This tea," Grim went on, "when drunk from a cup, is an excellent quencher of thirst. In fact, I— Splinter, get into your disguise!"

The last words were uttered in a baffling change of tone. A moment before, Grim had been the calm man of science. Now his voice and manner were those of a trained sleuth. Indeed, he was such a perfect master of disguise that, as he spoke, a large moustache seemed to sprout about his lips.

Splinter was not clever enough to do this, but he made a dart into his bed-room and returned in less than five seconds wearing a green baize apron, a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles, and carpet shoes.

"Good lad!" commented Grim. "And now we are ready to receive our visitor."

"Visitor?" ejaculated Splinter. "Why, that is a person who calls at the house of some other person."

"Exactly!" Grim said, smiling at the lad's shrewdness. "If you listen, you will hear feet coming upstairs. Now comes a knock. Ah, come in!" he added in an assumed voice.

As Grim had surmised, the door opened, and Mrs. Bones, who kept house for him in

the Baker's Inn Road, ushered a client into the room.

The newcomer was a short man in glasses. He carried an umbrella, and wore goloshes. He also wore a mackintosh, and his hat was made of waterproof cloth.

"Sit down," Grim said at once. "I see you dislike being caught in the rain."

"Wonderful!" gasped the visitor. "My dear sir, your powers of deduction border on the uncanny. How can you tell such things?"

Grim smiled.

"A mere matter of simple observation," he went on. "But I can also deduce that you have come to see me, and that you are about to speak."

The visitor nodded.

"I am Professor Skatty," he said. "And I am very well known in aeronautical circles. I am, in fact, the inventor of the Skatty Monoplane."

"I quite understand," Grim interrupted. "You have designed an aeroplane, namely, a machine which will fly through the air, and yet is heavier than air."

"You amaze me, sir!" the professor gasped. "Such is exactly the case. The Skatty 'Plane is, in fact, so wonderful that it will win the great race to-morrow."

"Not the two-thirty?" almost shouted Grim. "I thought Gold Braid was a certain snip."

"I was referring," the professor said, "to the great air race. Twice round the world for a prize of £20,000."

"That is a lot of money," remarked Grim sagely.

"I know," the professor continued; "and I shall win it with my 'plane. But look at this!"

He produced an envelope, opened it, and took out a strip of paper.

On it was written in capital letters:

"YOUR 'PLANE WILL NEVER RACE TO-MORROW! TAKE WARNING BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE!"

"K.
Hotel Regent, W."

Professor Skatty passed the terrible document to Grim, who read it through carefully three times. Then he turned it upside down and read it a fourth time through a pair of opera-glasses.

"It is a threat!" the great incriminator declared.

"I was afraid of that," Professor Skatty replied, casting a look of admiration at Grim. "But what can be done?"

"Ignore it," Grim answered, without a moment's pause. "I never take any notice of anonymous letters. They are not worth it."

"You are right," Professor Skatty said. "But I wondered if you would help me. The great race takes place to-morrow. My monoplane is safely locked up in the hangar. I wondered if you would consent to guard it for me till dawn to-morrow. Think, my dear sir, the honour of the country depends upon the Skatty Monoplane winning the race."

Grim did not need to think long. In a flash he saw that the professor would lose £20,000 if the monoplane met with mishap.

"I will guard it, sir," he said simply. "Splinter and I will spend the night in the hangar. Your monoplane will be safely returned to you to-morrow morning."

There is no time to explain the professor's gratitude. Suffice it to say that at eight o'clock Grim and Splinter took up their quarters on guard.

A small tent was rigged up just outside the front door of the hangar, which was built at the bottom of Professor Skatty's garden.

Two beds were put in the tent. There was a writing-table, a washstand, two armchairs, a billiard-table, and a sideboard loaded with silver trophies that the professor had won at various sports.

But, needless to say, Grim did not mind roughing it.

He was used to a hard life. The bare surroundings of a tent had no terrors for him. And Splinter was as hardy as his master.



He carried an umbrella and wore goloshes. He also wore a mackintosh, and his hat was made of waterproof cloth.

At ten o'clock the lad turned in, hastily pulling on a pair of bed-socks, and clasping a hot-water bottle in his arms.

"Good-night, lad," Grim said. "I will keep the first watch. I am not a bit nervous," he added, wiping tenderly the muzzle of a six-inch Naval gun that stood in a corner of the tent.

"Don't take any risks, guv'nor," breathed the lad, as he pulled the eiderdown over his youthful form.

Grim did not reply. For over an hour he sat in the armchair, bending over the electric fire that burned in the artificial grate. His head began to sink, but, with a great effort, he prevented himself from falling to sleep. Only his iron nerve enabled him to do this.

Presently his eyes shut, and a gentle snoring began to penetrate the silence of the tent. Grim's head sank with a thud on to the floor, but he never opened his eyes.

Twelve o'clock struck from a neighbouring church spire, and a stealthy footstep thundered towards the tent door. A pair of knuckles rapped on the tent flap.

Grim's head rose from the floor with a mighty heave. At once his senses were fully on the alert. He sprang to his feet and stretched his hand towards the trigger of his six-inch gun; but he never touched it.

"Good-evening!" said a quiet voice, and a tall man in a black mask entered the tent. He was dressed in a mackintosh suit, and wore goggles. The mask had slipped till it covered his chin.

"Good-evening," Grim replied, his sharp eyes scanning the other's face.

In a second he had come to a conclusion. "Hands up!" he cried. "I believe you are K!"

