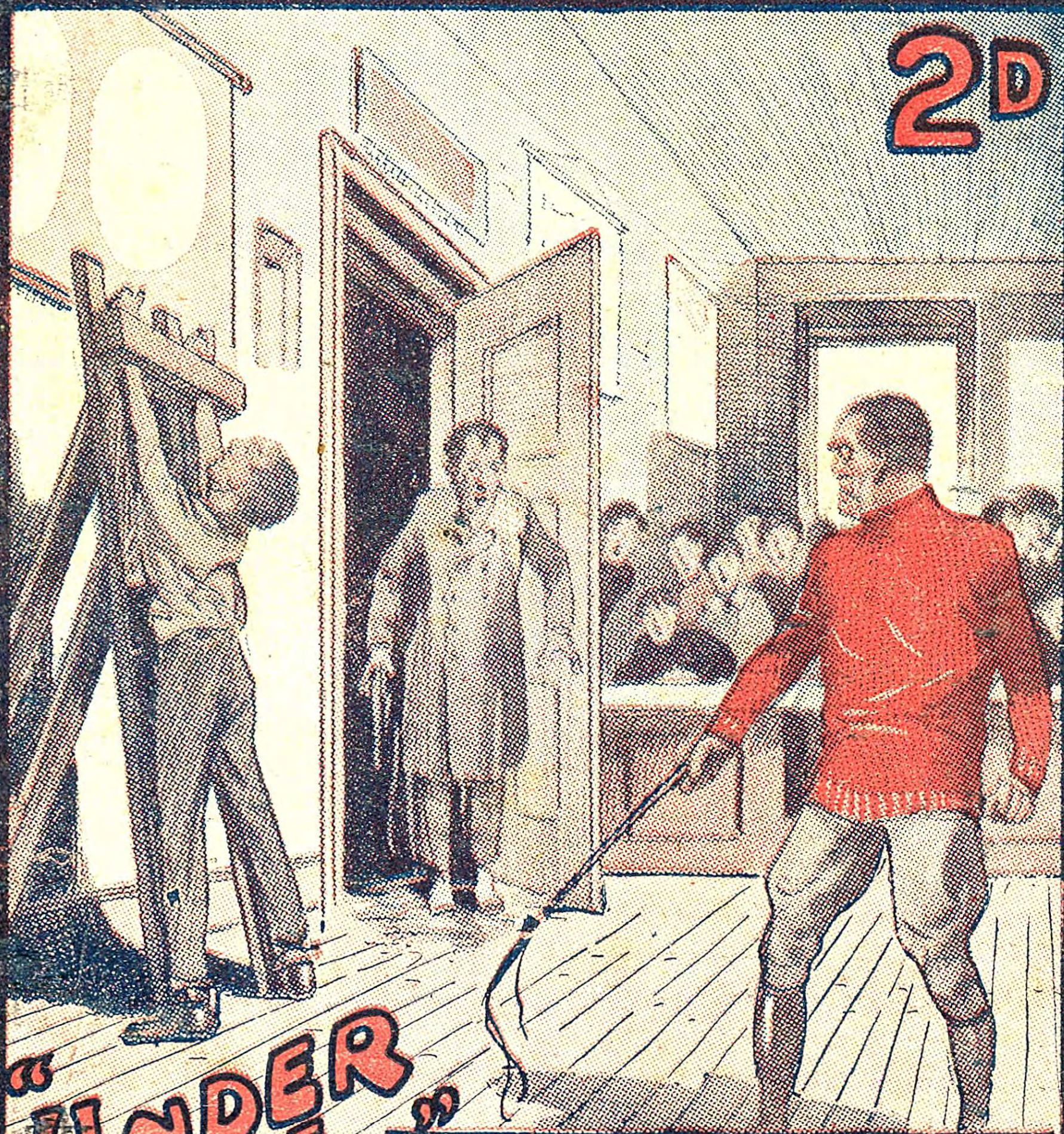


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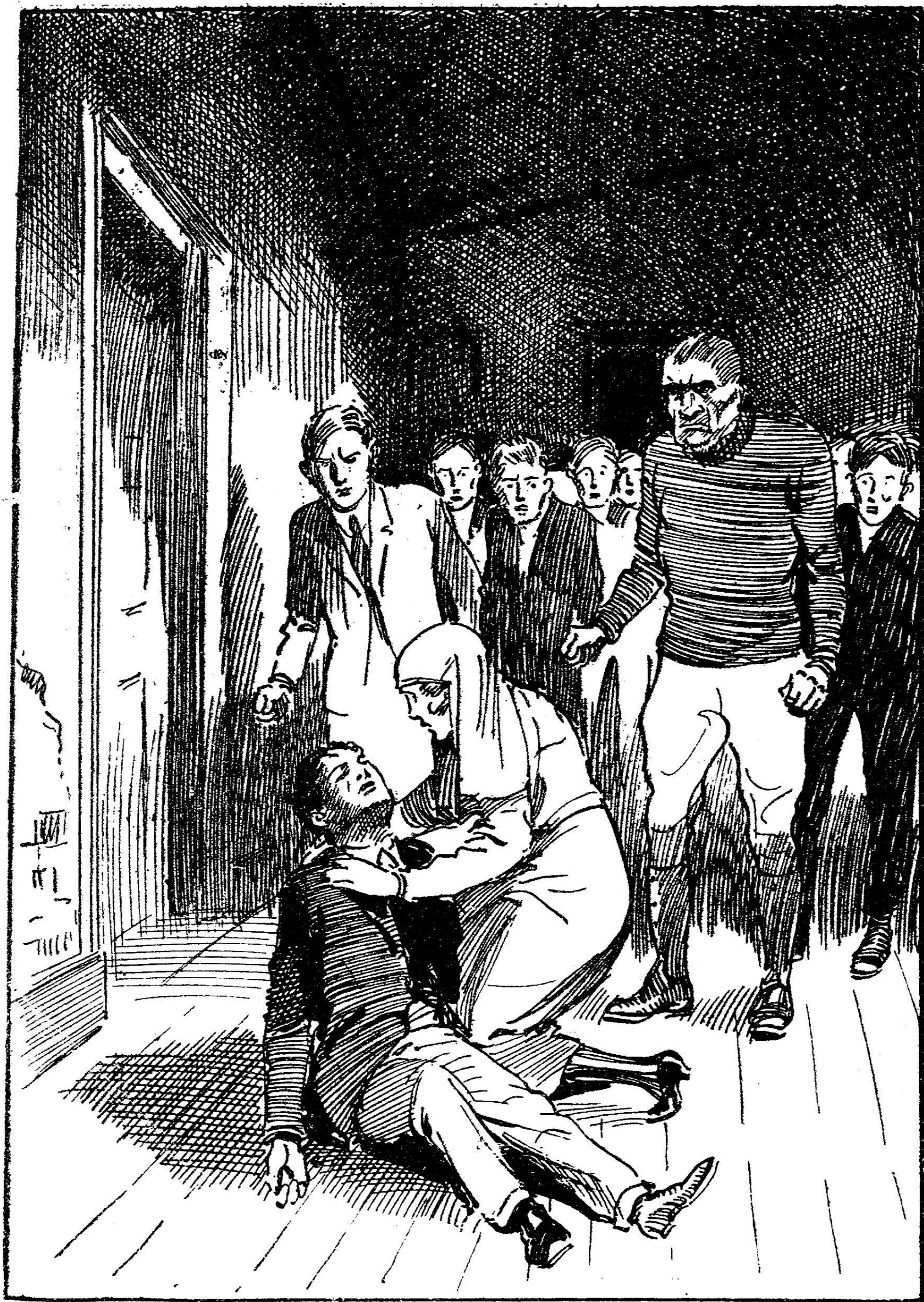
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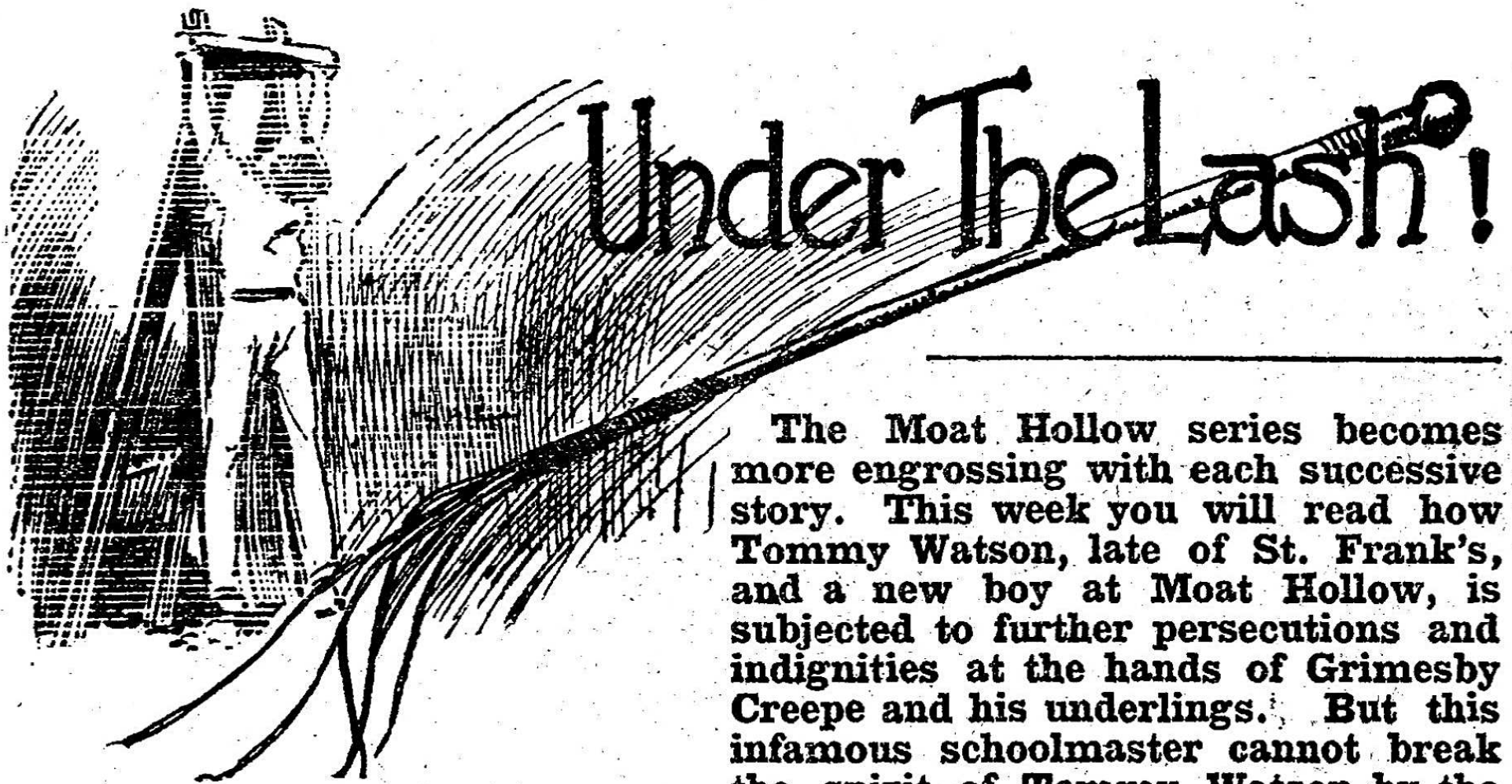
**"UNDER
THE
LASH"**

THE DOOR FLEW OPEN AND PROFESSOR TUCKER STAGGERED IN.

From This Week's Grand Long Story of the Moat Hollow School, introducing the famous boys of St. Frank's.



Carefully, tenderly, the nurse lifted Watson's head from the floor.



The Moat Hollow series becomes more engrossing with each successive story. This week you will read how Tommy Watson, late of St. Frank's, and a new boy at Moat Hollow, is subjected to further persecutions and indignities at the hands of Grimesby Creepe and his underlings. But this infamous schoolmaster cannot break the spirit of Tommy Watson by the

methods that have succeeded so well with other boys at the school. Besides, Watson has a number of staunch chums (his former schoolfellows at St. Frank's), who have found out a few unsavoury facts about Creepe's methods, and mean to rescue their chum from Moat Hollow. A mysterious phantom figure, whose identity is unknown, has on more than one occasion come to Watson's aid unexpectedly. Who is this mysterious friend? Perhaps some of my clever readers can discover who he is in this week's brilliant narrative.

THE EDITOR.

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

CHAPTER I.

SPOOFING THE PROFESSOR.

PROFESSOR SYLVESTER TUCKER, the science master at St. Frank's College, toddled briskly across the lobby of the Ancient House.

The professor always toddled. He had a curious little walk, taking short steps, with his body inclined slightly forward. As usual, he was attired in his baggy trousers, rusty frock-coat, and old-fashioned topper. The expression in his eyes was far away and dreamy.

"Ah, splendid! I was just coming to look for you, my dear uncle! I should just like a few words, if——"

Timothy Tucker, of the Fourth, blinked as his uncle walked straight on as though he didn't exist. T.T. was proud of his celebrated uncle, and he never tired of bragging about him. So it was a bit disconcerting to be ignored in this fashion.

Timothy Tucker hurried after the professor and pulled him by the arm.

"Really, my dear uncle!" he protested severely.

"Eh? What's that? And who, sir, may you be?" demanded the science master, peering at his nephew through his enormously thick, horn-rimmed spectacles. "How dare you detain me? I have an important engagement with Mr. Stokes, in the Ancient House."

"But you're in the Ancient House now, although you won't be if you keep walking towards the exit," said T.T. absently. "I am afraid you are in one of your customary conditions of absent-mindedness, my dear sir. Most distressing! Most lamentable! Allow me to point out——"

"Upon my word!" interrupted the professor testily. "Am I to be bothered and pestered like this by you, young man? Who are you? What do you mean by disturbing my train of thought?"

"I'm Timothy—your nephew, sir——" began T.T.

"Stuff and nonsense!" broke in the professor. "My nephew! Preposterous! I have no nephew—— At least——" He

broke off, stared at Tucker a little harder, and came to earth. "Why, to be sure!" he went on, beaming. "Of course! My nephew, Timothy. How are you, my boy?"

"I'm in the best of health, my dear uncle—the very best of health."

"Splendid!" said the professor genially. "That's the way, Timothy! And how is your father? What brings you here, and when do you think you will return?"

"Dear, dear!" sighed T.T. "I must confess, dear uncle Sylvester, that you are getting worse than ever. I am always here—I live at St. Frank's. I'm in the Fourth, uncle."

"Upon my soul! You don't really mean to say so?" said the professor. "So I'm your fourth uncle? I'd no idea of it, Timothy. But there, one is always liable to forget one's brothers and other relations. Give them my very kindest regards, won't you?"

Professor Tucker beamed, nodded, and passed on his way. He was so absent-minded that even now he failed to grasp the situation with any distinctness. He only knew that he was deeply engrossed in new comets, that had appeared in the sky, and all other matters sank into paltry insignificance.

Timothy Tucker looked out into the Triangle, and sadly shook his head as the professor toddled off towards the gymnasium. T.T. knew well enough that his uncle had no real wish to go to the gymnasium at all. But it was one of the professor's chief characteristics to wander about the school, and to penetrate all sorts of places he took no interest in whatsoever. On four distinct occasions the professor had invaded Mrs. Poulter's kitchen, and on one of these historic visits he had actually commenced lecturing the kitchen staff, under the impression that he was in the class-room.

It was a bright winter's afternoon, and there was a keen nip in the air. Morning lessons were over, and as it was a half-holiday, most of the juniors were in the highest of spirits.

Reggie Pitt and Handforth and many other stalwarts of the Fourth were on Little Side. The Triangle was neglected, save for one or two small figures who had just appeared out of the Ancient House.

"There he is!" exclaimed Willy Handforth crisply. "Run to earth, my lads! Let's grab him before he can escape again! There's nothing like seizing the opportunity while it's on the spot."

Willy's companions were Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon. The heroes of the Third had been searching for Professor Tucker, and now that they had found him they lost no further time.

Just as the professor was about to enter the gymnasium he found the way barred, for Willy & Co. stood in the path. The

three fags raised their hats with grave salutation.

"Good-morning, sir," said Willy briskly. "We've been looking everywhere for you—"

"Indeed!" interrupted the professor, adjusting his spectacles. "And what do you want, young man? Be good enough to leave me in peace. I have a most important engagement—"

"We want you to come and look at our new wireless set, sir," interrupted Willy. "It's a spanker—I made it myself, so I ought to know. We'd like to have your opinion on it, sir."

Professor Tucker shook his head.

"I'm afraid the idea is quite out of the question," he replied. "Good gracious me! Wireless! Why should I come and waste my time over such trivial—"

"Oh, well, of course—if you don't want to there's an end of it," said Willy. "I wouldn't press you, sir. You know best. Lemme see, Juicy. In amount ten minutes there's somebody going to speak on astronomy, isn't there?"

"Astronomy?" ejaculated the professor with a start.

"Yes, sir—all about the stars, you know," explained Willy. "An astronomer is a fellow who spends his time with a telescope, and—"

"Yes, yes, yes! To be sure!" broke in the professor testily. "Do you think I don't know what an astronomer is, young man? Is it possible that some learned gentleman is to give a lecture at this time in the day?"

Willy laughed carelessly.

"Wireless is a wonderful thing, sir," he replied. "It's surprising what you hear on the giddy radio. Anyhow, this chap is going to spout on the stars in about ten minutes. Why not come and listen in?"

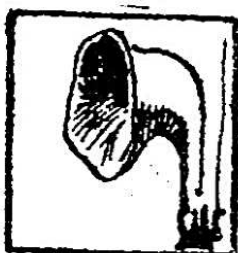
Professor Tucker nodded.

"I will!" he replied firmly. "Most assuredly I will! It is just possible that I may hear some further information concerning the remarkable comets which have recently been seen in the vicinity of the Axtellini Group."

And murmuring happily to himself, the professor was gently but firmly led off by Willy Handforth and his co-conspirators.

CHAPTER II.

WILLY'S LATEST.



WILLY HANDFORTH flung open the door of his little study.

"Here we are, sir," he announced brightly. "Walk in! Take a seat, sir!"

"Thank you—thank you!" beamed the

professor, peering round. "Good gracious me! Where are we? What is this—this place you have brought me to?"

"My study, sir!"

"Your study?" repeated the science master. "Good gracious! Do you actually perform your studies in this singular apartment? For the moment, I though we had wandered into a menagerie!"

The professor was hardly to be blamed for these remarks. Handforth minor's study was an extraordinary room. It was not much bigger than a clothes closet, and one wall was entirely filled with cages. Professor Tucker found himself under the critical eyes of a white rat, a ferret, a guinea-pig, and sundry other minor animals. Willy was the most enthusiastic collector in the Third. He wasn't supposed to keep these pets in his study, but he defied authority with calm, calculated indifference.

"It's all right, sir—you needn't look at Ferdinand and Septimus, and Rupert, and the others," said Willy hastily. "This is the wireless set—over this side. If you'll just stand by a minute I'll tune in."

"Ah, yes! But is it really necessary to play any musical instrument?" asked the professor mildly. "This—this tuning in—"

"Oh, that's only just a wireless term, sir," explained Willy. "There's no tune at all, really. Just you watch, and I'll give you a few pointers. I'm always ready to help a beginner, you know," he added kindly.

The professor peered at the weird contrivance before him with impatient interest. It was an astonishing looking mixture of wires, coils, metal boxes, and sundry knobs were attached in various positions. The set was home-made—one glance was sufficient to prove this.

Willy fixed on the earphones, and proceeded to tune in. He moved the knobs in various directions, and the professor stood looking on, more impatient than ever.

"Very interesting, no doubt—very instructing and amusing," he observed. "But, my dear lad, I can't possibly spend my time—"

Zurrrrh! Zip! Zzzurrrr!

These extraordinary sounds proceeded from an enormous loud-speaker which stood on the top of the cupboard. The professor gazed at it with a start.

"Dear me!" he murmured. "What is this strange disturbance?"

"It's all right, sir—just tuning in!" explained Willy, glancing up. "Haven't quite got the wave-length yet; but— Ah, here we are! Wait a minute. I'll switch on the loud-speaker again in a tick!"

He became tense and alert, and re-adjusted the knobs.

"It's all right—got 'em!" he announced triumphantly. "It isn't 2 L O, but that chap's spouting away for all he's worth on astronomy. Here we are, sir—just what you want!"

Willy pressed over a switch and removed the earphones. At the same instant the loud-speaker broke into voice. And this time its efforts were rather more successful than formerly.

"—and these stars, I may add, are of paramount importance when associated with the solar system," said the loud-speaker, in a husky, but easily understood voice. "I would like to impress upon my listeners the full significance of these stars. One is apt to take the stars for granted. They are in the sky, and there they hang, like so many glowlamps, except, of course, when they are obscured by cloud-banks."

"Quite so—quite so," murmured the professor, deeply engrossed. "I agree with you entirely, my dear sir. But can you tell me how it is that some stars are—"

He started, suddenly realising that the loud-speaker was carrying on relentlessly. The professor had momentarily supposed that he was in conversation with a fellow astronomer.

