

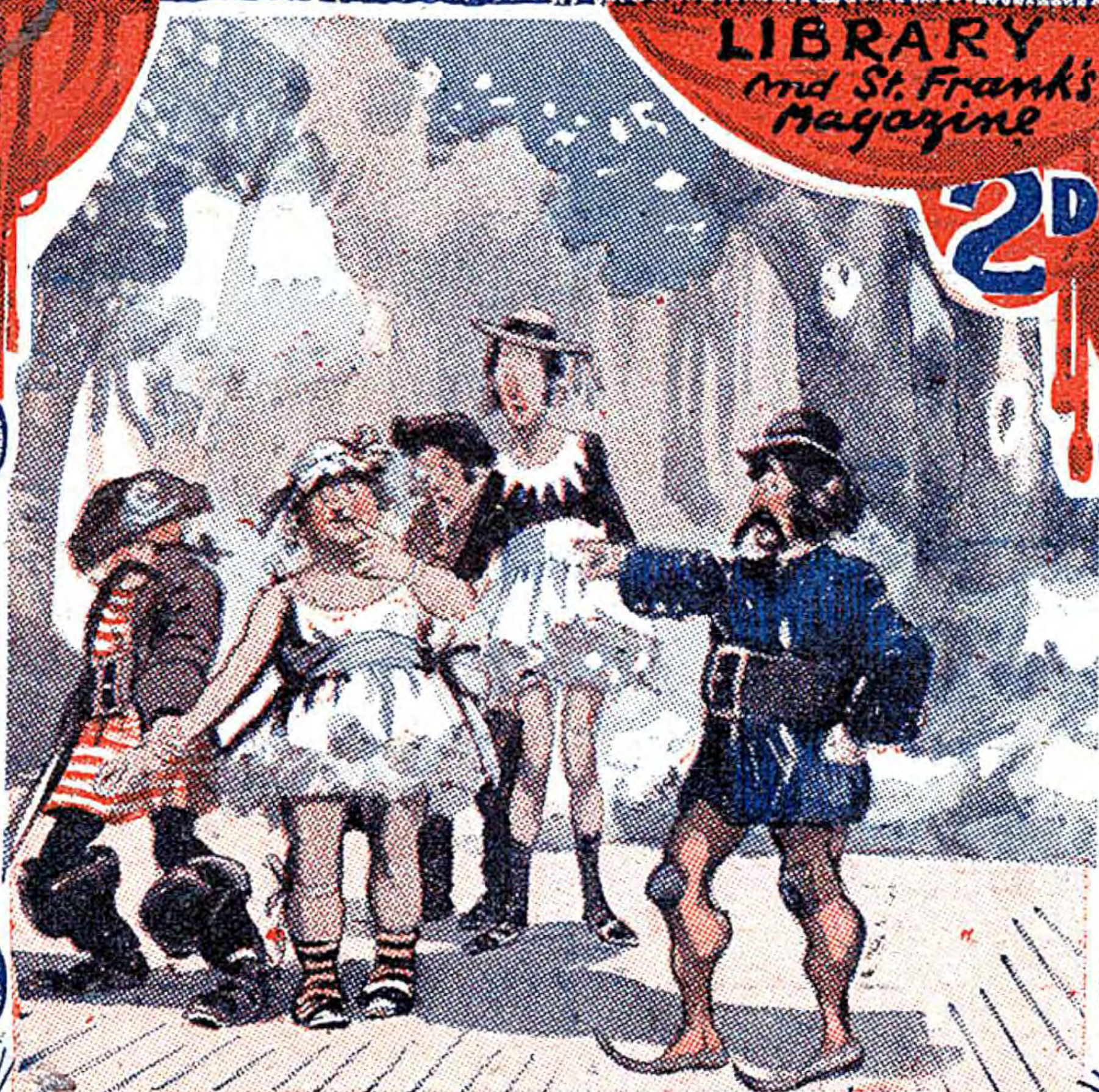
OUR 500TH NUMBER THIS WEEK!

THE

NELSON LEE

LIBRARY
*and St. Frank's
Magazine*

2D



HANDFORTH, AS THE BARON, WAS A SCREAM.

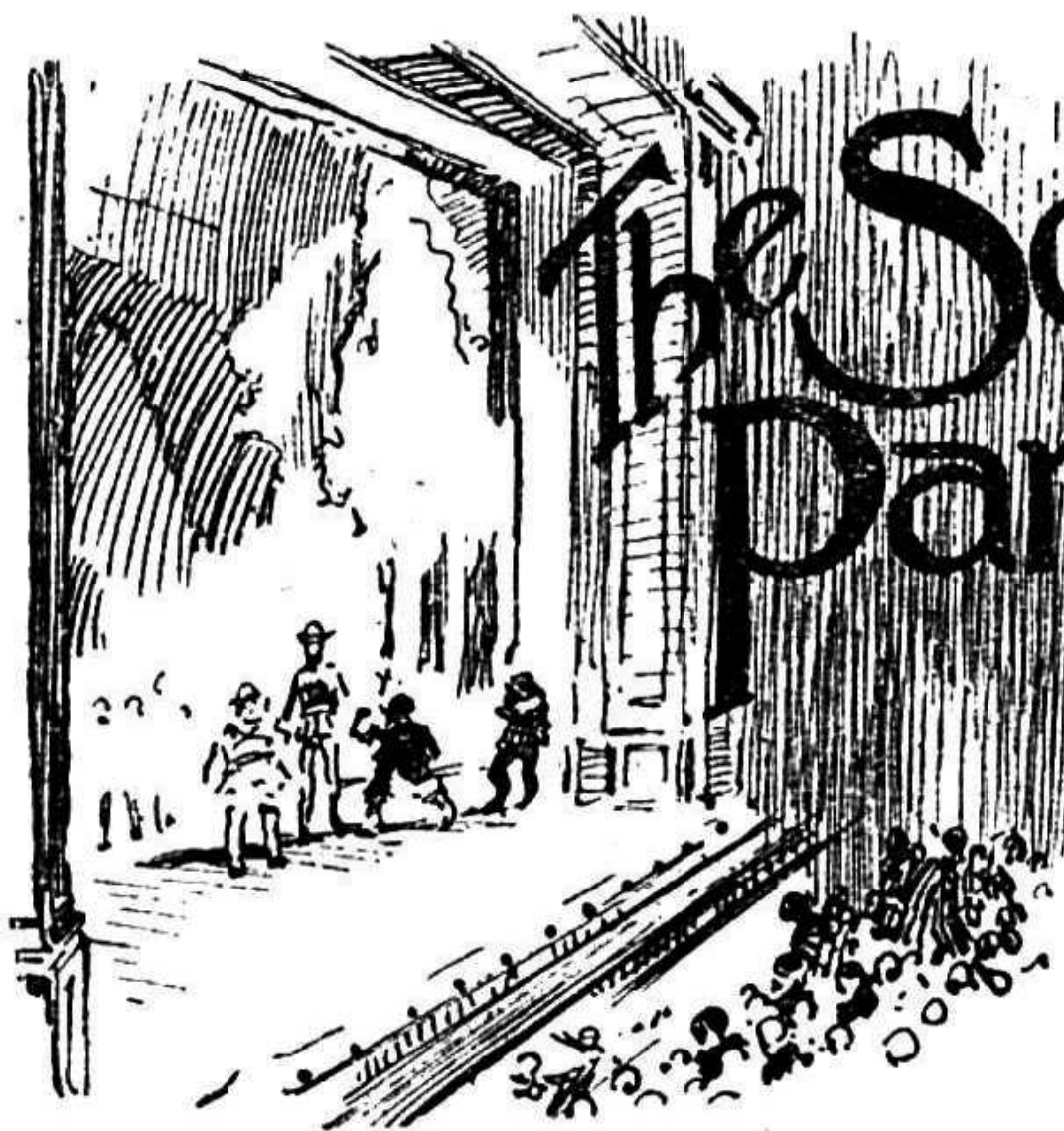
THE SCHOOLBOYS' PANTOMIME

AN AMUSING NEW YEAR
HOLIDAY STORY OF THE
BOYS OF ST. FRANK'S.

Also, appearing in this number —
"THE YELLOW FACE!"
A story of EILEEN DARE, NELSON LEE
and NIPPER.



Fatty sprawled on the pavement in hopeless confusion. His various bags were strewn round him, and doughnuts and jam tarts were rolling in all directions.



The Schoolboys Pantomime!

A GRAND LONG COMPLETE
HOLIDAY STORY OF THE BOYS
OF ST. FRANK'S.

go to the pantomime and see. "The Babes in the Wood." When, later on in the story, they are the guests of Jack Grey, at Grey Towers, the Juniors give their own version of "The Babes in the Wood" with amusing if somewhat disastrous results. It is a capital yarn of schoolboy holiday adventure, and has been written with due regard to the fact that this is the 500th Number of the Old Paper, and the first number of the New Year.

THE EDITOR.

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

CHAPTER I.

A BIT OF A SHOCK!

FATTY LITTLE, of the Fourth Form at St. Frank's, leaned over the side of the 'bus and stared eagerly.

"Great pancakes! Let's get off!" he ejaculated. "Look at those doughnuts in that window! The biggest I've ever seen! Come on—the 'bus is just going to start again——"

"Look out, you fat ass!" roared Handforth. "If you lean over like that you'll turn the giddy 'bus upside down! It's got a horrible list already!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth's remark was hardly fair. The list was really due to the rake of the road, and not to Fatty Little's bulk. And the stout junior gave a groan as the 'bus started off on its travels again.

The entire upper deck of the vehicle was filled with St. Frank's juniors, and the holiday crowds in the Strand were wondering what new kind of circus had been let loose.

The 'bus was a No. 6, and the St. Frank's fellows had taken possession of it at Oxford Circus. They were going nowhere in particular, but, as it was a fine morning, they

decided on a 'bus ride as a pleasant method of passing the time.

The idea was to go as far as the City, and then return by Tube. They reckoned to get back in nice time for lunch. And then, after that, the afternoon was to be filled in by a visit to the pantomime.

All the juniors were the guests of Lord Dorrimore, the celebrated sporting peer. Reggie Pitt & Co. had been having a fine time at Dorrie's London house. Dorrie was a millionaire, and he had provided his young guests with everything imaginable in the way of amusement.

Most of the juniors had joined his lordship's party from Glenthorne Manor, where they had spent Christmas. But Dorrie had well over two dozen Fourth-Formers on his hands, and he seemed to like it.

There were plenty of young ladies among his guests, too; for Irene & Co., of the Moor View School, were in great evidence. Many of the boys had their sisters with them, too.

But at the moment, the noisy crowd on the 'bus top were to themselves. And they would visit the pantomime alone, too. For the girls were invited out to a special tea by Lady Helen Tregellis-West, Montie's aunt.

For this afternoon, the juniors were on their own hook.

"I say, I've got an idea!" remarked Pitt, amid the uproar. "In a minute we shall be passing the Orpheum Theatre, so we might as well get off and collect those tickets. There's nothing like making sure."

"Good wheeze!" said Jack Grey.

"Rats! What do we want to stop now for?" asked Handforth. "We're going to the pantomime after lunch, aren't we?"

"Yes, but Dorrie only thought of the Orpheum this morning, and he rang 'em up and booked our tickets on the spot—the most expensive stalls, too! Well, that's all they had left, as a matter of fact," said Pitt. "If we don't pay for the seats now, we shall have to go off early. They don't keep seats booked by telephone—"

"Yes, but what about the money?" asked Jack. "There's fifteen of us, at least—and you'll have to pay quids!"

"All right—Archie's here!" grinned Reggie.

He rose in his seat, and pushed his way up to the front of the 'bus. Archie Glen-thorne was in one of the front seats with Alf Brent, and he beamed upon Reggie through his monocle when the latter tapped his shoulder.

"Got plenty of money, Archie?" asked the Fourth Form skipper.

"Absolutely!" replied Archie. "That is, of course, absolutely not! Sorrow, old cheese! By some frightful blunder on the part of Phipps, I came out this morning practically penniless! A dashed tragedy of course, but there you are! I shall tick Phipps off somewhat severely."

Reggie made a grimace.

"Well, you're a beauty!" he growled. "I thought about paying for those stalls at the Orpheum—so that we needn't arrive at the theatre so early after lunch. Dorrie will whack out later, of course—it's his treat. But what's the good of relying on you—"

"Oh, well, in that case, I think everything may be arranged," put in Archie. "I'm most fearfully short of cash, but a trifle like that—"

"Trifle!" said Pitt. "I shall need about five or six quid!"

Archie smiled.

"Good gad! I thought you wanted some money!" he observed. "I can let you have a fiver with ease, old boy—in fact, a couple of fivers. Phipps didn't absolutely forget me, dash him!"

"And do you call having ten quid on you a penniless state?" chuckled Pitt.

"Practically, dear old soul," said Archie. "I am never really comfortable, you know, unless I've got at least half a dozen fivers on one pocket, and a few tenners in the old wallet. One never knows what might happen. Here you are, old sparrow!"

"Thanks—one's enough!" said Pitt. "I've got a couple of quid on me, so I'm ready—"

Hi! This is Wellington Street! We get off here, you chaps! Move yourselves!"

The crowd tumbled down the stairway, and formed a big knot on the wide pavement just outside the Gaiety Theatre. London was looking wonderfully bright and clear on this frosty winter's day. And everybody was wearing an expression of good-tempered cheer. The Christmas holiday spirit was abroad.

"You chaps wait here, and I'll buzz across to the Orpheum and get the tickets," said Pitt briskly. "No need for everybody to come. I shan't be long!"

He hurried off and a minute or two later was struggling to get into the main entrance of the Orpheum. The great popular play-house was doing enormous business with the annual pantomime—this year's show being "The Babes in the Wood."

And the foyer was crammed with people who were eager to book seats in advance. Pitt took his place in the crowd, and fumed. Ten minutes had elapsed before he reached the window.

"I want to pay for the sixteen fauteuils that were booked on the 'phone about two hours ago," said Reggie briskly.

"Sixteen!" echoed the man in the box. "I don't seem to remember—"

He turned, and spoke to another man for a moment.

"What name?" he asked.

"Lord Dorrimore," said Pitt.

"I'm sorry, but there are no seats reserved in that name," said the box-office keeper. "As a matter of fact, we're sold right out for this afternoon's performance—there isn't a seat left in the house!"

CHAPTER II.

IN THE QUEUE!



REGGIE PITT was rather incensed.

"Oh, but that's all wrong!" he protested.

"Lord Dorrimore booked these seats himself—I was right next to the telephone when he called you up. You told him they were almost the last sixteen you had."

The box-office keeper turned away, looking rather startled. He examined two or three books of tickets, and held a short consultation with his assistant.

"I am really awfully sorry, but there seems to have been a mistake," he said, turning back to Reggie. "I wish you would express the regrets of the management to Lord Dorrimore, and—"

"That's all right," interrupted Pitt. "What about the tickets?"

"I'm afraid they're sold!" said the other, deeply concerned at having inadvertently offended so distinguished a patron as Lord

Dorrimore. "It was my assistant who took the order from his lordship, and he distinctly remembers doing so. But we've been so rushed here this morning that he failed to make a note of it at the time, and the tickets were sold through the pay-box. I can only offer you similar seats for another performance."

"Well, that's a bit rotten," said Pitt.

"I would offer you a couple of boxes if I had them—but we haven't an inch of space left!" said the box-office keeper. "You can have sixteen stalls for to-night, although I can't place the party all together—"

"Sorry, but that won't do—we're booked out for to-night!" put in Reggie. "Well, a mistake's a mistake, so it's no good grumbling."

He left the box-office, feeling a bit disappointed, and when he returned to the crowd they greeted him with ironical cheers.

"About time, too!" said Handforth. "We thought you'd got lost! Where are all the tickets?"

"Sold!" growled Reggie. "The fatheads made a bloomer, and forgot to take Dorrie's order. And they haven't got a seat left in the giddy theatre! We're dished!"

"Dished!" roared Handforth. "Ain't we going to the pantomime?"

"Not this afternoon, I'm afraid."

"Well, of all the nerve!" said Edward Oswald indignantly. "I'm going over there to kick up a row! That's not the way to treat a customer who buys sixteen stalls at a time!"

"It's no good, Handy—the seats are sold, and there's an end of it!" said Pitt. "They can't get them back now. We shall have to see the show some other time."

"But we're booked out to-night, and to-morrow as well!" put in Jack Grey. "And you're all coming down to my pater's place a couple of days after that. It seems to me we've lost our chance!"

"How absolutely mouldy!" observed Archie. "It only proves, dear old scouts, that nothing in this life is certain! I mean to say, these dashed seats—"

"I'll tell you what!" said Handforth, with a gleam in his eye. "What price the pit?"

"Three bob, I think!" said Church.

"Fathead! I mean, why shouldn't we go in the pit?" asked Handforth. "Not so good as the stalls, of course—but the pit's unreserved. We've only got to get in the queue, and we'll see the show!"

"I'm game!" said Church and McClure promptly.

Pitt grinned.

"Why not?" he said. "Let's be in the crowd for once! After all, it's a bit starchy in the stalls—especially with Handforth bawling about. We should probably be turned out if we did get seats!"

"Look here, you silly ass—" began Handforth wrathfully.

"And in the pit Handy can spread him-

self!" went on Reggie, unperturbed. "It's a good idea! It isn't often you get one, Handy, but this time you've struck a winner!"

Edward Oswald was mollified.

"All right—it's a go!" he said briskly. "Let's go and take our places in the queue—"

"Hi! Wait a minute!" gasped Fatty Little. "What about lunch?"

"Lunch? Blow lunch!"

"But we're booked to be back at Dorrie's place at half-past one!" said Fatty, almost tearfully. "Great doughnuts! I can't stand in a queue on an empty stomach!"

"You're not supposed to stand on your stomach—although you soon will if it sags much lower!" retorted Handforth tartly. "And what do you call an empty stomach, you greedy glutton? You ate about four breakfasts, and since then you've had a dozen pork pies, a bag of pastries, and a dozen bananas! You haven't got a stomach at all—it's a pantechnicon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, it's all very well to be funny—but I'm hungry!" roared Fatty. "I'm not going without my lunch, either! I'm feeling absolutely faint! I can't walk straight—"

"No wonder—you're overloaded!" snorted Handforth. "You're like a ship with too much cargo. You've got a horrible list—"

"Stop it, you chaps!" grinned Reggie Pitt. "Fatty can go and get his lunch after we've taken our places in the queue. Or, if it comes to it, we can buy plenty of grub and eat it in the theatre. Come on—let's grab our places while we've got the chance!"

CHAPTER III.

ENJOYING THEMSELVES.



THE juniors entered into the spirit of the thing with gusto.

In fact, if the truth be told, they rather revelled in the idea of standing in the queue, and seeing the pantomime from one of the popular parts of the theatre. It was all very well to be "swagger" and go in the stalls, but the stalls had undoubted drawbacks. In the best seats the juniors couldn't be half as free and easy as they really preferred to be.

Even Archie Glenthorne grinned cheerfully at the prospect. He was an aristocrat to his finger-tips, but he was always ready for a lark. But the juniors were booked for another disappointment.

When they got to the pit queue they first of all had a shock. It was enormous—a great line, four deep, stretching endlessly. And when they went to find the tail of it, a burly uniformed attendant shook his head dubiously.

"Sorry, young gents, but you don't stand a chance!" he declared. "There'll be lots o' this crowd turned away, as it is!"

Reggie Pitt sighed.

"That," he remarked, "has done it!"

"Are we dished out of the pit, too?" snorted Handforth. "Well, here's a go! Can't get in the stalls—can't get in the pit—"

"Take my advice, young gents, an' try the gallery!" said the attendant confidentially. "You'll find the queue round the other side of the theatre. I've just had a look at it, an' there's plenty of room yet. The gallery crowd don't seem to be comin' up quite so brisk to-day!"

"The gallery?" murmured Archie. "I say, dash it all—"

"Might as well go the whole hog!" grinned Pitt. "Come on! He who hesitates is lost!"

All the juniors were game enough, and they hurried round the theatre, and found the gallery queue formidable in proportions, but by no means prodigious. They were again assured by an attendant that they would get good seats.

"Well, we'll see the pantomime, anyhow!" chuckled Tommy Watson. "And why shouldn't we be in the crowd for once?"

"Why not, begad?" said Sir Montie.

"The queue's full now, anyhow," remarked Willy Handforth, cocking his eye down it. "Fatty Little's just joined us! As a matter of fact, he ought to have a gallery to himself! I'll bet something cracks as soon as he sits down!"

"Something won't crack—it'll split!" grinned Chubby Heath. "My hat! Look at his jacket! It's stretched like a giddy balloon! That chap ought to wear elastic!"

A gentleman was hovering near the end of the queue, offering to supply folding seats on hire at threepence a time. Several juniors took advantage of the accommodation, and they made themselves comfortable. Fatty vanished almost at once—having spotted a restaurant within easy reach. He came back loaded with bags.

"Good!" said Church. "He's brought lunch for all of us!"

"You ass! This is mine!" snorted Fatty.