The stranger suddenly burst into a laugh. "That is too funny," he said. "Why, I am a detective, and I am on K's track myself!"

Grim lowered the six-inch gun and almost gasped with surprise. Not for a single moment did he think that the man might be lying.

"It is just as I thought," he said. "Then you have come to warn me?"

"Exactly," returned the other. "There is a deep plot against Professor Skatty. Danger lies before him. He must be warned. Will you go off to his house and bring him here without delay?"

"Certainly," said Grim, fully alive to the danger of the situation. "But perhaps I had better wake up my assistant, Splinter."

"Not at all," the visitor went on; "I will look after him."

"Thank you!" Grim returned warmly. "Then I will rush off to the house and warn Professor Skatty."

Without waiting a moment, Grim left the tent. He rushed towards the house at a run. As he reached the drive he saw a large covered van coming slowly in the direction of the tent. Grim paid no heed to it, so great was his anxiety to rouse the professor.

The incriminator felt he was on the verge of a great discovery. He dashed up to the front door and pealed at the bell. It was five minutes before he could get an answer.

As he waited, he saw the big van halt outside the tent. The driver conversed with the man who had spoken to him, then the latter came running up.

"Oh, Mr. Grim," he said softly, "I am afraid we may be already too late! I am afraid the monoplane may be already stolen. Have you the key to the hangar? If so, lend it to me and I will see if the machine is still there."

Grim at once handed over the key and the man vanished into the gloom.

A minute or two later the door opened and the professor stood on the threshold. A few words sufficed for Grim to explain the situation.

"Come inside till I have dressed," said the professor.

Grim entered, and in less than three-quarters of an hour the professor had donned his ordinary clothes. Then the two made their way to the hangar. The door was open, and the two stepped inside. Almost at once the professor saw that something was wrong.

"Great snakes," he cried, "the monoplane has vanished!"

"You are quite correct," Grim agreed, after taking a good look round. "We must find Splinter. I dare say he will be able to give us the explanation."

Grim at once went to the tent. It was quite empty! Splinter had completely vanished! And a second later Grim made another wonderful discovery. The big van which he had seen had also vanished!

"What can it mean?" gasped Professor Skatty, almost off his head with excitement.

"It can mean only one thing," Grim returned coolly. "But what that is I am unable to say at present. Have patience. I will soon be able to tell you."

Amazed at Grim's command over himself, the professor watched him light a pipe. Then Grim sat down inside the tent and fell into a maze of deduction. When he came out of the maze it was with a pale face.

"I see it all now, professor," he explained. "That man who said he was a detective was really K. He has stolen your monoplane and my assistant. Professor—he was the man who wrote you that anonymous letter!"

"Marvellous!" choked Skatty, springing to his feet. "Then we can never find him."

"On the contrary," Grim replied, pulling the note out of a secret pocket. "I am well able to deal with anonymous letters bearing no address, and I deduce that K. is at this very moment living at the Hotel Regent, W."

"Good crumbs," yelled Professor Skatty, "you must have second sight!"

"Not a bit. I am only putting my great powers into practice. The Regent is probably one of those big buildings where people in London live. As for the letter 'W,' I imagine that is some secret sign calculated to put me off the scent. But, professor, we have no time to waste. Have you a car?"

"Alas, no!" sighed Professor Skatty. "But I have a horse."

"Saddle it at once!" commanded Grim. "I leave for London in five minutes."

Grim hastily filled his tobacco-pouch and thermos flask. By then the horse was saddled, and Grim flung himself on its back. The gallant animal was off like the wind, and five hours later horse and rider drew up outside the Hotel Regent.

Without troubling to wake up the porter, Grim hurriedly picked the lock of the front door, and dashed up the stairs two or three at a time. He hastily tried door after door. Then suddenly a boy's shout rent the air. Grim knew the shout came from Splinter. A moment later he had bashed in a door and stood on the threshold.

An extraordinary sight met his gaze. In the bed-room were a man, a boy, and a monoplane half-pushed under the bed. At once Grim saw the whole thing. The man was the mysterious K; the boy was Splinter, and the monoplane was the one which belonged to Professor Skatty!

"Splinter, my dear lad!" Grim cried, taking the boy in his arms.

"Guv'nor!" cried the lad, his face full of astonishment.

But there was work to be done. They could not spend the whole time in this fashion. Grim tore himself away. The moment he had entered the room he realised that the man K was a dangerous crook, and must be arrested.

And every moment that passed gave K an extra chance to slip away. While the inermimator and the lad were gripping hands K was moving stealthily towards the door. In five minutes he was only two feet from it, and in another ten minutes his fingers were actually grasping the handle.