"—and as for these comets, they are unquestionably the most remarkable series of shooting stars that have been seen for many a year," declared the loud-speaker firmly. "When one realises the enormous importance of astronomy, one is brought to an understanding of one's puny insignificance. Take for example, the case of the latest star."

"My hat! This is interesting!" murmured Willy tensely.

"Hush—hush!" breathed the professor, taking a deep breath.

"As a matter of fact, I am divulging a great secret by mentioning this star at all," remarked the loud speaker mysteriously. "The star is so new that it is at present unnamed. Some will laugh at me, but I have no hesitation in declaring that this remarkable heavenly body will appear at the zenith at half-past six this very evening."

"Good gracious!" ejaculated the professor.

"Many astronomers are in total ignorance of this new star—which is of the second magnitude," said the loud speaker. "I have every reason to believe that the new star will become famous, and I advise all amateurs to scan the sky diligently between the hours of six and seven this evening. If the sky is clear, they will be richly rewarded. And that, I think, concludes my little talk on astronomy. Good-afternoon, everybody!"

The loud speaker gave a "phut," and then became dead. Willy Handforth turned the switch, and glanced at the professor.

"There you are, sir—what do you think of it?" he asked proudly. "Not so bad for a home-made contraption, is it?"

"At six-thirty!" muttered Professor Tucker tensely. "This star will be visible at six-thirty! Good heavens! And I knew nothing about it! I must be ready—I must prepare!"

He bustled out of the little study, absolutely unaware of Willy's presence. He could think of nothing but this reference to a brand-new star of the second magnitude.

And as soon as he had gone, the cupboard opened, and Owen minor undoubled himself, and grinned.

"How did it go?" he asked cheerfully.

"Ripping! First rate!" chuckled Willy.

"The old boy drank in every word—thought he was listening to the real wireless! Owen, my lad, you deserve well of your country!"

"I should think I do!" agreed Owen minor. "I can tell you, it was an awful job speaking into that rotten tube——"

"Never mind—your voice sounded perfect

Two figures lounged leisurely across the old stone bridge, and for a moment they paused to gaze over the parapet at the frozen river. Then they came on again, pausing at the little junction where the side lane to Edgemore branched off.

"Rottenly dull down here, Tarky," said one of the figures, with a grunt of dissatisfaction. "Might as well live in the middle of a desert! Nothing to do—nothing to see—and everybody dead from the ankles up! My hat! What a rotten hole!"

The other grunted.

"Hole isn't the word for it," he agreed. "It's as slow as a giddy funeral! Even old Creepe is quiet this week. We shall

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through the loud speaker," interrupted Willy. "And we've got the professor on a string now—he'll be as easy to lead as a lost sheep!"

CHAPTER III.

CATCHING A TARTAR.



BELLTON LANE was quiet and peaceful, and the weak rays of the winter's sun filtered across the road through the trees on the edge of the wood. The ground was hard and rutty.

have to do something to keep life and soul together—Hullo! Look at this! Gaze on it! Feast your eyes, Kirby, my lad!"

Kirby and Tarkington both stared up the lane before turning off towards Moat Hollow. They were two of the monitors from that remarkable school. And, judging by their appearance, they were worthy assistants for Mr. Grimesby Creepe—the sinister owner of Moat Hollow.

The two youths were clumsy and big. They were attired well, and, indeed, could be called smart. But their coarse features and brutal expression lacked that mark of good breeding which characterised the majority of the St. Frank's fellows.

The object of their sudden attention was undoubtedly well worth looking at. A slim, neat, girlish figure was stepping briskly down the lane towards the village. Doris Berkeley, of the Moor View School was alone—an unusual occurrence. Generally, she visited the village accompanied by her study chums, Irene Manners and Marjorie Temple.

Doris was looking a picture of prettiness and health in her warm woollen coat and neat little furs. The fur toque on her head revealed several unruly curls of her glorious auburn hair. Her cheeks were rosy, and her dark eyes sparkled with the joy of life.

"The goods!" murmured Kirby, slowly grinning. "Distinctly the goods! We can't let an opportunity like this pass by, old man. What do you say?"

"We can't!" replied Tarkington promptly. "She's one of those Moor View kids—and quite a pretty girl, too. It's high time we became acquainted."

The two Moat Hollow monitors glanced at one another, and chuckled. They had seen Irene and Co. once or twice, but the girls had never so much as glanced at them. And Mr. Creepe's henchmen had never dared to accost the girls. There had been safety in numbers. But just now Doris was alone, and the lane was conveniently deserted.

Doris, in the meantime, was taking full stock of the two figures as they stood there, practically in the centre of the lane. The girl was under no misapprehension. She clearly appreciated the fact that the pair were waiting for her to walk by. She wasn't in the least perturbed. For Doris was one of those girls who could easily look after themselves. She was plucky, resourceful, and her nerves were strong.

"Two of those Moat Hollow chaps," she told herself. "A bright-looking pair—I don't think! They just about match old Creepe. What's come to Bellton these days?"

She set her expression very frigid, and made as if to walk straight past the grinning youths, keeping her gaze fixed steadfastly ahead. Both Kirby and Tarkington barred the way. Neither thought it necessary to doff their caps.

"Good-afternoon, Lucy!" said Kirby, with an impudent leer. "Or is it Daphne? You girls have got such funny names—"

"If you don't mind standing aside, I'll pass!" interrupted Doris, flashing a glance of scorn at the pair. "I don't know you, and I don't want to know you!"

"Oh-ho! So that's it?" chuckled Kirby. "On the high horse, eh?"

"And such a pretty girl, too!" grinned Tarkington. "I say, miss have some pity! This place is as dead as ancient Rome, and we're just longing for a bit of excitement."

"Really?" said Doris, with deadly calmness. "You'll get it if you don't stand out of the way. How dare you stop me like this?"

"How dare we, eh?" said Kirby. "We're awfully wicked, ain't we, Tarky? I say, how about a kiss? We need something to give us an appetite for tea!"

He seized Doris before she could dodge. At the same moment, Tarkington made a grab at her. Kirby pulled her face up, and then staggered back with a gasp. For a small, but business-like fist crashed into his face with fearful force.

"You cads!" cried Doris hotly. "Touch me again, and I'll knock you down!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE PROFESSOR ON THE SCENE.



KIRBY rubbed his cheek and glared. "You little spit-fire!" he snapped. "So you'd punch, would you? All right! I'll make you pay for it!"

Doris had tried to wrench herself away, and had, indeed, freed herself from Kirby. But Tarkington had seized her from behind, and her struggles were useless. She wasn't alarmed—but she was intensely furious.

"I've got her!" said Tarkington, with a grin.

He was enjoying himself. He swung Doris round, and at the same moment Kirby grabbed for her arm.

Crash!

The girl's fist shot upwards, and struck Tarkington in the mouth. His grin vanished, and he uttered a fierce growl. Kirby caught Doris again, and for the second time he tried to kiss her.

"You beast—you cowardly cur!" shouted Doris angrily.

"Dear me! Whatever's the matter? What is the meaning of all this noise and commotion?"

Professor Sylvester Tucker blinked in astonishment at the little scene. His approach had been unnoticed by the trio. And the professor himself had quite failed to grasp the significance of the affair. He only knew that his path was barred, and that something unusual was going on.

"Oh, please!" panted Doris, wrenching herself round. "Will you please order these hooligans away, Professor Tucker? They have insulted me dreadfully."

Professor Tucker frowned. He had been deep in thought, and this interruption rather annoyed him. As a matter of fact, he had wandered down the lane quite unconsciously, having had no real intention of coming to the village at all.

"What is this? What is this?" he asked impatiently. "I really cannot be bothered —"

"But, professor—please!" interrupted Doris. "I am appealing to you for protection!"

The science master started.

"Good gracious!" he ejaculated. "I really beg your pardon, my dear young lady! I must confess I failed to appreciate the nature of your request. You need protection? Of course! These young ruffians have annoyed you, eh?"

The professor was now fully alive to the situation. He gazed at Kirby and Tarkington with a severe frown.

"What is the meaning of this?" he demanded. "How dare you interfere with this young lady? Upon my soul! I have seldom met with such an act of sheer hooli-

Headmaster, and inform him in detail of this disgraceful occurrence!"

"But look here——" began Tarkington.

"Not a word!" interrupted the professor. "Go at once!"

Kirby and Tarkington went away, fuming. They were not a little alarmed. Mr. Grimesby Creepe allowed them many privileges, but he would be furious when he heard about this episode. Again and again Mr. Creepe had warned his monitors against getting into any kind of a scandal.

"Thanks awfully, professor! You're a brick!" said Doris gladly. "It's sporty



The professor peered at the weird contrivance before him with impatient interest.

ganism! What have you to say for yourselves? Who are you—where do you come from?"

"We didn't touch the girl at all!" growled Kirby.

"They belong to Moat Hollow, professor!" put in Doris quickly. "Oh, I do wish you'd go there, and complain to Mr. Creepe! He ought to be told about this——"

"And he shall be told!" declared the Professor gallantly. "Undoubtedly he shall! Make no mistake about that, my dear!" He turned to the crestfallen monitors. "Go at once!" he commanded. "I shall see your

of you to go to Moat Hollow and complain against those brutes. They—they tried to kiss me!" she added indignantly.

"Good gracious me!" said the professor, aghast. "Is that so? They actually tried to kiss you? Upon my word! There is nothing left for it but an immediate visit to Moat Hollow. Leave this to me, my dear—leave it entirely in my hands!"

"You're a sportsman—and thanks ever so much!" smiled Doris.

She went on her way, feeling that the ruffianly monitors would be richly rewarded for their ungentlemanly behaviour.

There was a gleam in Professor Tucker's eyes which boded ill for the girl's persecutors.

The professor was really angry. For the moment, he had cast all thoughts of astronomy from his mind. A young lady had been annoyed in the open road by two of the Moat Hollow monitors—and immediate action was necessary.

So the professor marched grimly into the gateway of the vicarage, intent upon grim things. Of course, he was under the impression that he was entering Moat Hollow. But he had been to the vicarage several times before, and the ground was familiar to him. He toddled up the drive with the firm conviction within him that he was about to face Mr. Grimesby Creepe.

"Young hooligans!" muttered the professor, as he hammered on the door. "I'll make them suffer! Perfectly scandalous—Ah, so there you are, sir! So there you are!"

The Rev. Mr. Goodchild had opened the door personally, and Professor Tucker gazed at him severely through his thick glasses. The professor had met him once or twice, but he generally forgot things so rapidly that the vicar's features seemed only dimly familiar.

"Good-afternoon, Professor Tucker," said the Rev. Mr. Goodchild cordially. "An unexpected pleasure——"

"Not at all, sir!" snapped the professor. "I have come here to make a serious complaint—a very grave charge against two of your rascally boys. They have the audacity to——"

"But, really, professor——" began the vicar.

"One moment, sir—one moment!" interrupted Professor Tucker. "Allow me to finish! My regard for you is one of extreme disgust! I have every reason to believe that you conduct your establishment in a most abominable fashion! As for these boys——"

"But—but—— Really!" ejaculated the startled vicar. "I fear there is some—some error in your mind, my dear professor! And I strongly protest against this——"

"It is not for you to protest, Mr. Creepe, but for me to protest!" declared the professor sternly. "Do you realise that these young hooligans actually stopped a young lady in the lane and attempted to kiss her? What have you to say, sir? What justification can you offer——"

The vicar gave a kind of gulp.

"My good sir, I am not Mr. Creepe!" he broke in feebly. "You are at the vicarage—I am Mr. Goodchild. Calm yourself, sir! You have apparently made an extraordinary blunder."

The professor looked astonished.

"The vicarage?" he repeated. "Good gracious me! How extraordinary! It appears that I have made a blunder, as you so reasonably suggest. So this is not Moat Hollow at all? A thousand apologies,

my dear sir—I can do nothing but depart in confusion!"

And Professor Tucker bowed, and without waiting for the surprised vicar to detain him he beat a hasty retreat.

CHAPTER V.

MR. GRIMESBY CREEPE AT HOME.



MR. GRIMESBY CREEPE, the headmaster of Moat Hollow School, beamed with complete satisfaction over his industrious class.

Only the sound of scratching pens disturbed the silence of the dull, gloomy school-room. It was afternoon, and the short winter's day was drawing in rapidly. The class-room was full of deep shadows.

There was no half-holiday for these unfortunate schoolboys.

Liberty was a word they knew nothing of. Even when lessons were over, they would be marched under the strict supervision of monitors into the dining-hall, there to partake of a poor apology for tea. After that there would be more work, and so on until bed-time.

For Moat Hollow was something akin to a prison.

The school-room was not particularly large, and it was not completely filled, yet it contained the entire school. Mr. Grimesby Creepe's pupils were not numerous. Including the monitors, there were only about thirty, all told.

But as there were six monitors—a number out of all proportion to the school—the wretched boys were constantly guarded, night and day. Each of the monitors had his own special pupils to look after, and as long as he kept them sufficiently subdued, Mr. Creepe was satisfied. But woe betide a monitor if he grew lax or careless. Mr. Creepe was lenient and even generous with his lieutenants, but he demanded full service.

The monitors, in fact, were well fed and privileged at the expense of the rank and file. These latter were made to suffer in every possible sort of way. Their lives simply consisted of work and sleep and frequent punishments.

Mr. Creepe was rather pleased this afternoon.

Everything was going well. The class was industrious, and the work was progressing rapidly. At the moment the handwriting lesson was being held. Mr. Creepe's methods were unusual.

In order to instruct his boys fully in the art of handwriting, and to give them plenty of practice, they were addressing circulars as fast as they knew how. Mr. Grimesby

Creepe was, for a schoolmaster, easy to please. He didn't care how the circulars were addressed so long as they were legible. He had no particular standard for his pupils to work to.

Each boy had a pile of big envelopes before him, and whilst some copied names and addresses out of home-made reference-books, others were using directories. And all worked feverishly. At the first sign of slackening up, trouble would follow.

"Smithson!" rapped out Mr. Creepe suddenly. "I have been watching you, young man! You have addressed one letter less than the others during the past four minutes!"

"Please, sir—" began Smithson meekly.

"I did not request you to interrupt, Smithson!" said Mr. Creepe. "I am not a hard man—my aim is to be fair and forgiving. Increase your speed, and all will be well. Indeed, Smithson, I will give you another chance."

"Thank you, sir," said Smithson eagerly.

"Fail to seize this chance, and I am afraid the evening meal will be somewhat meagre," went on Mr. Creepe, in a purring voice. "A pity, Smithson—a thousand pities! The remedy is in your own hands."

Smithson went on with his work frantically. He was a thin, weakly-looking boy, and the pace was too great for him. It was pitiful to watch his efforts, to see him striving to make up for lost time. He knew, from past experience, that Mr. Creepe would make no allowance for the two precious minutes which had sped by during the schoolmaster's conversation.

Tommy Watson, higher up the room, went at his work doggedly. He had not failed to notice Smithson's distress, and his blood boiled. Although Watson had been at Moat Hollow for two or three weeks, he was untamed. The longer he stayed the stronger grew his spirit. Mr. Creepe had found it impossible to break down the barriers of Watson's "obstinacy." The ex-St. Frank's junior was as grim and sullen as he had been on the first day. Cruel punishments had tended to strengthen him, rather than anything else.

And as Tommy went on addressing his circulars, his thoughts were busy. He reflected on the absurd farce of this so-called school. It was Mr. Creepe's policy to make money out of his pupils.

The fees at Moat Hollow were cheap—ridiculously cheap—but, to use a time-honoured expression, there was a catch in it. There were no servants at Moat Hollow—the boys themselves performed all the household duties, even to washing clothes and cooking food.

But the wily Mr. Creepe made a virtue out of these slave-driving methods. He blandly informed his scholars that his training was fitting them for the hard knocks of life in later years. It was a part of

his policy to send his boys out into the world fit for any mode of life.

Even the Moat Hollow garden was regularly dug and raked and tidied by the pupils. Not one penny did Mr. Creepe spend on domestic labour. He had other interests, too—secret interests which the boys guessed at, but could not actually fathom.

There were these circulars, for example—thousands of them. They went out regularly, and all advertising cheap novelties. They were presumably sent out by "The South Coast Export and Trading Company," of 102, High Street, Bannington.

But Watson suspected that Mr. Grimesby Creepe himself was the sole and only member of the firm. In short, he was carrying on a mail order business, and using his pupils to do all the work.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BLACKBOARD TREATMENT.



AFTER all, it was very simple.

Mr. Creepe had a single room in a block of offices in Bannington High Street. Here he employed a clerk—an aged individual who was entirely under Mr. Creepe's influence. His sole duty was to dispatch circulars and goods, and keep accounts of everything that came in.

Several times a week the schoolmaster would motor to Bannington in his closed car. And this latter was really useful for the conveyance of goods from the "factory." For the school was little else.

It was quite customary for the boys to spend hours in wrapping up silver pencils, cheap fountain-pens, watch-chains, and so forth, and addressing them ready for the post. These little packages would be prepared by the thousand—to be conveyed by Mr. Creepe to Bannington.

The beauty of it was, from the schoolmaster's point of view, he had no wages to pay. All his labour was "free gratis." The work was simple and unskilled, and so his pupils could perform it with ease. The school was a mere blind. What the boys learned on ordinary school subjects amounted to next to nothing.

It might be supposed that Moat Hollow would be freely discussed in such a small place as Bellton—and, as a matter of fact, it was. But, in spite of the unpleasant truth, most of the discussions were favourable towards Mr. Creepe.

This was partly due to his methods. The monitors were always out and about, and they never failed to sing Mr. Creepe's praises, and to circulate the story that he was kind-hearted, generous, and fatherly. In order to substantiate this view, Mr. Creepe

himself contributed to local charities. He hated paying out the money, for he was a miser by nature, but this was a matter of business.

Even the vicar had a totally false impression regarding Mr. Creepe. The worthy clergyman fully believed that Mr. Grimesby Creepe was a kindly, public-spirited man. His contributions to the parish relief fund were handsome. And Mr. Goodchild formed his opinions by this.

On Sundays the Moat Hollow boys would go for walks—with the smiling, benign Mr. Creepe in attendance. But the monitors were there, too, and if any boy had dared to break rank, or attempt to get away, his punishment would have been drastic.

Moat Hollow was entirely surrounded by high, prison-like walls. Even the gate was boarded up. And at first Mr. Creepe had kept these constantly closed. But his monitors had warned him of one or two adverse criticisms, and the schoolmaster had promptly changed his tactics.

During lesson times the school gates were now kept wide open, so that any casual passer-by could see with his own eyes that everything was calm and comfortable. But a chance passer-by is always apt to gain a wrong impression.

It was impossible to know, for example, that while the gates were open the pupils were kept hard at work in the school-room, with monitors on guard within the apartment, and with still another monitor out in the hall. And when the unfortunate boys were allowed out for a little exercise, the gates were closed and locked. Escape from this place was impossible.

Mr. Creepe ruled by a system of terrorism. So long as his pupils were meek and submissive, the regular daily round went on smoothly. But at the first sign of insubordination, the culprit was dealt with drastically. At the first sign of slackness, punishment befell the slacker.

Most of the boys were tamed. Every atom of spirit had been knocked out of them. They had lost their individuality—they had become machines under Mr. Creepe's harsh treatment. And they would have thought of flying into the sky sooner than revolt against this life of drudgery.

Watson was the only whole-hearted objector. A fellow named Jevons, and one or two other boys, still had a little spirit left, but it was gradually and systematically being knocked out of them. Tommy Watson feared that they would be but poor reeds to rely upon in an emergency.

As for the rest, they were mere youngsters, mostly, and pitiable specimens of humanity at the best. For most of Mr. Creepe's pupils were "unwanted" children. They were deformed, or disfigured, and perhaps their parents were divorced, or dead. They were boys who knew no home life—who lived on in Mr. Creepe's establishment

endlessly. There were only one or two exceptions.

And these exceptions, of course, were a necessary evil. Mr. Creepe was obliged to take new pupils when the chance offered—and these new pupils had to be broken in. The process was slow and tedious, but Mr. Creepe had never yet failed. Sooner or later the spirit of the most obstinate would be shattered, and he would ultimately become another useful tool.

That was Mr. Grimesby Creepe's system of conducting his school; and the outside world knew nothing—the outside world was completely hoodwinked. Only the miserable inmates of Moat Hollow knew the truth—and these were never allowed out, and never allowed even to write.

The monitors were the only free agents, and they knew on which side their bread was buttered. Allegiance to Mr. Creepe meant handsome pocket-money, good food, full liberty, and countless other advantages. Not one of them was likely to sacrifice all this by "blabbing." Even if a monitor revealed the truth to an outsider in an angry moment, no harm would be done. For no outsider would credit such a preposterous, farcical story. So Mr. Creepe was safe on all sides.

At present he felt almost genial. His heavy face, with its loose folds of flesh, wore a benign expression. He gazed upon the class with a kindly eye. Mr. Creepe could look very benevolent when he liked. Orders had been coming in well, and his profits were leaping. He felt happy.

But a frown fitted across his face and transformed it.