"Of course it is!" said Handforth tartly.

"In fact, I expect he's only brought half—he's going back for the rest!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

McClure thoughtfully got up, and offered Fatty his seat. The stout junior, with a happy sigh, sank down. There was a splintering crash, and he sank down even further. The flimsy seat gave up the struggle completely at the first onslaught of Fatty's bulk.

The unfortunate junior sprawled on the pavement in hopeless confusion. His various bags were strewn round him—many of them burst open. And doughnuts, jam tarts, and other delectable trifles were rolling in all directions.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hi! Somebody's pinching my grub!" roared Fatty, scrambling up with amazing alacrity.

Half a dozen tiny urchins were, in fact, collecting the scattered food with the speed and skill of trained conjurors. Before Fatty Little could fully recover himself, half his lunch had vanished.

And the entire queue roared with delighted appreciation.

"Jolly good!" growled Handforth. "Anybody who prevents Fatty from eating is a public benefactor! One of these days the greedy ass will explode! Let's try one of those doughnuts, Fatty!"

"Not likely!" roared Fatty. "You can't call me names and then pinch my grub! Go and eat coke!"

At this moment a perfectly respectable gentleman came up and proceeded to tie himself into knots in the middle of the road. He was a contortionist, and the feats he performed were really remarkable. His work was considerably hampered by the fact that he was obliged to dodge taxicabs every few seconds.

"That's more than Fatty can do, anyway!" said Watson.

"Absolutely!" agreed Archie. "This chappie strikes me as being a kind of human spider, dash him! I mean to say, he's frightfully clever, and all that sort of rot, but he makes me feel all wriggly down the spine!"

"There's another chap further up the queue," grinned Church. "He seems to specialise in tearing newspapers to pieces. My hat! Look at that giddy design! Jolly clever!"

Handforth nodded.

"I never thought these queues were so jolly decent," he said appreciatively. "It's thoughtful of the management to provide these shows to while away the time! Hallo! What's this fellow doing?"

The contortionist, having finished his performance, was now progressing up the queue with his hat in his hand, and with an engaging smile on his face. Handforth snorted.

"Well, I'm blessed!" he ejaculated. "He's passing the hat round! I thought there was a catch somewhere! Give him twopence, Church!"

"I haven't got any coppers!" said Church gruffly.

"All right—give him sixpence!" said Handforth. "I don't believe in this sort of thing—it encourages begging!"

And Edward Oswald, to prove his conviction, dropped a shilling into the hat when it came past—thereby earning a warm expression of thanks which rather overwhelmed the leader of Study D.

But the contortionist was more overwhelmed than anybody else—for Archie Glen-thorne was so touched that he delivered up all the loose silver he had—a sum amounting to six or seven shillings.

The juniors were enjoying themselves immensely, and were by no means sorry that those stalls had been sold. There was something novel and unique in standing in the gallery queue.

CHAPTER IV.

UP IN THE GODS!



"HALLO! We're going in!"

Reggie Pitt made this remark about half-an-hour later, when a certain stir at the front of the queue made itself apparent.

It rippled down the entire queue, and everybody became alert.

Money was hastily got ready by all and sundry, and a few late street performers made desperate dashes up and down.

"'Ere, what's the idea, mate?" inquired a portly individual in the seat below.

"Eh?" said Handforth. "What's the idea of what?"

"Well, my back don't happen to be a foot-rest for your bloomin' feet!" said the gentleman tartly. "Crikey! Are they your feet, mate?" he added, looking at Handforth's shoes. "I suppose they widened the doors for you, didn't they?"

Handforth turned red.

"You leave my feet alone!" he snorted.

"And you keep 'em out of my back!" said the portly individual. "I've come 'ere to enjoy this show—not to provide a rest for

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It was generally agreed that every junior should pay his own money, in order to avoid confusion. And at last the St. Frank's crowd got inside and mounted endless stairs until they at length reached the gallery. It was over half full, and humming with life.

"Better go straight down the centre, and sit in a double row," suggested Pitt. "Come on—unless we hurry, we shall lose the chance. Don't bother about Fatty—he's gone to the refreshment counter."

The juniors settled themselves down, and Handforth stretched his legs out luxuriously. After the long wait in the queue, he was rather glad of a seat.

"Not so bad!" he observed. "Of course, these forms are a bit hard, but—"

your plates o' meat! You be careful, me lad, or there'll be trouble!"

Handforth breathed hard, and suddenly remembered that nobody had bought a programme. And by this time the rest of the row had filled up. An attendant was on the steep stairs of the gangway.

"Wait a minute—must have a programme!" said Handforth.

The commotion he caused within the space of ten seconds was startling. He moved along the row like a miniature tornado. He didn't intend to be rough, but Handy was one of the clumsiest fellows under the sun.

First of all he biffed a lady's hat out of her hands, and it went sailing down the gallery, to alight gracefully on the bald head

of an old chap in the front row. Then Handforth trod on somebody's toes, stumbled, and sat in the lap of a kindly old lady who was just unwrapping some fried fish. By the time Handforth had sorted himself out, the fish was attached to the back of his jacket.

Unfortunately, the fish loosened itself and dropped neatly down the neck of a man in the row below. And before Handforth reached the gangway he had knocked two more hats flying, and had trodden on at least half a dozen corns.

The commotion was somewhat appalling.

"He'll get turned out before he gets back!" groaned Church. "My hat! Look at that chap getting the fish out of his neck!"

It was worth looking at. The unfortunate gentleman was quite a rough customer with a handkerchief round his throat. He was justifiably angered. But there was certainly no excuse for his next action.

He seized a handful of fish, and hurled it at Handforth. Fortunately for the latter, he moved at the crucial moment, and the fish splattered itself into the face of the programme attendant. The hapless youth gave one gurgle, and his programmes were scattered far and wide.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A roar went up from half the gallery.

"Order there!" shouted a burly attendant, hurrying to the scene. "What's all this 'ere, my lad?" he went on, gazing at Handforth severely. "We can't allow this sort of thing, you know!"

"Talking to me?" said Handforth aggressively.

"Turn him out!" yelled the man with the fishy neck.

Handforth was rescued in the nick of time by half a dozen juniors, who surrounded him in a kind of platoon, and worked him back into the row. Somehow, Handforth found himself in quite a different seat, and he was startled to discover a baby immediately in front of him. At the first sight of his face, it commenced howling lustily.

"My hat!" gasped Handforth.

He felt that it was up to him to do something, so he gave the baby McClure's cap to play with. The unhappy McClure didn't know anything about it until the cap was mixed up amid an assortment of orange-peel, jam-puff, and half-melted chocolate.

"Well, I thought you had more sense, Handy!" said McClure. "Fancy giving your cap to a kid like that! You'll never be able to wear it again!"

"Eh?" said Handforth. "You fathead! Do you think I'd give my cap to a baby? I've got more brains than that! That cap's yours!"

"Mine?" howled McClure wildly.

"Oh, don't make a fuss, for goodness' sake!" growled Handforth.

"But—but I've lost my cap now!" hooted McClure. "You rotter! I'll jolly well wear yours——"

"All this fuss over a cap!" said Handforth, with a sniff. "I've never known such

a chap for kicking up a shindy over nothing! Blow the cap! Let's have a look at the programme!"

"I haven't got it!" said Church. "You didn't bring one!"

"By George!" gasped Handforth. "I knew I went to the gangway for something! It was that fatheaded attendant! I shall have to go again now——"

"Help!" yelled Church. "Quick, you chaps—hold him! If he gets out of here again we shall all be arrested!"

And Handforth was held firmly in his seat. It was rather a good thing that the orchestra struck up at that moment, for it served to liven things up generally.

And then, at last, the curtain went up and the show started.

CHAPTER V.

HANDFORTH'S GREAT IDEA.



ON the whole, the juniors enjoyed the pantomime.

It was quite a good show, with a lively chorus, and a couple of funny comedians. And the settings were excellently arranged.

There were certain drawbacks about the gallery, as an ideal part, but after the show had started, and the crowd had settled itself down, there were no further disasters.

And during the interval the juniors discussed the performance with interest.

"Pretty good, taking it all round," said Jack Grey.

"I don't like the baron," said Handforth. "He's too small. The baron in a pantomime ought to be a big chap. And he ought to be funny, too. This fellow is absolutely painful."

"They can't all be tip-toppers, old man," said Church. "For example, we're going to give a concert down at Jack Grey's place—but some of us will make an awful mess of it. I suppose. You ought to be sympathetic."

Handforth looked thoughtful.

"I'd forgotten about that concert," he remarked. "When's it going to be—next week, isn't it?"

"Yes—at the village hall," replied Church. "Jack's pater wants us to do it, so there you are! And it's all for charity. You're going to recite, aren't you?"

"Yes—Shakespeare!" said Handforth carelessly. "I expect I shall have to sing, too."

"Oh, I say, draw it mild!" protested McClure. "You've got to consider the audience a bit, Handy. Just because it's a charity affair, you can't make the people suffer——"

"Suffer?" repeated Handforth, staring.

"Well, if you're going to sing——"

"You babbling idiot!" roared Handforth.

"My singing is the talk of every concert I appear in!"

"I can believe it!" said Reggie Pitt feelingly.

"I thought about composing some songs, too," went on Handforth in a reflective mood. "There's nothing like rendering you

paused. A gleam came into his eyes, and he flushed. He looked at Pitt tensely.

"By George!" he said, taking a deep breath.

"What's wrong?" asked Reggie.

"By George!" repeated Handforth. "I say, you chaps! I've got an idea! I've



The entire upper deck of the 'bus was filled with St. Frank's juniors, and the holiday crowds in the Strand were wondering what new kind of circus had been let loose.

own compositions! A chap can let himself go—"

"That's what the audience'll do if you try any of those games, my son—the audience will let itself go!" said Pitt. "It'll clear out in a body! You ought to give a comic turn as a pantomime baron."

Handforth glared, and was about to make some caustic retort when he suddenly

got the finest idea of the century! It's a stunner—it's absolutely marvellous!"

"Modest youth!" said Pitt. "What is this brain-wave?"

"What's the matter with a pantomime?" demanded Handforth tensely.

His chums stared.

"What's the matter with it?" said Church. "Which pantomime?"

"I mean, why shouldn't we chuck up that idea of giving a concert, and have a pantomime instead?" demanded Edward Oswald. "See? A real pantomime—with songs and dances and chorus and everything! We could produce 'The Babes in the Wood,' if we liked—and beat this show into fits. Yes, and I'll play the baron, too."

The other juniors looked dubious at first, but Reggie Pitt allowed a slow smile to overspread his well-chiselled features. His dark eyes sparkled.

"A pantomime, eh?" he said slowly. "By Jove, it's an idea, you chaps!"

"But what about the principal boy and the principal girl?" asked Tommy Watson. "And the chorus? We can't fill parts like those! We want girls——"

"Well, what about Irene, and Doris, and all the rest?" demanded Handforth. "They'll be at Grey Towers—they were going to sing at this giddy charity concert. Why couldn't they join in a pantomime instead?"

"They could—and they will!" declared Reggie. "Handy, that idea of yours is a winner! We'll do it! Instead of a concert, we'll startle the natives by giving them a rattling pantomime!"

Handforth was so excited that he could hardly keep his seat.

"I'll write the book, of course," he said. "And the music——"

"Nobody will write the music—it's written!" interrupted Pitt. "We'll just give some of the latest songs and ballads. As for the book, there's only one chap for the job—old Clarence!"

"Yes, he's the fellow," said Grey. "Oh, sorry! That wasn't meant to be a pun, you know!"

"For this occasion, we'll forgive you," said Pitt severely. "But don't let it occur again, or you'll get the bird! Clarence Fellowe is the chap for the book—why, he can reel off poetry without knowing it! And all pantomimes are written in a kind of rhyme."

The discussion had to cease at this point, for the curtain went up for the second half of the show. But the St. Frank's fellows were not so interested in it now.

Their minds were full of Handforth's big idea. A pantomime of their own! It was a thrilling thought.

CHAPTER VI.

A TALL ORDER.



LORD DORRIMORE grinned cheerfully.

"Well, you look a pretty ragged crowd!" he said, running his eye over the party. "Just got back, eh? What about that pantomime? I thought you were all goin' to see 'The Babes in the Wood'?"

"We've seen it," said Pitt. "We went up in the gallery."

"By the Lord Harry!" ejaculated Dorrie. "The gallery! But didn't I book seats for you in the stalls?"

The juniors explained the position, and his lordship chuckled.

"Oh, well, I dare say you enjoyed the show just as much," he said. "But I must say you look rather torn an' battered. Buzz upstairs, an' make yourselves presentable. The young ladies will be here soon."

"Good! We want to talk to 'em," said Handforth. "The fact is, sir, we've decided to produce a pantomime of our own!"

"By gad! There's nothin' like bein' ambitious!" said Lord Dorrimore. "A pantomime of your own, eh? Well, it ought to be humorous, anyway! But I'm afraid you're takin' on a lively packet of trouble!"

Pitt nodded.

"It's going to be a big task, but we'll do our best," he said. "Of course, it'll only be a modest affair—with cheap scenery and effects. The fact is, we were really going to give a charity concert at Jack Grey's place down in Berkshire——"

"But you've put the concert on the shelf, an' decided on this pantomime?" said his lordship. "Well, it's not my funeral! I dare say the villagers will live through it if they possess healthy constitutions. But, jokin' aside, boys, you can rely on me for any help you want," he added. "Scenery—costumes—anythin'! If I can help to make this pantomime a success, I will."

"Thanks awfully, sir!"

"Good old Dorrie!"

The juniors were delighted, and more enthusiastic than ever. And later on in the evening, when Irene and Co. were admitted into the scheme, they affixed the seal of approval at once. The girls, in fact, were almost as excited as the boys.

"Am I going to be the principal girl?" asked Irene eagerly.

"Well, I don't know—we haven't settled anything yet," replied Pitt, with diplomacy. "It's going to be a big job. Handforth thought of the idea, but he's placed all the actual management in my hands——"

"Who has?" demanded Handforth, staring.

"You have!"

"No, I haven't, you ass!"

"Then you're going to—and that amounts to the same thing!" said Pitt calmly. "My dear old chap, you can't do everything. You've thought of the idea, and that ought to be enough!"

"You—you silly id—Ahem!" said Handforth hastily. "Do you think I'm going to be pushed out like this? I'm going to manage the whole pantomime! I'm going to write the book, and I'm going to play the baron."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You mean well, old son, but it can't be

did!" grinned Reggie. "You don't seem to realise that this pantomime wheeze is a tall order. There's a tremendous amount of work to be done—and all in a short time! Fellowe has got to write the book before to-morrow night!"

Clarence Fellowe, the poet of the Fourth Form, looked doubtful.

"I'll do my best, no doubt," he said. "But it's hardly time to shout. A pantomime I've never tried, but from this one I will not hide. I'm not a really hopeless dunce, so I'll start the writing straight at once."

Pitt grinned.

"You don't need to write it—it comes natural!" he said. "That's just the stuff we need—rhymes like that. The story doesn't matter a bit. Pantomimes don't worry about stories."

For the rest of the evening, the proposed show was all the talk, and the next day the plans began to take ship-shape. Handforth was getting resigned to the fact that he couldn't do everything single-handed.

And by the end of three days the pantomime was still in a somewhat chaotic condition. Fellowe, however, had completed the writing, and every junior had his own particular part.

Of course, it was destined to be a comparatively short show—to play for not longer than an hour and a half. Even so, the amount of work entailed was rather staggering. Until the juniors got down to it, they didn't fully realise what a tremendous thing they had taken on.

Left in Handforth's tender hands, the whole affair would have petered out in no time—for the mighty Edward Oswald was no organiser. He meant well, but he just couldn't do it. On the other hand, Reggie Pitt was a master. He possessed an almost uncanny knack of knowing exactly what to do at the right moment.

And out of the chaos a state of order slowly emerged. The various parts took form, and the different scenes shaped themselves. Before Lord Dorrimore's party broke up, two preliminary rehearsals had been held. They were fearful affairs from an outsider's point of view, but Reggie Pitt was satisfied. He could see the pantomime coming along.

As a producer Reggie was revealing surprising abilities. The one virtue he needed more than any other was patience. But nothing seemed to vex him—nothing exhausted his remarkable fund of good humour. No matter how great the difficulties, Reggie dealt with them cheerfully.

The pantomime was, of course, "The Babes in the Wood." But Fellowe's version was totally different from the show at the Orpheum Theatre. In no sense was it a "pinch." At the same time, Reggie freely admitted that he was borrowing one

or two ideas from the professional production.

The schoolboys' pantomime would be a bit of a novelty—having a fully connected story throughout. As there would be no elaborate chorus, and only a comparatively few songs, it was essential that the production should be a kind of extravagant comedy—or, rather, a burlesque.

Reggie displayed rare insight by this decision.

To produce a real pantomime—on the lines of the big London shows—would have ended in hopeless disaster. For such a show is more or less of a gigantic spectacle, requiring a large stage, costly scenery, and elaborate effects.

In a village concert-hall, such things were out of the question. If attempted, they would be such a poor substitute for the genuine article that failure would unquestionably attend the experiment.

And so—the play was the thing. By making his pantomime a burlesque, depending for its success upon a connected story and the acting of the principals, Reggie was taking the only wise course.

CHAPTER VII.

THE NEWSPAPER PARAGRAPH.



GREY TOWERS, the stately old country seat of Sir Crawford Grey, in Berkshire, teemed with life and laughter. The household staff was nearly off its head with bewilderment at such an invasion.

For the schoolboy and schoolgirl guests had arrived.

It was essentially a party of Youth—just the same as Lord Dorrimore's gathering had been. In fact, all Dorrie's guests were now transferred to Grey Towers, with a few others in addition.

The holidays were being wound up in fine style. None of the fellows could complain of a dull Christmas or New Year. When they returned to St. Frank's for the new term they would have much to talk of, and much to remember.

It was the second day at Grey Towers. And, naturally, the one topic of conversation was—the pantomime.

Great progress had been made. Further rehearsals had revealed many minor flaws, and these had been eradicated. The pantomime was still a bit of a joke, but it was gradually assuming the shape of a real show.

Reggie Pitt and his lieutenants had inspected the village hall with interest and enthusiasm. And they had been pleasantly surprised. The stage proved much larger than they had anticipated, and they were

further gratified by the fact that electric light was available.

Sir Crawford Grey was responsible for this. The village hall was situated at the extreme end of the quaint old High Street, and was actually within a stone's throw of the Towers' grounds. And as Sir Crawford's place was installed with electric light throughout, it had been a simple matter to take the wires to the hall.

It made a great difference to the school-boy pantomime producers.

With old-fashioned oil lamps, the show would have been difficult in the extreme, but with electric light to aid the production matters were much easier.

Pitt had taken full advantage of Lord Dorrimore's generous offer. And before leaving London all the costumes for the production had been secured. Electricians were now hard at work, and some special scenery was being rushed through.

Rehearsals, in the meantime, were occurring in all sorts of odd places. Handforth and Co. were at it morning, noon, and night—for the mighty Edward Oswald, as the Baron, was entrusted with one of the principal parts.

Reggie hadn't much faith in Handforth as an actor, and he would probably reveal little talent as a comedian. But there was no question that Handforth would provide endless fun. He took himself so seriously that his performance would undoubtedly be comic in the extreme. And in an amateur production of this kind, unconscious humour was far more valuable than forced fun.

At last the eve of the great day arrived, and Reggie Pitt was happy. As far as he could see, the entire company was letter-perfect, and a full rehearsal had passed off without a hitch.

"We're practically ready for the big event now," said Pitt genially. "Tomorrow we'll have a final rehearsal—full dress—in the morning. So we shall all have to be on our tip-toes. This show's got to be a success—and I think it will be."

"I'm terribly excited!" declared Irene Manners, taking a deep breath. "Just fancy! I thought the pantomime was just for the villagers, but it seems that lots of the best people will be in front!"

"Rather!" agreed Doris, nodding. "All the titled people within a radius of twenty miles will descend upon the village hall—"

"About two families!" interrupted Ena Handforth calmly.

"Oh, well you know what I mean," went on Doris. "The vicar, and the doctor, and the squire, and all the big farmers. The front seats will be simply packed with all the big nobs! Won't it be jolly?"

"It seems to me that the villagers will be crowded out altogether!" grinned Jack Grey.

"Don't you believe it!" said Pitt. "The hall is a big place—capable of holding seven or eight hundred. And it's going to be packed, too. And we shall have a critical audience."

Later on in the evening Jack Grey had occasion to go to his father on some trifling errand. Sir Crawford was in the library and he glanced up from the evening paper with an unusually grave face.

"I'm glad you've come, Jack," he said. "I think one of your friends is named Watson?"

"Watson?" repeated Jack. "Oh, you mean old Tommy? What about him, dad? He's out in the hall, talking with Tregellis-West and Archie—"

"Do you know the name of his father?" interrupted Sir Crawford.

Jack frowned thoughtfully.

"I've heard it mentioned— Why, yes," he said. "I think Tommy's father is Sir Vivian Watson. He's a big prince of finance, or whatever they call 'em. Why, dad?"