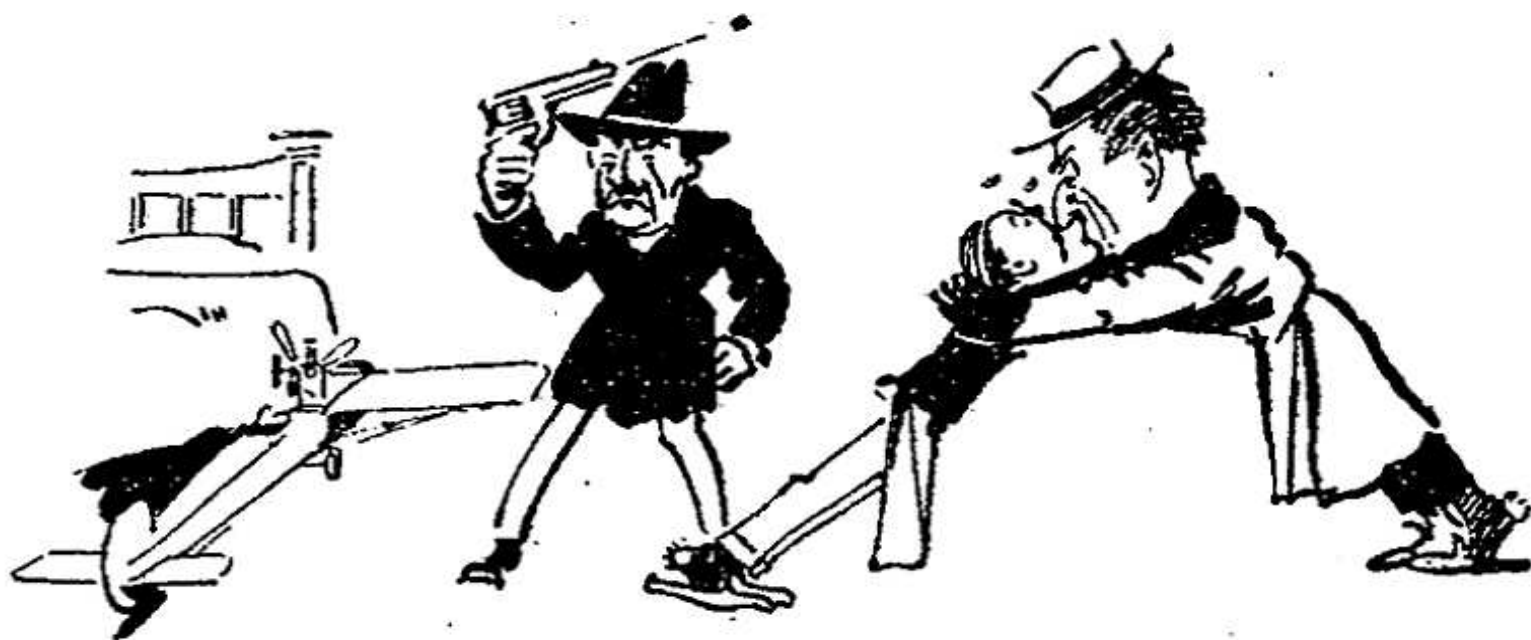
It was then that the inermimator noticed him, and stepped forward to make his arrest. But he was too late!

K suddenly pulled out a pistol!

Bang! Bang!

Not waiting to be arrested, K had shot himself!

But he was not a crack shot, and the bullet whistled harmlessly up the chimney. The next minute Grim had slipped on the darbies. He rang up the police and handed over the miscreant to justice. And the next



"Splinter, my dear lad!" Grim cried, taking the boy in his arms.

Bang! Bang!

Not waiting to be arrested, K had shot himself.

morning he sent on the monoplane by registered post to the professor.

And no one was more pleased than Grim when he read in the papers that the great aerial race was won by Professor Skatty's unbeatable Skatty 'Plane. Needless to say that out of the £20,000 prize money Grim was rewarded handsomely, and Splinter received the present of a dozen cigarette pictures as a memento of the case.

ARCHIE ON ATHLETICS

SWIMMING.

FOR those who like swimming there is nothing like finding a piece of the the jolly old wetness. In other words, water. This fluid is generously supplied all over the country.

It grows in ponds and that kind of thing. You find it in rivers and what not. And the sea absolutely bulges with it, if you follow me.

And, besides all that kind of stuff, there are baths. Swimming baths I should say. We have a bath of this sort at St. Frank's. That, in fact is where I learnt to swim.

Now swimming is really rather a frightful fag. I mean the jolly old tissues and so forth absolutely gasp with strain when one tries to swim.

Swimming is done by waggling the good old extremities. Arms and legs that is. Of course, fish and all that rot swim, and they haven't any arms or legs. But then they have fins, if I may put it so.

Probably if we had fins instead of arms

and legs we could swim so dashed awfully better. What?

But, as I remarked, swimming is a terrible fag. Energy positively oozes out of one at every pore and what not. And the water is bad for the good old locks.

I mean the hair becomes wet and all that. Then it may fall out and your head will appear with a large slice of baldness on top. But beginners needn't bother too much about that, if I may put it so.

Absolutely not!

Swimming and diving are a topping kind of jolly old sport, though not conducive, so to speak, to restful ease. But diving is not really swimming.

The old laddie who wants to dive has to climb up a ladder, and all that rot. Then he absolutely has to precipitate the manly form headfirst into the bath. I mean to say, that's jolly frightful!

My advice is stick to swimming, dear old tulips!



IN REPLY to YOURS

Correspondence Answered
by **UNCLE EDWARD**

(NOTE.—Readers of **NELSON LEE LIBRARY** can write to me, and I will reply on page. But don't expect reply for three weeks or a month. Address your letters or postcards to **UNCLE EDWARD**, c/o, The Editor, the **NELSON LEE LIBRARY**, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.—**UNCLE EDWARD**).