One of the boys—a thin, knock-kneed youngster named Rayne—was surreptitiously whispering a few words to his neighbour, who happened to be Tommy Watson. Mr. Creepe raised a short cane, and brought it down on his desk with an explosive thud which startled the entire class. This was one of Mr. Creepe's favourite little habits.

"Rayne," he said purringly, "kindly stand up, my boy."

The culprit rose to his feet, shaking in every limb, his face like chalk.

"Pup-please, sir, I—I—" he began.

"An excuse, Rayne, will only tend to increase your punishment," interrupted Mr. Creepe smoothly. "Come down here, in front of the class, and prepare yourself for the blackboard treatment."

Rayne winced, and even commenced to sob.

"Kirby—Tarkington!" ordered Mr. Creepe. "Rayne appears to be reluctant. Be good enough to assist him. I am never loath to help any of my boys who are unfortunately backward."

Tommy Watson stood up in his seat.

"Just a minute, sir," he said quietly. "I'm the one to be punished. Rayne was only answering a question I put to him a minute ago. I take all the blame, sir."

Mr. Creepe rubbed his hands together.

"Splendid, Watson—a noble, generous

spirit," he commented genially. "Such unselfishness is a pleasure to witness. Unfortunately, your appeal is useless. Rayne was speaking—so Rayne shall be punished. Your own behaviour shall be dealt with later."

Watson sat down, hot with helpless anger. The injustice of this forthcoming punishment made him boil. But he knew from previous experience that Mr. Creepe would make himself deaf to all reason.

The unfortunate Rayne was seized by the ever-ready monitors.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PROFESSOR DROPS IN.



PROFESSOR SYLVESTER TUCKER nodded grimly.

Ah, here we are!" he observed. "This time there is no mistake. I shall see Mr. Creepe, and—and—"

The professor paused, a frown spreading over his learned features. He was standing in the gateway of Moat Hollow. The dusk was gathering, and the old place looked unusually grim and forbidding.

"Dear me!" murmured the professor. "Dear me! Most annoying—most aggravating! I am positive that I came here for some definite purpose. But what? Why, indeed, I should call upon Mr. Creepe at all? I rather think I disapprove of the gentleman!"

The absent-minded science master knitted his brows.

"I am certain, at all events, that I have not come here merely to pay a friendly call," he went on, addressing the gateposts. "Certainly not! I had a mission—a mission not entirely unconnected with the vicarage—no, not the vicarage," he added, shaking his head. "There was a young lady—a remarkably pretty girl, if my memory serves—"

He broke off, and beamed with relief.

"Ah, yes, to be sure!" he said genially. "Of course! The young lady in the lane! I am here to complain in the strongest possible terms about the behaviour of two boys from this establishment. How ridiculous of me! I do declare my memory is failing me at times!"

The triumphant beam faded from his eyes as he walked briskly forward in the dusk. He remembered the nature of his call. He frowned sternly, and prepared himself for the coming interview.

He walked up the drive, and made straight for the front door. Unfortunately, the professor completely failed to notice the moat. He also took no heed of the fact that the bridge was absent—a little precaution which Mr. Creepe usually adopted when the gates were open.

Splash!

Professor Tucker walked straight on, engrossed in his thoughts. He took a step that wasn't actually there, so to speak, and

the next moment, to his consternation, he disappeared into the icy waters of the moat.

It was probably the greatest surprise the professor had ever had in all his life—and his life had been one long series of minor blunderings. He was always walking into the wrong place. This time the consequences appeared likely to assume serious proportions.

The professor rose out of the water, gasping, spluttering, and utterly bewildered. He was chilled to the marrow, and his limbs were numb. He didn't know what had happened, and his mind was in chaos.

But the instinct of self-preservation was well developed in the professor, and he struck out blindly for the bank—which he could see before him as a kind of blurred outline. He had lost his glasses in the plunge, and he was now more or less like a bat.

Minus his spectacles, Professor Tucker viewed the entire world through a haze. Even at two yards' range he couldn't tell the difference between a gatepost and a human being. Nothing became defined unless it was held within six inches of his face.

He plunged at the bank like a miniature whale. More by luck than anything else, he grasped the front doorstep—for the moat lay almost flush with the walls of the house. And the professor pulled himself up with surprising agility. He was really well-preserved, and his age, after all, was not more than fifty.

"Bless my soul!" he gasped, his teeth chattering. "Where am I? I—I had no idea the river was so close—I must summon help! I shall become chilled!"

He rose to his feet, and felt before him like a blind man. His hand came in contact with the doorknob, and he instinctively turned it. The next moment he found himself within the comparative warmth of the hall.

Moat Hollow was well protected. No caller could gain admittance without negotiating the moat—and this could only be done by crossing a kind of drawbridge which Mr. Creepe himself had invented. It was rather like a ship's gangway, which could be pushed straight out from the hall on runners. Mr. Creepe took no chances.

The professor wandered down the hall half-dazed.

He was so chilled that he had hardly any feeling in his limbs, and he went forward mechanically. The hall was dim enough in itself, and the professor's lack of spectacles made it a place of sheer mystery.

It was natural that he should walk straight on, and just as natural that he should collide with the class-room door at the end. The collision was a violent one, for the professor had no idea that a door barred his way at all.

Crash!

The door flew open, and Professor Tucker staggered in. He halted, blinking. Lights were gleaming here, and there came to his

ears the buzz of human presence. But everything was indistinct and blurred.

The occupants of the room, however, were unaware of this.

And to say that Mr. Creepe and his pupils were startled would be putting it mildly. They were literally staggered. The professor could not have dropped in at a more inopportune moment.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE UNWELCOME GUEST.



THE class-room hummed with excitement.

Two lights had been switched on, and the blinds were drawn. The class sat rigid with suppressed expectation. The professor had

appeared at a fateful moment.

For the unfortunate Rayne was actually in the middle of his punishment, and Mr. Grimesby Creepe was filled with wild alarm. A stranger—a master from St. Frank's—had come in, and had witnessed an example of his drastic methods! It was nothing more nor less than a catastrophe.

Rayne was in a position which could not be misunderstood. An infant would have realised that the unhappy junior was being subjected to a form of torture.

It was, in fact, the "blackboard treatment"—one of Mr. Grimesby Creepe's pet forms of instruction. It was so effective, and so delightfully simple. The blackboard easel was one of Mr. Creepe's own inventions. It was far heavier and sturdier than most blackboard easels, and embodied one or two novel features entirely its own.

With the blackboard in position, the easel performed its customary function to perfection. But the blackboard, like most of the other things at Moat Hollow was a mere blind. The easel was, as a matter of fact, nothing more nor less than a punishment rack.

The board had been removed, and Rayne was now on the rack. His wrists were encased in a crossbar at the top, and his legs were outstretched, his ankles being firmly manacled to the stout uprights. The whole contrivance resembled a modern edition of the old-fashioned stocks.

With the boy thus helpless, Mr. Creepe had been subjecting him to the lash. Twenty-five had been the sentence—and at the moment of the professor's arrival, the eighth stroke had been delivered. The professor had interrupted the ninth.

Mr. Grimesby Creepe stood back, the birch in his hand, an expression of utter consternation on his flabby, heavy-jowled features. The professor was looking straight at him, having seen all!

"Good heavens!" muttered Mr. Creepe hoarsely.

With a gulp, he pulled himself together. In an emergency such as this he was not without resource.

"There, boys—I have tried to give you a little example of the torture which our ancestors used to practice upon their victims," he announced glibly. "Kirby—Fryer! Release the lad, and let him return to his seat. Thank you, Rayne—you have proved very useful for this little experiment. I shall increase your pocket-money for this week!"

If Mr. Creepe had only known it, this paltry attempt to whitewash the affair was quite needless. The professor could see nothing. The entire room was invisible to him. Furthermore, he was on the point of collapse. In fact, he sank down before anybody could reach him.

"The moat!" he muttered huskily. "I failed to observe—I fell in—My limbs are numbed—"

His voice trailed away to a weak murmur, and at the same moment Mr. Creepe and Kirby ran towards him.

"It's all right, sir—he didn't see anything," said Kirby hurriedly. "I know him! He's lost his glasses, and he's as blind as a bat without 'em! There's no harm done!"

"I hope you are right, Kirby—I hope you are right!" breathed the schoolmaster.

He bent over the wet, dripping figure of the professor, and took one of the icy-cold hands. Then, for the first time, he realised that the unfortunate gentleman was in need of instant attention. Indeed, failure to take prompt measures would probably result in a chill, pneumonia, and perhaps death itself!

It was unfortunate—it was disturbing in the extreme—but the professor would have to be put to bed within Moat Hollow. To take him out into the cold air would be to send him to his death. And, much as Mr. Creepe detested upheavals, this one could not be avoided. Circumstances were such that his actions were forced.

"Look alive, Kirby—move yourself, Tarkington!" shouted Mr. Creepe urgently. "Come, Roberts! Carry the unhappy gentleman upstairs at once! Have you lost your wits, or what? Carry him upstairs, remove his clothing, and wrap him in heated blankets! Move, boys! Don't stand there, gaping!"

When Mr. Creepe liked he could get things done very speedily. In next to no time the professor was rushed upstairs to a spare bed-room, he was undressed, and rolled in hot blankets. And under this treatment he showed rapid signs of recovery.

Mr. Creepe realised the urgent necessity of calling in a doctor. So, having satisfied himself that the professor was in no immediate danger, he dashed to the telephone.

Dr. Brett, it seemed, was absent—but his housekeeper was able to inform the distracted Mr. Creepe that the medical man was at St. Frank's. So Mr. Creepe rang up the famous old school without delay.

Within three minutes he was talking to Dr. Brett.

"Professor Tucker?" repeated the doctor, grasping the gist of the story. "He has fallen into your moat? I'll be down at once, Mr. Creepe—expect me within fifteen minutes."

"It is very kind of you, Dr. Brett," said the schoolmaster. "I have taken prompt measures, and have applied first aid. I fancy the professor is in no danger, but your presence here will be a great comfort."

"All right," said the doctor briskly. "I'll dash off straight away."

Mr. Creepe hung up the receiver, and for the first time he took a breathing spell. He frowned heavily at the instrument.

"A nuisance—an infernal nuisance!" he muttered savagely. "If no harm comes of this, I shall be lucky! The old fool! Just like him to blunder in! But he shall be cleared out of this house at the earliest possible moment!"

CHAPTER IX.

A MEETING OF IMPORTANCE.



"EVERYBODY here?" asked Reginald Pitt briskly.

Study E, in the Ancient House, was packed. The noise was deafening, for everybody seemed to be talking at once. And above all the other voices the stentorian tones of Edward Oswald Handforth boomed.

It was, in fact, a committee meeting—a gathering of unusual gravity and importance. And Reginald Pitt, as captain of the Fourth, was supposed to be the chairman. Unfortunately he couldn't make himself heard.

"Hold on, you fellows—not so much noise!" roared Pitt. "Am I to get a word in edgeways or not? Dry up, Handy! Switch off the loud-speaker! We can't hear ourselves think!"

The noise decreased slightly. This meeting had been arranged earlier in the day, and as it was now too dark for football, the leading lights of the Fourth had gathered together. It wasn't teatime yet, but the juniors were anxious to get the proceedings over quickly, so that they could go to their own studies to prepare the meal.

"This is just a preliminary gathering—that's all," said Pitt. "If possible, we want to arrive at some decision—"

"If possible?" echoed Handforth, staring. "Fathead! I've come to a decision already. My idea is to invade Moat Hollow and drag Tommy Watson away by sheer force—"

"Dry up, Handy!"

"Cheese it!"

"Tell us something new, old man!"

"We seem to have heard that idea of

yours before," said Pitt sweetly. "But it won't do, old son. This is not an occasion for drastic measures. We want something subtle—something carefully thought out."

"Hear, hear!"

"Go it, Reggie!"

Handforth grunted, and subsided. The crowd in Study E was quite representative of the Fourth. Both Church and McClure were there, and De Valerie and Archie Glenthorne and Dick Goodwin and Levi. None of the Modern House juniors were included—for this was a purely Ancient House affair.

"It's all frightfully interestin', but what about doin' somethin'?" asked Sir Montie Tregellis-West anxiously. "Pray don't think I'm complainin', Reggie boy, but I'm the most interested party, begad!"

Reggie Pitt nodded.

"I realise that, Montie, and you needn't worry," he said briskly. "Tommy Watson was your own particular chum. The facts are simple, and you all know 'em."

"Then don't trot 'em out now!" growled Handforth.

"We might as well have the issue clear," said Pitt. "This term has been going for nearly three weeks now, and Tommy Watson came to Moat Hollow a few days after the St. Frank's term began. We saw him on the first night of his arrival, but since then he hasn't been near."

"An' there's somethin' wrong!" declared Sir Montie firmly.

"Of course there's somethin' wrong—we all know that!" snorted Handforth. "Watson's being kept a prisoner. Old Grimesby Creepe is a criminal, I believe, and that school of his is a blind."

For once Handforth was surprisingly near the mark. But there was not much credit due to him for this, for a great many St. Frank's juniors believed that Moat Hollow had a sinister secret. The very fact that such a sunny, even-tempered chap as Watson had kept away all this time was ample evidence of mystery.

"It's totally against Tommy's nature to act like this," went on Pitt quietly. "When he came here that night he promised to come to tea the next day. We've tried to communicate with him; we've done everything possible, but the situation remains the same. So it's up to us to probe this mystery, and find out the full truth about Watson and Moat Hollow."

Handforth nodded.

"The only way is to raid the place and force our way in," he declared grimly. "There's something fishy going on. Old Creepe isn't everything he seems. He's probably a crook—"

"Doing a bit of coining as a side line, eh?" grinned Church.

"If you're asking for a thick ear, Walter Church—"

"Peace!" interrupted Reggie. "Don't get on the high horse, Handy—you know well enough that your mind generally drifts in the direction of coiners. Personally, I don't believe anything of the sort. Creepe isn't everything he seems, but he isn't a crook like that. If only we can think of——"

He broke off, and glanced rapidly round the room.

"Hallo! Where's Jack?" he asked.

"The ass hasn't turned up yet," said Handforth. "Blow him!"

"Not likely!" retorted Pitt. "Jack Grey's one of the most important members of this meeting—and before we proceed he's got to be fetched. You chaps carry on; I'll buzz round, and round up the ass!"

Pitt pushed his way through the crowd and hurried out of the study. He reached the lobby, and bumped violently into Dr. Brett.

CHAPTER X.

AN UNEXPECTED CHANCE.



DR. JAMES BRETT made a wry grimace. "Whoa! Steady on!" he protested. "Mind my corns, my lad! What's the hurry? Is it really necessary to tear about in this frantic fashion?"

"Sorry, doctor!" gasped Pitt. "I'm in a bit of a hurry—looking for Jack Grey. I suppose you haven't seen him anywhere?"

Dr. Brett smiled.

"Sorry, but I don't spend my time looking for your missing Form-mates," he replied. "And I can't stop now—I've had an urgent call, and I can't wait. By the way, Mr. Pagett's cold is much better."

"Good! Now I shall enjoy my tea," grinned Pitt. "Don't let me detain you, doctor. Go off on your urgent call, and tend the sick!"

"In this case, the sick happens to be your respected science master, Professor Tucker," said the doctor, as he prepared to go. "One of these days he'll kill himself."

"What's he done now?" asked Pitt curiously.

"Only fallen into the moat at the new school down the road," replied Dr. Brett crisply. "I've just had a 'phone call from Mr. Creepe—and here I am wasting my time with you. Sorry, young man, but I must be going."

The doctor nodded, and walked out into the Triangle.

Reggie Pitt stood quite still for a moment or two. So Dr. Brett was going to Moat Hollow—to attend Professor Tucker. Pitt had a keen brain, and something seemed to tell him that here lay a golden opportunity. But he couldn't quite get the idea he wanted. Then, suddenly, a glitter came into his eyes, and a flush suffused his cheeks.

"By jingo!" he muttered tensely.

Without a second's hesitation he dashed out in the Triangle and caught the doctor as he was about to climb into his two-seater.

"Hold on, doctor!" he panted. "Two or three minutes won't make much difference—and this is important. You say Professor Tucker fell into the moat?"

"Ye-, but——"

"Is the professor in a bad way?" asked Pitt.

"I don't know till I see him; but Mr. Creepe doesn't seem to think so," replied the doctor. "What are you getting at? I can't waste my time——"

"But wait—just a minute!" pleaded Reggie. "Look here, Dr. Brett, there's something funny about Moat Hollow; I think you know it as well as I do. You remember Tommy Watson?"

Dr. Brett nodded.

"Yes, I know all about it," he replied slowly. "Tregellis-West told me the main facts an hour ago. It's rather peculiar about Watson. He's a cheerful, good-natured boy, and his silence is very mysterious."

"Not so mysterious as you seem to think," said Reggie grimly. "The fact is, he can't get out of that place—he's kept a prisoner. I believe all the boys are prisoners!"

"Possibly; but we can't know anything for certain," said the medical man. "Still, this is hardly the moment to discuss——"

"But it is—it's THE moment!" insisted Reggie. "That's just what I'm trying to explain. There's a meeting in Study E—waiting for me now—and we want to find some method of getting into Moat Hollow and having a word with Watson. Well, here's the very chance."

"The very chance?"

"Yes."

"But, my dear kid, I can't see——"

"You're going down to Moat Hollow to attend to Professor Tucker," said Pitt, lowering his voice. "He fell into the moat by accident, and Mr. Creepe's hand has been forced. You'll get into the place without question. What I want to know is this—would it be possible for you to keep the professor there for twenty-four hours, and instal a nurse?"

Dr. Brett stared.

"I should imagine the professor will need to remain twenty-four hours—after falling into the moat in this weather," he replied grimly. "As for a nurse—he'll have to have

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somebody. And by what I can hear, Moat Hollow has no female staff whatever."

Pitt nodded, his eyes gleaming.

"Then everything's O.K.!" he declared. "I'll be the nurse!"

"You?" ejaculated the doctor incredulously.

"Yes. I can easily dress up—"

"You silly young ass!" growled the doctor. "Do you think I could be a party to a deception like that? You've wasted enough of my time."

He spoke gruffly, and at the same moment he climbed into his car and depressed the self-starter. It was obviously a signal that the interview was at an end. The engine purred. Reggie Pitt saw the chance slipping away.

"Look here, Dr. Brett—be a sport!" he exclaimed tensely. "There's not much deception about it—nothing wrong, anyhow! If you tell old Creepe that a nurse is coming along I shall be admitted without question, and I've got all the make-up and props and clothes and everything. I can act a bit, too. Why, once I spoofed the whole school when I got dressed up as a girl, and that was in broad daylight, too!"

The doctor began to waver.

"Oh, but look here—"

"Besides, I'll be reasonable," went on Pitt, seizing his advantage. "If you find that Professor Tucker needs a really skilled nurse, you've only got to send me away as unsuitable. Let me come, anyhow—I'll leave it to you after that."

"But Mr. Creepe will see through you in a moment," grunted the doctor.

"He won't, and neither will you!" retorted Pitt warmly. "I can act a bit better than that. Let's leave it at that, doctor—be a sport! Mention something about a nurse to old Creepe, and I shall get in straight off. If the professor's really ill, you can pitch me out. Is it a go?"

"Oh, all right!" said Dr. Brett. "I believe I shall be committing a felony by



Professor Tucker walked straight on, engrossed in his thoughts. He took a step that wasn't actually there, and the next moment—

allowing it, but you're a most persuasive young rascal!"

"Thanks awfully!" said Pitt, with a deep breath. "I'll be down there twenty minutes after you arrive!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE QUICK-CHANGE ARTIST.



REGGIE PITT had his way—and he could hardly believe it.

As he had been mooted the proposition to Dr. Brett, he had realised the exact nature of his request. And it was with sheer joy that he realised that the forlorn chance had become a reality.

But there wasn't a second to be lost. Before Dr. Brett had got out of the gateway Pitt was in the Ancient House and bursting into Study E. He found that Jack had arrived, and Archie Glenthorne had grown languid at the delay, and had gone off for forty winks.

"News, you chaps!" panted Reggie. "Professor Tucker's fallen into the moat at old Creepe's place, and Dr. Brett's dashed down there to administer aid."

"Fallen into the moat!"

"The professor!"

"Look here, you ass, you can't kid us——" Everybody spoke at once, and the excitement was general.

"It's a fact—honest Injun!" declared Pitt. "I've just left Brett, and everything's fixed up. I'm going to get dressed as a nurse, and spoof old Creepe into admitting me!"

"What!"

"A nurse?" yelled Handforth.

"Yes."

"You?" ejaculated Grey.

"Yes, me!" retorted Pitt. "Anything funny about it? Do you think I can't do it? You chaps don't seem to understand that this is a golden opportunity. Once I'm in it'll be a pity if I can't locate Tommy Watson, and have a word with him."

"But—but——"

"Can't stop now—got to change!" said Pitt hurriedly. "Come on, Jack; I shall want you to lend a hand."

Jack Grey fairly leapt to the door, and he and Reggie hurried off, leaving the others in a state of confusion and bewilderment. Edward Oswald Handforth was unusually silent. But it was only temporary. The full significance of what he had just heard was slowly sinking in.