Sir Crawford handed his son the evening paper.

"Read this paragraph, Jack," he said quietly.

CHAPTER VIII.

KEEPING IT DARK.



JACK GREY took the newspaper with no little curiosity. His father's manner was so grave that he could not help suspecting that something was seriously amiss. And he started when he read the headlines at the top of a prominent column.

"CITY CRASH—BOGUS COMPANY EXPOSED—FAMOUS NAMES INVOLVED—SIR VIVIAN WATSON'S POSITION."

"My hat!" muttered Jack. "What's happened?"

He read the paragraph eagerly. It was, apparently, a serious business. The junior knew little or nothing about financial matters, but knowledge of this kind was unnecessary. He could easily understand, from the newspaper report, that Tommy Watson's father had met with grim financial disaster.

Sir Vivian had been prominently associated with a great new company. The enterprise had been promoted by a big syndicate, and Sir Vivian, it seemed, had lent his name to the undertaking. And now, like a house of cards, the whole scheme had collapsed with a crash.

"This looks pretty awful for Watson's

pater," said Jack, glancing up. "But what does it mean, exactly, dad?"

"I'm afraid it means that Sir Vivian Watson is a ruined man," replied Sir Crawford. "Mercifully, he stands in no discredit. His position, indeed, is one of singular misfortune. He has acted honourably and honestly, and stands ruined in consequence."

"I don't quite understand, dad."

"Well, you see, Sir Vivian lent his name to this enterprise, and thereby gave it a solid standing," explained Sir Crawford. "I don't think he made any guarantees—and that is why his action now is so honourable and praiseworthy. Although he is not legally involved, he has nevertheless sacrificed his entire private fortune in the interests of thousands of deluded shareholders. It is not Sir Vivian who is in disgrace, but the promoters of the company. It seems that the unfortunate gentleman was hoodwinked by a gang of unscrupulous associates."

"And he's really ruined?"

"Bankrupt, I'm afraid," replied Sir Crawford. "I hope this won't affect your chum's career at St. Frank's. But one can never tell. The fees at St. Frank's are high, Jack, and only men of wealth can afford to send their sons to such an exclusive school. How does your young friend seem?" "Why, he's as bright as a lark, sir," replied Jack. "Only ten minutes ago he was yelling with laughter at some of Handforth's antics. He's been merry all day."

"H'm! Then he apparently knows nothing of this disaster to his father," said Sir Crawford. "On the whole, I should hate to spoil the lad's holiday. And we must do our utmost to keep the information from him. Perhaps you had better not even mention the affair to any of the boys."

"I won't!" declared Jack firmly. "Why, the pantomime's coming off to-morrow, and Tommy's looking forward to it. But he's bound to see something in the morning papers——"

"We must keep the papers from him—in fact, from all the boys," interrupted his father. "I don't think they'll miss them, anyhow. If a letter or a telegram comes, I will hold them back until after to-morrow's performance. It will be a sad blow for the lad, and we must keep it from him as long as possible."

Jack went away feeling rather upset. But he kept his word, and gave no inkling to the others of what his father had told him. It pained him a little to see Tommy Watson so happy and light-hearted. Without doubt, Tommy knew nothing.

On the morrow the morning papers were conspicuous by their absence. And Sir Crawford had been right in assuming that the juniors would never miss them. They were too full of the forthcoming pantomime to think of anything else. And the girls were equally engrossed.

It was, indeed, a day of rush and tear.

All the final preparations had to be made—the dress rehearsal—the thousand and one little details which crop up at the last moment had to be seen to. Reggie Pitt had his hands full. As producer and principal comedian of the whole show, he was working like a Trojan. Reggie, in fact, was playing the important part of the pantomime dame, and, judging by rehearsals, he would be a huge success.

Special programmes had been printed, and the juniors and the girls took enormous pleasure in seeing their own names in print.

"Jolly good, on the whole," said Handforth critically, as he examined one of the programmes for the tenth time. "I don't quite see why old Clarence should be starred up so much——"

"He's the author, you ass!" interrupted Church.

"That's nothing!" said Handforth, with a sniff. "The author of a pantomime ought to hide himself in shame—not have his name blazoned on the programme like this! Most pantomimes are drivel, and if I wrote one I'd be ashamed to put my name to it!"

"And yet you put your name to Trackett Grim!" said McClure.

"We won't start an argument now—you chaps have got to look decent for to-night's show!" said Handforth sternly. "You ought to be thankful. I wouldn't like you to appear with black eyes, and so I'll bill you afterwards. But don't talk about Trackett Grim again!"

He opened the programme wide, and gazed at it proudly. Church and McClure winked at one another, and wisely remained silent.

"The programme's all right," said Handforth. "But the show isn't long enough, in my opinion. Only three acts, and everything will be over in two hours."

"Not likely!" said Church. "The actual pantomime—that is, the book of words—wouldn't take much more than half an hour. But what about the action, and the songs, and the dances, and the specialities? I'll bet the show will run for well over three hours!"

"We shall be lucky to finish it in three!" declared McClure.

And Handforth's chums were somewhere near the mark. Clarence Fellowe's masterpiece had been cut so unmercifully that the unfortunate author was almost in tears. But Reggie Pitt had been firm. As long as the story was connected, nothing else mattered. There were so many songs and specialities to be interpolated that relentless cutting had been necessary.

The juniors had put in a tremendous amount of hard work, and although some of them felt a bit nervous there was plenty of enthusiasm, and the great show looked like being a winner.

CHAPTER IX.

UP WITH THE CURTAIN.

THE programme was impressive.
The central pages were something like this:

THE BABES IN THE WOOD

An Entirely Up-to-date and Original Version of the
Celebrated Old Pantomime.

BY CLARENCE FELLOWE

Cast of Characters:

BARON DE BIFFE, The Lord of the Manor	...EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH
RUSH & TARE, His Personal Attendants...	WALTER CHURCH & ARNOLD McCLURE
DOLLY DIMPLE, The Baron's Ward	IRENE MANNERS
WIDOW PANCAKE, The Baron's Cook	REGINALD PITT
FELIX, The Celebrated Cat	WILLY HANDFORTH
TILLY, The Girl Babe	FATTY LITTLE
BILLY, The Boy Babe	CLARENCE FELLOWE
PETER PANCAKE, The Widow's only Son	JACK GREY
PRINCE CHEERIE, The Heir to the Throne	DORIS BERKELEY
COUNT HAPPIE, His Equerry	MARJORIE TEMPLE
ROB RATE, The Bold, Bad Robber	JOHN BUSTERFIELD BOOTS
TOM TAX, His Wicked Confederate	ARCHIE GLENTHORNE
TIGHT-ROPE TIM	JOHNNY ONIONS
GLOOMY GUS	BERTIE ONIONS
VENTRILOQUIAL VIC	NICODEMUS TROTWOOD
TRIXIE TRAPEZE	TESSA LOVE

A Strolling Variety Troupe

Peasants, Servants, Lads, Lasses, Guards, etc., etc.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENERY.

ACT I THE KITCHEN AT DE BIFFE CASTLE
 ACT II A GLADE IN THE FOREST
 ACT III THE BARONIAL HALL AT DE BIFFE CASTLE.

The Entire Production Under the Personal Supervision of REGINALD PITT.

The "Strolling Variety Troupe" were taking no part in the actual pantomime, but were included because they were due to provide the most important speciality act of the evening. And, of course, there were lots of St. Frank's fellows and Moor View girls in the chorus.

Fortunately the weather was clear and fine for the great occasion. When darkness fell the entire village was agog with excitement, and never before had the sleepy street buzzed with so much activity.

Motor-cars were rolling up in succession, and a full half-hour before the curtain was due to rise the hall was over half-filled. There was no doubt about the local enthusiasm. This charity show was the most novel entertainment that had ever been provided in the humdrum history of the village.

Behind the scenes everything was ready. There was plenty of subdued excitement, but

no frantic activity. Reggie Pitt had made his plans so carefully that everything was in readiness.

Dressing-rooms, of course, were unnecessary. All the members of the cast had prepared themselves at Grey Towers, the mansion being so conveniently near. And in a show of this kind there would be no changing of clothes. The same costumes would serve throughout the performance.

"Nearly full up!" announced Handforth eagerly, as he applied his eye to a peephole in the curtain. "And lots of people in front are in evening-dress. My hat! We shall have to pull ourselves together!"

This remark was addressed mainly to Church and McClure. They were both looking slightly nervous.

"Do you mean to say you've got stage-fright already?" demanded Handforth gruffly. "You silly asses! Look at me!

I'm ready for anything—and I know my lines from A to Z!"

"I wish the giddy show would begin!" said Church restlessly. "We shall be all right after the first minute or two. But I don't mind admitting I've got the wind up!"

"Same here!" agreed McClure.

"Huh! You fatheads are going to mess the whole show up!" grunted Handforth. "But look here, my sons. If you fail me at the crucial moment I'll biff you over the footlights into the orchestra!"

"Now, then, Handy—none of that!" said Pitt crisply, as he bustled up. "No biffing until after the show. You can't start now even if you want to; the girls have just arrived. Come along everybody. We've got to get everything ready for the opening chorus!"

And the last-minute preparations were made. The fateful moment had arrived; the curtain was about to be rung up.

CHAPTER X

ACT I.—THE KITCHEN AT DE BIFFE CASTLE.



"HURRAH!"

The curtain rose amid a storm of cheering and clapping. The village hall, packed almost to suffocation, was a dazzling scene. Never before had the local rustics seen so much light and colour on their modest little stage.

The occupants of the stalls, more sophisticated, sat back in their seats with an air of kindly tolerance. They had come as a matter of duty, expecting to be bored stiff.

The opening scene of the pantomime took everybody by surprise.

The kitchen was well portrayed, considering the difficulties of production. The scenery was small but adequate. And the stage itself was crowded with gaily-attired performers—retainers of the castle, milkmaids, etc.

And after one or two hints of hesitancy, the opening chorus was delivered with much gusto. A special orchestra had been engaged, and although it was composed of five members only, they proved sufficient.

"Jolly good; everything's going fine!" murmured Reggie Pitt, from the wings. "But we've got to wait until the show really begins—this is only a preliminary."

"I'm all on the jump!" muttered Jack Grey nervously.

"You'll be all right after you've made your entrance," declared Reggie.

The chorus had finished its song, and many voices were now calling urgently for the cook. This was Reggie Pitt's cue, and

he bustled on to the centre of the stage, to be greeted with a shout of laughter.

For Reggie's appearance was somewhat funny. As Widow Pancake he was attired in the usual fashion of pantomime dames. His make-up was clever, and it was almost impossible to recognise him as the cheery skipper of the St. Frank's Fourth.

WIDOW PANCAKE: Dear, dear, dear! Good gracious me! What's all this I see? Who's making all this commotion? It's worse than all the ocean!

CHORUS (In unison): The baron's coming and wants his dinner. What about it, you slow old sinner!"

WIDOW PANCAKE: Be off with you and leave my kitchen! To get to work I'm surely itchin'. And where's my boy, the lazy wretch?"

A DAIRYMAID: He's gone away the milk to fetch.

WIDOW PANCAKE: Don't bandy words with me, my wench. When he returns his neck I'll wrench. Ah, here he comes. I do declare! Upon my soul his legs are bare!

Peter Pancake burst in, and the audience yelled. For Peter was a ludicrous sight, attired in green velvet with frills, and with tiny knickers only reaching half-way down his thighs. He carried a huge can, and appeared to be breathless.

PETER PANCAKE: Oh, mother dear, what do you think? I met a gentleman in pink. He's just outside the castle gates. I think he wants some roller-skates.

WIDOW PANCAKE: Don't talk such trash to me. What earthly good are skates to he?

PETER PANCAKE: He's limping badly, mother dear. He's hurt his foot, I rather fear. And such a gent I've never seen; he's got a pal who's all in green. Their clothes are made of purest silk—

WIDOW PANCAKE: Yes, but what about my milk? You'll waste the whole confounded day. You're nothing but a silly jay. And as for all these interferers, you mustn't let them try to skeer us!

Widow Pancake shooed the entire company off the stage with the exception of Peter, and then there was a good deal of comic action at the table. Reggie proved himself to be a rare comedian, and long before the scene was over the audience was convulsed.

The sophisticated people in the stalls were just beginning to unbend, and were, in fact, realising that this schoolboy pantomime was something out of the common in amateur entertainments.

Widow Pancake rendered a comic song in splendid style, and was obliged to give an encore. In the meantime, Handforth was fuming in the wings, eagerly waiting to make his entrance. He considered it rather a cheek on Reggie's part to get such a lot of applause.

PETER PANCAKE: I think I hear the master's voice.

WIDOW PANCAKE: His words don't seem so very choice. But there, we can't expect much else, poor man! As far as money goes, he's an "also ran." As for getting all our wages, I don't see any chance for ages!

The door was flung open, and Baron De Biffe stalked in, immediately followed by his two personal attendants, Rush and Tare. Their appearance caused much hilarity. Edward Oswald Handforth, as the Baron, was a scream. His legs were encased in tights, and there were large knobs sticking out in various places. He wore a huge moustache, a flowing wig, and his general attire was a mixture of mediæval grandeur and modern simplicity.

BARON DE BIFFE: Who talks of paltry, useless money? Don't try to be so jolly funny. I've come down here to find some grab—

RUSH (aside): He's just had four pints at the pub!

BARON DE BIFFE: Another word from you, my lad, and then you'll see me really mad! I've had enough of all your rot—

TARE: Plenty of your own you've got.

BARON DE BIFFE: Another word and you'll get the sack! In fact, you'd better go and pack—

TARE: But what about my six months' screw? It's no good getting in a stew. Both Rush and I will stand your rage, until you've paid us all our wage.

RUSH: So there you've got it, old funny face! It's lucky we can stand the pace.

BARON DE BIFFE: You're insolent, you scurvy knaves. Be like the cook, for she behaves.

WIDOW PANCAKE: Perhaps I do, but don't forget, unless you pay you'll need a vet. We've stood your nonsense quite enough, so don't you start your funny stuff.

BARON DE BIFFE: I've had too much of all this—er—all this— My hat! I've forgotten the giddy lines! I've had too much of all this—

A VOICE FROM THE WINGS: Piffle!

BARON DE BIFFE: Eh? Who's talking piffle? Look here, Buster Boots, I'll jolly well biff you for that when I come off—

At this point his words were drowned in the yells of laughter. Handforth apparently forgot that he was on the stage. But Church and McClure came to his rescue, and all was well.

BARON DE BIFFE: I've had too much of all this piffle. A lot of fuss over such a trifle. The rhyme's all wrong, but let it pass—in pantomime we need some farce.

WIDOW PANCAKE: Why can't you go—the whole bunch? I've got to see about the lunch. Oh goodness me, here comes another! Why should I suffer all this buther?

BARON DE BIFFE: My rhyme was bad, but yours is worse! One more like that and you'll need a hearse! But here comes my ward with all her suite—

WIDOW PANCAKE: To litter up my kitchen neat. I've never known such goings on. I think I'd best by far be gone.

And as Widow Pancake and Peter indignantly left by one door, Dolly Dimple appeared from another, followed by her retinue of handmaidens. Irene Manners was certainly looking very charming as the principal girl, and her suite included Winnie Pitt, Ena Handforth, Violet Watson, and several other fair young ladies.

Dolly Dimple's appearance was the signal for a song, in which the Baron was supposed to join. But as Handforth got mixed up with the first and second verses, the audience enjoyed the entertainment immensely. In fact, the more mistakes there were, the funnier the show.

After Dolly Dimple had retired, amid much applause, Handforth had to be literally pulled off by Church and McClure—Edward Oswald having quite forgotten that he ought to have made his exit several minutes earlier. A certain commotion in the wings, and the quivering of scenery, only created more hilarity in the audience.

For a moment the stage was left empty. There were two doors—one supposed to lead into the interior of the castle, and the other an outer door. The latter now opened, and two newcomers appeared. Prince Cheerie and Count Happie strolled quietly into the empty kitchen.

Both looked very sweet and dainty. Doris Berkeley, as the principal boy, was attired in a pink silk suit, and she wore it with perfect ease and grace. With her dark eyes and piquant face, she made a charming prince. And Marjorie Temple, as the equerry, looked fair enough in her costume of green silk. The Prince was limping somewhat.

PRINCE CHEERIE: Oh, dash! She's gone, as I'm alive! To speak with her I must contrive! The sweetest girl I ever saw—

COUNT HAPPIE: I rather like the dress she wore!

PRINCE CHEERIE: But did you see her lovely face? Such eyes—such smiles—such perfect grace!

COUNT HAPPIE: But what about your injured toe?

PRINCE CHEERIE: One smile from her and the pain will go! We seem to have the place alone. Oh, my foot—

ANSWERS
EVERY MONDAY...PRICE 2:

COUNT HAPPIE: I thought you'd groan! You'd better rest awhile, I think, before you give the girl a wink.

PRINCE CHEERIE: She's not that sort of maid, old man! I'll have to get another plan. Fate led our footsteps on this road—the way to happiness it showed. I'll win that lovely girl, I swear—

COUNT HAPPIE: A prince like you can do and dare.

PRINCE CHEERIE: That's just where you are all at sea. Such simple ways are not for me. If I the girl so quickly got—pray what would happen to our plot? No, no, my Count, no words I'll mince—I mustn't see her as the Prince.

COUNT HAPPIE: You mean you'll pose in humble guise?

PRINCE CHEERIE: Yes, and thus find favour in her eyes. A prince, I fear, would daze her so, I'd rather that she didn't know. In such a case as this, old chap, blue blood is simply off the map.

COUNT HAPPIE: What's that? I think I hear a voice!

PRINCE CHEERIE: You're right—the maiden of my choice! Retire at once, and leave the field—I'm not a prince if she'll not yield.

Count Happie quickly passed out through the doorway, and at the same moment Dolly Dimple came tripping into the kitchen. She paused, in slight confusion, and the Prince bowed low.

PRINCE CHEERIE: Forgive this base intrusion, pray—I simply had to pause and stay.

DOLLY DIMPLE: If father finds you here, bold sir, he'll very quickly make you stir. You seem a nice young man, I think, especially in that suit of pink.



The commotion Handy caused within the space of ten seconds was startling. He moved along the row like a miniature tornado.

PRINCE CHEERIE: Such words will make me bolder still—your beauty gives me such a thrill. I'd dearly like to know your name—

DOLLY DIMPLE: Why, I do believe your foot is lame!

PRINCE CHEERIE: A trifle—nothing more, I vow. Come, tell that name—come, tell me now! I'm sure you're not the Baron's child—I've heard he's just a trifle wild.

DOLLY DIMPLE: He will be if he finds you here. Take my advice, and quickly clear. My name is really very simple—I'm known to all as Dolly Dimple.

PRINCE CHEERIE: A wondrous name, indeed it is! You make my blood all boil and fizz. I take it you're the Baron's ward?

DOLLY DIMPLE: And you, no doubt, some noble lord?

PRINCE CHEERIE: Oh, no—a passing stranger, I—but after this I'll oft be nigh. That is, of course, if you'll permit. I'd like to feel I've made a hit.

This was the cue for the orchestra to strike up, and a duet was rendered very charmingly by the principal girl and the principal boy. Without doubt, the show was going with a sparkle, and those people who had expected to be bored, were astonished to find themselves genuinely entertained.

Immediately after the duet there came the sound of lusty squalling, and the Prince gaily kissed his hand to Dolly.

PRINCE CHEERIE: I must away, but do not fear—

DOLLY DIMPLE: Be quick—be quick—the Baron's here!

With a bound the Prince disappeared through the doorway. But Baron De Biffe had already entered, and he struck an attitude of exaggerated surprise, and stared keenly after the Prince's retreating form.

BARON DE BIFFE: Hallo! Hallo! What's this I see? What made that young man start and flee? There's something fishy here, no doubt—I'll very shortly find it out!

Dolly Dimple fled, confused, and, before the Baron could intercept her, the Babes made their appearance. And the audience rocked in their seats.

For the Babes were about as incongruous a pair as could well be imagined, and they made their entrance in an enormous perambulator, pushed on by Widow Pancake. The whole contraption collapsed in the middle of the stage, spilling the Babes in a confused heap.

Clarence Fellowe picked himself up, and his six feet of thinness rose everlastingly. He was dressed in frilly baby clothing, and the spectators fairly shouted with merriment.

But Fatty Little, as Tilly, the girl Babe, was even funnier. He was all in white, with little bits of pink ribbon tied to his shoulders and in his wig. He wore little short socks, and his bulky figure and fat legs proved a most diverting sight. He and Clarence clung to one another and wailed at the top of their voices.

WIDOW PANCAKE: Now, now, just stop that noise. Another squall, and I'll pinch your toys. A lullaby, and then to bed—at least, that's what your uncle said.

BARON DE BIFFE: I meant it, too, and don't forget it—obey my word, or you'll regret it!

This was the signal for a concerted number—comically rendered by the Baron, the Cook, and the Babes. It was a comic song with short verses. At the finish, after several encores, the Babes were hustled off by Widow Pancake. The entire chorus had taken part in the song, and these dispersed, too.