A REGULAR READER (Northampton): Careless of you to knock the ink over, but I don't mind, because your pencil writing is probably clearer. I hate blots. All careful, neat people do. Your idea about publishing the Trackett Grim stories in a separate book is a corker, but I don't think Nipper would agree to it. The fathead is jealous. Of course, the Trackett Grim stories are world-famous, as you say. So you think the old paper got more and more popular after the first Trackett Grim story appeared? I'd like to know you. I think you're a wonderful chap. But you're off-side when you suggest that Willy should help me in editing. Your remark that I should be proud of him is a mystery to me. Very often I'm ashamed to own him as a brother. Of course, he's better than any other kid in the Third—that goes without saying. Isn't he my minor? I agree with you that Irene is plucky. And altogether, I regard you as a pal.

W. RCEEPNS (SPENCER), (Coventry): Did you think you could disguise your name by spelling it all jumbled? Don't forget I'm a trained detective, and those ciphers are as simple as A B C to me. Glad you liked Archie's number so much—I thought it was awful. There's no accounting for tastes. Both Hubert Jarrow and Willy are now writing for the Mag., as you'll see. Your reference to the Trackett Grim stories is insulting, and so I won't repeat it. What the dickens do you mean by saying you're fed-up with them? Just wait until I see you, my lad!

IRENE (Hampton): I like your name. 

think it's the prettiest girl's name there is. I've congratulated Nipper, as you asked me, and he's awfully bucked. I don't think the Art Sketches will be stopped just yet, but it's a good idea of yours to have portraits of the fellows. I get so many inquiries about my appearance that it's high time my photograph was given to the world again. It's like your nerve to suggest that I've got a soft spot for Irene Manners, you silly joss— Oh, I nearly forgot you were a girl, but it doesn't matter. I haven't got a soft spot at all—I'm as hard as nails. Ask anybody who's sampled my fist!

MAY (Barking): Of course my ticker is worth more than 2s. 2d. Willy only pawned it for that amount because he was afraid he wouldn't be able to redeem it if he got more. I told Archie what you said in your letter, and he was so pleased that he forgot to have his usual forty winks. No, Irene is no relation of the Harry Manners you mention. Glad you like Doris, but you needn't be sorry that you're not a boy. After all, girls generally get the best of everything.

A REGULAR READER (Ealing): The printers made a silly mistake, and didn't include that Northampton chap's reply until this week. But I expect it was Nipper's fault for being late with the copy. I think the Mag will soon be publishing a new portrait gallery, and all the information you want about the fellows will be included in this. But don't be impatient—it may not come for quite a week yet. You know how slow Nipper is!

LESLIE R. HILL (Highbury): I'm worried about you. I've kept your giddy letter, and can't get those heights you want. But they'll all be printed in the Portrait Gallery I refer to in the reply immediately above this.

READER (East Grinstead): Thanks for your nice long letter, and your appreciation of the Magazine. Yes, Nipper's name is really Richard Hamilton, and I think the masters call him Nipper because Mr. Lee always does so. I'm glad you like Irene and Doris, but Irene isn't a bit prim, as you suggest. But I expect she seems a bit like that compared to Doris. I should think I have got lots of letters

to answer! I ought to be paid for this job—but that's only my joke. I rather like it, really.

REGGIE'S ADMIRER (Southend-on-Sea): I showed your letter to Reggie Pitt, and he was very highly flattered. So am I, because you say that the Trackett Grim stories are the best things in the Mag. I won't tell you what the author said, but you are quite right in assuming that he's a jolly brainy chap. Fatty Little's Christian name is James, and sometimes we call him Jimmie. But nicknames are mostly used in the Remove. Handforth is just over fifteen, and of course he really likes Irene Manners. I hope she thinks as much of me as you suggest.

SANDY (Plymouth): No, I've never made 499 runs in one innings—and you haven't either, you boulder! You're just trying to pull my leg, and I can tell you it can't be done. You say you were stumped just when you were about to make your 500th run, eh? I think you must have slipped that "5" in front of the two naughts by accident.

C. P. ANDREWS (Leigh-on-Sea): Why do all you fatheads keep saying that the Trackett Grim stories are funny? I'm getting wild about it, so I'm giving you warning. All the same, thanks for admitting that they sound true, because they're so well written. How on earth should I know when Irene Manners is getting married? It'll be years yet, anyway. It's like your nerve to say that I've got a big nose. How the dickens do you know? Oh, by the way I've told Sopp what you say about his rotten Fables, and he didn't quite like it! Naturally, the Trackett Grim stories are ten times better. I'm afraid I can't push Sopp out of the Mag. and fill his space. Nipper wouldn't agree. I asked Archie Glenthorne if he would lend you a fiver, but the lazy boulder was asleep and didn't hear me. Hard lines!

EDDIE B.: Yes, Pepys is English, and he's been in the Remove for some little time, although he hasn't been heard of much. It's a waste of time to print Trackett Grim, is it? You try and write one yourself, you rotter, and see how hard it is! You could use that nice typewriter of yours, too. Of course I know who "Historicus" is, but I shan't tell you. You needn't pity Johnny and Bertie Onions—they're quite capable of sitting on an ass like T.T. As for my hair, I don't like it being tidy, so why should I trouble?

GEOFF (Worstead): Thanks for your nice congratulations. I've seen Handforth, and I've told him what you say. You seem to be another of those beggars who find Trackett Grim amusing. Nothing's happened to Larry Scott—he's still here. But he's a quiet fellow, and

doesn't push himself forward much. Something like me, in fact, although he's different in some things. For example, he can't possibly tell a lie. Hussi Ranjit Lal Kahn is still here, too. That's a good idea of yours about printing a plan of the College, showing all the studies. If you'll be just a little patient, I expect all these things will come along in good time. We can't do everything at once, you know, and don't forget that I'm not the Editor. Of course, if I had my way— Oh, well, it's no good me calling Nipper a rotten editor, because there's so much jealousy here that nobody would believe it.

