

GREAT "BARRING-OUT" STORY THIS WEEK!

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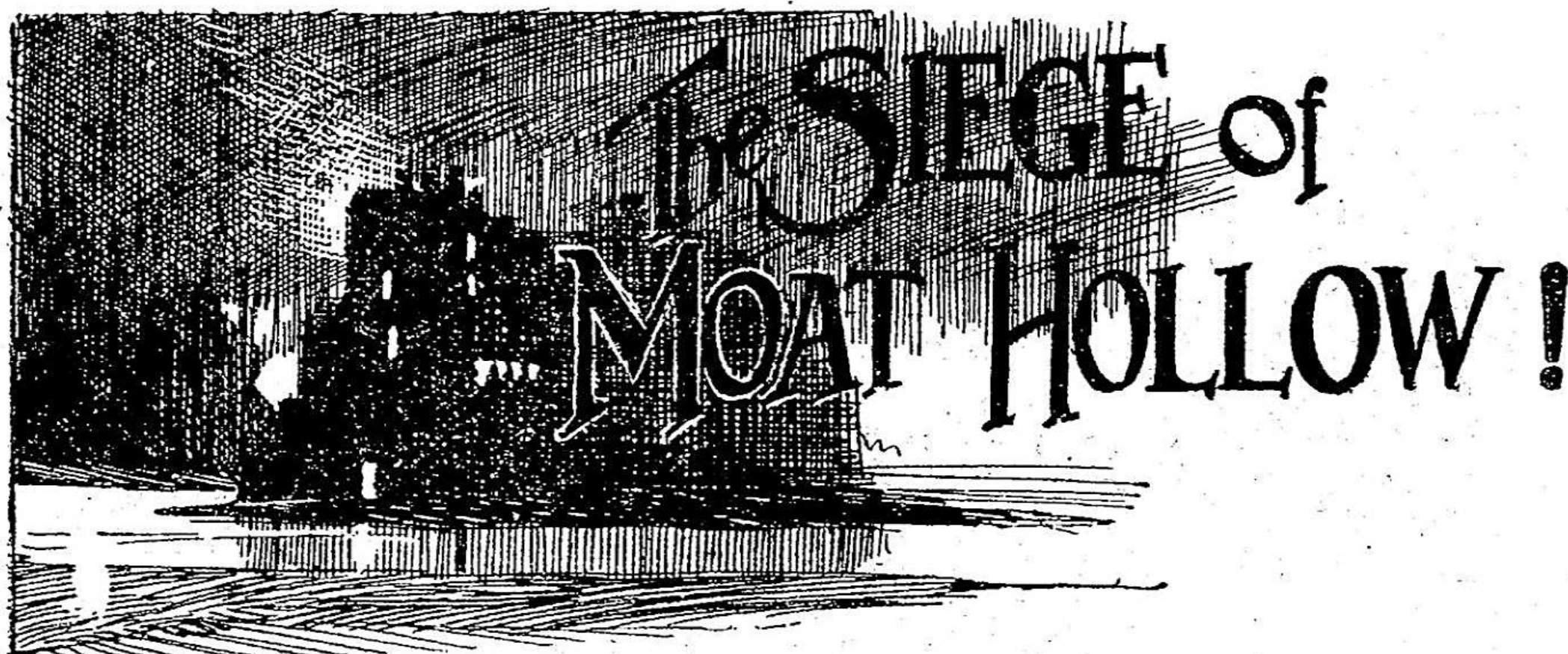


The SIEGE of MOAT HOLLOW

This week's exciting long narrative of the "BARRING OUT" at Moat Hollow School, introducing NIPPER and the well-known boys of ST. FRANK'S.



"Stand back, you brats!" snarled Kirby harshly.
He stood with his back to the shaft, guarding it, so that the other monitors and Mr. Creepe should have time to join him.