The Baron was left entirely alone on the stage, and a scratching sound attracted his attention to the outer door. He frowned, grunted, and flung the door open. A black,

furry object whisked in—to be greeted by gleeful shouts from the many children in the audience.

BARON DE BIFFE: Oh, yes, of course, I might have known! Just when I want to be alone! Lie down, you brute, and don't disturb—your spirits, Felix, you must curb.

Felix, the cat, didn't seem to be curbing his spirits. He pranced up and down, made a dash at the Baron, and bowled him clean over. Edward Oswald and Willy Handforth had rehearsed this scene several times—and it had always been funny. But this time it was a roaring success. Willy acted wonderfully as the cat, and the antics he got up to were astonishing. But at last, after a lot of fooling, he settled down, and squatted at the Baron's feet.

BARON DE BIFFE: About time, too, you awful creature! Be jolly thankful I don't beatcher! Sit there and listen while I speak—I'm going to let a secret leak.

FELIX: Me-ow, me-ow!

BARON DE BIFFE: You saw that chap all dressed in pink? He's not exactly what you'd think.

FELIX: Me-ow?

BARON DE BIFFE: May I be boiled in liquid beery—I'll bet he's none but young Prince Cheerie! He's after Doll, or I'm a kipper—as her hub., he'd be a ripper! I'll do my best to help this match, and so the wealthy Prince we'll catch.

He paused, tried to look knowing, but only succeeded in looking funny, and Felix cocked his head on one side, and eyed the Baron gravely. The latter nodded in a confidential manner.

BARON DE BIFFE: The Prince is keen to keep it dark, but I see through the gay young spark! And here we come against a snag, for empty is my money bag. It seems to me I've got to think—I'm nearly on the dizzy brink! A party gay must needs be held, and one that cannot be excelled.

FELIX: Me-ow—wow—wow!

Again the Baron paced up and down, and when he paused, he looked at Felix, and laughed gruffly to himself. The sound of the Babes squalling floated through the half-open doorway.

BARON DE BIFFE: Those lusty babes are full of health—they stand 'twixt me and mighty wealth! I'll take them in the woods to play, and do the dirty work to-day!

The Baron crouched in a sinister attitude, and the orchestra struck up some slow, quivering, villainous music. Felix shrank back, frightened, and the Baron drove one fist into his other palm.

BARON DE BIFFE: Yes, that's the way we'll get it done! A knife, a rope, or p'raps a gun! A picnic in the woods at once—and soon I'll have some piles of bunce! This frightful deed I mustn't shirk—the wood's the place for dirty work!

The orchestra crashed out on a solemn note, and then the stage filled with rustics and dairymaids and all the other members of the chorus.

BARON-DE BIFFE: Prepare at once for feasting gay, so boys and girls come out to play. Let's get a hustle on and go, or we'll never end the giddy show!

There were cheers and shouts, and the curtain descended on the first act, with the chorus dancing and prancing in happiness and glee.

CHAPTER XI.

ACT 2.—A GLADE IN THE FOREST.



EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH beamed.

"Not so bad, eh?"

he said genially. "Everything's going fine, and as for you girls, you've done mar-

vellously. I've never seen you looking so ripping, Irene."

Irene Manners laughed.

"I don't know about 'looking ripping'—I felt awful!" she replied. "I don't know how I got through it—and I'm sure I made a ridiculous hash of the whole scene."

"Rats!" said Doris Berkeley. "You were topping. If anybody made a hash of it, I did! Just fancy! Me pretending to be a boy, and making love to you! These pantomimes are all topsy-turvy!"

"That's what makes them so different from any other kind of show," grinned Reggie Pitt. "I'm jolly pleased with you all—you've done ten times better than I expected. And the show's going with a glorious swing. There hasn't been a single flat minute. Even when Handy forgot his lines the audience enjoyed it!"

Handforth turned red.

"Blessed if I can understand it!" he growled. "I thought I was absolutely letter perfect—Hi! What's the matter? Leggo, Walter Church! What's the idea of grabbing me—"

"You're wanted, old man," said Church briskly. "Look at all this scenery! We've got to transform this kitchen into a forest glade—so buck up! We may be actors during the show, but in the interval we're scene-shifters!"

The task was not a heavy one, and well within ten minutes the forest glade was perfected, and the second act was due to commence. The company, of course, had no changes to make.

The audience had settled itself down to thoroughly enjoy the performance. The villagers were openly awed, and the more educated people—the county "nobs," so to speak—had entirely lost their air of tolerance. As the local doctor said, the pantomime was better than Drury Lane!

When the curtain rose on the second act, there was a round of applause. The forest

was depicted effectively, and practically the entire company occupied the stage. The picnic was in progress, and there were no such things as "property" foodstuffs. The company was enjoying a real snack, and appeared to delight in the show even more than the audience.

There was some little trouble with Tilly, the girl Babe, for her share of the picnic was supposed to be imbibed out of a bottle—and through a tube. But Fatty Little thought otherwise. He liked milk in its right place, but with all this food knocking about, he couldn't resist it. So the audience was enlivened by the spectacle of the girl Babe cramming itself with doughnuts and mince-pies, and other indigestible trifles.

Towards the end of the picnic, a picturesque troupe of strolling players appeared, and forthwith proceeded to perform. This was really a speciality act, and the Onions brothers and Tessa Love and Nicodemus Trotwood and and Jerry Dodd provided some highly entertaining fare.

But the story had to be carried on, and, after a few songs, the chorus dispersed, and the signs of the picnic were cleared away. The stage was left in the hands of Baron De Biffe and his two attendants, Widow Pancake and the Babes.

BARON DE BIFFE: The revels done, we've got some peace—I thought the gorge would never cease! After such a lot of pies, the kids must have some exercise.

WIDOW PANCAKE: I'll take them home, without delay—

BARON DE BIFFE: No—take them in the woods to play. Return to me in fifteen jiffs, or else you'll get some mighty biffs.

WIDOW PANCAKE: Come on, my loves, we'll have some fun—among the trees we'll have a run.

TILLY: Oh, please don't take us far away.

BILLY: The woods are dreadful dark to-day.

WIDOW PANCAKE: Come on, and cast away those fears—I'm with you all the time, my dears.

The Babes were led off among the imaginary trees, and Baron De Biffe turned to his two attendants, and waved an imperious hand.

BARON DE BIFFE: Away, you knaves, and leave my sight! I'd be alone amid the night!

RUSH: But that's absurd—it's daylight yet—

TARE: He speaks as though it's black as jet!

BARON DE BIFFE: My lads, we're in a pantomime—so everything has got to rhyme. Don't argue here, you silly clowns! Or else you'll earn my lordly frowns.

RUSH: Oh, well, in that case, we'll away.

TARE: It seems it's dangerous to stay!

And the Baron's attendants linked arms, and walked off—leaving their lord and master alone in the forest. The Baron looked round with an air of exaggerated mystery.

BARON DE BIFFE: Ah-ha! Alone at last, I see! And now for fearful villainy! When Widow Pancake brings the kids, I'll do them in and get their quids!

At this point, two strangers crept upon the scene. They appeared from behind the imitation trees at the rear. The Baron was unaware of their stealthy approach. They were a villainous-looking couple, and they obviously had base intentions towards the Baron.

They were Rob Rate and Tom Tax, the Robbers. Rob Rate was dressed like a pirate, with high sea-boots, a farcical naval costume, and an admiral's hat emblazoned with the skull and crossbones. Buster Boots looked a really desperate character. Tom Tax, his confederate, was no less grotesque; for Archie Glenthorne appeared as a high-wayman, but as he was still wearing his monocle, the effect was rather funny.

ROB RATE: Avast, you hulking lump of trash! What's this I hear about cash? You're old De Biffe, or I'll be bust! I want the rates for March the Fust!

TOM TAX: We've caught you fine, my dear old cheese—I've come along your goods to seize! You haven't paid your last year's tax, so fork it out, and don't be lax!

The Baron started back, and scowled ferociously at the two newcomers. Handforth overacted everything, and the effect was ludicrous. Humorously enough, he took himself quite seriously.

BARON DE BIFFE: What! Rates and taxes once again? They're on me like a hurricane! I haven't got a single cent—so don't annoy a stony gent!

ROB RATE: You can't back out like that, you swab! We'll skin you out of every bob! We're robbers bold, so don't you squirm, we're out for blood, you slip'ry worm!

BARON DE BIFFE: What's that you say, you're robbers bold? May I be froze and struck with cold! The very blokes to do the deed! Do you object to spill some bleed?

TOM TAX: We do it twice a day, old scout! Our fees, in fact, are next to nowt. What deed is this you want performed? Come on, we'd like to be informed!

ROB RATE: But don't forget we want some tin—

BARON DE BIFFE: Hold on a bit, till I begin! I've got two babes—they'll soon be here. Let's confab while the coast is clear! If these young sparks are sunk in sand, I'll have a fortune in my

hand. Then I'll pay my tax and rate, and all the fees you nominate.

TOM TAX: We'll do the job, old funny face, and after that we'll haunt your place. Until we get our little parcel, our home is with you at your castle.

ROB RATE: That's a bet, so if you like, we'll drown the nippers in the dyke! And when the deed is truly did, you'll owe us more than fifty quid.

BARON DE BIFFE: I'll give you more than that, you silly 'uns—when the kids are dead, I'm in for milly-uns. The plot is laid, so I'll be gone—I'll see the pair of you anon.

ROB RATE: But what about the babes, old horse?

TOM TAX: I think I see them through the gorsel

They all turned and stared across the glade, and Widow Pancake marched in with Tilly and Billy. She was scolding them severely, and the Babes were sobbing.

WIDOW PANAKE: I've never known such naughty elves—they simply won't behave themselves. Just now I found them in a brook—

BARON DE BIFFE: Bah! You can't do anything but cook! Give me the kids, and get you hence! It's time you learnt a bit of sense!

WIDOW PANCAKE: Oh, very well, I won't stay here! Good gracious, what a smell of beer! These friends of yours I don't admire—they look to me like villains dire!

With a toss of her head, Widow Pancake marched off, leaving the Babes in the Baron's hands.

BARON DE BIFFE: Now, list to me, my little dears—lend me your tiny, shell-like ears. These gentlemen, so good and true, are going to have some fun with you.

BILLY: Oh, please, dear uncle, they're not gents—one's got his trousers all in rents!

TILLY: Boo! I want to go home, I do!

BARON DE BIFFE: I've had about enough of you. Here, take the pair, and get you busy—I won't look on, it makes me dizzy!

Covering his face with his hands, the Baron staggered out of the glade, leaving the Babes in the hands of Rob Rate and Tom Tax.

ROB RATE: Come on, my lad, we'll get it done! It won't take long when once begun. I've got some rope, and string, and stuff—I think that ought to be enough.

TOM TAX: Odds life, and all that sort of thing! If we do this, we're sure to swing! The whole affair seems rather foul—in half a tick I'll start to howl.

ROB RATE: All right, we won't do any strangling—we'll cart 'em off and do some wangling! The Baron's wicked to the core—a greater rogue I never saw! Dragging the children with them, the two

robbers went off into the woods. And as they vanished, two other figures appeared, from the other side. Prince Cheerie and his Equerry entered the glade.

PRINCE CHEERIE: Some fishy work, now I'll be bound! Those men are scamps, I'll bet a pound! They've got the Baron's babes in hand—that's something I don't understand.

COUNT HAPPIE: The Baron's wicked through and through—

PRINCE CHEERIE: Yes, I know that as well as you. You'd better follow quick as light, and keep the babes within your sight.

With a wave, the Equerry ran out of the glade, and Prince Cheerie thereupon burst into song. Doris proved herself to be an excellent singer, and she won great applause. The song finished, Prince Cheerie moved about despondently, until Dolly Dimple appeared at the end of the glade.

PRINCE CHEERIE: A lucky meeting this, I vow! Whatever made you come here now?

DOLLY DIMPLE: I'm here because the author knows, the pantomime has got to close. We've got to exercise our tact, and hurry on to end the act!

PRINCE CHEERIE: I say, you'll give the show away! Don't be so confidential, pray! I think we'd better sing a song, before we're bothered with the throng.

And Prince Cheerie and Dolly Dimple rendered a love duet which entranced the audience. By the end of it the pair were in one another's arms, and further lovemaking, apparently, was needless.

PRINCE CHEERIE: This show's too short for lengthy wooing, we've got to wed, and must be doing! So off we'll go and make our plans, but first we'll order up the banns.

They left the glade, with the Prince's arm round Dolly's waist, and then the Baron appeared. At the same time, the Robbers strode into the glade from the other side.

BARON DE BIFFE: I knew I'd find you here again! It's in my part—as plain as plain! Now, what about the brutal murder?

ROB RATE: Nothing could be more absurder! We've done our work, so don't you fret—so how about the cash we'll get?

BARON DE BIFFE: Come back with me and be my guests—I'd rather you than those young pests! They've gone for good, and so I'm rich! I've got more wealth than Little Tich!

TOM TAX (Aside): Don't count your chicks before they're hatched! Against us both you're more than matched! The babes are safe, we've seen to that. We've diddled you, my dear old rat!

The robbers winked at one another, and then marched off with the Baron, arm-in-arm. And then, as though by magic, the picnic-party appeared again—having appar-

ently lurked in the vicinity throughout. But this sort of thing, of course, is permissible in pantomime. And it was absolutely essential that the act should end with a full stage and plenty of rousing music.

CHAPTER XII.

ACT III.—THE BARONIAL HALL AT DE BIFFE CASTLE.



REGGIE PITT was delighted.

The pantomime was going wonderfully—even better than the schoolboys had dared to hope for. All the members of the cast were doing well, and there had been scarcely any mishaps.

The last act was necessarily a short one—but it was, nevertheless, the chief one of the evening, so far as spectacular effect went. When the curtain rose on the Baronial Hall the audience was astonished.

The scenery, for so small a place, was quite gorgeous, and the electricians had performed their work so well that sprays of lights were hanging in festoons all round. And in the opening of the act, Prince Cheerie and his entire bodyguard arrived in state.

Doris Berkeley and her attendants were looking more charming than ever—for they had now donned some gaily coloured cloaks, which were dazzling in their brilliance.

There was a very attractive dance, and after this the guests dispersed in the usual fashion of pantomimes, leaving the stage in possession of two or three of the principal characters. In this case, they were the Baron and his two attendants, and Dolly Dimple.

BARON DE BIFFE: You've got the Prince, and all is well. Within an hour you'll wed the swell! So make you ready, Dolly dear—the time is drawing very near!

DOLLY DIMPLE: I'll go at once, but can you say, why are the babes so long away? We haven't seen them for a week—

BARON DE BIFFE: Be off, my girl, and find your sheik! The babes are well, and safe and sound—(Aside)—in fact they're safely underground!

He looked very pleased with himself, and Dolly Dimple, her fears allayed, tripped off. The Baron turned to his attendants, and clapped Rush on the shoulder. The unfortunate Church nearly turned a somersault.

BARON DE BIFFE: To-night, my lad, we'll all be gay. We'll throw our troubles far away! My fortune's changed, I've heaps to spend. I'll even pay your wages, friend!

RUSH: The news is good, I don't deny—

TARE: But I want a finger in this pie!

BARON DE BIFFE: You'll have your money—every groat. So no more grumbles from your throat. But who comes here in such a haste? I do believe he's being chased!

Peter Pancake came tearing in, and he was apparently highly excited. He paused in confusion as he saw the Baron, and bowed.

PETER PANCAKE: My lord, my lord, a man without! He's brought a hamper, strong and stout! A gift from our most noble prince—

BARON DE BIFFE: Then show him in—don't be so dince!

PETER PANCAKE: The man has gone, O noble sire!

BARON DE BIFFE: It seems to me that you're a liar! You say, a man awaits without—and then you say he's gone, you lout! What game is this, I'd like to know? I'll have you chucked out in the snow!

PETER PANCAKE: The man has gone, but not his load.

BARON DE BIFFE: Then fetch it in to me, you toad! Here, Rush! Here, Tare! Go help the lad! Don't be such lazy dolts, by gad!

RUSH: We go, my lord, to do your bidding.

TARE: We thought the kid was only kidding.

The Baron's attendants hurried off, and a great commotion came from the side of the stage. The Baron stood in the centre, frowning. Then Rush and Tare came back, dragging with them a huge hamper, with Peter Pancake pushing at the other side.

BARON DE BIFFE: What's this? Great Scott! A hamper large—it's almost bigger than a barge! What have we here, good gracious me?

RUSH: Suppose we open it and see?

They unfastened the strings, and in the middle of the process Rush pulled off a label and read the wording on it aloud.

RUSH: The Prince has sent you this, old mate, so raise the lid and learn your fate!

BARON DE BIFFE: Presents rich, I'll bet my boot! Let's look inside and see the loot!

The lid was raised at last, and Baron de Biffe started back when two figures rose from the interior of the hamper. They were the Babes—both of them smiling with calm delight. The Baron uttered a hoarse cry, and fell back a step or two.

BARON DE BIFFE: May I be boiled in olive oil! The kids again, my joys to spoil! Where's Rate? Where's Tax? Bring in the curs! They've done me brown, and even wurs!

BILLY: You wicked, nasty uncle man!

TILLY: The Prince it was who spoilt your plan.

BARON DE BIFFE: The Prince? My hat! I'm all undone. It seems to me I'll have to run!

PRINCE CHEERIE (entering quickly): Too late, you plotting, scheming wretch! Who'll hurry off, the police to fetch! This man, he planned to kill the mites! See how he trembles in his tights!

BARON DE BIFFE: You've got it wrong, so let's cry "Pax"—the thing was schemed by Rate and Tax!

PRINCE CHEERIE: A lie, and well you know it, too! Both Rate and Tax are good and true. They never meant to do the deed, but only fooled you out of greed! I've had the babes up at the Palace, looked after by good Sister Alice!

BARON DE BIFFE: I'm finished now, without a doubt, but how the deuce can I slip out? The fortune isn't mine at all, so all that's left to me is gall!

He appeared broken, and then Rob Rate and Tom Tax strode in with stern footsteps, and pointed accusing fingers at the Baron.

ROB RATE: He fooled us with his wicked bribes, but now it's him that gets the gibes. He wanted that which wasn't his'n—so now he'll soon be sent to prison!

TOM TAX: Before he goes I want my taxes—he doesn't get who never axes!

PRINCE CHEERIE: I'll pay his bills, and let him go, for this is pantomime, you know. Besides, I've got his ward for keeps, and that will compensate for heaps. But after this the babes must go, to live in quite another show. I'll have them at the Palace grand, where wicked uncles never land.

BARON DE BIFFE: My gratitude is fervent quite—I thought I'd see a cell to-night! A royal prince you've proved indeed, and may you never lack a feed!

PRINCE CHEERIE: So all is right, and now's the time, we ought to end our pantomime.

The music struck up, and the guests poured in from all sides. Songs and dances followed, and the whole show ended up with a joyous, merry swing. And the curtain went down amid deafening applause.

Again and again the curtain was raised, but at last the flattered performers were set free. Behind the curtain, they congratulated themselves with noisy enthusiasm.

"Well, you've all done wonders!" declared Reggie Pitt. "Particularly you, Doris—and you, Handy! I thought the show would be fairly good, but it's been a regular triumph!"

"You don't say anything about yourself, Reggie," said Doris Berkeley. "You played the Cook screamingly, but your part was too small—"

"Quite large enough, with all the directing to do, on the top of it!" declared Pitt. "I say, what about a second performance to-morrow night?"

"Rather!"

"We're all game!"

"As a matter of fact, we ought to take

the show to London!" declared Handforth firmly. "I've made up my mind to be an actor——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This part is all very well, but it doesn't give me enough opportunity!" went on Edward Oswald. "I've decided to act in a real drama——"

"Perhaps so, but your pater's decided that you shall go back to St. Frank's!" chuckled Tommy Watson. "I say, what about the author? We ought to give him three cheers."

"Hurrah!"

Clarence Fellowe was dragged to the front, and warmly cheered. Then Pitt came

"Telegram? For me?" said Tommy Watson curiously. "What on earth——"

"Better not read it," suggested Jack quickly.

"Why not?"

"Oh, you might as well wait until the party's over," replied Grey. "I don't suppose it'll be anything important——"

He broke off abruptly, for Tommy Watson had opened the telegram, and was now reading it. And Tommy's face was expressive of surprise.

"I can't make it out!" he said. "The pater tells me to come home at once—and asks why I didn't leave here yesterday! He says that nothing must prevent me from going!"

The whole contraption collapsed in the middle of the stage, spilling the Babes in a confused heap.



on for an ovation, for he, after all, had done more actual work than anybody else.

And later on, at Grey Towers, the schoolboys and schoolgirls were royally feted by Sir Crawford and the remainder of the house-party. And it was unanimously decided that the pantomime should be repeated on the following night. There would be no difficulty in getting an audience—and, after all, it was all for charity.