C. A. H. M. (Horley): Another chap with typewriter. They seem to be as common as dust nowadays, so no really distinctive fellow would own one. I think I shall get one next term. I'm not going to be whacked by you chaps. And now about that reply. My chin isn't big because I'm a fine fighter. I just happen to be one of those strong, silent men sort of fellows. If I owed you a thick ear, you wouldn't need to meet me—I'd overtake you. I don't believe in owing things to anybody—I always pay. As for Irene, Nipper wouldn't dream of kidnapping her, because he knows he'd have to reckon with me.

DOLLY (Rhyl): Why do you refer to yourself as "only" a girl. Why should a girl be "only"? Some girls are a lot more important than boys. I haven't told Nipper and Pitt that you like them best, because they might get conceited. It's an absolute libel to say that Handforth is horrid, and I'm surprised at you, Dolly. It's a bit thick when girls write to me saying I'm horrid, and that my Trackett Grim stories are comical, and that I've fallen in love with Irene Manners. Whoever heard such tommyrot? Somebody must have been pulling your leg.

JACK (Snaith): Yes, Doris is jolly pretty, but you must be daft to like her better than Irene. But I'd best not say much more, or she might see it. So you like Nipper and Pitt, eh, best, too? And you call me a big bully! It's a wonder I'm replying to you at all. I never hit Church and McClure unless they deserve it, as everybody knows. If I ever went on the stage I wouldn't be a comedian, but a screen actor, because all the film comedians turn into actors after they've become successful. So I'd start at the right place. By the way, you write just like Adams talks, and I believe you're an American. But, of course, you may be just spoofing, which is most likely. Of course I'm in the Remove cricket eleven, you see. What a question!

UNCLE EDWARD.

TRAVEL TALES.



By An Old Boy

(Lord Dorrimore's Weekly Trifle)

No. 6.—HOW A RHINO NEARLY GOT ME.

WE were out in the African hill country beyond Mombasa after big game, which seemed to elude us day after day, though we could hear lions roaring and leopards "sawing wood" at night.

I was getting irritated and impatient.

One day we were sitting quietly in the bush when our native "boy" Sam suddenly let out a big yell, and dropped the plate he was wiping, and then ran and leapt into the branches of the nearest tree. My companion and I followed him, for we had caught the word "kifuru," meaning rhino.

Now the rhinoceros is a fool beast, blind and stupid, but terribly dangerous, for all that. For he will attack anything and anybody, and he'll wait at the foot of a tree till you drop down from sheer exhaustion.

For a time he couldn't find us. But Sam's tongue betrayed our whereabouts. Then the brute charged the tree, nearly jerking us off. It was a weak tree, and at the second charge the roots began to give ominously.

I slipped out of the tree and ran for our rifles, which we had not had time to get. I grabbed one of them, and then doubled back for our tree, the rhino on my heels. My companion, who had meanwhile also left the tree, realising my peril, pulled off his jacket and threw it plump on to the rhino's head. The folds, falling about his nose and eyes, blinded and baffled him. He ran past us, and then came to a dead stop, put his feet on the coat, and ripped it off.

I steadied my rifle, took aim, and fired. The bullet struck between the eye and the ear, and penetrated the brain. Our lives were saved. But it was one of the narrowest shaves I ever had.

I got two very fine horns, a back one and a front one. One, of course, I gave to the chum who had saved my life.



POTTED PESSIMISM

This Week's Josh

By CUTTLE (The Porter)

No. 6.—SEASIDE DELUSIONS.

EVERYBODY was rushing to the seaside as can afford it. Why? Ask me! Because it was a fashion, and folks do as their neighbours do, even if they don't want to.