Led by Nipper, the boys of Moat Hollow School have rebelled against the tyranny of their Headmaster, Mr. Grimesby Creepe. They were driven to revolt by the persecutions of Creepe and his six monitors. The boys are now in possession of the school building, the Head and his monitors having been thrown out of the school. A fresh attack is expected by Nipper, and if this fails, a siege is inevitable. With the help of the Fourth Form of St Frank's, it may be possible to get food supplies to the beleaguered school. The fate of the rebels is in the balance, and it will go ill with them, should Creepe succeed in starving them into submission.

THE EDITOR.

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

CHAPTER I.

THE SPEED MERCHANT.

EDGAR FENTON paused at the corner of the Sixth Form passage.

"All right, Morrow, I'll see you later," he said. "Tea in a quarter of an hour, don't forget. Bring Wilson along, if you like."

"Good!" said Morrow. "Thanks!"

The two prefects parted, Morrow going off upstairs, and Fenton striding towards his study. It was nearly tea-time, and the Ancient House was comparatively quiet. The captain of the school had, in fact, particularly noted the unusual peace.

He and Morrow had just come in from Big Side, where the first eleven had been putting in some practice. It was a half-holiday, and so nearly everybody had been out of doors.

Fenton entered his study, and then came to an abrupt halt.

"Well I'm hanged!" he ejaculated wrathfully.

He had expected to see the room tidy and neat; he had expected to see the fire glowing warmly in the grate; he had expected to see the table set for tea, and everything in trim.

Instead of this delightful picture, he beheld a drab scene.

The study was untidy—in fact, positively littered up with odds and ends, and considerably dusty. The fire was out, the fender was full of ashes, and there was not even the slightest hint of tea preparations.

"Confound it!" exclaimed Fenton. "I'll half-skin that young——"

"Hallo! Anything wrong here?"

Fenton turned and found Hodder major in the doorway. Hodder major had just come in, and, although muddy, was cheerful.

"Wrong?" echoed Fenton. "Look at this study!"

The other Sixth-Former looked at it.

"I'm not exactly dazzled," he observed.

"What's the joke?"

"The place hasn't been touched. There hasn't been a soul here since lunch-time," retorted Fenton angrily. "And yet I colared that infernal fag of mine before going out to practice, and gave him precise instructions! Told him to have everything ready by five o'clock to the minute."

"Ah, these fags are sent to try us!" said Hodder major sadly.

"It's ten to five now, and the room hasn't been touched!" went on the school captain.

"By Jove! When I get hold of that young sweep I'll—I'll——"

"Don't!" interrupted the other. "Why rack your brains for nothing? There's no punishment under the sun that fits a case like this. You have my sympathy, old man. I've had just the same troubles. In this long, weary life, we must learn to accept these trials with fortitude."

Fenton strode to a corner and produced a cane.

"See you later!" he said gruffly.

Hodder major grinned sympathetically as Fenton charged out through the door and vanished. Hodder major followed him, and just caught sight of the skipper whirling purposefully round the bend.

"Trouble," said Hodder major, "is in the air."

He went off upstairs, shaking his head. And Fenton, in the meantime, searched the Third Form quarters from end to end. He looked everywhere. There wasn't an inch of space that he left neglected. But, for some strange reason, the Third Form appeared to be non-existent. The usually noisy haunts of the Third were filled with deep shadows and brooding silences.

Fenton's fag was missing with the rest of the Third. But he wasn't so far off as Fenton had imagined. In fact, the incensed skipper had actually brushed past him at the bend of the Sixth Form passage.

But the erring one had scented danger from afar, and had lost no time in squashing himself tightly into a kindly recess. In his haste, Fenton had charged by without noticing.

"Phew!" whistled the fag. "That was a near thing!"

He emerged from his hiding-place, and streaked for Fenton's study like a new-fashioned kind of ghost. Once inside, he closed the door, took a rapid breath, and grinned.

"I've got five minutes, at least," he told himself. "Easy! Marvellous things can be done in five giddy minutes."

Willy Handforth—for Fenton's fag was no less a person than this sprightly young gentleman—whipped his jacket off, rolled up his sleeves, and started work. And when Willy started work, he reminded one of a human tornado.