There was only one incident which came to mar the complete harmony of Jack Grey's party. On the following morning, Tommy Watson received a telegram. He happened to be down early, and he was chatting happily with Jack in the lounge-hall.

Jack Grey nodded gloomily.

"That's done it—you'll have to go, of course," he said. "I was half afraid something like this would happen."

Tommy Watson stared.

"Half afraid?" he repeated. "How did you know I should get a wire?"

"I didn't exactly know," replied Jack awkwardly. "But, look here—you'd better come along and see my pater."

Watson was mystified as Jack led him to the library. But his mystification vanished after a short talk with Sir Crawford. Instead, he had become grave and rather pale.

"I cannot tell you how sorry I am, my dear boy," said Sir Crawford kindly. "I tried to keep the bad news from you as long as possible, and I am really glad that you enjoyed the pantomime last night without knowing of this disaster. I have no doubt that your father will soon be as solid and prosperous as ever."

Watson hardly remembered leaving the library. Sir Montie Tregellis-West, his bosom chum, was rather shocked when he saw him. For Tommy had completely changed. And immediately after breakfast he left for home. Only Montie went with him to the station. Handforth and several others had wanted to go, but Pitt had dissuaded them. He knew very well that the chums of Study C would prefer to be alone.

"I shall look out for you on Victoria Station as usual, old boy," said Sir Montie, as they shook hands. "I am frightfully sorry about all this, but I am sure your pater will pull things round."

"I hope so!" said Watson huskily.

THE END.

"Well, when the new term starts, Tommy boy, we shall have to do our best to make you forget this shockin' trouble—we shall, really!" declared Tregellis-West. "Oh, begad! How rotten! Your train's comin'!"

And when, a few minutes later, Tommy Watson was whirled away to London, he little realised what an ordeal lay ahead of him! He certainly never dreamed of the trials and troubles that were to be his in the new term.

At Grey Towers the party was soon as merry and bright as ever. Watson and his father were momentarily forgotten. And the schoolboys' pantomime was repeated with even greater success than ever.

As everybody agreed, these holidays had been better than any the St. Frank's fellows and the Moor View girls could remember.

And when the party broke up the vision of school loomed ahead—for within a short week the new term would be upon them, and they would be back amid the old, familiar surroundings.

By Your Editor:



My dear Readers,—

We celebrate this week the 500th number of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY with our 1925 New Year Number. It is a double event in the history of our paper that marks a triumph in achievement for the past and the dawn of brilliant prospects for the future.

LOOKING BACK.

Nearly ten years have elapsed since we first saw the light, and I am glad to find still a large number of readers who have been readers since those early days. Nelson Lee and Nipper were then at Gray's Inn Road, and many of you will remember those fascinating stories of Professor Zingrave, Jim the Penman, Eileen Dare, etc. Not long after, Nelson Lee and Nipper came to St. Frank's, and ever since St. Frank's has become inseparably bound up with the Old Paper. What an imposing array of characters and memories have appeared under the banner of St. Frank's. Far and wide throughout the Great British Empire, Handy and Co., Archie, Sir Montie, T. T., Fatty Little, Fullwood and Co., etc., have become real living personalities.

THE RETURN OF NELSON LEE AND NIPPER.

Now, for a few months, Nelson Lee and Nipper have returned to their old haunts in London. They will be coming back to St. Frank's again before long, much to the delight of their numerous friends at the school.

A NEW SERIES NEXT WEEK.

Just a few words about our great new series which starts next week. Quite near St. Frank's has lately come into being a new school, on the site of the River House School. Known as the Moat Hollow School, there is something sinister and mysterious about the place. How Tommy Watson finds himself a new boy at this school, and his strange experiences on his arrival are told in next week's story, "THE SCHOOL OF HIDDEN DREAD!"

Wishing you all a Prosperous New Year,

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.



The Yellow Face!

**A CLEVER DETECTIVE STORY
OF NELSON LEE, NIPPER AND
EILEEN DARE.**

What dreadful fear lurks behind the mysterious Dr. Nicholson? New facts come to light in this amazing case and are related in the following story, in which the popular girl detective, **EILEEN DARE**, plays a leading role.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY!

DR. JEREMY NICHOLSON, owner of Hollowdene Manor, near Watford, struggled frantically in the grip of two unknown enemies.

He had been pounced upon without warning, just as he had emerged from a side-door of his house—and he now realised that the men must have been lying in wait for him.

It was night, and the grounds of the Manor were dark and silent. In such a spot the captive knew that it would be no use to call for assistance, and he twisted and writhed in his efforts to free himself from his captors.

But the doctor's struggles were useless, and in spite of his resistance, he found himself being half-dragged and half-carried through the tangled mass of weeds and vegetation which had at one time formed the gardens of the old mansion.

With almost incredible swiftness, he was hurried along by the two kidnappers, until the premises of the Manor were left behind, the main road crossed, and the open common lay before them.

Straight towards this gorse-grown expanse of land the prisoner was hustled, until it began to dawn upon him that he was being taken to an old ramshackle hut, which stood some little distance ahead. The place was merely a dilapidated shed, which had been in disuse for a number of years, and Dr. Nicholson found himself wondering what was in the wind.

By this time he had almost given up his efforts to free himself from the grip which had been placed upon him, and he now looked keenly at the two men who held him so tightly.

He could not see them distinctly, but the stars gave sufficient light for Dr. Nicholson to observe that the men were obviously

foreigners. They were both dressed in European clothing, but their general outline, and the shape of their faces, told the prisoner quite clearly that he was in the hands of two Chinamen.

So far, neither of them had uttered a single syllable, but had seized their captive, and had hurried him off in silence—a sinister, menacing silence, which indicated a deadly purpose.

And Dr. Nicholson, up to this moment, had been far too occupied with his attempts to struggle free to waste his strength in talking. But now, realising that such efforts were beyond him, he harshly demanded an explanation of the outrage which had been perpetrated upon him.

"What does this mean?" he grated angrily, drawing in his breath in little short gasps. "Who are you, and what do you mean by treating me in this outrageous manner?"

One of the Chinamen answered.

"No savvy!" he said shortly. "No savvy!"

Dr. Nicholson gritted his teeth, and turned to the second man.

"Are you an uneducated heathen like your companion?" he asked contemptuously. "Are you unable to 'savvy' what I say—"

"By no means!" cut in the second Chinaman, speaking in perfect English. "But I am not prepared to converse with you, Dr. Nicholson, until you are safely confined within the hut upon the common! Once we have arrived there, I shall have great pleasure in telling you all you wish to know—and possibly in giving you some small items of information which will not be exactly to your liking!"

The prisoner looked at the Chinaman in some surprise, but he made no reply. There almost seemed to be something in the Oriental's voice which made Dr. Nicholson wince, and it was evident that he was by

no means in the dark as to the Chinaman's meaning.

And so the strange trio continued on their way towards the hut—the captive still held very firmly, and all three of them maintaining their former uncanny silence.

But what could be the explanation of such queer proceedings—proceedings which were taking place upon the English countryside, quite near to the old town of Watford? There was a vast amount of mystery about the whole affair—and also in connection with Dr. Jeremy Nicholson himself. He was known to be the owner of Hollowdene Manor, and to be a morose, irritable recluse, who resided in the old mansion, looked after by a butler and his wife, with the additional assistance of two maidservants.

Strangely enough, Nelson Lee, the famous detective of Gray's Inn Road—was immensely interested in Dr. Nicholson. At the present moment the great criminologist, together with his two assistants, Nipper and Miss Eileen Dare, were in the immediate vicinity of the Manor.

Their presence was totally unknown to Dr. Nicholson, who was under the impression that his household affairs were being conducted in their usual smooth manner.

But this was scarcely true.

Nelson Lee and Nipper had first come into contact with the doctor during the tremendous thunderstorm a few nights earlier. The pair had been motoring from St. Albans to London, but had been stopped by a fallen tree. At the same time—before they had even alighted from their car—a flash of lightning had revealed a strange and tragic sight to them.

One of the Manor servants—a girl named Ellen Bennett—had rushed from the door of the house with an agonised cry upon her lips, and had dropped dead upon the drive. The detective had at once examined her, and had concluded that she had been killed by fright.

Dr. Nicholson had denied this, asserting that the girl had succumbed to an attack of heart failure. Later, Nelson Lee had been approached by a fellow-servant of the dead girl's, who had confirmed his suspicions, with the result that Eileen Dare had been installed at the Manor in the capacity of maid.

Her duty was to discover, if possible, what sinister secrets Dr. Nicholson was hiding within the old house, for Nelson Lee was convinced that the Manor contained something which was in some way responsible for the unfortunate servant's death.

So far, Eileen had drawn an absolute blank—but she did not give up hope.

And while the lady detective kept observation within the Manor, Lee and Nipper were serving a similar purpose outside.

Already they had made certain discoveries, which were amply sufficient to justify the detective's suspicions, and to prove beyond

all doubt that Dr. Jeremy Nicholson was a mystery man, living in a mystery house.

Lee and Nipper knew, for instance, that two London burglars—Bill Jenkins and Walter Hayes—were in the neighbourhood, bent upon blackmailing Dr. Nicholson. They also knew that the doctor, in addition, was being menaced by Chinamen.

Just before the doctor had been kidnapped, they—from the opposite side of the house—had seen Bill Jenkins enter by a corridor window. But the burglar had come charging out a moment later, with his face distorted by fear, and had rushed off through the grounds, followed by his companion.

And while Lee and Nipper had been speculating as to the cause of Jenkins' fright, they had been hailed by Eileen Dare, who had witnessed the kidnapping of Dr. Nicholson by the two Chinamen. She had at once gone in pursuit, but had fallen heavily over a concealed root, and had hurt her knee. But she quickly explained what she had seen, and Lee and Nipper had decided to go to the rescue of the unfortunate recluse.

That was the position at the present time—a position that was charged with mystery and menace, with Dr. Jeremy Nicholson as the central figure. For some reason or other, two distinct and separate factions were pitted against him—each unknown to the other, and each bent upon serving their own particular ends.

The Chinamen, undoubtedly, had gained the upper hand at the moment, and as soon as the isolated hut upon the common was reached, they promptly bound their prisoner hand and foot. Then one of the men—he who spoke the perfect English—turned to the captive and regarded him with his almost expressionless countenance.

"Now, then, Dr. Nicholson," he said, "there is no need to waste words. We have brought you here for the sole purpose of extracting certain information from you—and if that information is not promptly forthcoming, we shall take measures to force it from you!"

The prisoner scowled.

"What is it you wish to know?" he grated.

"The hiding-place of the Captain," said the Chinaman. "Unless you reveal it at once, you will be put to the torture."

"Torture!" repeated Nicholson. "You wouldn't dare—"

"Make no mistake!" cut in the other, pointing to certain ghastly implements which lay on the floor near by. "Everything is prepared, Dr. Nicholson, and you will find that I am by no means joking! Where is the Captain?"

Dr. Nicholson writhed and struggled for a moment, and then burst into an agonised torrent of words.

"You fiends!" he exclaimed. "You diabolical, bloodthirsty heathens! You are entirely on the wrong track, and I refuse to

give you any information whatever! Do you hear—I defy you——”

“Very well, Dr. Nicholson—we shall see!” said the Chinaman, turning to his companion and grunting an order in his native tongue. “I have just given instructions for the torturing irons to be heated! When they are ready, I will repeat my question. If you then refuse to answer, you will have only yourself to blame for the consequences!”

CHAPTER II.

AN UNEXPECTED RESCUE.



BILL JENKINS, running like a man possessed, charged through the grounds of Hollowdene Manor, and did not pause until he emerged upon the common.

The terrified expression which Nelson Lee and Nipper had seen upon his face was still very much in evidence, and there could be no doubt that the man had received a very severe fright.

The very speed with which he had taken to flight proved that he had met with a very unusual experience, and his companion—Walter Hayes—had the greatest difficulty in keeping pace with him. It was not until some few moments after Jenkins had gained the common that Hayes rejoined him, and when he did so he very naturally demanded an explanation of his colleague's queer conduct.

“What the blazes is the matter with you, Bill?” he asked, in surprise. “I’ve never known you to get the wind up so badly as this before! You look scared, man—that’s what you look! Properly frightened——”

“You’re right!” said Jenkins hoarsely. “I’ve just seen the most horrible object—a ghastly, frightful-looking apparition! It was in the corridor—the most repulsive sight I’ve ever seen in my life!”

Hayes stared at Jenkins in astonishment, as well he might. Such a statement would have been surprising enough if it had been made by a child—but coming from a professional burglar it seemed incongruous.

“Rot!” he replied incredulously. “Ghosts don’t exist, you idiot! I expect you saw a suit of armour, or something of that sort——”

“Armour, be hanged!” snorted Jenkins, recovering himself somewhat. “Do you take me for a fool, Walter? I tell you I saw the most appalling spectre in the Manor—a repulsive thing with a vivid yellow face! By glory! I hope I’ll never see anything so horrible again as long as I live!”

Hayes could see that his companion was quite sincere in his assertions, and he no longer doubted that Jenkins had really witnessed something very much out of the ordinary. What it was, Jenkins himself had no idea; he only knew that it had been

sufficiently terrible to cause him to bolt without troubling to make investigations.

“Well, this is a rum go!” commented Hayes, rubbing his chin. “You went in there to see Dr. Nicholson—and instead you get scared by an apparition! I’m blowed if I know what to make of it!”

“Neither do I!” said Jenkins. “But I know that I’m not going inside that place again in a hurry! We’ll get the doctor to come out to us by some means or other, and make terms with him——”

“Great Scott!” suddenly interrupted Hayes, pointing excitedly across the common. “There’s the doctor now—in the hands of a couple of Chinks!”

Jenkins peered across the gloomy common, and he also could see the luckless Dr. Nicholson being led towards the hut by the two relentless Chinamen. The sight was a distinctly mystifying one to Jenkins and Hayes, for they had no idea who the Chinamen were, or what their game happened to be.

But one thing soon became clear to the cunning Jenkins, and he lost no time in pointing it out to his confederate.

“Look here, Walter—I don’t like the look of this!” he muttered. “If we aren’t careful we shall lose the opportunity of getting that cash from the doctor altogether! I don’t know what the Chinks are up to, but it looks to me as if they’re on the kidnapping lay! If so, where do we come in?”

“You mean that they’re going to take him away altogether?”

“That’s what it looks like,” said Jenkins. “We’d better follow, and bolt the Chinks up. If we rescue the old man from them, he’ll be so darned grateful that he’ll agree to anything we like! This is where we make him pay up, my boy—pay up to any old figure we care to name!”

Hayes nodded, and the pair at once commenced walking towards the hut, into which the Chinamen and their prisoner had now vanished. Within a few minutes the two burglars were peering into the building through a crack in the woodwork, and what they saw—and heard—almost made their blood run cold.

A candle-end had now been lighted, and by its feeble rays the two Orientals were preparing for their diabolical work. One of them had got a brazing-lamp roaring fiercely, and in its intense, blue flame he was heating the implements of torture, while his companion watched the proceedings with his expressionless face.

Dr. Nicholson, bound hand and foot, lay upon the floor, his eyes glittering with a fierce hatred. A few seconds after the arrival of Jenkins and Hayes, the Chinaman announced that the irons were ready, and his companion turned to the helpless prisoner.

“We are determined to locate the captain, no matter what the cost,” he said slowly.

“You, Dr. Nicholson, are in a position to

reveal his hiding-place, and I demand that you do so—instantly! Are you willing to obey?"

"No!" said Nicholson firmly. "No! I told you before that you are entirely on the wrong track and I will not tell you anything! You are a couple of inhuman fiends, and I refuse to treat with you under any conditions!"

For the first time the Chinaman's eyes glinted, and he motioned to his subordinate to pick up the torturing irons. The man did so at once, and snatched the now almost white-hot implement from the flame. Then, with a deliberate, studied slowness, he raised the glowing metal above Nicholson's face, and gradually commenced lowering it towards his eyes.

This was too much for Jenkins and Hayes, and with one accord they dashed towards the door, pulling their revolvers from their pockets at the same time.

"Hands up, you scum!" roared Jenkins angrily. "By thunder! I'll teach you to torture an Englishman——"

But the Chinamen did not wait to hear anything further. The candle was extinguished with great suddenness, and a moment later both the Orientals had taken their departure, slinking from the hut like a couple of shadows.

Jenkins grinned as he relit the candle.

"Good!" he exclaimed, looking at the prisoner keenly. "That was a near thing for you, doctor—but a miss is as good as a mile! I'm glad that we were able to help you, for now I reckon you'll be more willing to hand over that little amount of cash I mentioned last night—with a little bit more thrown in!"

Dr. Nicholson looked at Jenkins searchingly and then started.

"By heavens—the blackmailer!" he ejaculated, aghast. "You seem to have saved me from one peril, only to confront me with another——"

"Never mind, Dr. Nicholson!" came a voice from the doorway. "I fancy you can leave these two men to me."

Jenkins and Hayes swung round in a startled manner, and found themselves looking into the barrels of two steadily-held revolvers—held in the hands of Nelson Lee and Nipper.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHINAMEN MAKE A HAUL.



BILL JENKINS blinked stupidly for a moment, and then uttered a bellow of anger.

"Who—who the blazes are you?" he demanded, staring at the newcomers vindictively.

But Dr. Nicholson, who had recognised

them at once, provided the answer by his sudden exclamation of surprise and relief.

"Mr. Lee!" he muttered, looking at the detective quickly. "What—what brings you here at such an opportune moment?"

The detective smiled. He had a pretty shrewd notion that the doctor would not have been so pleased to see him under ordinary conditions, but his relief now was perfectly genuine.

"Nipper and I have been watching the activities of these gentlemen for some little time, Dr. Nicholson," he said, pointing to Jenkins and Hayes. "We saw them heading for this hut, and followed. Apparently, we have arrived just in time to upset their blackmailing scheme, but we seem to have missed the two Chinamen whom we expected to find here."

Lee and Nipper had set out from the grounds of Hollowdene Manor in search of the kidnappers, but had been unable to get upon their track for some little time. The Chinamen had hurried their victim off at such a speed that they had vanished from sight before Lee and Nipper had reached the common.

But the light within the shack had served to indicate the whereabouts of the Orientals, and the two detectives had lost no time in hurrying towards the shed—only to discover that Jenkins and Hayes were also bound upon a similar errand.

And so Lee and his assistant had crept along in the wake of the pair, and had witnessed their entry. A moment later the candle had been extinguished, and in the utter blackness which followed, they had failed to observe the escape of the two Chinamen, who had crept from the hut as silently as a pair of snakes.

"Yes, Mr. Lee, you have certainly missed the Chinamen," said Dr. Nicholson, in reply to the detective's remark. "They took their departure a few moments before you arrived—— Good heavens!"

The doctor's words were suddenly bitten off short as he saw the door abruptly flung open, and the two Chinamen reappear. Evidently they had been hiding in close proximity to the hut, and they now intended to turn the tables.

Lee and Nipper were standing just inside the shed, with their backs towards the door—a circumstance which was responsible for the events of the next few seconds.

For the two Chinamen, with a quickness which was surprising, flung themselves at Lee and Nipper without the slightest warning, charging into their backs and sending them sprawling. They had no opportunity to defend themselves, and before they could rise the Orientals were upon them.

"Help us to rope these two detectives!" gasped the English-speaking Chinaman, appealing to Jenkins and Hayes. "They are the enemies of all of us, and we must

render them helpless while we have the chance!"

The two blackmailers saw the force of this argument at once, and instantly joined the Chinamen—the burly Jenkins flinging himself upon Lee's outstretched body while Hayes devoted his attention to Nipper.