"The chap's mad!" exclaimed Cecil de Valerie. "How the dickens can he go down to Moat Hollow as a nurse? He'll be pitched out within a couple of jiffs! Besides, the professor isn't ill!"

"I'll bet he is!" said Church. "Why, even you couldn't fall into a moat at this

time of the year without getting ill. I say, that's a ripping wheeze of Pitt's! He'll naturally be admitted if Dr. Brett's in league with him!"

"Rather!" said Tregellis-West, flushed with excitement. "Begad! I hope the dear boy is successful in locating Tommy. We can always trust Reggie to spring a surprise—we can, really!"

Handforth gave a violent snort.

"Rot!" he said indignantly. "Whoever heard of such a mouldy idea? Fancy going down dressed as a nurse! I'll jolly well squash the thing at once, and take it on myself!"

"Oh, are you Fourth Form skipper now?" asked De Valerie.

"This isn't a time to talk of skippers!" snapped Handforth. "Whoever heard of a chap getting dressed up as a nurse? I've got an idea that's twice as good. I'll go and disguise myself as a hospital attendant. White coat, bag, and everything!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cheese it, Handy," grinned McClure. "The professor isn't as bad as all that—he doesn't need hospital attendants. A nurse is just the very wheeze—and Pitt's the chap for the job!"

But Handforth wouldn't be convinced. Not that this made much difference. He talked, and he argued, but while he was spending time in this useless fashion, Reggie Pitt was doing.

Within ten minutes he had made a transformation.

Eagerly assisted by Jack Grey, he donned the garments of a nursemaid. The Fourth Form dramatic club's wardrobe was rather extensive, and this nurse's uniform was always in readiness.

Reggie Pitt was a wonder at impersonating a girl.

His clear-cut features, and his rather slim, neat figure, were just fitting for such a disguise. By the time he was quite finished, even Jack Grey stood back and stared.

"Well, my hat!" breathed Jack. "It's marvellous!"

"Think I'll do?" asked Reggie breathlessly.

"Do?" repeated Jack. "My dear chap, you'll have to keep old Creepe at bay or he'll start flirting with you! You look stunning. Never saw anything so terrific!"

Jack's eloquence was understandable. He was looking at the neat, trim figure of a young nursemaid. Her uniform was complete to the last detail, and her face was singularly attractive under the neat cap. Curls escaped about her ears, and there was a demure expression in her eyes.

There was certainly a slight resemblance to Reggie Pitt about this girl, but not one person in a hundred would have associated the two. The disguise was all the more wonderful, considering that Reggie had used nothing on his face except a lipstick, a little rouge, and some powder.

"All serene then?" he asked crisply. "Right! We'll go!"

They hurried out of the room and went down the corridor towards the staircase. Halfway downstairs they ran into Archie Glenthorne—who was just coming up in a great stew, having remembered that a parcel of ties had arrived by the afternoon post—and he hadn't even looked at them.

"Good-evening, Master Glenthorne," said Pitt in a low, but sweet voice. "How wonderful to see you again!"

Archie paused, and his monocle dropped.

"What-ho!" he murmured. "Sundry greetings, and all that sort of thing. I must be allowed to observe, old thing, that I don't seem to remember——"

"Oh, Archie!" exclaimed the young lady with a sob in her voice. "You don't remember me? After all the sweet promises you made to me? How can you prove so false?"

CHAPTER XII.

WITHIN THE ENEMY'S LAIR.



ARCHIE GLENTHORNE turned delicately pink.

"Oh, but really!" he said feebly. "I mean! Oddslife, and all that sort of stuff! I think there must be some poisonous mistake. I don't even know——"

"Won't you kiss me sweetheart?" murmured the girl pleadingly.

"Good gad!"

Archie nearly fell downstairs backwards, and Jack Grey had the greatest difficulty in the world to keep back the shout of laughter that wanted to escape. The expression on Archie's face was too funny for words. The unfortunate junior was utterly flabbergasted.

"Oh, I'm hurt—I'm wounded!" breathed Reggie, with a sob. "Cruel, cruel Archie! You have broken my heart. Nothing remains for me but the river. Farewell, false youth!"

Archie Glenthorne shook with emotion.

"But dash it all!" he breathed. "I say! That is, dash it! You are mistaking me for another cove, old dear! I've never set eyes on you in all the good old existence——"

"Rats!" grinned the young lady. "Sorry, Archie, but I just wanted to use you as a test. The light's pretty good here—and you didn't even spot me. Nothing like trying it on the dog, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Jack.

"Gadzooks!" gasped Archie. "What's this? What, as it were, is this foul and mouldy business? It appears that trickery is at work. The last of the good old Glenthornes has been absolutely spoofed!"

"Spoofed with knobs on," agreed Pitt

genially. "Keep it mum, Archie—don't breathe a word. I rely upon you as the scion of a noble family to keep the dread secret!"

Reggie hurried downstairs, accompanied by Jack Grey. And Archie stood there, gazing after him while he recovered his equilibrium. His heart was still fluttering spasmodically.

"Well, there you are!" breathed Archie. "I mean, I've heard of a few dashed japes, but surely this is beyond the good old pale? That piece about trying it on the dog was distinctly smudgy. I mean to say, a remark of that dashed sort is capable of being taken in more ways than one. I shall have to discuss the matter with Phipps!"

And Archie went on his way frigidly, assuring himself that his dignity had been not only ruffled, but positively affronted.

Reggie Pitt made up his mind to hurry straight off without delay. He wouldn't go to Study E and show himself to the crowd. It would be too risky. The rank and file of the Fourth would probably spot him, and then the whole junior school would know about the escapade.

But Pitt wasn't to escape so easily.

The members of the committee meeting were waiting outside in the Triangle. They stared at the trim, dainty nurse with curious feelings. Church and McClure and Tregellis-West thought they had made a mistake—they half believed that this person was a real girl.

"Begad!" ejaculated Sir Montie. "It's absolutely staggerin'!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Congrats, Reggie, old man!"

Even Handforth was obliged to confess that the impersonation was wonderful. And then, before they could put any questions, or get any answers, Reggie had gone. But Jack Grey stayed behind to satisfy the eager Fourth Formers. Jack had heard all the facts during the course of the dressing process, and he now passed on his information to the excited juniors.

In the meantime, Dr. Brett was sitting by Professor Tucker's bedside, within Moat Hollow. The doctor was in no way concerned about his patient—and he had had time to observe the bed-room and other features of the house.

The room was cosy. There was a cheerful electric radiator glowing, and softly shaded electric lights. Professor Tucker lay between blankets, propped up amid numerous pillows.

"All this fuss!" he protested irritably. "I refuse to stay here—do you hear me, sir? How dare you detain me like this? Who are you, sir? Why do you sit there——"

"It's all right, professor—I'm the doctor," interrupted Brett. "I'm afraid it would be unwise for you to leave your bed just yet. I am satisfied with your present condition,

but there is always the risk of contracting a chill."

"Stuff and nonsense!" declared the professor. "Rubbish, sir! Fiddlesticks! I have never felt in better health. A mere immersion in cold water is perfectly harmless. My glasses—where are my glasses?"

"I believe they sank in the moat," said the doctor gently.

"Moat? What moat?" demanded Professor Tucker.

"You fell into the moat——"

"Nonsense, sir—nonsense!" interrupted the patient. "We are not in the Middle Ages! There are no moats—— Good gracious! Why, yes, of course, I really believe I did fall into the moat," he added in a startled voice. "In that case, I must be within the establishment of that rascal Creepe?"

Mr. Grimesby Creepe, who was standing near by, coughed.

"I am afraid, professor, that you are just a little delirious!" murmured the doctor hastily. "A nurse will be here presently, and she will look after you throughout the night and during to-morrow. Please rest yourself, and accept the situation peacefully."

The professor sank back, snorting. And Dr. Brett was rather relieved. He was surprised, too. Professor Tucker had little or no temperature, and the immersion appeared to have had no ill-effect. It spoke volumes for the professor's sturdy constitution.

"A day will be ample, Mr. Creepe," murmured Dr. Brett. "I think we can safely let the professor go by to-morrow evening—possibly in the morning."

"I trust so—I trust so," said the schoolmaster. "At the same time, on no consideration move the professor until he is thoroughly fit. I am only too delighted to extend him the poor hospitality of my house."

But under his breath he cursed Professor Tucker with whole-hearted venom. Dr. Brett would have been astonished if he could have read Mr. Creepe's thoughts at that moment.

A tap sounded on the door, and Kirby looked in.

"Here's the nurse, sir," he announced. "She's just arrived."

CHAPTER XIII.

TOMMY WATSON'S RUSE.



REGINALD PITT was a cool youngster, but his heart beat more rapidly than usual when he stepped into the sick-room. Dr. Brett turned and stared—quite ready to make excuses for a schoolboy escapade.

"Great Scott!" he breathed wonderingly.

He was startled. The nurse who had just come in was so absolutely feminine and attractive that he could scarcely bring himself to believe that he was really facing a junior of St. Frank's. For a moment he thought that a real nurse had come.

Then he caught the faintest of winks from Reginald. And he instantly recognised the junior's expression. Mr. Grimesby Creepe, who had been standing aside, now strode forward.

"I am afraid you will find things rather awkward at first, my girl, but we must do the best we can," he said kindly. "Your patient is, fortunately, in need of very little attention".

"Mr. Creepe is quite right, nurse," said Dr. Brett briskly. "Professor Tucker has a mere trace of a temperature, but nothing more. I will give you full instructions later."

Brett uttered these words significantly, plainly implying that he wished to be left alone with his patient and the nurse. Mr. Creepe took the hint, made an excuse, and retired.

"You infernal young rascal!" whispered the doctor. "I never thought you'd do it. Still, I've got to admit you look the part to the life."

"Thanks!" breathed Reggie. "Everything O.K.?"

"Yes—he's almost well enough to leave now, if he wants to," replied Brett. "His clothing is being dried, but he won't need it until to-morrow. Be very careful, young'un——"

"Trust me for that, sir," murmured Pitt. "You'll be here to-morrow?"

"Early—first thing in the morning," replied Brett. "So you'd better make hay while the sun shines. Personally, I can't see much wrong with this place. I think a lot of those rumours are groundless."

"You can't judge by appearances, sir——"

Reggie broke off, for Mr. Creepe's heavy footsteps could be heard in the corridor. The schoolmaster tapped and entered. And Dr. Brett lost no time in preparing for departure.

The professor, in the meantime, had dozed off, which was just as well. He would be far less trouble asleep. And Reggie Pitt soon found himself in sole charge of the sick-room.

Mr. Creepe saw the doctor off the premises and locked the gates. He was looking rather grim as he re-entered the house.

"A nuisance—a bothering nuisance!" he murmured irritably. "By glory! I'll clear this confounded girl out in the morning—and the professor, too! Thank Heaven there's no harm done! With a little care, I shall get the incident over without trouble. But why on earth that nurse is required beats me!"

However, Mr. Creepe could not turn "her" out. The nurse had been left by the doctor, and it would have looked very significant if Mr. Creepe had raised any objections.

The school, in the meantime, was getting over its excitement. During this trying period, all the boys had been confined to the class-room. They were still waiting for their tea. For Mr. Creepe would not allow any of the boys out until the doctor had gone.

Kirby, in a frivolous moment, had related the course of events to the hungry boys, hinting that they would be kept waiting for their meal for another hour yet. He also mentioned that a nurse had come in.

"Jolly pretty, too!" said Kirby, with a grin. "We shall have to be very attentive, Tarky, old man."

"You bet!" said Tarkington, with a chuckle.

Tommy Watson heard the words dully at first. Like the rest, he was famished, and thought only of tea. All the boys were ill-fed at the best of times, and to be kept waiting for a meal was little short of torture.

But Watson's thoughts drifted away from food, and he reflected on what he had heard. So Dr. Brett had left a nurse in charge? There was nothing particularly exciting about this—

And then Watson flushed slightly. An idea had come to him. The more he thought about it the more it took hold of him. But he was not allowed to ponder much. For a few minutes later the door opened, and Mr. Creepe appeared.

"Happily, the incident is over," he said. "Now, boys, we will see about some tea, eh? Let me warn you to keep very quiet—the patient must not be disturbed. If any boy makes the slightest outcry, he shall be richly rewarded later. We must always respect the sick," he added benevolently.

But not many of the boys were deceived. Mr. Creepe wasn't worrying about the sick. His main object was to avoid attracting the nurse. Under no consideration must she come into contact with any of the pupils.

But Tommy Watson's mind was made up.

In double file the school was let out of the class-room, out through the hall, and into the cold, bare apartment which did duty as a dining-room. Tommy Watson marched with the others.

His heart was beating fast, for his plan must be worked now or never. He was ready to grasp at the faintest straw. And there was just a bare chance that his scheme would bear fruit.

In the middle of the dim hall he suddenly staggered, broke from the rank, and uttered a piercing, penetrating scream. It was so

abrupt and unexpected that the other boys started back, scared.

Tommy Watson fell to the floor, writhing.

CHAPTER XIV.

A WHISPERED WORD.



MR. GRIMESBY CREEPE was nearly frantic.

"Quick—the boy's in a fit!" he ejaculated hoarsely. "Good heavens! How many more misfortunes shall we have to-day? Silence the young hound! This—this noise——"

Tommy Watson was seized by two of the monitors. He had been throwing himself about on the floor as though demented, uttering scream after scream at the top of his voice.

It was a trick, of course. He had remembered reading, in a story somewhere, of a detective who pretended to fall into a fit to further an investigation. And it seemed to him that this was an occasion where the ruse could be put into actual practice.

He did it well—so well that Mr. Creepe was deceived.

The schoolmaster's great anxiety was to whirl the boy out of the hall before the nurse could come upon the scene. Any ordinary nurse, perhaps, would have hesitated before venturing out of the sick-room.

But Reggie Pitt was on the alert for information. Finding that the professor was peacefully sleeping, he had, indeed, actually emerged from the sick-room, and was creeping cautiously along the corridor at the moment of Watson's clever trickery.

With quick footsteps, Reggie ran down the corridor, and tripped daintily down the stairs. Even in this emergency, he did not forget his part. He was on the scene before the monitors could grapple with the kicking and gasping junior.

"Oh dear! Whatever is the matter?" asked Pitt, running down the hall.

Mr. Creepe compressed his lips grimly. The damage was done—the nurse was on the scene. It was now impossible to carry Watson away and subdue him. Mr. Creepe boiled within him, but his exterior was one of grave anxiety and concern.

"How unfortunate! How distressing!" he shouted, wringing his hands. "The poor lad is in a fit! Kirby—Tarkington! Stand aside and let the young lady come!"

"Thank you—I can deal with this quite easily," said Pitt steadily. "I think I will soon bring him round."

One glance had told Reggie that the prostrate junior was Tommy Watson, and, instinctively, he guessed that this fit was a

fake. And even as Pitt bent over the ex-St. Frank's junior, he marvelled at the audacity of this whole adventure.

"Stand back, please—let the boy have air!" he said urgently.

Carefully, tenderly, he lifted Watson's head from the floor. Tommy had ceased his struggles, and was now apparently senseless. On his knees, Reggie pillowed the junior's head in his lap.

Something had to be done, of course, and Reggie was resourceful. He commenced to briskly massage Watson's forehead, and at the same moment he looked up at the startled monitors.

"Some water, please—quick!" he said. "And a little brandy, if you have it. I am afraid the poor boy is——"

"Water—water!" rapped out Mr. Creepe. "Look alive, Fryer! The poor, dear boy is in danger! Hurry yourself!"

Pitt bent down over his steady massaging.

"It's all right, miss—only a fake!" came the faintest of faint murmurs from the patient. "I'm not in a fit—I did it on purpose to attract you. Please take a message to St. Frank's—say I'm kept here a prisoner. Ask Pitt and Tregellis-West to help me——"

"Ah, that is better—much better!" murmured Reggie, in a satisfied voice. "Come along—you'll soon be yourself now!" He bent closer. "All right, Tommy, I understand," he added softly. "I'm Pitt, but don't make any sign——"

"Oh!" gasped Watson. "I say, Reggie——"

"Water—please!" exclaimed Pitt hastily.

He spoke thus in order to drown Watson's startled exclamation. In spite of himself, the junior had not been able to choke back the words of relief and joy. And Mr. Creepe was watching closely.

The water arrived, and Pitt administered it.

"Recover!" he breathed. "Pretend to get better!"

Pitt was satisfied that the whisperings had passed unheeded, for there was a good deal of shuffling going on, and the light was dim and uncertain. But he was a little doubtful about that exclamation of Tommy's. He was half-afraid that Mr. Creepe had seen—and heard.

Watson "recovered" rapidly. He was thrilling with excitement within him. The knowledge that Reggie Pitt was near at hand nearly caused him to shout with joy. For it indicated an early release from this life of misery and torture.

"I think he will soon be better now," said the nurse, as Watson was shakily brought to his feet. "It was just a passing spasm. If there is anything further I can do——"

"I think not—I think not!" interrupted Mr. Creepe. "Be good enough to return to your patient, nurse. I will take this

boy to my own study, and lay him on the couch before the fire. Have no fear; he shall have every care, and my personal attention."

Pitt went upstairs with the firm conviction within him that Mr. Creepe knew. The schoolmaster had not fathomed the identity of the nurse, but he had, without doubt, probed the depth of Tommy Watson's little deception. The situation was beginning to look uncomfortable.

Mr. Creepe's study was upstairs, and Watson was gently assisted to it by the schoolmaster. The junior was gloating over the success of his venture. Then the door closed, and Mr. Creepe turned the key.

"Now, Watson!" he exclaimed, his voice vibrating with suppressed fury. "Now, you infernal young dog! Enough of this trickery—enough of this fooling! What did you say to that nurse?"

Tommy Watson fell back, utterly dumb-founded.

CHAPTER XV.

THE UNEXPECTED HAPPENS.



FOR a moment, Watson was nearly stupefied.

Mr. Creepe knew the truth—there was no room for doubt on that point. And Watson found himself staring at the schoolmaster in a dazed, bemused kind of way.

"I—I — I mean——" he began.

"Do not be deceived!" broke in Mr. Creepe fiercely. "I saw your lips moving—I know that you practised a deception in order to communicate with the nurse. You have failed, Watson—your trickery has led you to disaster!"

Tommy Watson was goaded by Mr. Creepe's harsh tone.

"Yes, I was fooling!" he panted. "What's the good of denying it now? I've had enough of your bullying—I've had enough of this awful tyranny and drudgery——"

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Creepe. "What did you say to that nurse? Answer me, boy! What string of falsehoods did you say to the girl? I will give you ten seconds."

Watson took a grip on himself and squared his jaw.

"I won't tell you a thing!" he replied violently. "I won't answer you within ten seconds, or ten days, or ten years!"

Mr. Creepe nearly broke a blood-vessel.

"You infernal young scamp!" he snarled. "I'll wring the truth out of you! I'll force you to speak——"

"Never!" interrupted Watson, his voice fierce and vibrating. "I don't care if you thrash me—if you birch me until my back's bleeding! I don't care a hang for you!" he added passionately.

Mr. Creepe started back, glaring. He had already had a taste of Watson's obstinacy, and his long experience of boys told him that this one would prove a hard nut to crack.

"We will see—we will see!" he replied curtly. "I shall take no immediate action, Watson—I will give you time to think this thing over. You murmured something to that girl. And she, the faithless hussy, pretended to keep up the deception. I will give you until seven o'clock, Watson."

"Yes, you young fool—torture!" shouted Mr. Creepe, stung by the junior's tone. "I will ring for the monitors, and they will take you away to the cellars. And at seven o'clock you will be brought up into the school-room. Remember, Watson, I shall expect the truth from you!"

Mr. Creepe strode to the door. Outside the faint swish of a skirt sounded, and a figure flitted along the passage. Reggie Pitt, in fact, had been listening.

He had felt himself justified in doing so.



Her uniform was complete to the last detail, and her face was singularly attractive under the neat cap.

You have an hour and a half for meditation."

Watson was deadly calm.

"It'll make no difference, sir—I won't speak!" he said doggedly.

"That remains to be seen!" snapped Mr. Creepe. "No ordinary punishment awaits you at seven o'clock, Watson—bear that in mind. I have methods of my own for loosening reluctant tongues!"

"Torture, I suppose?" asked Tommy, with supreme contempt.

And the words he had overheard convinced him that he was right.

"Torture, eh?" he muttered, taking a deep breath. "So the yarns about old Creepe are right. Thank goodness I'm on the spot! Somehow or other, I've got to save Tommy from that brute!"

It was a pity that things had gone wrong, but matters might have been worse. Reggie, at least, was not suspected. And if the worst came to the worst, he could force his way into the school-room at seven o'clock and put a stop to the proceedings.

And, after that, perhaps, he and Tommy might be able to make a dash for it and escape.

With these thoughts in mind, Reggie crept back into the sick-room. He wasn't anxious about Professor Tucker. The old gentleman was sound asleep, and would probably remain so for hours. After his unpleasant experience, he would naturally be tired.

And then Reggie got a bit of a shock.