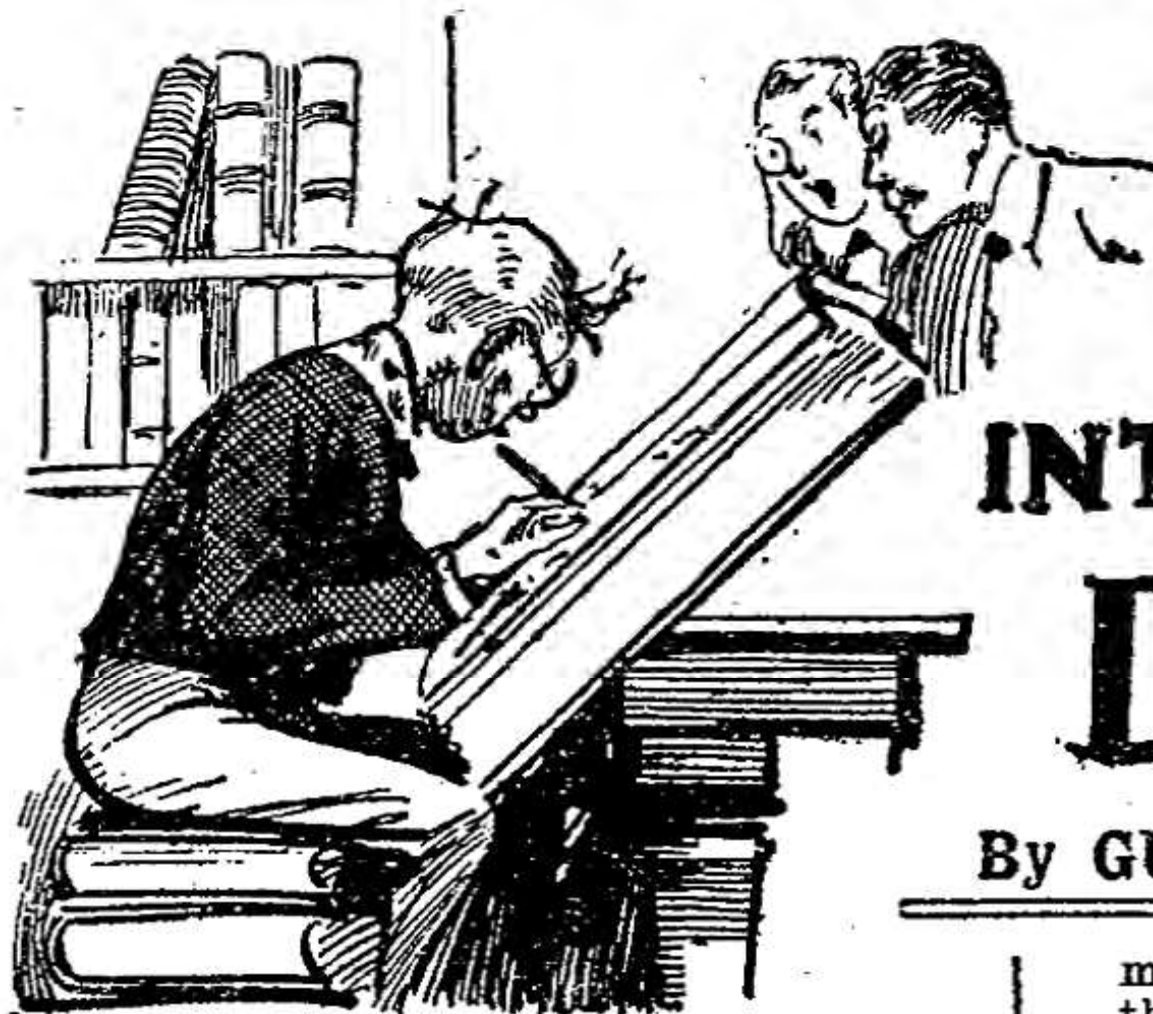
What was there at the seaside, I'd like to know, to tempt folks away from a good home? Water, and sand, and noise, and sharks. What was the good of going to a place what gives you a double appetite, when you have to pay twice as much for grub, and then get rotten stuff?

People says as how they goes to the seaside for rest. But what do they want to rest for when they never work? Nobody works nowadays; they only play at working. Resting was what they do mostly.

And what was the good of the seaside in bad weather? Ask me! And the weather was sure to be bad. When you can't go, in May or June, it was fine. When you can go, in July or August, it was wet. And was there a more miserable place on earth than the seaside in wet weather, when you was only a visitor? Ask me!

Wherever you turn they want money. A toll to go on the pier. A shilling for a bathe—and you wait in a queue two hours for a turn, and the sea was all open in front of you and you can't step in. Everybody wants to squeeze you and suck you dry. If you sits on a beach-chair you have to pay. And if you sits on the beach itself you may sit on a broken bottle if you don't look out.

No. You can take it from me as going to the seaside wasn't no catch. Why, you've only to look at the faces of the folks when they come home. They tells the tale. The best way to enjoy the seaside was to do the same as I do—sit at home and think about it. That costs you nothing, and you keep all your comforts. I don't get no ozone, don't I? Oh, well, most of them as does get it don't seem to be a powerful sight better for it. I could lick most of 'em at anything.



PEEPS INTO PEPYS DIARY.

By GUY PEPYS of the Remove.

MONDAY.—Mightily troubled this morning by a misadventure which did befall me in the gymnasium. Comes Johnny Onions, and he to disport himself on the horizontal bar with much prowess, and I watched admiringly. But I not content with this, and so must needs essay the same manœuvre after Johnny has gone. A right foolish conceit, as I now do realise. For I did but commence the trick when I fell with great heaviness, hurting myself in divers places. And I to discover, later, that in my fall I did break a fountain pen which was lent to me but last night by Glenthorne.

TUESDAY.—Up in good time, and, blessed be the day, Archie to inform me that his pen was but a trifling thing, and of no account. I did offer recompense, but to this he did scorn my advances—to my great comfort. And so well out of the misfortune, may the saints be praised. A right miserable day, for rain did fall almost continuously, with but brief intervals of fine. Much entertained during morning lessons by the antics of a sparrow, which did foolishly fly through the window. Mr. Crowell, bent upon catching it, did fall over the blackboard, and then retire to his own apartment in order to recover. A rousing half hour did follow, in which work became but a farce. The sparrow did escape, which pleaseth me. For, after performing such good service for the Remove, it did deserve liberty. Methinks lessons would be far more attractive if such incidents were of daily occurrence.

WEDNESDAY.—This morning much commotion in the dormitory by reason of Handforth's forgetfulness. He to miss one boot, and to roundly accuse Church and McClure of having concealed it for sinister purposes. And then it did transpire that Handforth had hurled his

missing boot at Teddy Long last night, the boot being discovered in a water jug at the end of the dormitory. And Handforth to roar afresh, since he could not don such a wet article. I have fallen to wondering if the boot did actually fall in the water, or was it pushed?