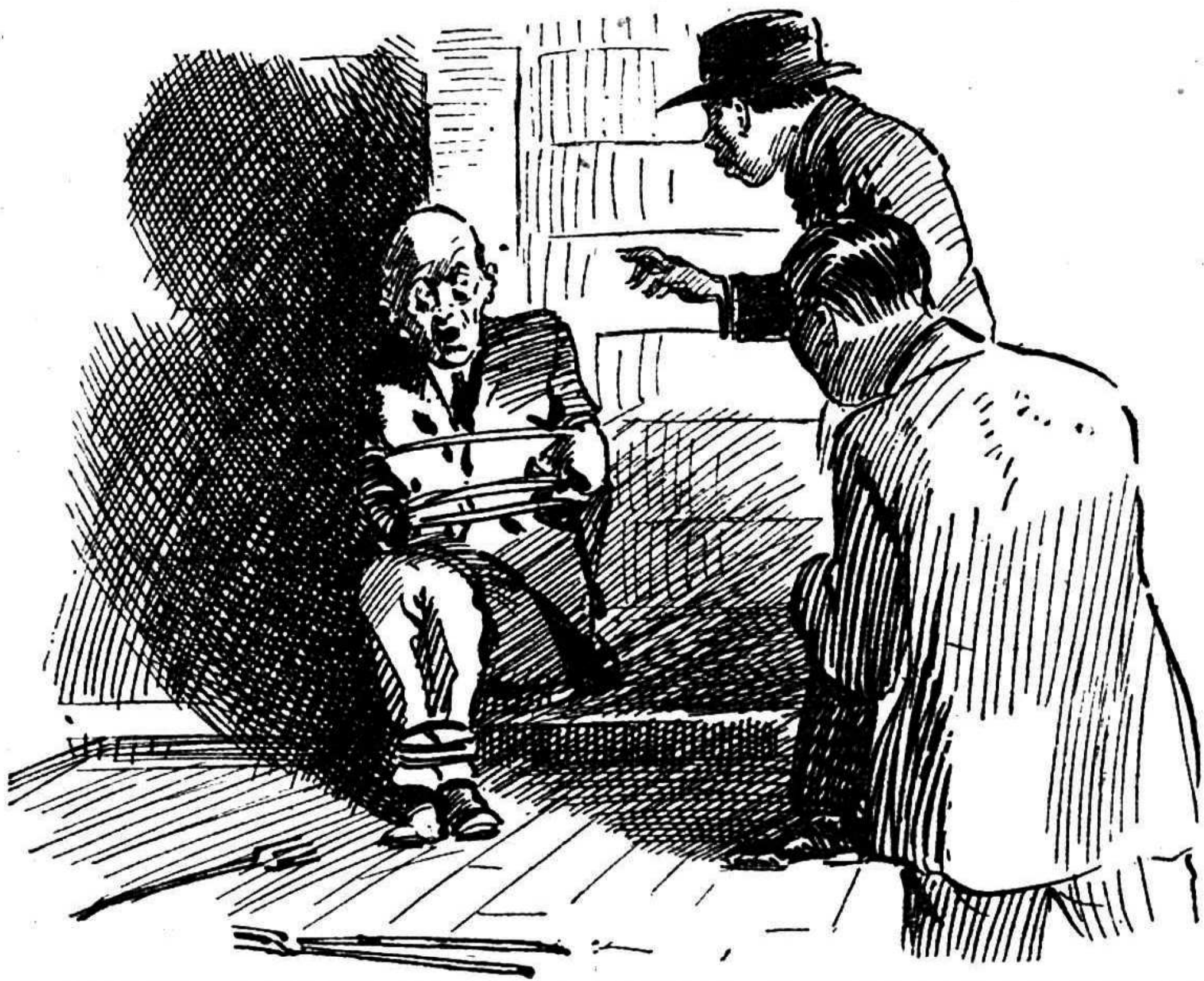
But the four criminals had all their work cut out to cope with their victims, for Nipper and his master were wiry and tough, and in the pink of condition. They put up a truly courageous fight before they were finally overpowered, and this catastrophe would not have overtaken them but

willing to agree to our terms, and to pay us what we demand, we shall have no option but to treat with these Chinamen—and to sell them your precious secret!"

The doctor looked startled.

"No, no!" he exclaimed quickly. "Do nothing of the kind, I implore you! They have made a tremendous mistake in thinking as they do, and you will only make matters worse if you do as you suggest. Tell them nothing!"

The two Chinamen looked at one another significantly, and commenced muttering together in their own tongue. Then they



"Unless you reveal the hiding-place of the captain," said the Chinaman, speaking excellent English, "you will be put to the torture."

for the drastic action of Jenkins in clubbing them with his revolver-butt.

The blackmailer had seen that this was their only hope, and he had not hesitated to resort to the measure, watching his opportunity, and dealing out severe blows to both Lee and Nipper in turn. The result was fatal, and very soon the detective and his assistant were lying upon the floor of the hut, bound and helpless.

"That's better!" said Jenkins, in a tone of relief. "Now we can finish our little talk, Dr. Nicholson. If you're still un-

exchanged nods, and again relapsed into silence, seeming, however, to be much more upon the alert than formerly.

"It's all very well for you to say tell them nothing," said Jenkins. "But we came down here to make some money, and we're not going away empty-handed, Dr. Nicholson. Will you pay the money over to us—"

Jenkins got no further, for at that moment he was served in a similar manner to how he had served Nelson Lee. Hayes was attacked simultaneously, both the

Chinamen jumping forward and bringing their revolvers down with tremendous force upon both the heads of the two men.

Bill Jenkins had nobody but himself to blame, for the Chinamen's action had been brought about by his slip in admitting that he and Hayes were aware of Dr. Nicholson's secret.

"You are mistaken, you pig of an Englishman!" said the Chinaman quickly. "You will not be able to sell us the secret, for we shall take it for nothing! Since you have acknowledged that you are aware of Dr. Nicholson's affairs, you have sealed your own doom!"

A few minutes later the half-stunned and baffled crooks were roped up in a similar manner to the others, and the most important of the two Chinamen looked at them with almost a smile on his bland features.

"Five prisoners!" he muttered gleefully. "Five prisoners—and at least three of them in possession of the facts we are so anxious to learn. It will be a surprising thing if they remain silent for long, for a little torture is sure to work wonders!"

CHAPTER IV.

EILEEN DARE GETS A SHOCK.



MEANWHILE, Eileen Dare was undergoing a queer experience within the gloomy walls of Hollowdene Manor.

After Lee and Nipper had departed upon their search for Nicholson, she had limped back to the house, feeling troubled and anxious.

All this mystery and excitement was very disconcerting—particularly on account of the fact that no progress seemed to have been made in the matter of solving it. Neither she—nor the famous detective—had so far been able to discover anything of importance, and they were just as much in the dark now as they had been at the outset.

Dr. Nicholson's secret had not been penetrated, and neither had they found anything which would in any way account for the unfortunate death of the maid-servant, Ellen Bennett.

The case seemed to get more baffling as it proceeded, and Eileen was becoming a little impatient. But she realised that she now had a splendid opportunity of again subjecting the doctor's private rooms to examination—for he was now absent from the Manor entirely, and consequently he would be unable to surprise her.

So she made her way once more to the private apartments of the old recluse.

This time, she entered boldly, her sole thoughts concentrated upon the business in hand. Only a short time ago she had thoroughly searched both the doctor's den and

his bed-room, and had found nothing whatever of a suspicious nature.

And yet she knew that there must be something here which would account for Nicholson's tremendous anxiety to keep the rooms sacred from prying eyes. If so, what could it be?

Eileen's dainty feet made scarcely any sound upon the soft carpet as she wandered round the den—peering everywhere, and noting everything which the room contained. At the end of five minutes, she told herself that there was positively nothing which had been overlooked, and she frowned a little as she opened the door of the bed-room, and entered.

But just after crossing the threshold, the lady detective gave vent to a little startled gasp of amazement, and stood as if rooted to the spot upon which she rested.

For just as she entered the room, she observed one of the oak panels in the wall slowly open, and she beheld a face peering out at her—a terrible, repellant face, of a ghastly yellow hue! The sight was nauseating in its absolute horror, and Eileen Dare, in spite of her iron nerves and strong will, felt like screaming aloud in her terror.

Her scalp seemed to shrivel upon her head, and for a few seconds she could do nothing but stare, with wide-open eyes, at that awful apparition which confronted her. She had never seen such diabolical features during the whole course of her life, and she felt sick and dizzy with horror.

And then the panel was abruptly closed—slipping into position with a little, soft click.

Eileen blinked, and then found herself wondering if she had imagined it all.

"No—it was real—real!" she muttered apprehensively. "Oh! What could it have been? I have never seen such a terrible face before!"

The lady detective had been badly scared, and she felt like turning and running from the room. But she could not bring herself to flee in so ignominious a fashion, and she resolved to make an attempt to discover the hidden panel, and to make a further investigation.

It required all her nerve to remain within the room at all, but she mastered her natural fears, and forced herself to examine the panelling with painstaking minuteness. Obviously, one of the sections was movable, for she had seen it open and close with her own eyes.

But finding a method of opening it was another matter. Try as she would, Eileen could not discover any hidden spring or knob which would actuate the mechanism controlling the panel, and after ten minutes' search she was forced to give up the task as hopeless.

Being baffled in this way did not add to the girl's peace of mind, for she was now intensely curious to know whose face she had seen framed in the open panel.

"I must find Mr. Lee at once, and tell him of my discovery," she said to herself quickly. "No doubt he will be able to succeed where

I have failed, and the sooner he is told of this awful yellow face the better it will be."

Having finally decided to give up her search for the time-being, Eileen left the doctor's private apartments, and went down to the kitchen. Here she enlisted the services of Mason, the butler—telling him that Nicholson had left the house, and that Nelson Lee had gone after him with a view to protecting him from some unknown enemies.

Mason was very much surprised, but he agreed to accompany Eileen without hesitation. She was thankful for his company, and she did not deem it necessary to enlighten him further regarding his master's plight.

Together they went out into the grounds—Eileen leading the way towards the spot where she had seen the doctor being taken by his kidnappers. Right across the tangled lawn they went, and onwards towards the main road—finding it a simple matter to follow the progress of their quarry on account of the trampled grass.

And when they were facing the great expanse of common, they were both startled by the sharp crack of a revolver—a quick, clear-sounding shot which echoed from across the common with great distinctness.

"What—what was that?" gasped Mason apprehensively.

"A shot!" answered Eileen crisply. "A revolver shot, Mr. Mason, by the sound of it! It seemed to have been fired from that little hut, and we must hurry there at once. Oh! I do hope that nothing dreadful has happened!"

She dragged at Mason's sleeve as she spoke, and together they commenced running towards the shack—Eileen almost forgetting her injured knee in her excitement.

CHAPTER V.

THE CROOKS' ESCAPE!



BANG! Bang!

Two more shots followed the first within a very short interval, and they came from the revolver which Mr. Walter Hayes was holding in his right hand.

By superhuman efforts he had managed to free one arm from the ropes which bound him, and he had lost no time in levelling his revolver at the two triumphant Chinamen—who were busily preparing their implements of torture for the second time that night.

"You'd torture us, would you?" grunted Hayes fiercely. "By Jimmy! If you don't clear out of this hut within two seconds, I'll drill you both with lead!"

Hayes loosed off another shot as he spoke, and the Chinamen, with real fear in their slanting eyes, made an extremely hurried exit. Their position had suddenly become one of great danger—for after their treatment of their prisoners, they had no doubt that Hayes would keep his word.

And as soon as they were gone, Hayes set to work to slip out of the remainder of his bonds. He had been carelessly roped up, evidently, for otherwise he would never have been able to free his right arm. But, having accomplished so much, it was a comparatively easy matter for him to complete the operation.

Having done so, Hayes turned his attention to his partner, and very soon he had the dazed Jenkins sitting up, a free man. Hayes assisted him to his feet, and Jenkins looked at him very gratefully.

"Thanks, Walter," he exclaimed thickly. "That crack on the head made me see stars, but I shall be all right in a moment. We'd better take Dr. Nicholson home—"

"Take him home!" repeated Hayes.

"Yes," said Jenkins. "We'll take him home to the Manor, and force him to sign a cheque for us! This time we'll make no mistake—"

"What's that?" cut in Hayes quickly, looking towards the door in a listening attitude. "There's somebody coming, Bill—"

"We'd better get outside—quick!" said Jenkins, in a tone of annoyance.

The pair had distinctly heard the sound of hurrying footsteps, and they had no intention of being trapped again within that dilapidated shack. So they left the place as speedily as possible, and streaked off across the common.

Just after they had gone, Eileen Dare and Mason made their appearance, and they both gave little gasps of dismay when they saw the three prisoners upon the floor. But a brief examination told them that Lee and Nipper were by no means badly hurt, and were, in fact, almost themselves. Dr. Nicholson, too, was suffering from nothing much worse than morose anger.

Within five minutes the three prisoners were liberated, and Lee and Eileen were comparing notes. But Dr. Nicholson seemed to be very anxious to get back to the Manor, and he intimated as much. He was greatly perturbed at the detective's presence at the Manor—but he took care not to show this.

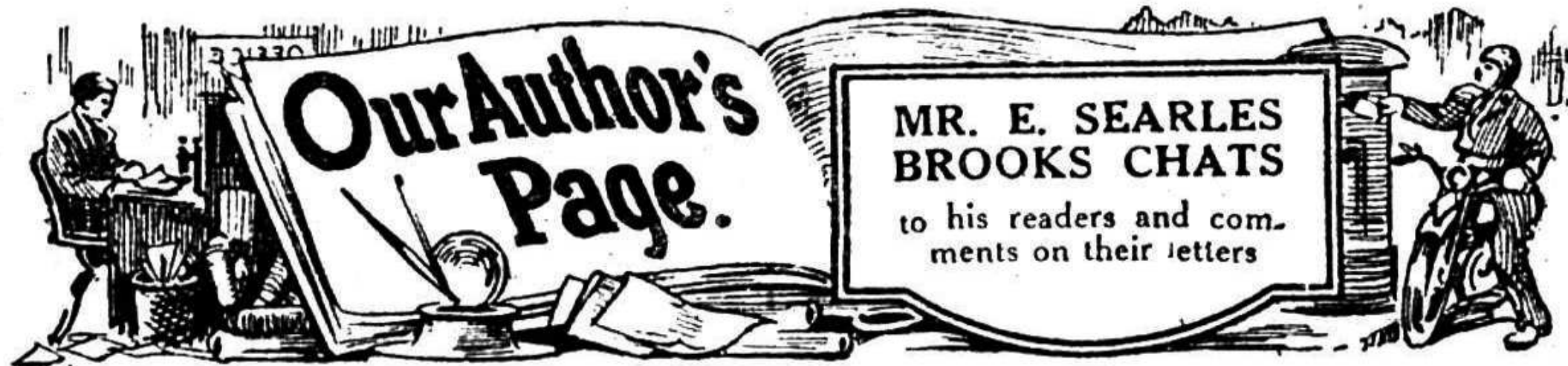
Nelson Lee asked him what it was the Chinamen were after, and also why Jenkins and Hayes were attempting to blackmail him. But the doctor merely shook his head in answer to both questions.

"I cannot explain anything to you, Mr. Lee," he replied. "The Chinamen's presence here is a great mistake, and they are very obviously labouring under the delusion that I can assist them in some manner. But they are wrong—entirely wrong! If you will excuse me, I will go back to the house at once!"

What was the real reason of the Chinamen's presence? And what could be the meaning of the ghastly yellow face which Eileen had seen?

All these questions were extremely obscure—but Nelson Lee was determined to solve them sooner or later.

THE END.



[NOTE.—If any readers care to write to me I shall be pleased to comment upon any remarks that are likely to interest the majority. If you have any grumbles—make them to me! If you have any suggestions—send them along! Remember, my aim is to please as many of you as I possibly can. All letters should be addressed to me personally, c/o The Editor, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.—E.S.B.]

Letters received: Phyllis E. Wainwright (Studley), J. F. H. (Cork), "Old Timer" (Hornsey), R. A. Ablewhite (Barnet), Frank Voce, jun. (Seaforth), "A Keen Nelson-Leeite (Hull), F. Moorhouse (Kendal), Kenneth James (Birmingham), S. Thompson (Bradford), L. H. Marshall (Manor Park), "A N. L. Enthusiastic" (E.C.), "A Girl Reader" (Wellingboro'), "Dave" (Hammer-smith), T. L. Lampon (Watford), Leslie Pawson (Harrogate), Reginald Morris (Newport, Mon.), Graham Watson (Basingstoke), William Slade (Custom House), R. Belgrave Charwell (Hornsby, N.S.W.), J. Miller (Sydney, N.S.W.), Edward Barton (Rugby), Israel Kerr (Johannesburg), W. Darling (Westbourne Grove), B. B. Wrathmell (Huddersfield), "Ian" (E.1), W. E. M. Cooper (Maldon), H. N. Boulton (Birmingham), Margery Brook (Wolverhampton), "Faithful to the Core" (Newport, Mon.), J. W. Boucher (Camberwell), C. W. R. (Chiswick), T. E. Pattinson (Walthamstow).

Although I mentioned last week that I find it impossible to give individual answers, I really feel that I must make an exception now and then. For example, there cropped up this week the case of Master T. E. Pattinson, of Walthamstow. In the November 22nd issue, I had occasion to point out to Master Pattinson that his dislike of Irene and Co. being in the stories was just a little selfish and unfair. I have, by the way, received scores of letters since—from every part of the country—condemning our Walthamstow friend for his views.

But it now gives me the greatest possible pleasure to report that Master Pattinson has acted like the real sportsman I always

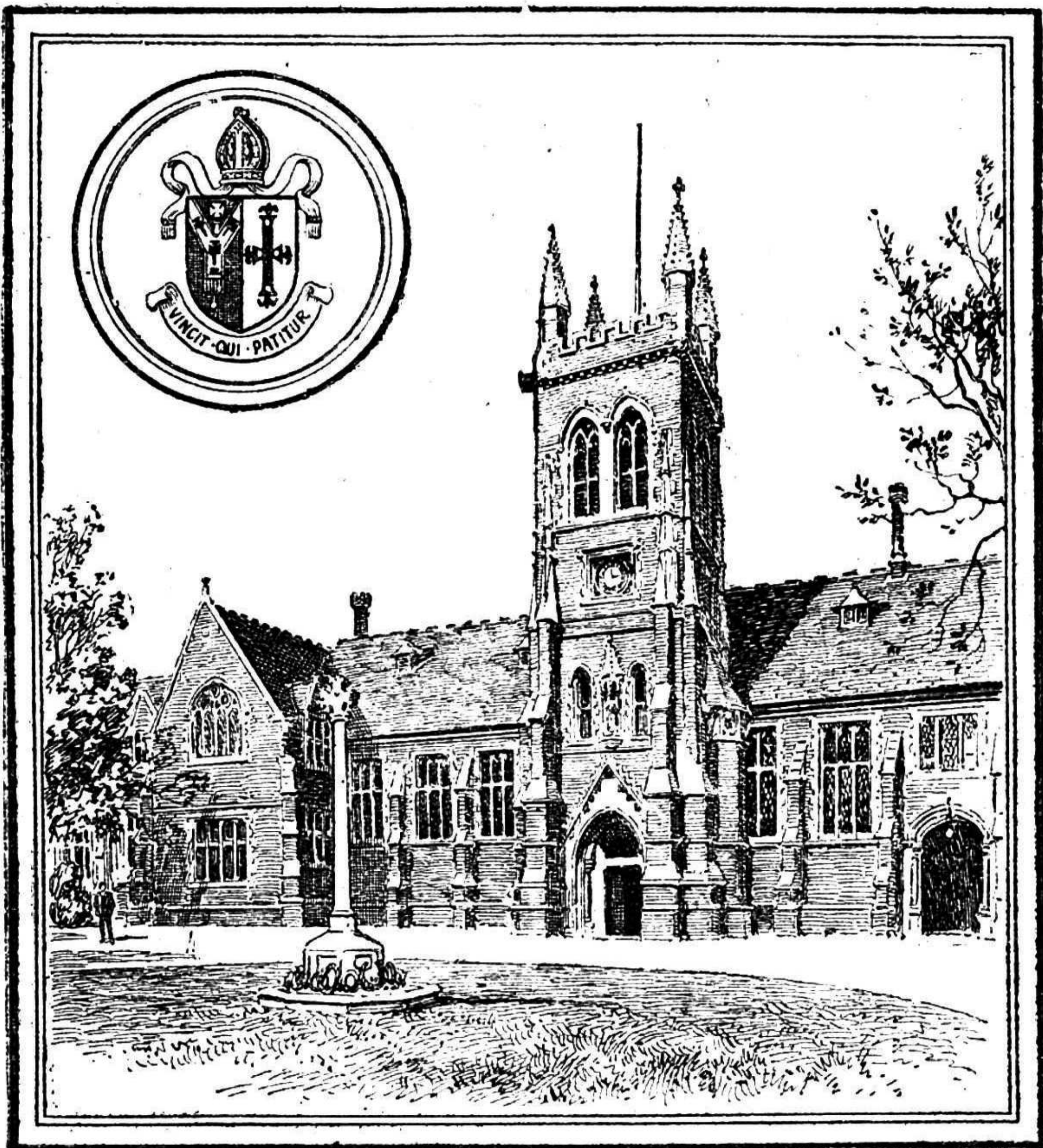
hoped him to be. He has written me another letter, and, in consequence of my remarks, agrees that Irene and Co. have a perfect right in the St. Frank's district, and that any girls have an equal right to be readers of the Old Paper. Best of thanks, T. E. Pattinson, for your frank and enthusiastic letter. You're the right sort.

Now, this is a special sort of week, isn't it? Our 500th Number, and still going strong. Although the Editor is undoubtedly singing his own song of triumph, I can't help adding a word of my own to mark the great occasion. We don't have 500th Numbers every week, do we?

And next week, after the frivolities of the festive season, we get back to more serious topics. Commencing with "The School of Hidden Dread," I have written a series which I think you will all like. By this time I fancy I know the kind of yarn you revel in most. And there's one point I wish to specially mention. A number of you have complained about Tommy Watson and Sir Montie Tregellis-West being relegated to the background. Well, in this new series they will both be well to the fore—indeed, featured. So, if you have been displeased with me hitherto, I hope, after you have read some of the new stories, that you will forgive and forget.