For as he entered the sick-room, he observed Professor Tucker sitting up in bed, wide awake. He closed the door and grunted. Things seemed to be going all wrong.

"Now, professor, you must get to sleep again," he said gently.

"Eh? What's that?" demanded the professor. "Who are you? What are you doing in my bed-room? What is the meaning of this intrusion?"

"I am your nurse——"

"Nurse? What on earth do I want a nurse for?" demanded Professor Tucker, peering forward intently. "What is all this nonsense——"

"You had a little accident—you fell into the moat, and you must remain very quiet," said Pitt patiently. "Please do not exert yourself much, professor. The doctor ordered complete rest."

"Good gracious, yes!" muttered the professor. "Now that you speak of the matter, I seem to remember——" He broke off. "What time is it?" he demanded, after a pause.

"Why, just about half-past five," said Pitt. "You cannot get up now, professor. The evening is cold. There is a frost, and the stars are gleaming——"

"The stars?" interrupted the professor, with a violent start. "Half-past five! And at six-thirty the new star will be visible to all! I must rise! I must get up! Good heavens! What am I doing in bed on such an occasion as this?"

CHAPTER XVI.

ALL FOR NOTHING.



REGGIE PITT was utterly helpless. He believed that the professor was suffering from some delusion, for Reggie knew nothing about Willy Handforth's

cheerful little practical joke. But the science master had remembered, and wild horses wouldn't have kept him in bed now.

"My clothes—my clothes!" he insisted. "Where are my clothes? I demand them—I absolutely demand them! Good gracious me! The new star will appear in less than an hour——"

"But you can't get up now!" insisted Pitt frantically. "The doctor positively ordered——"

"The doctor! Confound the doctor!" interrupted Professor Tucker testily. "Fiddlesticks, my girl! Retire at once! Get out of this room! I insist upon dressing!"

"But you can't——"

"My clothes—give me my clothes!" roared Professor Tucker. "Stars will not wait. There is less than an hour, and I have my telescopes to adjust—my charts to consult!"

Reggie was in despair. To make matters worse, Mr. Creepe came in, to find out what this disturbance meant. He was astonished to see Professor Tucker so excited and energetic.

"My dear sir!" he exclaimed mildly. "You really must not exert yourself to this extent——"

"Rubbish! Do you hear me, sir—rubbish!" bellowed the professor excitedly. "I insist upon getting up at once—I must leave this place without delay! A wonderful star is due to appear in the sky at six-thirty, and under no circumstances can I miss the remarkable phenomenon. What have you done with my clothes? How dare you rob me of my attire?"

Mr. Creepe's eyes narrowed.

He thought rapidly. His dearest wish was to get rid of Professor Tucker, and the nurse as well. If the patient went, the nurse would be compelled to go, too. But the professor was so insistent that to deny him was well-nigh impossible. And Mr. Creepe didn't want to deny him.

"I am afraid your clothing is still too wet to be worn," said the schoolmaster gently. "But perhaps——"

"Then I must leave your premises wrapped in blankets!" declared the professor firmly. "Do you realise, sir, that this star——"

"If you insist upon going, professor, you shall go!" interrupted Mr. Creepe. "I shall certainly make no attempt to detain you here against your will. Perhaps you will be good enough to accept a suit of my own clothing for the time being?"

"Splendid—splendid!" said the professor promptly.

Pitt was nearly frantic by now. It was all so absurd—so totally different to what he had expected. And it made him all the more exasperated because he knew that Professor Tucker was labouring under some delusion.

The skipper of the Fourth made a last effort.

"Mr. Creepe!" he said tensely. "You mustn't do this—you mustn't let the professor get up! Dr. Brett gave me the most explicit instructions——"

"Unfortunately, the matter is beyond my control," said Mr. Creepe purringly. "If

the professor persists, I shall do nothing to detain him. I cannot hold him here by force. Moreover, I am quite satisfied that he has fully recovered, and is fit to leave. Retire from this apartment, and wait in the hall. Or, better still, I will instruct one of my monitors to escort you off the premises. Your services are no longer necessary, young lady."

And, to Reggie Pitt's mortification, he was forced to leave. The matter was quite beyond his control now. Single-handed, he could do nothing against such circumstances. And to even attempt force would be to reveal his deception. And that was to be avoided at all costs.

He found himself outside, under the cold sky, turned out into the lane by Kirby. And soon afterwards the professor appeared, looking incongruous and almost comical in Mr. Creepe's clothes, but as brisk and active as a schoolboy.

Pitt didn't wait. His last hope had gone. He was so exasperated with the professor that he had no inclination to accompany

him. Just because the old chap had this bee in his bonnet, the whole programme was wrecked.

The situation was not only galling, but desperate.

At seven o'clock—in just over an hour's time—Tommy Watson would be submitted to some kind of torture. And Moat Hollow was now bolted and barred. Watson was a prisoner within—with rescue remote.

But Reggie Pitt hastened towards St. Frank's grim and determined.

There was still an hour—still time for the Fourth to plan something. Watson's position seemed hopeless, but the facts, at least, were known. And the St. Frank's Fourth was famed for its resourcefulness. Perhaps, even now, something could be done!

The events of the immediate future promised to be exciting. But even Reggie Pitt, with all his imagination, could not have foreseen the amazing developments which were looming ahead!

THE END.

The Further Adventures of Tommy Watson at Moat Hollow School

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(Now proceed with the narrative.)

CHAPTER VI.

THE FORGOTTEN RING.

NIPPER regarded his master's find with a wry face.

"Why, what the dickens——" he exclaimed, looking at the object in Nelson Lee's fingers curiously. "Great Scott! That's a chunk of skin, isn't it, guv'nor?"

The detective nodded.

"Exactly, young 'un!" he agreed, examining the parchment-like fragment with great interest. "It is a portion of skin which has been severed from the finger of a man, and it appears to have been burnt off by the action of some sort of corrosive liquid. I am highly delighted with this discovery, for it will provide us with at least one tangible clue——"

"I don't quite follow that, sir," cut in Nipper, wrinkling his brow. "How can a scrap of dried skin from the finger of an unknown man help you?"

Nelson Lee smiled.

"Come, come, Nipper, where are your wits?" he asked reprovingly. "Isn't it feasible for us to infer that the man who lost so large a piece of skin must have a considerable injury upon his finger? Not

even the hardest of us can shed a half-inch of skin without leaving some trace, and I have great hopes of being able to get upon the track of at least one of the criminals owing to this fact. Possibly the clue may seem slender, but it is much better than nothing at all."

The famous detective was now extremely keen, and he lost no time in examining the fragment of skin through his magnifying-glass. His scrutiny merely served to confirm his original opinion regarding it, and he had no doubt whatever that it had been accidentally severed from the finger of one of the men who had taken part in the mysterious burglary at Messrs. Barlow's.

There was nothing else in the waste-paper-basket which interested Nelson Lee in the least, and after replacing the litter of paper which he had emptied from it, he rose to his feet and continued his search of the dusty office.

The fact that the apartment had been hired some time previously proved beyond all doubt that the criminals had made their preparations well in advance—a circumstance which was in itself highly significant.

For it served to show that the robbery at Barlow's was not a hurriedly executed affair, but a very carefully organised under-

taking. The amazing cleverness with which it had been carried out proved conclusively that the men responsible were more than usually astute and levelheaded, and Nelson Lee became more and more convinced that Professor Zingrave had taken a very active part in the proceedings of the previous night.

The ex-chief of the Green Triangle had often exhibited a fondness for scientifically-executed crimes, and in this latest achievement he had excelled himself completely.

Nothing like it had ever occurred before, and when all the sensational details were fully published there was certain to be a considerable stir in the Metropolis, especially among the prosperous business men of the City. They very naturally would feel that their property was no longer safe from the daring criminals who had so successfully victimised Messrs. Barlow, and who had decamped with their booty without leaving a trace.

Nelson Lee by this time was quite positive that this barren office had been used by the criminals for the purpose of operating the instrument which had caused Ben Logan's collapse—the mysterious agency which had stricken the watchman down under the form of the invisible grip.

The detective had also concluded that the same instrument which had accomplished this feat was also responsible for the putty-like condition of the safe door.

What terrible engine of destruction had been employed Lee had no means of knowing. But it was obvious to him that a machine of some sort must have been used in order to obtain the known results.

The marks of a metal tripod upon the floor of the office indicated clearly enough that the machine had been placed near the window, and the scorched condition of the window-bars of Barlow's office, on the opposite side of the road, proved that the mysterious machine was capable of executing its terrible work at a distance.

A good part of Nelson Lee's conclusions were necessarily derived from inference; but he could explain away the facts in no other manner than where his deductions led him.

The famous detective of Gray's Inn Road was now intensely keen to solve the problems which confronted him, but this was obviously going to be a difficult task. The criminals had taken very great care to leave behind no traces by which they could be identified or located, and beyond that single scrap of human skin, there was absolutely nothing worth looking at within the office.

Nipper remained silent until his master had concluded his examination of the place, and then he shook his head.

"I don't see it's possible to find this chap with the injured finger, sir," he declared. "We've got no clues whatever—"

"Perhaps the caretaker of this block of

offices may be able to help us in that respect, young 'un," interjected Lee crisply. "He must have seen the tenant of this room on several occasions, and it is just possible that he may know something. At all events, I mean to ask him."

A few minutes later the man whom Lee had previously seen was again being questioned; but he appeared to know very little indeed concerning the elderly individual who had occupied the office. Beyond the fact that he had given the name of "Mr. William Turner," and that he was a pleasant, mild-speaking gentleman, the caretaker knew nothing.

"Did Mr. Turner injure himself in any way while he was here—upon the hand, for instance?" asked Nelson Lee keenly. "I have reason to believe that he sustained rather an acute wound—"

"If he did, sir, I don't know nothin' about it," cut in the caretaker. "The last time I saw Mr. Turner he was quite all right, an' that would be, I suppose, about a couple o' days ago. I 'appened to be away yesterday at a funeral, so if anythin' happened then I shouldn't know nothin' of it."

The detective nodded. Evidently it was hopeless to expect any information from this quarter, and Lee decided that his next best course was to ascertain the name of the nearest doctor, and to interview him without delay. In a matter of this sort it was imperative that every clue should be followed up as closely as possible, for there were so few of them available that nothing could afford to be missed.

The caretaker readily supplied the information needed, and informed Nelson Lee that Dr. James Portman's surgery was quite close by—in Burston Lane. This medical man was the only one in the immediate vicinity, and the detective and Nipper at once set out for his address.

Within five minutes they presented themselves at the doctor's surgery, and discovered that they had timed their visit to a nicety. Fortunately the doctor was at home, and he received them at once.

Nelson Lee stated his business briefly and concisely, telling Dr. Portman that he was looking for an elderly man with an injured finger. He described him as best he could from what he had learned of the man's appearance from the caretaker of the offices, and the medical man nodded at once.

"I know who you mean, Mr. Lee, but I cannot supply the man's name," he said briskly. "As a matter of fact, he came to see me yesterday, and I treated him professionally. He had a rather nasty wound on one of his fingers, from which a large piece of skin had been burned—"

"Exactly, Dr. Portman; that is the man I am so anxious to find," said the detective with a nod. "Is it too much for me to hope that you can assist me?"

"I'm afraid it is," was the reply. "I know nothing whatever of the man, Mr. Lee, and never set eyes upon him until he visited me yesterday. He gave me no name, and he was also very vague regarding his injury, simply stating that it had been caused by an accident. I bound up his finger for him, but in order to make an effective job of it I had first to remove a ring from it. The man was in such a hurry to depart that he completely forgot to take his ring with him, and it is still in my possession, awaiting his return to claim it. That's about all I can tell you."

"Do you mind showing me the ring?" asked the detective keenly.

"Certainly, Mr. Lee; you're quite welcome to see it," answered Dr. Portman readily, crossing to his desk and opening a small drawer as he spoke. "Here it is."

Nelson Lee took the ring from the doctor's hand, and as he did so his eyes gleamed hopefully. The ring, obviously, was a valuable one, and it was fashioned in such a manner as to render it distinctive and unusual.

Surely such a ring as this would provide a means of finding its owner?

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE TRACK!



DR. JAMES PORTMAN looked at Nelson Lee curiously.

"You seem to be interested in the ring, Mr. Lee," he observed, with a note of amusement in his voice. "Surely you don't anticipate making any discoveries from an examination of it?"

"Well, nothing of a startling nature," confessed the detective. "The ring is a very beautiful one, and I am hoping that it will provide me with the clue for which I am seeking. I should like you to allow me to retain it for the present, doctor—"

"You're quite at liberty to do so, Mr. Lee," said the medical man readily. "But I am interested to know how you propose to make use of it for the purpose you mention. You don't mean to say that you have learned anything from a scrutiny of that ring—anything which will prove of use to you, I mean."

Nelson Lee shook his head.

"Nothing beyond the initials of the jewellers who manufactured it," he said. "But I am hoping that an interview with them may bring forth the desired result, doctor. You see, a heavy gold ring of such a curious pattern as this is sure to be readily recognised by the makers, and in all probability they will be able to provide me with the name of the buyer. If such is the case, I shall consider myself amply re-

warded for the slight trouble I have been put to."

Dr. Portman smiled at the simplicity of Lee's explanation, and a few moments later he shook hands with both Nelson Lee and Nipper as they took their departure. The medical man marvelled at the painstaking care with which the detective was following up his slender clues, and he was extremely sceptical as to what the results would be.

Lee, however, was jubilant at the fortunate chance which had caused the ring to come into his possession, and he was very confident that it would serve to aid him considerably.

The ring was of a most unusual pattern, and was fashioned in the form of a pair of intertwined adders—the eyes of the snakes being represented by four tiny rubies of magnificent lustre and brilliance. Upon the inside there appeared the usual hallmark, together with the initials "M. & W."—capitals which Lee knew represented the celebrated firm of Morgan & Willis, of Queen Victoria Street.

"I reckon it's pretty hopeless to expect the makers to tell you who the owner of that thing is," commented Nipper, as the pair made their way out of Burston Lane into Cannon Street. "In all probability, Morgan & Willis have been turning them out by the score—"

"I don't fancy so, young 'un," cut in Nelson Lee, with a shake of his head. "This ring is a hand-forged article of the finest possible workmanship, and was made, in my opinion, especially to the order of a customer. In any case, we have no other feasible line of inquiry to go upon, and I shall certainly not give up hope until we have exhausted every possibility. Remember that we are upon the track of the redoubtable Professor Zingrave, and it is worth any amount of trouble in order to come to grips with him. If it is him, as we suspect, who engineered the amazing robbery which took place at Barlow's last night, we must leave no single stone unturned to effect his speedy capture. He is a dangerous man, Nipper, as we are fully aware of from our past experiences."

Nipper nodded.

"He's more dangerous than ever now, sir, if last night's exploit is anything to go by!" he commented. "That diabolical machine he's using will make him as bold as brass, especially after his initial success with it. Before we know where we are, we shall have a series of similar burglaries taking place all over London—and if that happens there'll be a panic! There isn't a safe in existence which can stand up to such heat as that used at Barlow's."

Nipper's words were true enough, as Lee was quite aware. And this was precisely why the detective was so anxious to get upon Zingrave's track without the least delay.

The pair had been walking towards the premises of Messrs. Morgan & Willis as they conversed, and upon arrival Lee at once sent in his card to the head of the firm. The gentleman who occupied this exalted position was Mr. Stephen Willis, son of one of the original partners, and he received the visitors in his private office at once.

"What can I do for you, Mr. Lee?" he asked pleasantly. "It is some little time since I last had the pleasure of seeing you, and I trust your business on this occasion is nothing of a serious nature—"

"No," smiled Nelson Lee, producing the ring from his pocket. "All I want you to do for me to-day, Mr. Willis, is to tell me the name of the man for whom you made this ring."

Mr. Willis took the ring from the detective's hand, and, as he did so, his eyes opened wide in surprise.

"Why, bless my soul!" he exclaimed. "Where on earth did you get this, Mr. Lee? If you had brought me any other ring which my firm was responsible for, I should probably have had to refer you to my manager, but this is different. I had this made especially to the order of a friend of mine, and I had no idea that it had left his possession."

Nelson Lee beamed.

"That is, indeed, fortunate," he exclaimed. "That ring, Mr. Willis, came into my possession only a few minutes ago, and I have every reason to believe that it was recently worn by a criminal whom I am extremely anxious to locate. How he obtained it, I don't know, but I am determined to find out."

The detective thereupon related the circumstances which had led up to his obtaining the ring, and Mr. Willis nodded his head in perplexity.

"Extraordinary!" he murmured. "I can't understand it! The ring was supplied to Lord Bramfield, of Grosvenor Square—the friend whom I referred to just now, Mr. Lee. You surely don't suspect him of being this criminal, I hope? Such a thing is preposterous—"

"Quite so!" agreed Lee readily. "There can be no question of Lord Bramfield's complicity in this affair, Mr. Willis, but perhaps he will be able to tell me something regarding the history of the ring. At all events, I intend to interview him at once."

The detective was now keenly on the hunt, and he was as good as his word. For, within two minutes of leaving Mr. Willis' office, both he and Nipper were seated in a taxi, bound for the residence of the nobleman for whom the ring had originally been made.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE REWARD OF PERSISTENCE.



LORD BRAMFIELD was seated in his library when Nelson Lee and Nipper were announced, and he at once rose to his feet to receive them.

He looked at the famous detective questioningly as he shook hands, but he was not kept waiting long before Lee stated his business. He did not go into any unnecessary details, but just gave the brief facts, concluding by producing the ring, and showing it to the interested peer.

Lord Bramfield recognised it instantly, just as Mr. Willis had done, and he gave vent to a sudden exclamation of pleasure as he caught sight of the valuable trinket.

"By jingo—my ring!" he ejaculated, with a grin of satisfaction. "Where on earth did you find it, Mr. Lee? I certainly expected that it was lost to me for ever, and this is a most pleasant surprise."

"How came the ring to leave your possession?" queried the detective.

The nobleman smiled.

"It was stolen from my bed-room by an uninvited guest who happened to stroll in one evening while I was at dinner," he explained. "In other words, Mr. Lee, it was taken by a burglar from this house about a couple of months ago, together with a lot of other valuable stuff of my wife's. The police were informed, of course, and they eventually captured the fellow, but too late to regain any of the loot—"

"The burglar was captured, you say?" cut in Lee keenly.

"Yes, so I was informed," said his lordship, with a nod.

"Have you any idea who he is, and can you tell me whether or not he has been sentenced yet?" persisted the detective.

"No—to both questions," smiled Lord Bramfield. "I cannot enlighten you upon either point, Mr. Lee. All I was told was that the man had been taken into custody, and that there seemed to be very little hope of my regaining my property."

Nelson Lee thanked the nobleman, and promised to return the ring to him as soon as he had finished with it. Then he and Nipper once more went upon their long-drawn-out chase, the detective being fully determined to carry the investigation to its logical conclusion.

From Grosvenor Square, Nelson Lee went straight to the nearest police-station, and from the inspector in charge he learned that the man who had been arrested in connection with the burglary at Lord Bramfield's was a criminal named Joe Harding. The detective further ascertained that Harding was at this moment in Brixton Prison, under remand.

"Good!" muttered Nelson Lee to Nipper

in a tone of satisfaction. "The end of the quest seems to be in sight at last! A brief conversation with Joe Harding ought to prove very enlightening, young 'un, and I am very hopeful that he will be able to tell us the identity of the man who obtained the ring from him. Once we have learned that, we should be well on the way to achieving our object."

From the police-station the pair lost no time in hurrying to Gray's Inn Road, where the detective kept his racing motor-car garaged. And, once seated in this splendid vehicle, they set out upon their journey to Brixton Prison.