THURSDAY.—A day of excitements, and I to be kept on the move with little cessation. A letter from Pitt, which seemeth to be the forerunner of bad news. Much talk of a rescue party, but I doubt me if much will come of it. I did immediately write home, for the purpose of sounding my parents in case the dream become a reality—and I not wishing to be unprepared.

FRIDAY.—Comes Mr. Pitt, to visit Mr. Lee. A mighty nice gentleman, as I do think, and he to urge Mr. Lee to travel abroad to Africa, in search of the missing expedition. To my great sorrow, a telegram from home, bidding me discard all foolish ideas. But I not to be discouraged, for naught is worth the taking unless perseverance be entailed in the gaining of it. Perchance the rescue party will not go, and so my worries are for nothing. All clear now with regard to Dr. Stokes and his fine lady. And I to share the general satisfaction, Dr. Stokes being one of my favourites, and a right hearty gentleman.

SATURDAY.—At breakfast-time I did learn that fresh news had arrived from Africa, but very grave of import. The talk of a rescue party still more pronounced, and I do begin to believe that it will become true. And so the week endeth, with the prospect of holidays next. I have made a decision, and have informed Nipper of this same. Since my Diary be a mere trifling record of school happenings, I must now needs close it until the new term commenceth.



E. SOPP'S FABLES

By EDGAR SOPP, of the Fifth.

No. 32.—THE FABLE OF THE KIND
HEARTED DANDY AND THE SEEDY
WAYFARER.

NOW it came to pass that on a summer's eve in July a Seedy Wayfarer of Youthful Mien who had trudged many Weary Miles drew near to the portals of St. Frank's College. He knew not what that Huge Pile of buildings might be, but assured himself that it was some Mighty Institution, inhabited by large numbers of Human Beings. And, being Hungry and Footsore, he did sit him down to rest on the bank in Bellton Lane—cogitating, in sooth, as to whether he should venture within the gates in the hope of selling a few luscious mushrooms he had gathered on his travels in the wilderness. And, behold, one of the St. Frank's students

DID COME FORTH FOR A STROLL.

And he did chance to perceive the Forlorn Youth, upon whom, in the tenderness of his Heart, he did Take Pity. The said student, Archie Glenthorne to wit, looking thus upon the Youth, said within himself that the Poor Old Scram looked jolly well Used Up, and that it was Dashed Hard Lines to be in so sore a case, and that a Feed and a cup of the Good Old Brew would do wonders for the Chappie. Approaching the Forlorn Youth the Kind-Hearted Dandy did slap him on the back and did Instruct Him with considerable vim to Cheer Up, and not to look

SO FRIGHTFULLY PIPPED.

And he did mention that a Steak or a Chop, and a cup of Something Hot, would disperse the somewhat Sinister Clouds. Whereupon the Forlorn Youth did confess that of a truth he did hunger, since neither Bite or Sup had he tasted that day. And Archie did take him firmly by the hand and did lead him to his own Study. And the luxury and splendour of that Celebrated

Apartment fairly stunned the Shabby Visitor. When offered a chair he did sit on its Extreme Edge,

ILL AT EASE.

And Phipps was called by Archie, who did exhort him to Rally Round, like the Good Chappie he was, and find beef and ham and cheese, and cakes and tea, and so forth. But Phipps did look upon the Seedy Wayfarer with no favourable eye, the which the Youth did perceive. And the poor old cove, when the Viands were set before him, did eat and drink with No Relish. On the contrary, he was but looking for a Way of Escape—which same did open to him when Archie and Phipps withdrew for a moment

TO HOLD SECRET CONFAB.

And, behold, the Seedy Wayfarer did Bolt from the Room, carrying Much Food in his hands, and he did return to his place in the Lane—where Archie, anon, did find him Hugely Enjoying the good things. And Archie did Express Surprise that he should choose this Frightfully Damp old Spot in preference to the Comforts of the Study. To which the Seedy Wayfarer replied that it was Better Thus, for that he felt More Comfortable and more At Home. Then did the Kind-Hearted Dandy understand that it is Not Enough to be Kind, but that one must

BE KIND IN THE RIGHT WAY.

And it was Borne in upon him that it would have Been Better to have given the Forlorn Youth money to procure Food for Himself, to eat as and where he liked, rather than to have taken him to a Place of Luxury which only scared him Absolutely Stiff.

MORAL: TAKE A FISH OUT OF WATER, AND, IF HE'S GOT ANY KICK IN HIM, HE'LL SOON GET BACK.

"Jock o' the Loom!"

A grand mill-life story commences in this week's issue of

PLUCK

Jock Olroyd is real Yorkshire—full of grit and go—just the sort of fellow you like to read about.

Get a copy of
PLUCK
right away!!

EVERY TUESDAY — 2d.

Free Footballs!

Five of 'em every week are included in the stupendous offer which is to be made this autumn to readers of the

BOYS' REALM

There is no reason why YOU should not get one, or why your League should not have one of the solid

SILVER CUPS

which are also included in this offer. For full details see this week's "Boys' Realm," price 2d. everywhere. Or, if you can't get this week's number, see next week's.

ORDER NOW!

THE £ s. d. VALUE OF YOUR HAIR.

1,000,000 "HARLENE-HAIR-DRILL OUTFITS FREE.

NOT everyone would barter their hair during life for money as do the poor fisher maids of Brittany. For, after all, a really good head of hair has a higher value to its possessor than it would ever realise if offered for sale.

Every man and woman can have this priceless wealth of beautiful hair, if he or she will only devote two minutes a day to the practice of the wonderfully successful "Harlene-Hair-Drill."