You mustn't think that I've forgotten all about the "St. Frank's League" idea, and the proposal for another Map of St. Frank's and district. The former is a very big proposition, and it may be months before we can get anything really going. So please be patient, and try to refrain from writing to me at once asking that it should be brought into immediate force. I don't mean that I don't want you to write—I do—but there are heaps of other subjects you can think of, I'll bet.

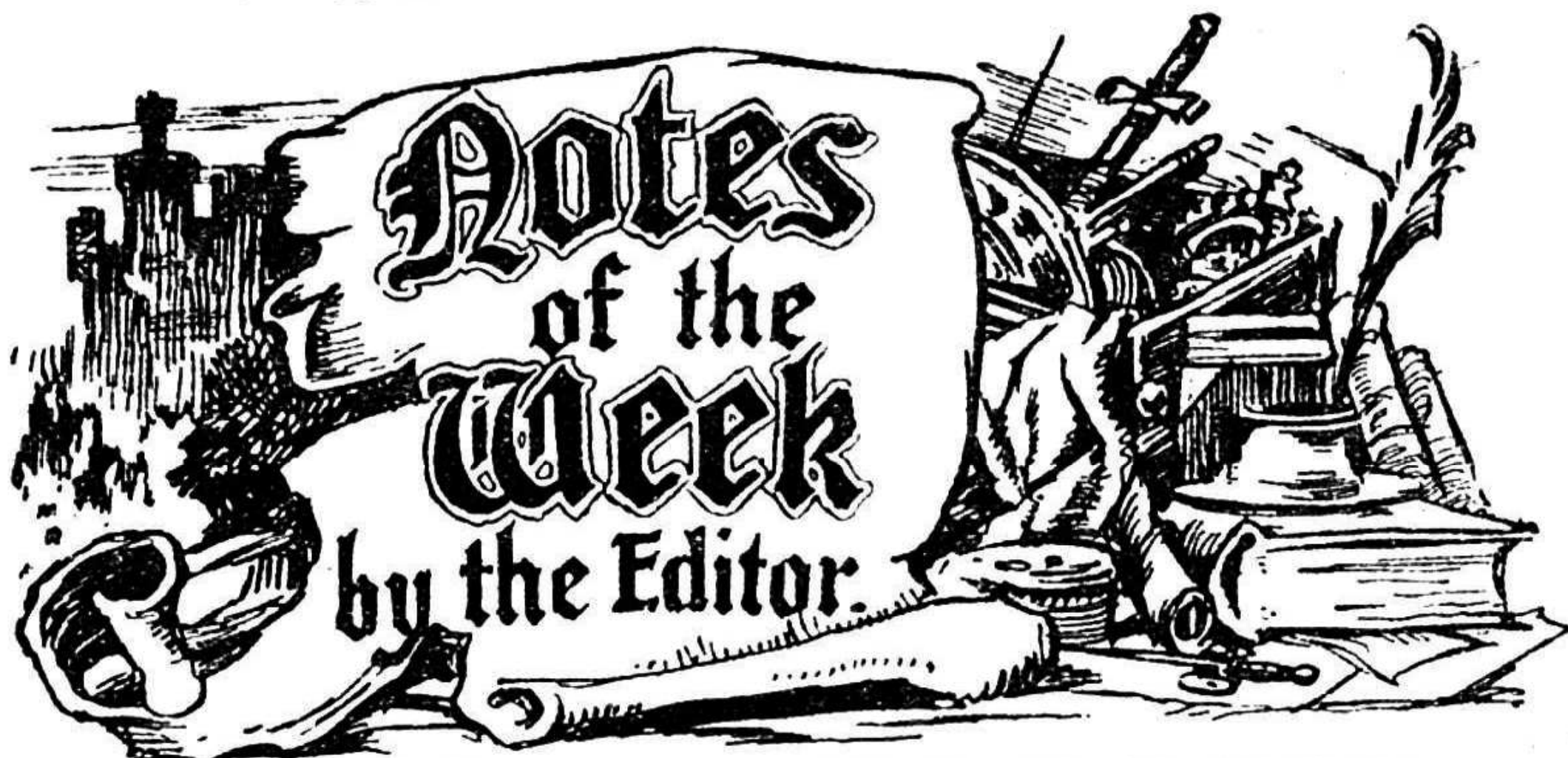
The Map, of course, is a different thing. That's coming along comparatively soon—in fact, it's being prepared now. But you mustn't expect to see it next week, or even next month. There's an awful lot of work to do on an ambitious map such as I have in mind. It's taking a long time to get all the facts together. But when it does come it'll be IT.



OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS SERIES OF ART SKETCHES.

No. 59. WHITGIFT GRAMMAR SCHOOL.

Founded by Archbishop Whitgift in the year 1596, Whitgift Grammar School was originally part of the Whitgift Hospital. The present buildings, seen in the sketch above, were erected about fifty years ago.



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

My dear Chums,

The Old Year has gone out, and with it, may we hope, all our troubles and sorrows. 1924 will be remembered as one of the gloomiest years we have ever known as regards weather. We were completely dished out of our summer, and the number of cricket matches which had to be abandoned on account of the rain tells its own sad story. I suppose we schoolboys feel the effects of a bad summer more than anybody else. But bad weather conditions seem to be pretty general all over the world. Chums write to me from Australia bemoaning the fact that they have only had four sunny days in the last two months, and cuttings from Australian papers describe the havoc wrought by floods and storms. I really think we ought to send old Josh Cuttle out there to cheer up our Australian chums a bit.

"IT AIN'T GOIN' TO RAIN NO MORE!"

I wish I could believe the cheery optimist who wrote this scag, and that we "don't have no more rain" in 1925. Perhaps if we tried auto-suggestion and said every morning "in every way it is getting finer and finer every day," we might see a decided improvement in the weather. There is nothing like looking on the bright side of things. Our friends, when they wish us a Bright New Year, really mean us to cultivate an optimistic outlook. And when you sum it up, that is the secret of enjoying oneself, of getting the most out of our work and play, and, as a nonagenarian said the other day, of living to a healthy ripe old age. For our New Year resolution, then, let us try to look at the cheerful side of things, and that you will succeed in this endeavour is the best that I can wish you for the coming year.

THE ST. FRANK'S CALENDAR.

Why not make your own calendar this year for a change? In this week's "How to Do It," Goodwin explains how to make a perpetual calendar and a special calendar for 1925. They are both of his own design, and have been carefully thought out for the benefit of our handy chums. Calendars and almanacs are always plentiful at the beginning of the New Year, but the best of them are not to be compared in durability and workmanship to the finished product of the handmade article. I wish it were practicable for me to offer a prize to those readers who make the best models from the instructions given by Goodwin. Next week in this series Goodwin will tell you how to make a cupboard to hold your tools. Every good workman likes to keep his tools clean and in a place where he can get at them easily and quickly. The tool cupboard Goodwin has designed fulfills these requirements, and is much cheaper and more convenient than a tool-chest.

A TABLE FOOTBALL GAME.

A really fascinating and realistic table football game will shortly make its appearance in the "How to Do It" series. Goodwin has been working on it for some weeks, and I think he has at last invented a game that will soon be all the rage among footer enthusiasts. I have always thought there was a touch of genius about Goodwin. Now I am certain of it.

BACK TO SCHOOL NEXT WEEK.

The Christmas holidays will soon be over and next week we shall all be back at St. Frank's. On the whole, the Fourth have done pretty well this Christmas, being first the guests of the Glenthornes, then of Lord Dorrimore, finishing up with a house-party at Grey Towers.

Your old chum,

REGGIE PITT.

NEW YEAR CONVERSATIONS

Imagined by
CHARLIE TALMADGE

I.

AT THE HANDFORTH HOME.

EDWARD OSWALD: Yes, I've made up my mind! It's New Year's Day, and I'm going to keep to my resolutions! I'll stick to them throughout the whole year.

WILLY (Singing): Tell me the Old Old Story.

EDWARD OSWALD: Stop that giddy howl, my lad! I tell you I'm going to stick to these resolutions—it's only a matter of will-power. Determination will do anything.

SIR EDWARD: Splendid, my boy! That's the way I like to hear you speak. And what are your New Year resolutions?

EDWARD OSWALD: First of all, I'm never going to get into a temper—I'm always going to hold myself in check. Secondly, I'll look after Willy with a fond, loving care—"

WILLY: Thanks—for nothing! It takes you all your time to look after yourself, you fathead! Do you think I want you messing about like that? Keep your giddy love to yourself, Ted!

SIR EDWARD: Now, now! Willy, I am shocked!

EDWARD OSWALD: There you are, pater—what's the use? Even when I make these resolutions, he jeers at me! But I shall be firm—I'll stick to it!

WILLY: Perhaps you will—but I shan't!

II.

AT SOMERTON ABBEY.

THE DUKE: Well, De Valerie, old man, I've made my resolution for the New Year.

DE VALERIE: Good! I've made one, too. What's yours?

THE DUKE: During the winter term, and all through the year, I'll look after my clothes carefully and diligently. I realise I've been too careless. In future I mean to have a crease down my trousers, and I shall never appear without a clean collar, and tidy hair.

DE VALERIE: You've gone the whole hog! I'm not quite so wholesale. I've promised my mater to write home every week—regularly. That's my firm resolution. I'll always write like clockwork.

THE DUKE: I don't call that much! I've given myself something hard—something that'll need firmness and will-power. But this is the right time to begin—on the first day of the year. Haven't you noticed how tidy I am?

DE VALERIE: By Jove, yes! You're as spotless as a new pin—except for that

smudge on your collar, and the mud behind your knee, and that rent in the back of your jacket, and those inkstains on your fingers. You've made a fine beginning, old man!

THE DUKE: Great Scott! I hadn't noticed! (Rushes upstairs).

III.

AT THE FELLOWE HOME.

FELLOWE Senr: Well, Clarence, you'll soon be off to school again—and this is the first of the New Year. What resolutions have you made?

CLARENCE: I regret to report, I haven't given it a thought.

FELLOWE Senr: You might do worse than resolve to abandon that ridiculous doggerel style of conversation. Talk naturally, my boy! Make your resolution now!

CLARENCE: All right, dad, I'll do it! And I don't believe I'll rue it—I—I mean, of course, I'll use all my force. When I return to school, I won't be such a fool. I'll talk like other boys, and make a lot of noise.

FELLOWE Senr: I'm afraid you're a hopeless case, Clarence. Still, try your best—I should like you to get out of the habit.

CLARENCE: I've already made my vow, and I'll stick to it from now. Oh, sorry! It slipped out quite by chance—my tongue leads me such a dance!

IV.

AT TREGELLIS CASTLE.

LADY HELEN: Well, Montie, the holidays are nearly over. Have you made any New Year resolutions?

SIR MONTIE: Begad, rather, aunt! I'm not going to be such a frightful ass, you know. I shan't worry about the latest cut, and the newest thing in waistcoats, and all that. I've made up my mind to cut it out—I have, really.

LADY HELEN: A very good resolution, too. I like to see you looking smart, Montie, but I am afraid you think of clothes rather too much. There are other things in life, you know.

SIR MONTIE: Just my idea, aunt!

ONE WEEK LATER.

AT ST. FRANK'S.

GENERAL CHORUS: New Year resolutions are a lot of sentimental, superstitious rot! People get you to make 'em, and they know all the time that it can't be done. I'm chucking mine from this minute! They're too much fag!

OUR PORTRAIT GALLERY. And WHO'S WHO.



T. TUCKER

No. 49. TIMOTHY TUCKER.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Rather thin, with ungainly limbs, somewhat too long for his body. His head is unusually large, and surmounted by a thick, tangled mop of black hair. Outstanding ears, and green-tinted spectacles, give him a weird appearance. Eyes dark. Hair, black. Height, 5ft. Weight, 7st. 8lb. Birthday, August 1st.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

Speaks in a peculiar, shrill voice, and uses grotesque and exaggerated language. A crank in every way. Is popularly believed to be "touched," but is really well aware of all he is doing. Is a bold agitator in any disturbance against authority.

SPORTS AND RECREATIONS:

Lecturing and making speeches are his chief hobbies. Next to these, he loves nothing better than writing long, abstruse, unintelligible articles.



CYRIL CONROY

No. 50. CYRIL CONROY.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION.

A smallish boy, with good-tempered features. By no means handsome, but attractive in his own way—a fellow instinctively liked. Eyes, blue. Hair, auburn. Height, 4ft. 11ins. Weight, 7st. 10lb. Birthday, May 12th.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

Good-natured and easy-going, and rather careless in his attire. Is noted for the smudges in his lesson-books, and is generally backward in class.

SPORTS AND RECREATIONS:

Sometimes plays for the reserves, but his form is always uncertain—according to his mood. Hobbies: Reading, cycling, and playing his cornet. On this instrument he is really excellent.

THE FOURTH At ST. FRANK'S.



No. 51. ENOCH SNIPE.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Small and thin—so thin that his clothes, although cut small, hang upon him like rags. Slightly hunchbacked, with a long neck and a projecting head. Long, thin, bony hands. Sharp pointed features, with an habitual foxy expression. His eyes protrude from his head, and are peculiarly red-rimmed. Eyes, pale blue and watery. Hair, dark and scanty. Height, 4ft. 11ins. Weight, 6st. 11lb. Birthday, October 22nd.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

Has a crawly, cringing nature. Will take a blow from a fag and creep away. But he is cunning, vindictive, and venomous. Always resents a blow or an insult, but retaliates in some spiteful, contemptible fashion behind a fellow's back. An out-and-out worm.

SPORTS AND RECREATIONS:

Is interested in nothing in particular.



ENOCH SNIPE

No. 52. HUBERT CHURCHMAN.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Average size, with pugnacious features, which belie his character. Has a cheerful expression, which indicates his personality. Eyes, brown. Hair, chestnut. Height, 5ft. 1in. Weight 8st. 2lb. Birthday, February 9th.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

Mild-mannered and peaceful, in spite of his looks. An average schoolboy, with many good qualities and few bad.

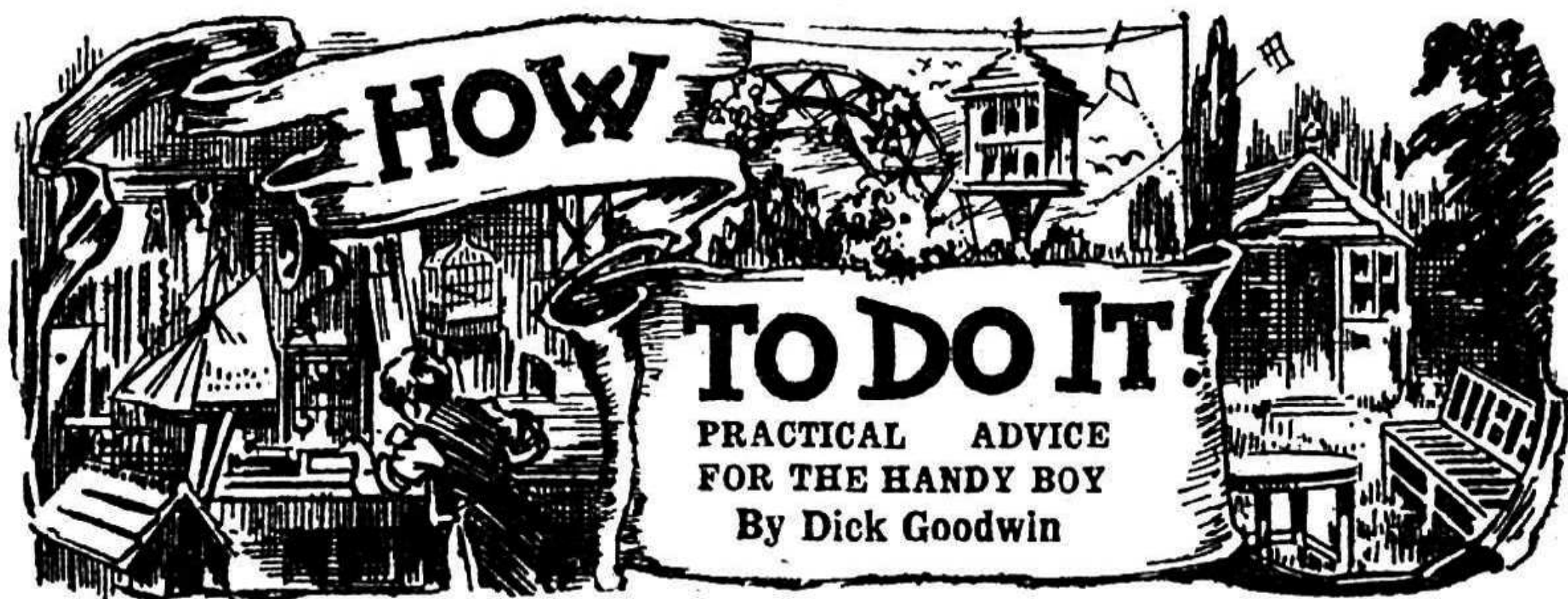
SPORTS AND RECREATIONS:

Keen on boxing—perhaps owing to sharing the same study with Ernest Lawrence. Hobbies: Keeping pets, and bartering them for others.



HUBERT
CHURCHMAN

NEXT WEEK! The Hon. Douglas Singleton, Horace Crowe, Hussi Ranjit Lal Khan, George Webb.



A SIMPLE PERPETUAL CALENDAR

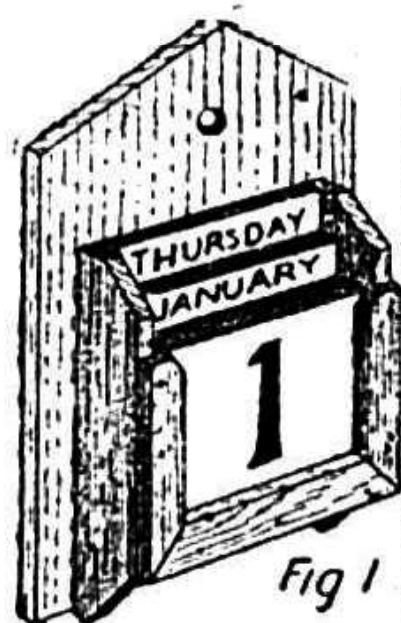


Fig. 1

As we are beginning a new year, I don't think I can do better than to describe one or two calendars I have made. The small perpetual calendar shown at Fig. 1 was made from $\frac{1}{4}$ in. prepared fretwood and thin glazed cardboard. The principal measurements are given at Fig. 2, and details of the various parts at Fig. 3. Fretwood can be obtained prepared to thickness in several kinds of wood, walnut or oak are

suitable. A piece measuring 12 in. by $4\frac{1}{2}$ in. will be enough. The back A is first prepared to $6\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $4\frac{1}{2}$ in., and a line is drawn $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. from the top; this gives the depth of the sloping top.

USING GLASSPAPER.

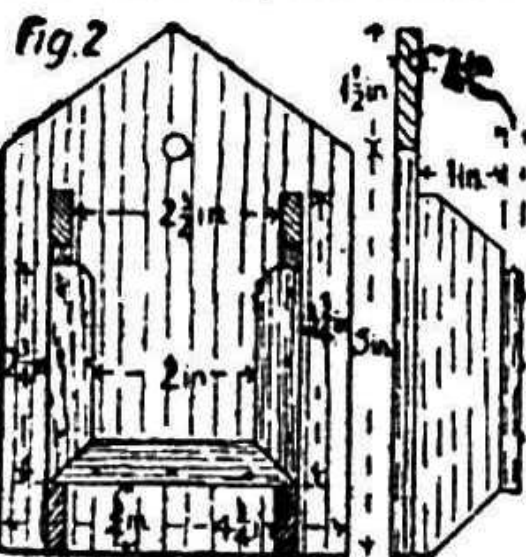


Fig. 2

Saw off the waste, and clean the edges with glasspaper, either by rubbing them on a large sheet laid flat on a table or the bench, or by wrapping the paper round a flat block of wood; if this is not done it is difficult to obtain sharp edges. The two side pieces B are now prepared to $4\frac{1}{2}$ in. by

1 in., and the front edges are cut off to a mitre, so as to leave $\frac{1}{4}$ in. top and bottom. These

pieces are screwed to the back A, with the bottom edges flush with the bottom of the back, so as to leave a space of $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. in between, as shown at Fig. 4. The shelf C is $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. long

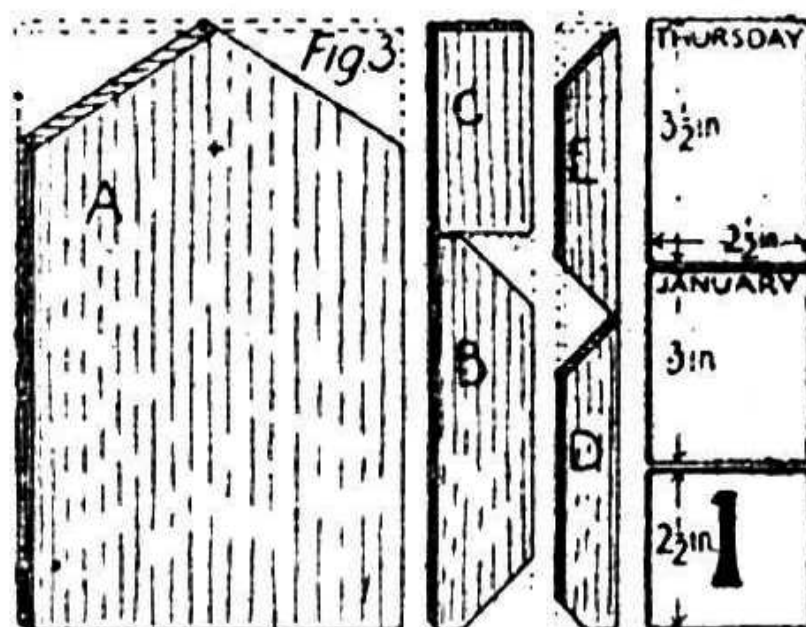


Fig. 3

and 1 in. wide, and is fitted between the side pieces, with the underside $\frac{1}{4}$ in. from the bottom. It can be glued, nailed, or screwed in position.