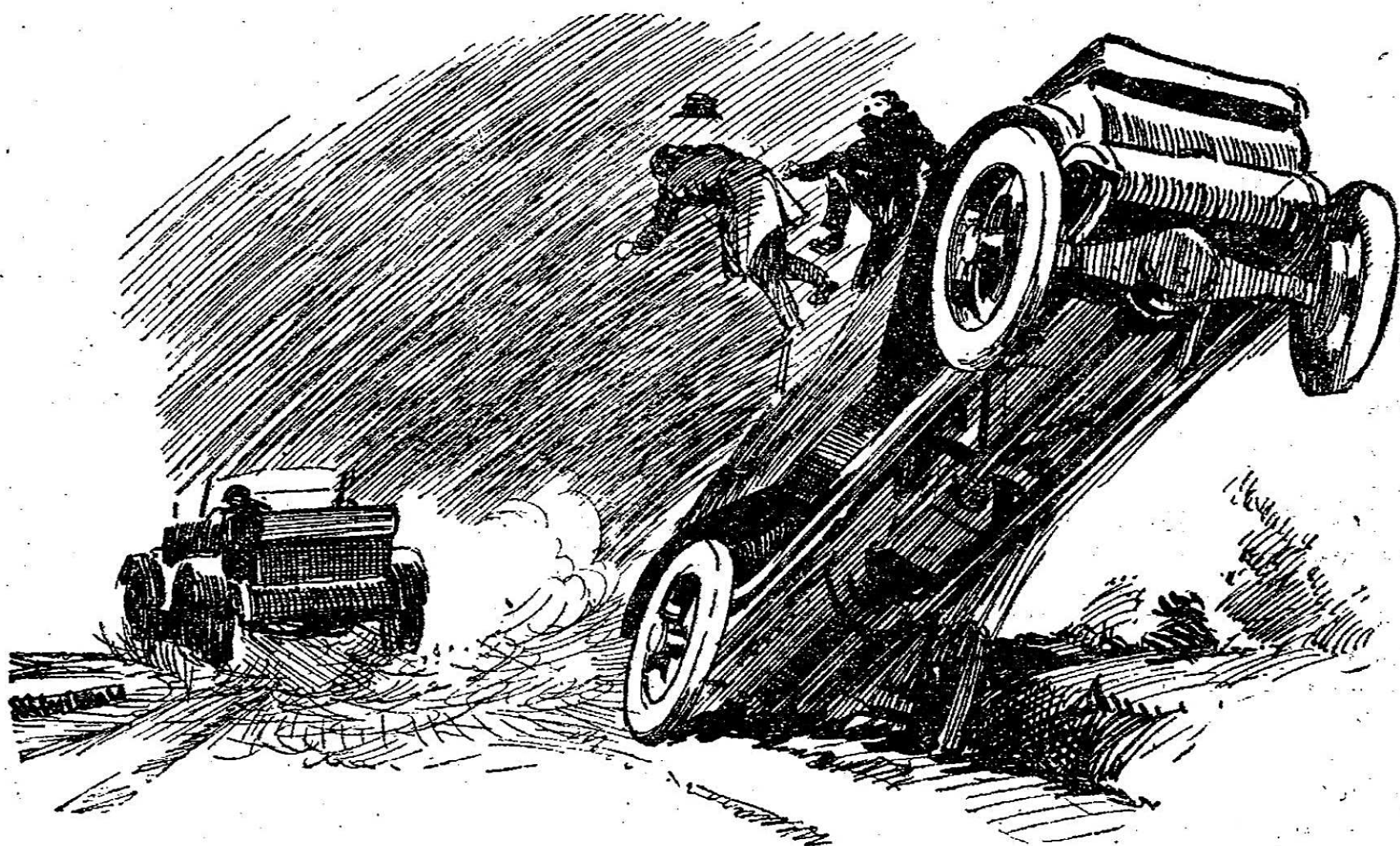
The run was made in record time, and

come to mention it, guv'nor! Lemme see! Where did I git that from——"

"From Lord Bramfield's residence in Grosvenor Square!" put in Nipper, with a grin.

"That's right—so I did!" agreed the burglar. "I found it amongst a lot of other swag——"

"Exactly!" cut in Nelson Lee. "But we're not so much concerned with the other 'swag' at the moment, Harding. What I want to know is this: What became of the ring after it entered your possession? Did you give it away, or pawn it, or sell it? It was not found upon you when you were taken into custody——"



The racer swerved giddily towards the near side hedge, and overturned with a sickening, grinding crash.

Nelson Lee, upon arrival, experienced no difficulty in securing an interview with the governor. To him the detective explained that he wanted to have a few words with Joe Harding, and the request was readily granted.

The burglar was brought to the presence of Lee and Nipper in a private room, and Joe Harding was obviously at a loss to understand the cause of the interview. He eyed the pair very suspiciously for a few moments, but grinned cheerfully enough when he understood the nature of the position.

"Snake ring with ruby eyes!" he muttered, frowning thoughtfully. "I do seem to remember one o' that sort, now you

"No; I sold it, guv'nor," interrupted Harding, adopting a frank tone. "I'll tell you the truth—straight I will! I kep' that ring on my finger for a considerable time, but when I got 'ard-up I 'ad to part with it. I sold it for two quid to a traveller chap I know, and not more'n two hours afterwards I got pinched!"

"When was this?" queried Nelson Lee.

"Just over a week ago," said the burglar.

"And who was the man to whom you sold the ring?" went on the detective. "Do you know his name and address?"

Joe Harding nodded.

"Yes; it was Bill Stockton," he said. "I believe 'e's a traveller o' some sort, but I

don't rightly know. 'E lives at Mrs. Rook's lodgin'-house—26b, Great Russell Street."

This information was just what the detective wanted, and he was highly elated at the success of his interview with Joe Harding. The burglar could impart no further information, and after thanking him, Nelson Lee and Nipper took their departure.

Outside Brixton Prison they climbed into their car, and Nipper looked at his master inquiringly.

"What's the next move now, guv'nor?" he asked. "A little talk with Mr. Bill Stockton of Great Russell Street?"

"Yes, my lad—that is obviously our only course," answered Lee. "We cannot be sure that Harding was speaking the truth, but we cannot afford to allow anything to stand in our way. It is imperative that we get upon Zingrave's track by some means or other, and we are adopting the only means available to us."

"You think that this Bill Stockton is Zingrave?" queried Nipper.

"It is too early to think anything," said the detective. "All we can do is to pursue our inquiries and see where they lead us."

Nelson Lee did not know it, but both he and Nipper were heading for one of the most startling adventures of their lives!

CHAPTER IX.

NIPPER'S ALERT ACTIONS.



MRS. ROOK, the proprietress of the lodging-house in Great Russell Street, waddled to the front door in answer to Nelson Lee's knock.

The detective had left Nipper in the car on this occasion, and it was unnecessary for the lad to be present at the interview. And, as events were to turn out, it was extremely lucky that Lee's assistant remained seated in the racer which stood throbbing near the kerb.

Nelson Lee raised his hat politely when Mrs. Rook presented herself at the open door, and his keen eyes noted that she was a somewhat untidy, slatternly-looking woman. Despite this, however, she appeared to be a comely, motherly soul, and obviously honest.

"Pardon my troubling you, madam, but I'd like to have a few words with you respecting one of your guests," said the detective easily. "I am referring to Mr. William Stockton—"

"To be sure, sir—come inside!" said Mrs. Rook readily, turning and leading the way into the front sitting-room. "Mr. Stockton ain't here just now, if you wanted to see him."

Nelson Lee nodded.

"As a matter of fact, I did want to see him—rather badly," he murmured. "But if

he is out, of course I cannot do so. Have you any idea when he will be in?"

Mrs. Rook shook her head.

"That I can't, sir," she declared. "There's no tellin' one way or the other with Mr. Stockton. Bein' a commercial traveller, same as he is, he comes an' goes at all times, and I don't never trouble myself about him. You see, sir, he rents two rooms in my house, and pays well for 'em, too. If you want to see him very particular, I should advise you to leave a note makin' an appointment—"

"That would scarcely be much good, in view of Mr. Stockton's irregular appearances here," cut in the detective. "Possibly I had better leave my business over for the time being."

"Well, sir, you're quite at liberty to write 'im a note if you wish," said Mrs. Rook generously. "I'll give him any message you like, but it ain't certain whether he'll be here to-day or not. 'E might drop in any moment for anything I know, or he might not come near the place for a week or more. It's just as the fit takes him, I suppose, or else where 'is business keeps him."

While Mrs. Rook was thus engaged in conversation with Nelson Lee, Nipper became aware that a man was alighting from a motor-car quite near to him. The man walked straight up to the front door of No. 26b, opened it with a latchkey, and passed within. When the door had re-closed Nipper could of course see nothing further, but he wondered who the man was, and whether he could encounter his master within the house.

The newcomer, after entering, made straight for the stairs, but he paused before ascending, on account of the voices which were clearly audible to him. Within the sitting-room Nelson Lee and Mrs. Rook were still talking, and the stranger did not hesitate to catch every possible word he could from his position in the hall.

"Well," he heard the detective say, "my business with Mr. Stockton is of the utmost importance, and I may as well tell you, Mrs. Rook, that I am a detective—"

"Lawks!" exclaimed the good woman, in consternation. "A policeman in plain clothes, eh? Well, my man, I wouldn't have allowed you to come in if I'd known— But you look like a gentleman," she added, looking at Lee keenly. "I believe I've seen your picture somewhere, sir— Yes, I have! You're Mr. Nelson Lee, aren't you, of Gray's Inn Road?"

The stranger at the foot of the stairs started as he heard the detective's name uttered, and he turned at once and pulled open the front door. A moment later he was hurrying towards the spot where he had left his car, and Nipper subconsciously wondered why the man had left the house so hurriedly.

Then a sudden thought seemed to occur to Nipper, who at once jumped from his seat in the racer and hurried to the lodging-house. Here he knocked upon the door in a peculiar manner, knowing that Nelson Lee would recognise it as their own secret signal.

He was right, for the detective appeared at the door almost in a flash.

"A queer thing just happened, guv'nor!" said Nipper quickly. "A man entered this house with a latchkey, and after remaining inside for a few moments, he came dashing out again, looking considerably scared. Did you see him?"

"No," said Lee. "But what you say seems queer, Nipper! By gad! I wonder if he heard me talking with Mrs. Rook! If he did, that would account for his sudden flight, particularly if he was Bill Stockton! Which way did he go, young 'un?"

"Straight up Great Russell Street—in his car!" said Nipper, looking up the road as he spoke. "There he is, sir, now! You can see him——"

"Jump in the car!" said the detective crisply. "We'll follow that man and ascertain if your suspicions are correct!"

With incredible swiftness the famous pair leapt into their racer, and Lee set the engine roaring with a touch of the throttle lever. And a moment later the powerful machine was speeding along Great Russell Street in the wake of the car which Nipper had pointed out.

Were they on the right track at last?

CHAPTER X.

THE INVISIBLE GRIP AGAIN!



NIPPER grunted.

"The blithering idiot is making for the open country, guv'nor!" he exclaimed disdainfully. "He must be mad if he thinks he can get away from us in that old creak. Why, we could overtake him in the first mile of clear road!"

Nelson Lee's racer was closely following the car containing the mysterious individual who had displayed such a curious anxiety to leave Mrs. Rook's establishment, and Nipper's remark had been occasioned by the man's obvious intention of leaving the metropolis behind.

All through the congested traffic in the western suburbs of London he had driven at an almost reckless speed, and it was a wonder that he had not met with a serious accident. Nelson Lee, in order not to lose sight of his quarry, had been compelled to follow his tactics, but the detective drove with the most consummate skill and calmness.

The great racing car had many advantages over the other, but speed was a

matter of sheer impossibility until the busy streets of London were left behind. Now the fugitive was just careering through Hendon, and his present speed indicated that he would increase it to the utmost as soon as he got clear of the town.

The man's sudden flight was almost positive proof that he was aware of the identity of his pursuers; and it was also indicated clearly enough that he had ample cause to avoid a meeting with the famous detective.

Otherwise, why had he acted in this queer manner?

Nelson Lee's inference seemed to be very near the truth, and the detective was now quite convinced that the man they were chasing was the Mr. Bill Stockton who had purchased Lord Bramfield's ring from the burglar who stole it. As luck would have it, he had entered the lodging-house just at the moment when Lee had been talking to the landlady, with the result that he had become alarmed, and had fled.

Nipper's sharpness had frustrated his plans, however, and now it looked as if he would soon have to submit to capture. For it was impossible for the fugitive's vehicle to outdistance the racer, however hard it was driven.

For a time Lee allowed the leading car to keep the foremost position on the road. Dusk had now given place to the darkness of night, and the powerful headlamps of the detective's racer illuminated the dusty road for a considerable distance ahead.

Watford was reached and passed, and by this time Lee decided that there was no further object in continuing the chase. The man in front obviously knew that he was being followed, and he would not therefore seek to reach any place of safety.

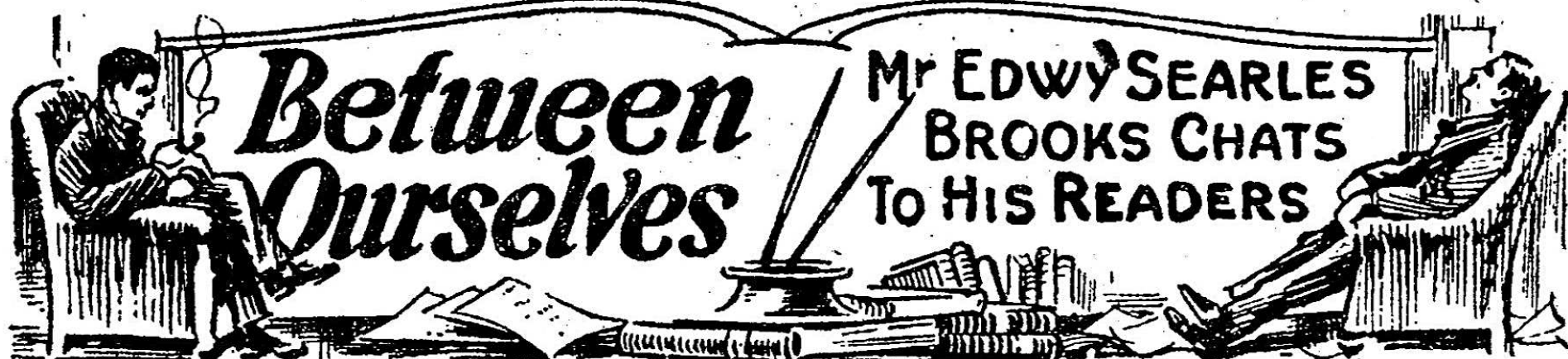
Why he had chosen this route was something of a mystery, but Nelson Lee did not intend to be led any further afield. It would be a simple matter for him to overtake his quarry, and he had no doubt that he and Nipper could manage to capture him without much trouble.

So the detective "stepped on the throttle," and caused the great vehicle to roar along with greatly increased speed. So quickly was the acceleration brought about that the leading car almost appeared to be standing still, and it would be overtaken in a matter of moments.

This, at all events, was what Lee and Nipper anticipated; but something occurred which instantly set their calculations at naught.

For, without the slightest warning, the engine of the racer suddenly emitted a terrible grinding noise, and the car at the same second swerved giddily towards the nearside hedge and overturned with a sickening, grinding crash.

(Another Thrilling Instalment Next Week.)



(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: J. Barnes* (Glasgow), Smith Thompson (Bradford), Gladys E. S. (Birmingham), "A N.L.L. Enthusiast" (Leyton), H. Hutchinson (Leicester), P. F. D. (Tottenham), Justin Laurence Fitz-Gerald (Staplehurst), Graham E. Mitchell (Teddington), "Kid"* (Beckenham), William Page (Bournbrook), C. L. Gale (Battersea), Alice Anderson (Southsea), G. Desmond Richardson* (Burton-on-Trent), A. F. Thebold (Leigh-on-Sea), N. F. Oswald (Edinburgh), Clifford Agnew (Bootle), M. Davies (New Cross), J. Parr (Platt Bridge), H. Mathys (Louvain, Belgium), C. E. Bullock (Gloucester), R. G. N. (Prescot), N. Reynolds (Swinton), B. Scawley (Liverpool).

A few more enthusiasts have given me their names as Organising Officers of the proposed St. Frank's League. Their names have been duly marked with an asterisk, and their addresses noted down. By the time these lines appear in print there may be something fixed up about the League—but I can't say anything for certain.

Many thanks, Smith Thompson, for your little notebook of portraits. You needn't alarm yourself with the thought that I shall throw it away. On the contrary, I am treasuring it, and am looking forward to the other notebooks you promised. The drawings are very good, and do you great credit. But, just between ourselves, I'd like to see some really original work. Thanks very much for your good wishes.

Here's a little paragraph for you, Graham E. Mitchell. You wanted your name men-

tioned, didn't you? And you deserve it, too, after writing me five full pages. I'm sorry to learn that you have no trust in authors, and for days I have been growing more and more like a shadow. By the way, can you tell me exactly WHY you have no trust in us? I feel it is my duty, on behalf of the entire author tribe, to inquire into this lamentable matter. Somehow, I've got a tiny suspicion that you've been trying to pull my leg.

Sorry I can't help you, William Page. I can quite appreciate your desire to correspond with home and colonial readers, but if I were you I should write a few sweet words to the Editor. He's really a good sort (I've got to say this, as he reads the copy before it is sent to press!) and he'll probably help you in the matter.

Thank you very much, Mrs. Anderson, for your delightful letter. I hope that you and your children are enjoying the present series, and you can rely upon Nelson Lee and Nipper returning very shortly, to say nothing of the stories being longer. You raise a very interesting point in the latter part of your letter when you state that you are all longing for another "Desert Island" series, with sharks and cannibals, etc. Another reader moots the very same subject, and I think it will be of general interest if I enlarge upon this point straight away.

The other reader I referred to is C. E. Bullock. He doesn't want anything to do with cannibals and desert islands, and discovering new lands, but would prefer the Summer Holiday stories to deal with long tours of England by the St. Frank's boys.

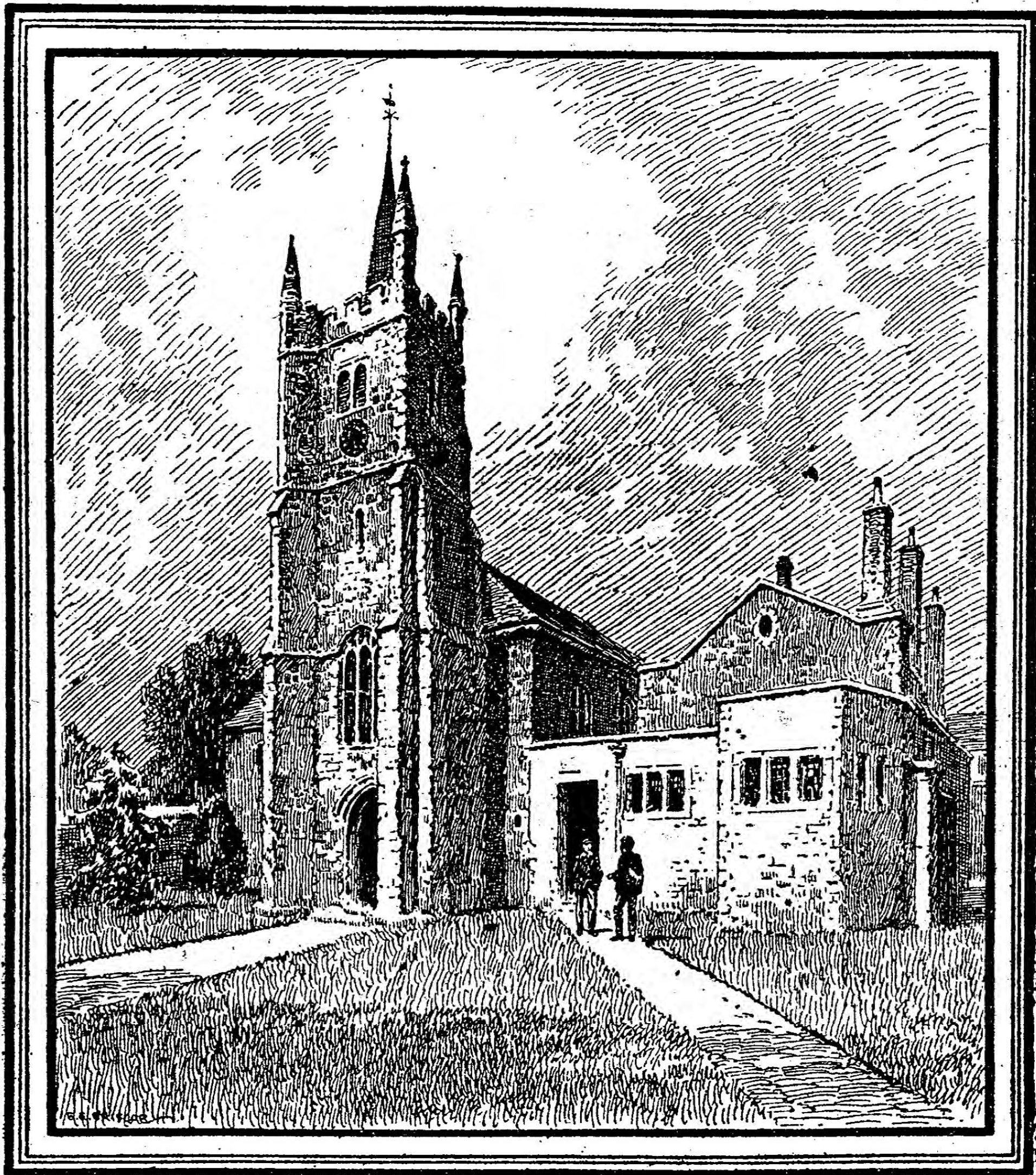
I'm very much afraid, C. E. Bullock, that you will be in the minority if this matter is put to the vote. And I have a mind to ask for votes on this all-important question. It seems to me that Mrs. Anderson possesses the true British spirit in longing to read about daring adventures and

(Continued on page iii of cover)



St. Frank's Magazine.

No. 62. Vol. 3. Edited by R. Pitt. January 31, 1925.



OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS SERIES OF ART SKETCHES. No. 63. THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL, ASHBURTON.

Said to possess the oldest school building in England, Ashburton Grammar School was founded in 1314 by Walter Stapleton, Bishop of Exeter. The school is situated amid beautiful Devonshire scenery. Con-

siderable sums of money have been expended in adapting the school for the co-education of boys and girls. The games played by the scholars include cricket, hockey and football.