It costs you nothing to acquire a full Seven Days' Trial Outfit of the universally popular "Harlene-Hair-Drill." (Send the Free Coupon to-day)

Each Free Gift contains the following:—

1. A TRIAL BOTTLE OF "HARLENE" the ideal liquid food and natural growth-moting tonic for the hair.
2. A PACKET OF "CREMEX" SHAMPOO. This is an antiseptic powder which thoroughly cleanses the hair and of all scurf, etc.
3. A BOTTLE OF "UZON" BRILLIANTINE, which gives the finishing touch of beauty to the hair.
4. A COPY OF THE "HAIR-DRILL" MANUAL—the most authoritative and clearly-written treatise on the toilet.

After a Free Trial you will be able to obtain further supplies of "Harlene" at 1s. 1d., 2s. 9d., and 4s. 9d. per bottle. "Uzon" Brilliantine, 1s. 1d. and 2s. 9d. per bottle. and "Cremex" Shampoo Powders, 1s. 6d. per box of seven shampoos (single packets 3d. each), from Chemists and Stores all over the world.

"HARLENE" FREE GIFT FORM

Detach and post to EDWARDS' HARLENE, LTD., 20, 22, 24, 26, Lamb's Conduit St., London, W.C.1.

Dear Sirs,—Please send me your free "Harlene" Four-Fold Hair-Growing Outfit as described above. I enclose 4d. in stamps for postage and packing of parcel.

Nelson Lee Library, 19/7/24

NOTE TO READER.

Write your full name and address clearly on a plain piece of paper, pin this coupon to it, and post as directed above. (Mark envelope "Sample Dept.")



2/6 Weekly

is all you pay for our No. 400A Mead "Marvel"—the finest cycle ever offered on such exceptionally easy terms. Brilliantly plated; richly enamelled, lined in colours. Sent packed free carriage paid on

15 DAYS' FREE TRIAL.

Fully warranted. Money refunded if dissatisfied. Old machines exchanged. Big bargains in factory soiled mounts. Tyres and accessories 33 per cent below shop prices. Write TO-DAY for testimonials and illustrated art catalogue.

Mead

Cycle Company (Inc.),
(Dept. B797) Birmingham

YOURS for 6^D

FULL HUNTER Best Quality LEVER WATCH Offered on Our Unheard of Bargain Terms.

Gent's full-size Full Hunter Watch, heavy nickel-silver-finished case with double back, perfectly made dust and damp-proof. Fully interchangeable Lever movement, fitted with all latest improvements (5 Gold medals) carefully timed and tested. Fully guaranteed for 10 years.



FREE

Handsome pocket-
to-pocket Double
Curb Albert FREE
with every watch.

So sure are we that you will be more than satisfied, that we send this Watch post paid upon receipt of 6d. only. After receiving watch, if satisfied, balance 2/- on receipt and 3/- monthly until 20/- is paid. Cash with order for balance within 7 days 18/- Send 6d. to-day to—

SIMPSONS LTD.,
Dept. 389, 94, Queen's
Rd., Brighton, Sussex.

500 BRITISH-MADE CAMERAS

Complete with Optic Sale Price

ally Ground Convex Lens

assuring clearly defined

photos (size 2 1/2 x 1 1/4)

Shutter and Brilliant

View Finder. Also best quality

Plate, Developing and Fixing

Chemicals, Sensitized Paper and

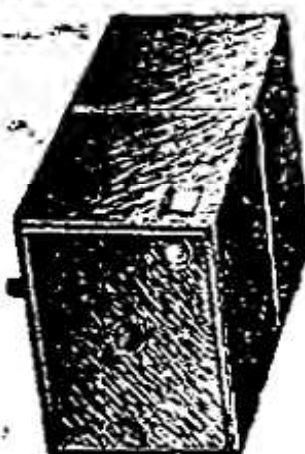
Printing Frame. Complete Camera

and Outfit. Catalogue 1,000 Big

Bargains, post free.

THE LEEDS BARGAIN CO.

(U.J.) 31, Kendal Lane Leeds.



Height Increased 5/- Complete
In 30 Days. Course.

No Appliances. No Drugs. No Dieting.
The Melvin Strong System NEVER
FAILS. Send stamp for particulars
and testimonials.—Melvin Strong, Ltd
(Dept. S) 10 Ludgate Hill London E.C.4



MAGIC TRICKS, Etc.

PARCELS, 2/6 & 5/-

VENTRILOQUIST'S INSTRUMENT.

INVISIBLE. Astonishes, Mystifies.

Imitates Birds, Beasts. 6d each.

4 for 1/-—P. FEARING, Travancore

House, Seafeld Rd., Colwyn Bay.

125 STAMPS well mixed, including LIBERIA,
etc. Send 3d. 50 Austria 4d. 25 French Colonials
6d.—Brooks, 43, Edmund St., Camberwell, S.E.

Stop Stammering! Cure yourself
as I did. Particulars **FREE**.—**FRANK B. HUGHES, 7,**
Southampton Row, London, W.C.1.

Be sure and mention "The
Nelson Lee Library" when com-
municating with advertisers.

MY GREAT OFFER

I supply the finest Coventry-
built cycles from 2/- weekly
or lowest cash prices. Any
cycle sent on 14 days' ap-
proval, packed free and
carriage paid, on receipt
of small deposit. Write for
free bargain lists now.

O'Brien The
World's Largest Cycle
Dealer, Dept. 24, COVENTRY