THE FRONT PIECES.

The three front pieces, D, D, and E, are first prepared to $\frac{1}{4}$ in. wide, and then cut to length; those at D are $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. long, and E is 3 in. long. The top corners are cut off $\frac{1}{8}$ in. each way, and the bottom corners mitred, as in frame making. These

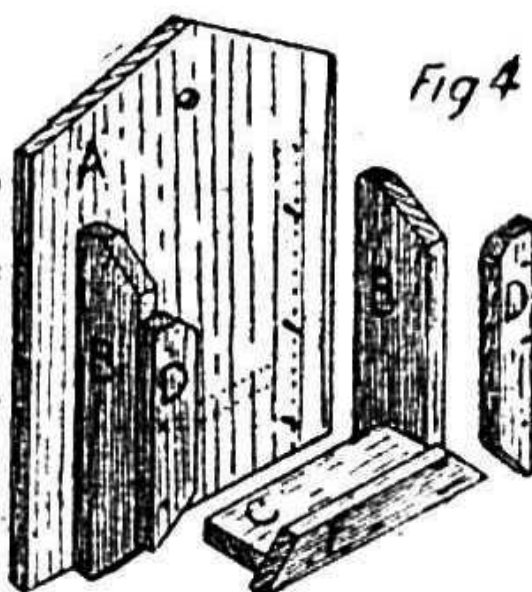


Fig. 4

pieces should be carefully fitted, as the joints must be neat. In addition to glue, either small round-headed brass screws or small brass pins should be used. A rub over with fine glasspaper will clean up the surface, which can be finished with beeswax and turpentine.

MAKING THE CARDS.

The next step is to make the cards, and the best material to use is Bristol board, of the thickness known as 3 or 4 sheet. The easiest way of preparing the pieces is to pin a large sheet of Bristol board to a drawing board, and outline the sizes in pencil. For the days, mark off seven spaces $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $2\frac{1}{2}$ in., for the months, twelve spaces, 3 in. by $2\frac{1}{2}$ in., and for the numerals, thirty-one spaces $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. square. The height of the letters should be about

$\frac{1}{8}$ in., and the distance of the top of the letters from the top of the card should also be about this amount.

THE NUMERALS.

The numerals should be approximately $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. high, spaced out about $\frac{3}{4}$ in. from the top of the card. All letters and numerals should be lightly sketched in with pencil, keeping the upright strokes upright, and the round letters, such as C, D, G, and O, circular, and the others in proportion. They should be lined in with Indian ink, and then, when quite dry, rubbed over with soft rubber to take out the pencil marks, and cut apart with a sharp knife. Sheets of celluloid (I use old films) should be cut out to each of the three sizes, and one kept before each of the three sets. If the cards do not quite fill the space, pack up with some blanks at the back.

A COMBINED BLOTTER AND CALENDAR



Fig. 5

I have made a number of the blotters shown at Fig. 5 to give away as presents, and they have proved very welcome. The

article is not difficult to make, the arrangement of the parts can be followed in Fig. 6. A represents the base which holds the sheets of blotting paper B. The base is grooved at the ends, which are rounded to allow the blotting paper to lie flat, and also in the centre to form a space for the moving card C, on which the days of the week are printed. Two stops, D, are glued on to keep the card straight. Fitting on top of the base is a piece of three-ply wood, E; this is grooved underneath to take the numeral card F; it is also grooved on the top to take a piece of glass or celluloid, G, which is kept in position by a thin metal frame, H. The handle J is of brass, and attached with round-headed brass screws, K.

MAKING THE BASE.

The base is made from a piece of yellow deal or pine, prepared to 6 in. by 4 in. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in., and finished quite true and smooth. The grooves are marked out to leave a space of 4 in. in the middle, and two projections, each $\frac{1}{2}$ in. wide, as at Fig. 7; this should be done before the ends are rounded. The latter operation is done by first paring off the corners with a sharp chisel, and then finishing with a file, if necessary, and glasspaper. An alternative method is to use a piece of $\frac{1}{2}$ in. thick wood, and then glue two 4 in. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in. strips on top. The next step is to cut a thick piece of white cardboard,

or a thin piece of cigar-box wood, barely $\frac{1}{8}$ in. thick, to 4 in. by $2\frac{1}{2}$ in., and cut notches in the sides $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $\frac{1}{8}$ in. as at C. Place the shaped piece C on the top of the base, and then fit the two stops D, 2 in. by $\frac{1}{8}$ in. by $\frac{1}{8}$ in., so that the card or wood will move up and down quite easily.

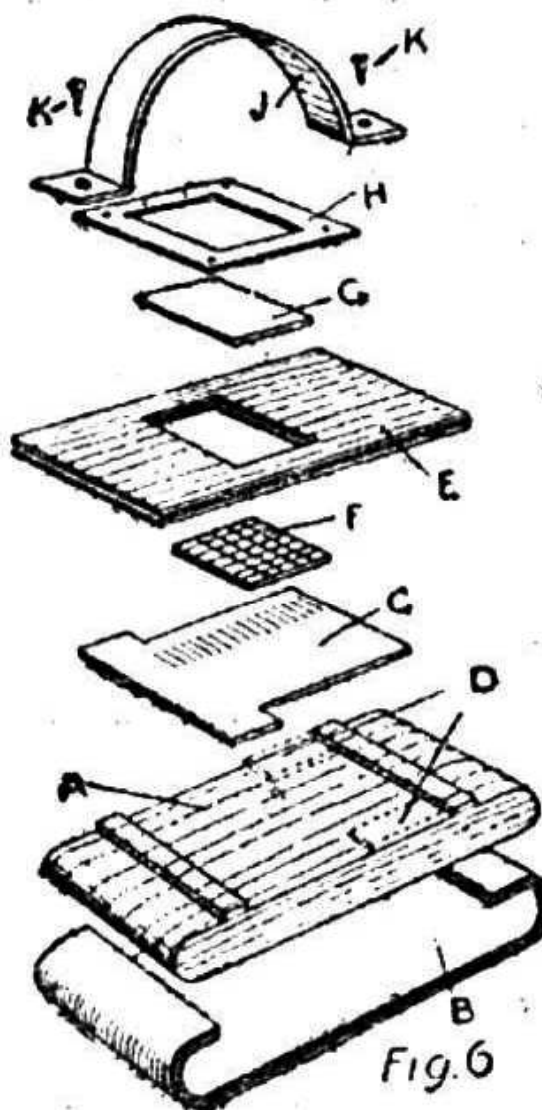


Fig. 6

THE TOP PIECE.

The top piece E is made from three-ply wood, $5\frac{1}{2}$ in. by 4 in. by $\frac{1}{8}$ in., with a centre opening 2 in. by $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. The easiest way to make the opening is to first mark it out with try-square and gauge on both sides, bore two 1-in. holes with a centre bit, and then pare to the lines with a wide chisel. A rebate must be cut on the top to take the glass or celluloid, but this, as shown at Fig. 8, is quite a

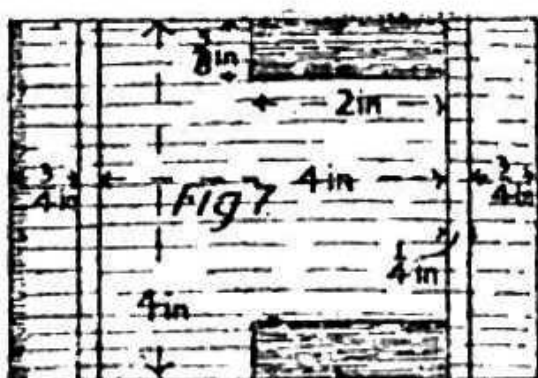
simple matter, for all that is required is a knife-cut made $\frac{1}{8}$ in. outside the opening, carried down as far as the top layer, the latter being lifted up with the knife blade. A similar rebate is cut underneath, but here it is not necessary to cut the rebate all round the opening, just

sufficient to take the numeral card F, as indicated by the dotted line in Fig. 8.

THE NUMERAL CARD.

The card F is $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $1\frac{1}{8}$ in., this allows of $\frac{1}{8}$ in. top, bottom, and one edge, to fit in the rebate and show a $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. square space.

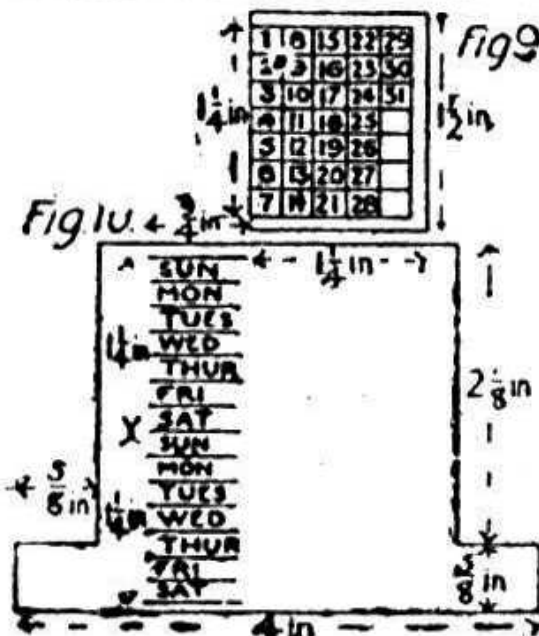
The brass plate covering the top opening is cut to $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. by 2 in., with a centre opening of 2 in. by $1\frac{1}{2}$ in., small holes are drilled for screws, as indicated at H. The handle J should be made of stiff sheet brass, 6 in. long and $\frac{1}{8}$ in. wide. The curve should be bent round a piece of round wood, and the ends bent in vice. Holes are drilled to take $\frac{1}{8}$ in. or $\frac{3}{16}$ in. round-headed screws, as at K. The numerals,



as at Fig. 9, should be marked on Bristol board or on glazed paper, and pasted on the card. The lines must be accurately marked, and the numerals as well as the lines drawn in Indian ink. The days are marked between lines the same distance apart as the numerals—this is important; the space they occupy must not be more than $\frac{1}{4}$ in.

FINISHING.

When all the parts are complete, the wood should be cleaned up with fine glasspaper, and either ebonised with stain or Indian ink, or varnished, and the metal parts polished with fine emery cloth, and brushed over with a hard nail-brush and pumice powder. It is warmed, and then brushed over with lacquer made of shellac and spirits of wine. The paper is fitted on and the top screwed down to complete.



IN REPLY TO YOURS

Correspondence answered by E. O. Handforth.

(Note.—Readers of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY can write to me and I will reply on this page. But don't expect an answer for several weeks, perhaps five or six. Address your letters or postcards to E. O. HANDFORTH, c/o, the Editor, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. —E.O.H.)

ALFRED HAYWARD (Plymouth): Here! What's the idea of saying I'm a fake? You're welcome to Candles. She must be one of those melting girls.

VERONICA KELLY (Plymouth): My big sister is named Edith. You're right—Willy doesn't care about girls. He's just like me in that respect.

ALLEN STRAW (Plymouth): So your pal says I'll give you a silly answer? Like his nerve! As a matter of fact, I haven't got room to answer you at all.

ISLE OF WIGHT DARKY (Sandown): You seem to be a bit of a terror. Go to school with four boys and they scared of you! You must be like Ena. Hard lines!

TREBOR YREFFOEG HCRUHC (Norwich): What do you think I am, a Russian?

After calling me all those names, you're lucky to get even mentioned, blow you!

F. W. MASSWE (Mansfield): So you'd like to see me in Colney Hatch? Sorry, old man, but I'm not coming there—so you'll have to wait in vain.

W. SMITH (Hyde): It's all right—by the time you read this you'll have had a letter from somebody about those back numbers. Thanks, old man.

MORRIS LION (W.1.): I'll bet you're a fierce sort of chap with a name like that. Sorry, I've just seen you wanted to be called "Honest Injun." Don't be wild.

SMITH THOMPSON (Bradford): Percy Bray came with Buster Boots. Thanks for those sketches. They're jolly clever. You'll be a great man one day.

SYMPATHISER (Timbuctoo): The first time I knew that Timbuctoo was in the East End. If you call me dense I'll tell you to go to where you pretend to come from.

F. W. A. PARTRIDGE (S.E.1.): Yes! I do object to you saying that I ought to be boiled in oil. You need to have your feathers plucked.

J. D. ARCHER (Norbury): Yes, please write again—always glad to hear from sensible chaps. You needn't worry—I didn't vote at all.

BOXING STEVE (Cardiff): I must have missed you when you came to St. Frank's—to knock me out in the first round. Perhaps you were that tramp I saw.

G. W. D. Junr. (Aberdeen): So you're another one who thinks my yarns are piffle? You ought to hear what I think about your letter.

CISSIE DOUST (Plymouth): Sorry you've had to wait such a long time, but the Christmas holidays delayed everything. Thank goodness I've got a good excuse!

FRANK LESCUM (Melbourne): There's no need to hold that boxing tournament. As you say, I should go right through the whole lot. So why waste time?

W. D. M. (Adelaide): Awfully sorry I can't give a decent reply to your lovely letter. Yes, write again, and I'll answer in the way you request.

NO NAME (Sydney): Haven't you Australian chaps got any names, or what? Jerry Dodd's pals are Tom Burton and Augustus Hart.

PHIL EPALS (North Adelaide): Willy would rather jump into a duck-pond than kiss a girl. Why, the young bounder won't even kiss Ena!

DON MORCOM (Unley, S. Australia): So that letter of yours came nearly twelve thousand miles? When I opened it, it was just as good as new.

C. J. WEISE (Potchefstroom, S.A.): Jolly glad to hear from you, and sorry I can't spare you more space. I don't want to make all the others jealous.

RALPH GRANT (Kildare): Good old Ireland! I always said it was a fine place. Glad you think my stories are full of thrills. I knew it all the time.

F. G. PONT (Catford): Yes, certainly, I can give you those addresses—Reggie Pitt, Boots, Church, McClure, etc. They're all exactly the same as mine.

ARCHIE, MAY, BOB, ENA, ARTHUR (Ealing): That club of yours isn't up to much, if you all decide that I should write less for the Mag. But you don't mean it.

JACK ROGERS (Whittingham): How can you tell such whoppers? I know jolly well you didn't meet Irene and Marjorie at Wembley. You can't pull my leg like that.

ERNEST GITSHAM (Newcastle-on-Tyne): Quite right, old man. My stories are too short. Of course I write them longer, but Pitt carves the giddy things up.

GOLD DUST DAN (Platt Bridge): Help! Water! Here we are again! For sheer

persistence you take the giddy biscuit. I dream about Deadwood Dick nightly.

JOVIAL JOE (Astwood Bank): What's the good of telling Willy not to gorge himself? He's pigheaded, and he'd go and do it just to spite me.

J. W. BARGE (Birmingham): Didn't your sister get a reply? I think she must have received it by this time, because I always reply to EVERY letter.

A LOVER OF GOOD STORIES (Hove): It's a good idea of yours for me to have more space for my replies, but they're jolly stingy with their giddy pages.

LAURIE WILSON (Dunstable): If you think I was born on the first day of April, that's enough. You're no pal of mine. I won't say another word. Blow you!

K. E. S. (Devonport): Don't be an ass! You don't use your brain for ju-jitsu. It's an exercise, and all you do is to bring your muscles into play.

L. MORRISON (Netley Abbey): It's no good telling Willy to keep his own money. He's got a special receptacle for all his cash—Mrs. Hake's till.

JAMES MILLWARD (Birmingham): My dear ass, Mrs. Stokes has been with us for months. She presides over Mr. Stokes's quarters in the Ancient House.

IVONIAN (Lewisham): Good old R.T.! Your praise is embarrassing. I hope I'll never do anything to spoil your good opinion of me. Thanks muchly, old man.

J. M. DOYLE (Acton): Sorry I can't give you that address; I don't even know it. By this time you will have learned why things are changed in the Old School.

R. BRIAN STEEL (Westcliffe): I've a good mind to bring an action for libel. Writing me on a postcard, and calling my stories potty. It's awful!

EDWARD S. BEST (Tooting): You say you like football stories? Good! I'll see what I can do. I'll write one myself, if you like. You want a good 'un, don't you?

JOHN CLARKE (Navan): The best runner in the Fourth is the chap who gets there first. I won't mention names, but you know whom I mean.

EILEEN ROBERTS (Kensal Rise): Your remarks about my face are so uncomplimentary that I simply refuse to have anything to do with you. You're a naughty girl.

W. G. K. (Homerton): I don't punch a chap's nose for not writing to me—I only punch it when he insults me. Your letter is one of the right sort.

CECIL W. ETHERIDGE (Brooklyn, N.Y.): Yes, I was surprised to get your letter. Thanks very much. I love N.Y. Please write and tell me how you get your copy.

TED.



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MEMORIES REFRESHED HERE.

Christmas Day on the prairie! Our wonderful heroes, Bob Brave and Claude Courage, are in the hands of Indians, threatened with death. Bob Brave is tied to a stake, and the Indians are dancing round him like the dickens. But Claude Courage has escaped, and is racing across the boundless prairie to fetch the North-West Mounted Police from Fort Adventure. Will he be in time?

CHAPTER X. TO THE RESCUE.

CLAUDE COURAGE raced on—ever on!

Across the snow-swept plains, over the boundless prairie, and through the canyons and gulches! Travelling in Alaska and Klondike is jolly hard, and Claude Courage made light of it. He was racing to Fort Adventure to fetch help for his chum. What did he care about difficulties?

He knew that he had to get back before dawn, or the game would be up. Unless he got back in time, Bob Brave would be served up for breakfast. Already the cauldron was prepared, and Bob Brave's future looked exciting.

At last, when the first grey threads of dawn were appearing in the sky, Claude reached the Fort. There it stood, on a little hill in the middle of the prairie, a real old-fashioned Wild West fort, made of logs, with log walls surrounding all the buildings. Claude gave a gasp of relief as he saw it, for he was nearly beaten.

As he rushed up to the entrance, a sharp cry rent the air.

"Halt! Who goes there?"

"Help!" gasped Claude. "Indians—Redskins—"

"Bust me if it ain't one of us pale-faces!" exclaimed Sergeant Bones, of the

N.W.M.P., who was on sentry duty. "Injuns, did you say?"

"Thousands of 'em" cried Claude huskily. "They—they—"

But his long run had been too much for him, and the brave lad swooned!

CHAPTER XI.

BOB'S TERRIBLE ORDEAL.

"UGH! Paleface boy heap plump! Make good breakfast!"

Leaping Elephant dug Bob Brave in the ribs and chuckled. The war-dance was nearly at an end, and things were beginning to look pretty squiffy for poor old Bob. Indians waltzed round him in thousands.

The dawn was already beginning to appear, and yells of impatience and triumph from the Indians warned the brave British lad that the end was very near.

"But am I downhearted?" laughed Bob. Brave words, but the Indians were more intent upon eating Bob. And in the meantime, Claude had recovered from his swoon, and was talking to the commander of the fort—a huge man with a grizzled beard and piercing eyes. General McTavish was a great fighter. Throughout the length and breadth of the Indian country, he was known as the Terror of the Prairies.

"Enough, lad!" he roared, after Claude had told him all. "Enough! We'll go back with you, and rescue your chum!"

"But shall we be in time?" panted Claude.

A bugle sounded, and within a few minutes the relief force was ready—a thousand men strong. And at a word from General McTavish they leapt into the saddle and tore across the plains to the rescue!

(What is happening to Bob Brave? See next week's instalment!—AUTHOR.)

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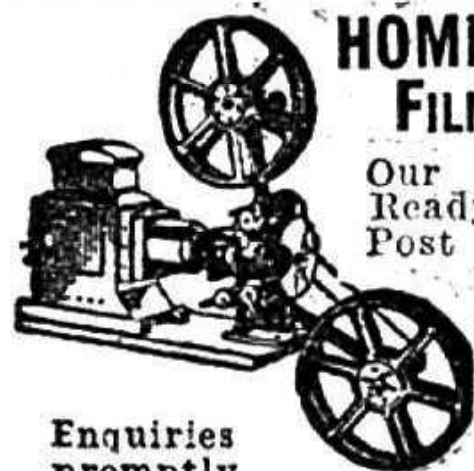
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