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

My dear Chums,

It has been suggested to me that I should arrange for the Mag. to be printed in the middle section of its parent paper, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, so as to enable readers, if they choose, to detach the pages without difficulty and without spoiling the rest of the book. A few years ago, when Nipper was running "Nipper's Magazine," he adopted this plan for some months. If readers generally wish me to do this, I shall be delighted to oblige them. The "Who's Who" feature and the coming map of St. Frank's contain facts about the school that the regular reader should keep by him in a handy and compact form for future reference.

HALVING THE PAGES.

As an additional improvement in making the Mag. more adaptable for separate detachment and binding, I am considering the idea of printing it downwards from left to right of the present pages, thus making each page half the size, with two pages in the space now occupied by one. Thus, when you detach a sheet of four existing pages by folding them and cutting them where indicated, you will have eight small pages. I propose to have two of these sheets for the Mag., thus making sixteen small pages. When bound, the Mag. will then be a neat little volume, half the size of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY. But before I can decide to print the Mag. in this way, I must first confer with the printers and find out if it is practicable. Also, I would like to know what you, my chums, think about it.

DICK GOODWIN WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU.

Football enthusiasts who are anxious to obtain the St. Frank's Table Football Game, which Goodwin described how to

make recently in his "How To Do It" articles, should communicate without delay to Dick Goodwin, c/o The Editor, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon, Street, London, E.C.4, as arrangements are being made for the manufacture of this ingenious table version of the great winter game. Goodwin would also like to hear from readers who are interested in his articles and who would like a few extra hints, or who have any particular suggestions to make for future articles in the "How To Do It" series.

SOLUTION OF OUR CROSS-WORD PUZZLE.

I wonder how many of my readers succeeded in solving the St. Frank's cross-word puzzle, which appeared in the Mag. last week. Here is the correct solution:—

ACROSS.	DOWN.
1. TUCK	1. TIPS
3. BEEF	2. KID
5. RIVER	3. BED
7. PL	4. FEET
9. DAD	6. VAL
11. SID	8. LINES
13. BAT	10. HANDY
14. NIL	12. DIG
15. WON	13. BOO
16. PEG	16. PITT
18. ODE	17. ROT
20. IS	19. EDIT
21. FOE	21. FAT
23. YD	22. ETC
25. FATTY	24. TT
27. TART	25. FR
28. CERT	26. YE

TRACKETT GRIM AGAIN.

A number of readers are anxious to know if I am publishing any more Trackett Grim yarns, and if so, when? Why, of course I shall! But we must wait until Handy has finished his present serial, and that will not be very long.

Your old pal,

REGGIE PITT.

TRAVEL TALES.



By An Old Boy
(Lord Dorrimore's Weekly Trifle.)

No. 26.—HOW A YELL SCARED A TIGER AND SAVED MY LIFE.

IT was in a very wild part of Assam, where I was staying with a tea-planter. Although one of the best big game districts in India, it is seldom visited by hunters, as it is over a thousand miles from Calcutta, far from railways, and altogether rather wild and desolate, except for the few cultivated patches.

The planter kept an elephant, and one day I mounted this, sitting behind the mahout on a sort of straw mattress, a rather hard and slippery sort of thing on which it was difficult to keep one's seat. I took my rifle, but had very few cartridges.

As we were ambling along, a big tiger suddenly sprang out of a clump of thatch-grass, and stood glaring at us ferociously, and yet with a sort of contemptuous indifference. I put a shot into his right shoulder, causing him to leap high into the air. Then he retreated to a spot about a hundred yards off. I fired my last three cartridges, which all missed. Anyhow, the tiger took not the slightest notice of them. Then suddenly he disappeared. That meant he was going to stalk us.

I ordered the mahout to make tracks for home. We hadn't gone twenty yards before the tiger reappeared, now in a furious rage. And I couldn't shoot! Then the elephant bolted, and in striving to control him the mahout let out such unearthly yells that the tiger was frightened. I had to hold on for dear life. The tiger prepared for a last spring, and at the same moment the mahout uttered the most frightful shrieks that I ever heard issue from a human throat. They were indescribable, unbelievable. But they saved us. For the tiger turned away, and we saw him no more.

FACTS LET LOOSE

By EUGENE ELLMORE

LICHENS.

Among the smallest objects in the vegetable world, lichens are among the most extraordinary. In the first place, they live a double life. They have a dual nature, being partly alga and partly fungus. The alga supplies organic food material, while the fungus has the power, through a battery of acids which it contains, of dissolving the hardest rocks. Neither the alga nor the fungus could live separately, but joined together they can live almost anywhere, certainly in places where no other vegetation can exist. On bare rocks a fungus would soon die for lack of food substances, and an alga would perish from drought and lack of mineral. So they join forces, and the alga cells supply food to the fungus cells on condition that the fungus cells dissolve the rock by their acids and supply mineral food to the alga cells.

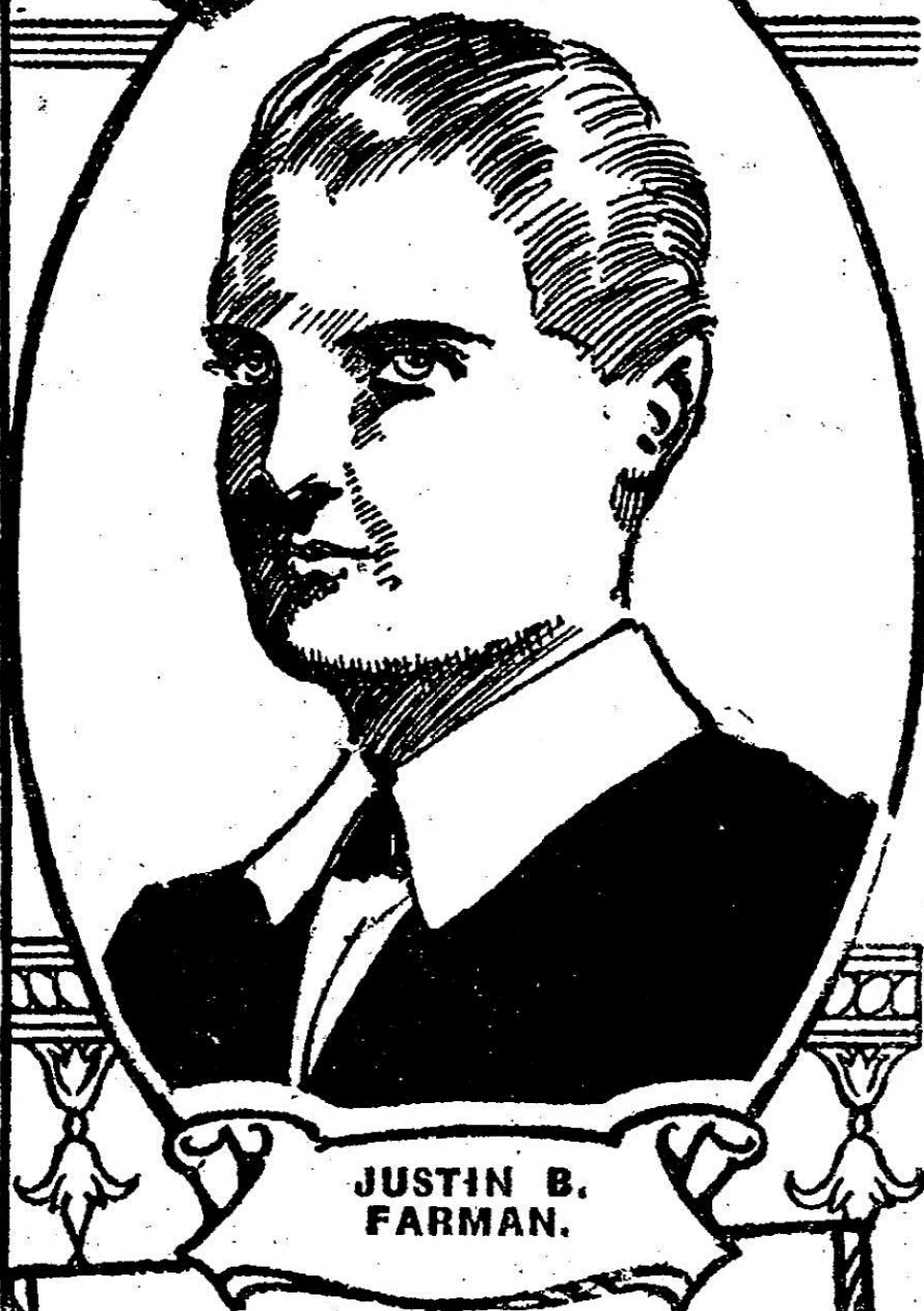
Lichens are long-lived. It takes some of them nearly fifty years to produce seed. But they have plenty of time, for some of the lichens on our rocks were established there when William the Conqueror came, and possibly centuries before.

Where you find lichens you find a healthy spot, for they like pure fresh air, and abhor stagnant places. Hence you won't find them in London. But they will grow at the top of the highest mountains, when the hardest of plants have succumbed; and they will stand extremes of heat and cold and drought longer than any other vegetable growth. Nothing else has equal vitality.

"Manna" is simply a lichen—*lecanora esculenta*, which lies loose on the ground in little grey lumps, and still saves the lives of travellers in wilderness and desert.

Lichens are used in the arts, in chemistry, and in medicine in various ways. In Iceland and Lapland they are important economically, since not only reindeer, but also human beings largely live upon them. "Iceland moss" is a lichen, and it is the chief food of poor Icelanders. It can be bought at the chemists, and is excellent for stomach and chest diseases. No lichen is poisonous.

OUR PORTRAIT GALLERY. And WHO'S WHO.



**JUSTIN B.
FARMAN.**

No. 65.—JUSTIN B. FARMAN.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Well-built, upright figure. Bronzed, handsome face, with good-natured expression and humorous eyes, the latter being blue. Hair, fair and curly. Height, 5 ft. 3 ins. Weight, 8 st. 7 lb. Birthday, October 26th.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

Good-tempered and likeable, with a generous, cheerful nature. Very proud of his Californian birth, but, unlike many Americans, the reverse of boastful. A thoroughly good sort.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

Has learned to like cricket, and is very adept at the game. Is an expert horseman, and can do wonderful tricks with the lasso.

No. 66.—CHARLES OWEN (Owen major).

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

An insignificant-looking boy, with a slim, skinny frame. Rather weak features, and a supercilious expression. Eyes, blue grey. Hair, dark. Height, 5 ft. 1 in. Weight, 7 st. 13 lb. Birthday, September 25th.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

Rather inclined to push himself forward, but commands no respect, and is ever ready to criticise and condemn without evidence. Not a bad chap, and not a cad. Commonplace.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

Shines at nothing, but is a severe critic of others. Hobbies: Cross-word puzzles, amateur photography and reading.



**CHARLES OWEN
(Owen major).**

THE FOURTH At ST. FRANK'S.



No. 67.—HAROLD DOYLE.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

An average-sized boy with an Irish type of face. Generally wears a cheerful grin, and is shockingly untidy in appearance. Eyes, brown. Hair, fair. Height, 5 ft. Weight, 8 st. 4 lb. Birthday, July 14th.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

Hasty-tempered and inclined to argue. Extremely forgetful and careless. Cannot keep anything for twenty-four hours without mislaying it. Generous and free-handed.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

An excellent sprinter, but lacks staying power for long runs. A good swimmer, and can box a little. Hobby: Chemistry.



HAROLD
DOYLE.

No. 68.—YUNG CHING.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

A typical Chinese boy of the upper class, thoroughly Westernised. Eyes, dark. Hair, black and glossy. Height, 4 ft. 9 ins. Weight, 7 st. 3 lb. Birthday, June 16th.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

Very tricky, although pretending to be innocent. Good-natured, but difficult to understand. Very deep.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

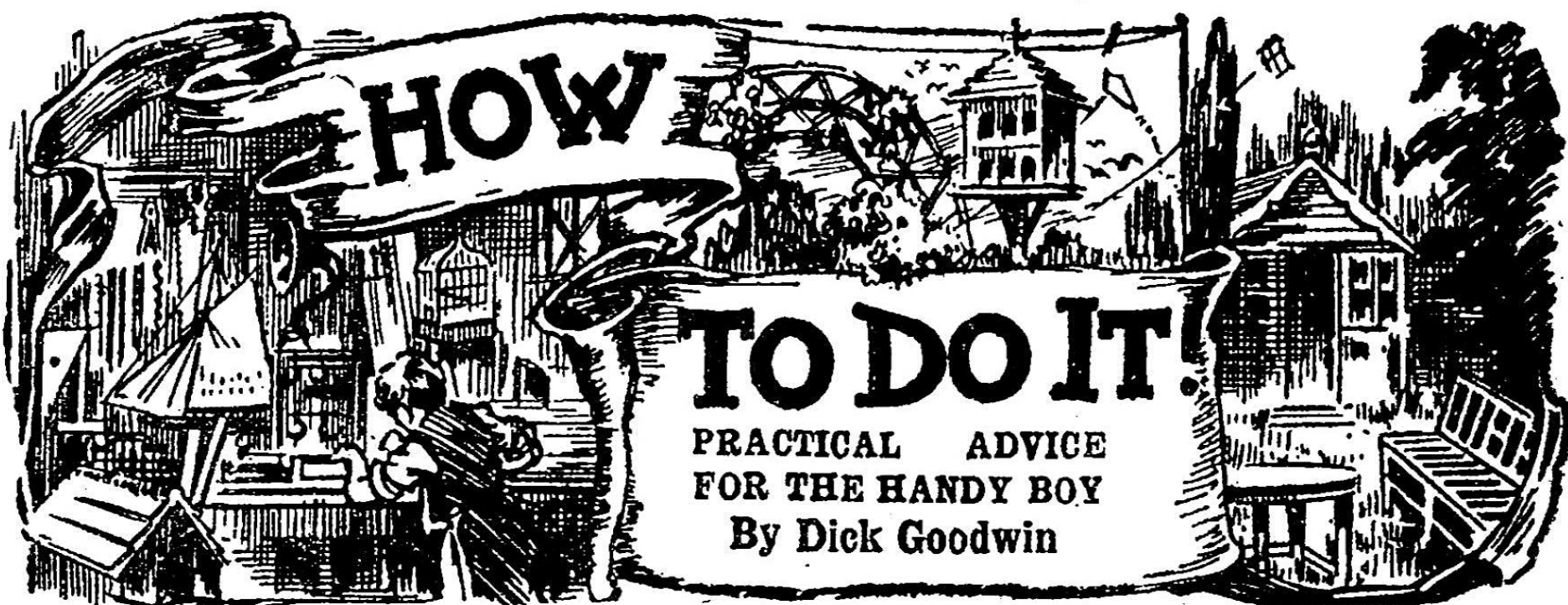
Takes no interest in sports, but makes a hobby of kite-flying.

NOTE.—The ages of Fourth Form boys vary between fourteen and sixteen, but for obvious reasons no more definite information on this point can be given.

NEXT WEEK: Larry Scott, Eric Dallas, Arthur Steele, Clement Turner.



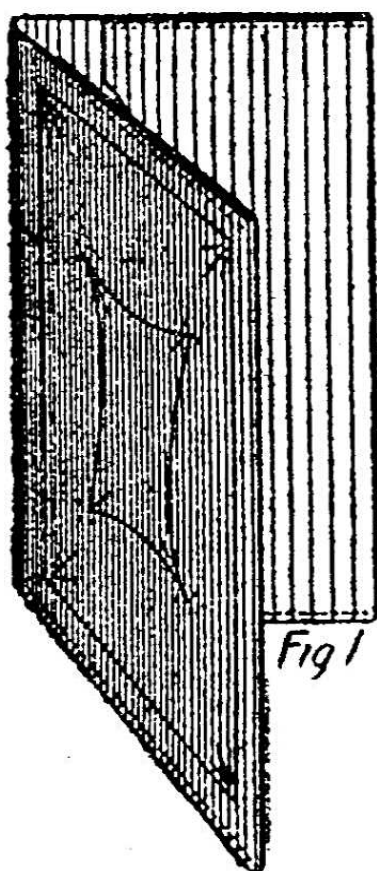
YUNG
CHING.



Readers who wish to ask questions or make suggestions regarding these articles are invited to write to Dick Goodwin, c/o The Editor, The Nelson Lee Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HOW TO MAKE A LEATHER POCKET WALLET

IT is not always possible to obtain a piece of leather just large enough for one piece of work. I find it is cheaper to buy a skin and use it up in various ways. As the tools used in leather work are all simple and easily made, it is possible to make up all sorts of useful little articles from a skin by careful planning. Calf skin, with a similar quantity of "skiver" which is a cheap veneer of leather used for lining, will make a number of wallets; but if the sides of the wallet are stiffened with canvas or cardboard, sheepskin in the form



of "basil" will be found quite satisfactory in use and cheaper.

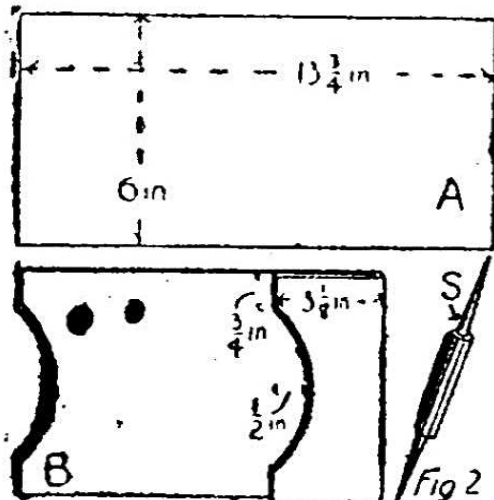
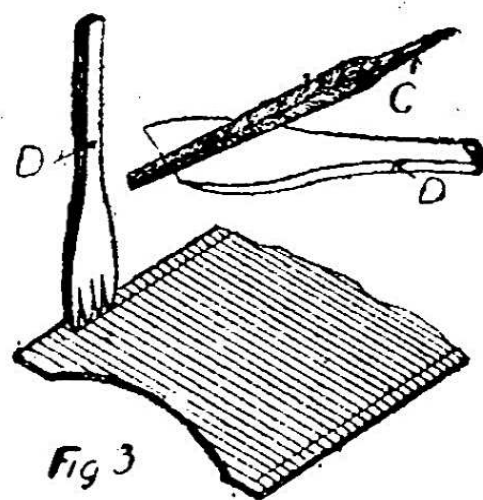
A SIMPLE WALLET.

A simple form of wallet, shown at Fig. 1, is made with one long strip of basil lined with skiver pasted on the inside with ordinary flour paste with stiff can-

vas between, if required. The first stage is to cut the oblong pieces $13\frac{1}{4}$ in. by 6 in. as at A, Fig. 2, and cut out the ends as at B. Next mark a line $\frac{1}{8}$ in. from the sides, $6\frac{1}{4}$ in. from each end with a scribe. This tool can be made with an 8 in. length of steel rod pointed at both ends with a handle made of suitable rubber tubing, as at S. The next process is shown at Fig. 3, and consists of marking the sewing holes with a stitch tool, which can be made with a file from a piece of mild steel, as at C and D. The ends are now folded over, as at Fig. 4, and sewn with a needle and linen thread through the holes made with the tool, and following the method shown at E and F.

SEWING THE EDGES.

The first sewing is done by passing the needle through one hole and then the next in order, and when the length is complete, the same method is followed to the commencing point, thus filling

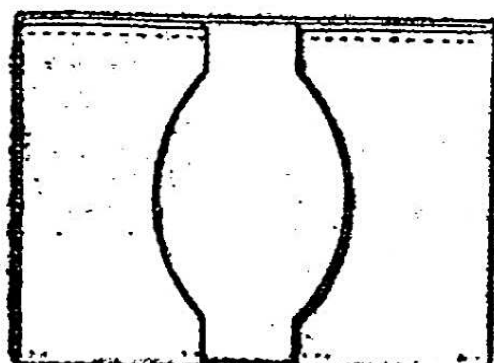


all the spaces. If any form of decoration is required on the sides of the wallet, it must be done before the sewing is done. The effect of indented lines can be worked by using a scribe with a blunt end. For straight lines the scribe can be drawn along the side of a rule, but it must be pressed down fairly hard, and when once a line has

been made in this way on the leather, it is almost impossible to obliterate it, therefore don't make mistakes. Any design can be transferred from a drawing with carbon paper.

A WALLET WITH LACED EDGES.

The laced or thonged-edge wallet, shown at Fig. 5, is a more ambitious piece of work; it is not more difficult to make, but requires much care in marking out. Calfskin is preferable, and it is probable that the three pieces required may be obtained from a local book-binder. The outside piece, shown at G, Fig. 6, is $7\frac{3}{4}$ in. by 6 in., the two inner pieces H are

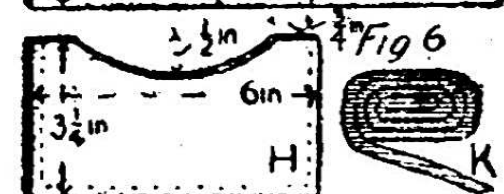
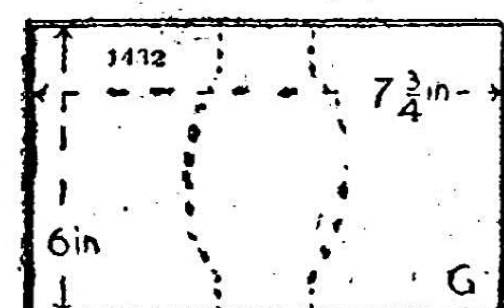


6 in. by $3\frac{1}{4}$ in. The latter pieces are cut with a curved hollow $\frac{1}{2}$ in. deep with $\frac{3}{4}$ in. at each end. All the cutting should be done with a very sharp knife on a block of hard wood, a shoe-maker's knife is best, but any strong pocket-knife blade can be used. The best way of keeping the blade sharp is to make a strop by gluing a strip of fine emery cloth to a strip of wood. Lines for the thonging holes should be drawn with the scribe about $\frac{1}{4}$ in. or 3-16 in. from the edge, and the decoration formed with the same tool.

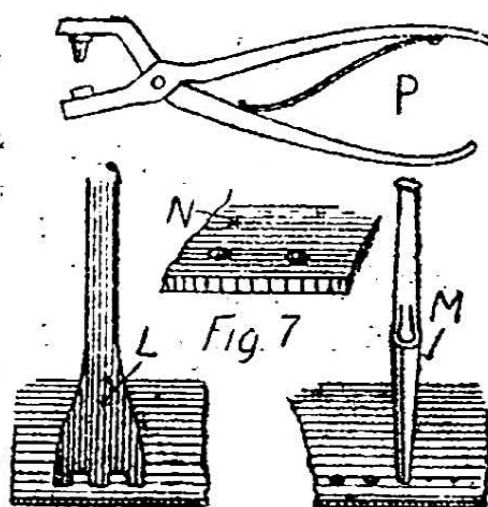
METHODS OF DECORATION.

A large number of suitable decorative designs can be worked by the use of the scribe alone, but with the addition of two or three punches, considerable variety is obtainable. Punches can be made with 3-16 in. steel rod or strip filed to the required shape and finished with emery cloth. The markings from punches are made with a hammer, but care must be taken to make the mark in the right place.

HOW TO DO THE LACING.



The holes for the thonging or lacing are made with a thonging tool as at L, Fig. 7. The use of this tool enables the worker to obtain accurate spacing, which is essential to the good appearance of the finished work. Suitable round holes can



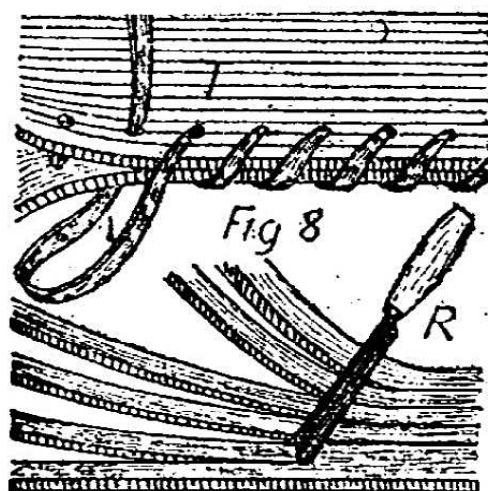
be cut with a saddler's punch, as at M. This tool will make neat, round holes which should be about $\frac{1}{4}$ in. apart, as at N. A useful tool for those who do not mind spending a little money on an equipment of tools, is the spring pliers shown at P, this tool, also obtainable with a number of cutters arranged to revolve, will cut the thonging holes very rapidly. The best method to follow in preparing the holes in the wallet is to cut the holes in the inner pieces first, place them in position, and mark out the position of the holes in the under piece with the scribe; this will insure them being in line.

CUTTING THE THONGS.

The thongs can be obtained ready for use in long lengths. They can be cut from odd pieces of leather with a sharp knife as at R, Fig. 8, or from comparatively small pieces as at K, Fig. 6. The actual method of thonging is shown at T, Fig. 8, and consists of pulling an inch or so through the end hole, placing this length flat on the inside and covering it with the subsequent lacing which follows a regular order over and over the edge. Care must be taken to avoid pulling the lacing too tight. Each thong must be carefully drawn in position, and folded over the edge before it is pulled up through the next hole.

FINISHING THE WORK.

The ends of the thongs, when finished, are threaded through two or three lacings, and are rendered secure by paring them off thin and touching them with seccotine or similar glue. The lacings can be hammered out flat or the wallet opened out, placed under pressure to obtain the necessary flat and even edge. By combining the two methods of sewing and lacing, a large number of small, useful articles can be made. The surface of the leather can be further ornamented by modeling and staining, but this is rather advanced work, and hardly necessary in such a simple object as a pocket wallet.



NEXT WEEK! Goodwin will describe how to make
A SIMPLE ELECTRIC MOTOR!



IN REPLY to YOURS

Correspondence Answered by
Edward Oswald 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.).

J. HARKER (Bradford): How can I hang my face on a wall and throw a brick at it? Teddy Long could lick me blindfold, eh? Well, so he ought to! How could I see to hit him back? You saw what I said to Rhoda. Well, you're the opposite!

ROY ROBERTS (Sydney, N.S.W.): Australia belongs to England, you ass! So all your sporting wins go to our credit. My stories are "screams," are they? Well, I must say you Colonials have got a queer sense of humour!

BILL B. (Melbourne): I've told Tom Burton about those boats and cray-fishing stunts, and he swears he'll come and see you next time he's in Australia. But all those interesting things oughtn't to be written in pencil, you know. How about having another go? You can handle a pen as well as a fishing-line, I know.

L. E. C. (Rose Bay, N.S.W.): Anyone would think I was contrary, by the way you talk! But Church and McClure would tell you different to that. Why, there isn't a chap breathing so easy to please as I am. There's nothing perverse about me!

ERNEST TYNE (Glebe, N.S.W.): We've got two ventriloquists here already—Nick Trotwood's one, and I'm the other. And one of them is very good indeed. I won't say which, because I hate talking about myself. Aren't two enough for you?

ONE OF YOU (Melbourne): That's a jolly fine school motto you've got, Irene—Knowledge and Virtue. In fact, it's nearly as good as our—By Wisdom and Courage. I told Pitt he's your favourite, and he was as pleased as Punch.

THE OTHER OF YOU (Melbourne): I'm so glad you're a jolly girl, Emily, as they're the only ones who really count. And you've got sense with it—haven't you picked me as your favourite? Willy's too young to take any interest in girls.

BOTH OF YOU (Melbourne): Irene and Emily! What nice names—especially Irene! So you think my stories thrilling and well-written. Jolly sensible girls! But please tell me more about these "Haygarth" stories. I'm jolly interested.

TWO TRUE-BLUE AUSTRALIANS (Melbourne): Well, I'm blessed, if you Australian girls aren't the giddy limit! Talk about cleverness! Why, our Irenes and Emilys aren't in it with you! You've egged me on to give you four replies instead of one! And I've only just tumbled to your little game! It's not fair!

D. A. YOUNG (Brisbane): By the time you read this I expect you'll know the answers to most of those questions. If not, please write me again. Yours is another sensible Australian letter. Don't worry—you shall have more of my yarns. Kenmore's still here, worse luck—because he's still a rotter.

ISOBEL L. PERRY (Melbourne): Just as if you could believe I'm not real! You can't kid me like that! It wouldn't be fair for me to answer all those questions of yours, when I'm so cramped for room. Reggie's so stingy with his space. But if you read the Old Paper weekly, and take care not to miss a single issue, you'll find out everything you want to know. You just see!

MAC (Ballarat): Are you dotty, or what? How can your girl be the prettiest and sweetest on earth when there's Irene Manners here? Punch that boy next door for me for not buying his own weekly copy of the Old Paper! That's not the way to help the circulation up. The more buyers, the better it gets, you know.

X (Timbuctoo): So you waste paper on me! All right! Keep your old waste-paper! What do you think I am—a rubbish dump? Still, as you've taught me that Timbuctoo's in Leicester, I'll forgive you. Insulting ass, all the same!

- STARCIE (Nottingham): By George! That's a ripping letter of yours. It was more interesting than a Cross Word Puzzle, and just as easy to wrestle with. Let's have another! I wish they'd all write as clearly and sensibly as you do.
- R. H. W. (Abingdon): Of course things here aren't getting worse every day. They're getting better. I see to that. I DID kiss Irene Manners under the mistletoe, and I hope you're satisfied. But don't kid yourself through you it was. It wasn't!
- H. RAYBOULD (Coventry): Your brother's all wrong. All my replies are answers to real correspondents. I'd like to biff your brother for stuffing you up like that. But I'm not surprised—he knows what a keen imagination I've got.
- RALPH F. SANDERS (Bristol): Of course I'm an absolute marvel! Have you only just found it out? But writing those stunning detective stories is nothing much to us clever authors. We don't make any fuss about them, and the praise we get doesn't turn our heads. I'm glad you've noticed mine's not swelled.
- EDWARD JOHN JOSEPH REILLY (Minyip, Victoria, Australia): You've got such a long name and address that it's taken up nearly all the room I had to reply to you in. Jerry Dodd says he can't remember you at all. I don't believe you knew him out there. John, you've told a whopper!
- MARCUS L. LOANE (Chatswood, N.S.W.): So you want Nos. 110, 111, 112 113, and 114 of the Old Paper? Well, perhaps somebody who has these five numbers to sell will see this and let me know. If not, I'm afraid I can't help you. About those questions, just read what I've said to Isobel L. Perry of Melbourne.
- G. GRAHAM (Toronto): I don't mind giving the girls your best regards. But when you ask me to kiss Irene for you, I call it a bit thick. It's a jolly good job for you that you're so far away! You're a nice chap to praise me for biffing Church and McClure when they're cheeky! Their cheek's nothing to yours! But you've got us three new readers, and that squares everything.
- PEGGY (Birkenhead): My photograph appeared in No. 486 of the Old Paper. How on earth did you manage to miss it? Willy's about two years younger than me, his best chum's Chubby Heath, and he's not old enough to bother about girls. I'm so sorry about your brother, but we don't fight like that.
- COLLECTOR (Birmingham): Another one after back numbers of the Old Paper. 450, too! That's a tall order! Well, I can only ask all readers who have copies to sell, from 1 to 450 inclusive, to let me know, and then I'll see what I can do for you. There are plenty more
- wanting back numbers, so I hope there'll be plenty of offers. The lower the prices wanted, the better, of course. Church and McClure are getting lazy, and this'll keep 'em busy!
- FLO S. (Middlesex): Your brothers are jolly sensible chaps, and I hope they'll both get married and bring their children up to read the Old Paper, and that you'll do the same. If you "try" to write again, you will. Please do. But mind you leave out that bit about bullying! Willy's a cheeky nuisance!
- LARRY BROWN (Sussex): It's a good job for you there was no proper address on your letter, or I'd run you to earth and spificate you! Of course I've got as much sense as a busted-up hosepipe. I've got more. And everybody knows I'm NOT a hopeless blockhead. Why, I simply live on hope! You're dotty!
- BARRY LBOWN (Hailsham): It's no good trying to fool me. Have you forgotten I'm a detective, you fathead? By clever deduction, I know you're Larry Brown. You used the same typewriter, paper, and envelope, and posted your letter at the same time and place. But in this letter you've contradicted everything you said in the other one. So I don't know whether to thank you or slang you. You've mixed me all up, you potty ass!
- A.E.D. (Liverpool): What's the matter with you chaps, missing the photographs like this? Reggie's was with mine in No. 486. There's nothing laughable in my yarns, you chump! I don't write piffle of that kind. There's something wrong with you. My thrilling, dramatic literature isn't funny!
- JACK BLACKMAN (North Sydney, N.S.W.): That's a good idea of yours about Overseas readers being put in touch with each other, and I'll keep it in mind. I shouldn't mind the extra work at all. In fact, I should rather like it, as it would help to keep Church and McClure out of mischief. Besides, you've got the Old Paper six new readers, and one good turn deserves another.
- AN OLD SOUTHLANDIAN (Rye, New York, U.S.A.): Your notepaper's great! I can't tell you how pleased I was to get your letter, and you're getting both your wishes. Many thanks! Do write again soon! How do you get your copy of the Old Paper, and have you heard any American opinions of the St. Frank's stories? It would be SO interesting to us to learn them if you have!
- A STAUNCH READER (Tottenham): You sound like a bully to me—biffing your brother so much that he's afraid of the sight of you. Willy isn't afraid of me!
- PHYCIL (Abindon): I have no objection to you expecting a full page for your reply. But that doesn't say you'll get it, does it? No jolly fear.

TED.



IN QUEST OF GOLD!

A Marvellous New Serial of Breathless Adventure in the Klondyke and Alaska.

By the Celebrated Author
Edward Oswald Handforth

MEMORIES REFRESHED HERE.

While out hunting rabbits in the Rockies, Bob Brave and Claude Courage come face to face with an enormous grizzly bear. They are miles from the camp, and the situation is pretty off-side. Claude stands rooted to the ground as the bear lumbers towards him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN THE ARMS OF THE GRIZZLY.

THERE was no time for action. The enormous bear, towering twelve feet into the air, bore down upon Claude like a traction-engine. It was impossible to escape. It was impossible to move an inch.

Claude leapt aside like lightning, but he was too late. The great bear seized him in its clutches, and hugged him to its great hairy chest. The moment was fraught with horror.

"All right, old man—keep your pecker up!" panted Bob Brave.

He loosed off his catapult, and caught the bear a biff in the eye with a whacking great stone. But the bear only winked, and didn't seem to mind. Panting with horror, Bob flung his catapult down, and swept his eyes round the canyon for another method of attack.

In a trice he saw how to do the trick. And Claude, all this time, was being slowly crushed to death. Tighter and tighter grew the bear's hug. The breath from its great mouth felt like the exhaust from a steam-engine, and scorched Claude's face like anything.

But Bob was losing no time. He knew that it would be all up in less than a minute. There was no fighting against this monster of the mountains. Indeed, Claude was almost at his last gasp already.

"Help!" he cried appealingly. "Bob—

Bob! Good-bye old fellow! I can feel my ribs going—it's all up——"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SMOKE SIGNALS.

BUT Bob was ready. With startling agility, he had dashed up the mountain-side. His quick eyes had seen an overhanging crag. It weighed tons and tons, and he reached it in the nick of time.

"Look out!" he roared.

And with one heave he sent the crag hurtling down. Those tons of rock struck the bear on the back of the neck, and the next second the monster of the mountains was a mass of pulp.

"Saved!" gasped Claude thankfully.

He crept out from the debris, unscathed. Although the rocks had killed the bear, Claude was unharmed. For Bob had flung the great missile with such skill that only the bear had suffered.

Bob rushed down, and the two chums clasped hands. Words were impossible. They just gazed into one another's eyes with dumb emotion.

"Thanks, old man!" muttered Claude brokenly.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" growled Bob. "Anybody would have done it!"

And then, suddenly, Claude's eyes grew round. He stared across the mountains. On twenty distant hilltops columns of dense smoke were rising into the air. There was no wind, and the smoke rose ominously into the still heavens.

"The Indians!" panted Claude, horrified. "They're going to attack the camp! They're signalling to one another to start the massacre!"

(Read how the two chums save the camp from destruction—in next week's pulsating instalment of thrills!—AUTHOR.)

(Continued from page 30)

exciting discoveries in strange lands. Right down through history, we Britons have led the way in exploration and adventure.

* * *

Now, in a very few weeks I shall have to be turning my thoughts to the planning of the Summer Holiday series—for, as you all know, I write my stories a good deal in advance. And I should like to know your opinions. What are these summer stories to be about? Send me your votes, and I'll promise to turn out a series that will meet with the majority's approval.

* * *

For example, quite a few readers have asked me to write further stories about the characters and places in former series—such as the White Giants on the Amazon, the Quaint Inhabitants of New Anglia, at the South Pole, the South Sea Islands, and so forth. Personally, I have had a half-formed idea of taking my characters to British Guiana this summer, with Lord Dorrimore and Umlosi to the fore. A series of this sort could develop in many ways, but the main keynote would be Adventure. From British Guiana our party could penetrate to the Amazon, and come upon the White Giants once again. But I don't want to introduce anything of this sort, unless the majority of readers desire it.

* * *

So please write me postcards or letters, as many as you like, and drop me a hint. Is it to be a Holiday Series in England, on the Amazon, in Africa, in the South Sea Islands—or where? The more letters you send, the better I shall be able to judge. And I really do want to please the bulk of you. It will be a great help if you give me a little guidance as to your wishes.

* * *

With reference to Nelson Lee and Nipper coming back to St. Frank's, C. E. Bullock urges me to keep Mr. Beverley Stokes at the school. I made Mr. Stokes a House-master in the hope that he would partially take the place of Nelson Lee. Now you want Nelson Lee back, and Mr. Stokes as well! What is a poor author to do? Perhaps the most satisfactory solution to the new problem will be to leave Mr. Stokes in his present position, and to find a new place for Nelson Lee—one that will be more fitting to his peculiar talents.

* * *

So Mr. Stokes will remain where he is, and while Dr. Malcolm Stafford will continue to conduct the school, I shall bring Nelson Lee back to St. Frank's as a kind

of Deputy-Head and lecturer on criminal investigation. This will leave him free to occupy his time on detective cases, and fully retain the dignity and eminence of his position as one of the foremost investigators in the kingdom. But you'll have to wait a few weeks for these changes.

* * *

I was particularly delighted with your letter, Clifford Agnew. It is your opinion that the old paper has not been given a sporting chance in its new form. You also think that readers in general have been a little hasty. I am inclined to agree with you. But the flood of letters urging me to bring Nelson Lee and Nipper back has been overwhelming, and so I've been obliged to bow to the majority. However, I still agree with you that the new form has hardly had a chance to get into its stride. But I am not writing these stories to please you alone, Clifford, and I'm not writing them to please myself. I've got to give the bulk of our readers what they ask for. And they haven't merely asked for Nelson Lee and Nipper to come back—they have demanded it in a perfect roar.

* * *

I don't know whether I have spelt your name correctly, H. Mathys, but if not, it is your own fault. Your signature was decidedly indistinct. Not that it really matters—the letter was the main thing. I am interested to find that we have at least one reader in Louvain, and I appreciate your encouraging remarks.

* * *

Strictly speaking, I don't suppose I ought to give you any space, R. G. N. Your letter is full of enthusiasm and praise, and you include a few of those grumbles which I so welcome. At the same time, there is nothing in the letter to interest other readers. My only reason for replying to you here is to refute the statement of your chum that you would get no reply.

* * *

I'm afraid there are a great many readers who share the opinion of R. G. N.'s chum. They think that "Between Ourselves" is just a little piece of bluff, and that even if they write they won't receive an acknowledgment or a reply. This is hardly fair to me. Please remember that I make a stern point of acknowledging EVERY letter, and any matter of general interest—or what I deem to be of general interest—I enlarge upon, so that you may all join in the discussion, so to speak. Naturally, I cannot answer you all, and I don't think you expect me to, but you can be fully satisfied that I keep your letters, file them away, and treasure them.

(Continued from page iii of cover)

As for you, Solly Kaminek, I hardly know how to advise you. I am very pleased to hear of your loyalty to the Old Paper, and it gratifies me to learn that you enjoy my yarns so much. It is a pity your parents take exception to the St. Frank's stories, especially as they have never read one. Why don't you rope them in a couple of chairs and then read them a chapter or two, and see how they like it? You'll be hearing more about Solomon Levi and Sessue Yakama and the others before so very long. I wish you the best of luck. In other words, muzzeltoff!

I went into quite a few details of transport in New York in my American Notebook, Alec H. Still, I dare say I can remember a few other facts, and no doubt others will be interested, too. Unlike London, New York is chiefly served by street cars. Of course, we've got plenty of trams in London (too many, in my opinion), but New York is simply overrun with them. All their 'buses are green, and they mainly serve Fifth Avenue, and run northwards on Riverside Drive, parallel with the Hudson. There are other routes, but not a great many—nothing like our huge organisation of "Generals."

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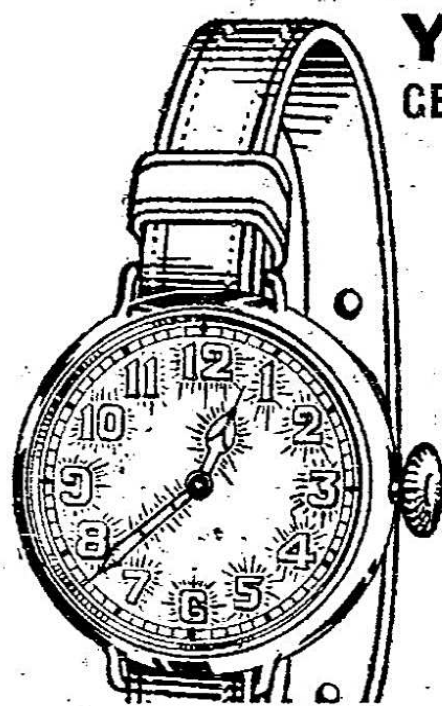
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D/R

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