Undoubtedly, he performed a few miracles just now.

With one dash he reached the cupboard. In next to no time the floor was swept. Willy had a method all his own. In times of stress, such as this, he executed manœuvres which any self-respecting housemaid would have regarded with sheer horror.

Having swept round the room with lightning, masterly strokes, Willy neatly whipped up the corner of the carpet, swept the litter underneath with one movement, and dropped the carpet again. Then he briskly stamped on the lumpy portion to make it

lie down flat. Willy's system was sweetly simple. If Fenton returned at once, at least something would be done, but if Willy had some time at his disposal later, he could remove the rubbish at leisure.

The fag next proceeded to give a demonstration of how several things could be done at once. He whisked some firewood out of the cupboard, grabbed some paper, and struck a match. In a few seconds there was a blaze in the grate. And while it was developing, Willy briskly shot all the cinders and ashes under the grate out of sight.

By the time this was done, the wood had caught. Some coals were quickly dumped on and the table next received attention. With a magical touch, born of long practice, Willy cleared away everything, produced a white cloth from the drawer, and spread it.

Fenton would have had heart palpitations if he could have seen the fag juggling with plates and cups and saucers, as he transferred them from the cupboard to the table. Two or three swift dashes, a clatter or two, and the table was set. It was a masterly exhibition.

At one minute to five, Willy paused for a breathing space. He looked round proudly. The transformation was extraordinary. A magician couldn't have done better in the time.

Willy stole to the door, crept out, and ran lightly to the end of the passage. His idea was to listen for a moment to see if there was any sign of the approaching enemy.

There was. He ran right into Fenton's arms!

CHAPTER II.

A LITTLE CROSS-EXAMINATION.



HANDFORTH MINOR gave a silent gasp of dismay, but recovered himself at lightning speed. He gazed sweetly and innocently into Fenton's face.

"Oh, hallo, Fenton!" he said carelessly.

"By Jove!" ejaculated Fenton. "So here you are!"

"Yes, please, Fenton."

"You confounded young sweep!" exclaimed the school captain, angrily. "I've been looking everywhere for you!"

Willy nodded.

"Here I am!" he said brightly. "This is me, Fenton—this well-set-up, handsome young fellow in front of you——"

"If you start checking me now, my lad, I won't be answerable for my actions!" interrupted Fenton in a grim voice. "Come with me!"

He took hold of Willy's ear to make certain that Willy should obey. They went up

the passage silently, and reached the door of Fenton's study. Willy was released.

"You'd better resign yourself to a licking!" said Fenton sternly. "I'm going to teach you a lesson, my lad—a lesson in obedience! I'll show you whether you can ignore my orders! Open that door!"

"Yes, Fenton," said Willy meekly.

He opened it.

"Now!" thundered Fenton. "Look in there! What did I tell you——"

The skipper broke off with the words dying on his lips. He stared into the study dazedly. And Willy stood by, an expression of mild wonder on his features.

"Well, I'm hanged!" ejaculated Fenton.

The study was as neat as a new pin—superficially, at least. The floor was swept, the table was laid, the fire burned cheerily in the grate. There was an air of comfort about the place. The bleak look had gone.

"Who—who did this?" demanded Fenton, when he found his voice.

"I, said the sparrow, with my bow and arrow—— I mean, I did, Fenton!" replied Willy hastily.

"You!"

"Little me!" nodded Willy. "All by myself!"

"Well, I'm hanged!" repeated Fenton.

"That'll come later in life," said Willy sagely. "I've often said to myself when you've been licking me—'One of these days Fenton is going to be shoved on the gallows, or in the electric chair, or shot at dawn.' Most likely you'll be shot at dawn, Fenton."

"If I have any more of your cheek, my son, you'll be shot out of the window!" said Fenton grimly. "Shut that door! Good! Now, stand over there, by the table. Give an account of yourself."

"Please, Fenton——"

"Give an account of yourself!"

"I was born one bright morning in September," said Willy blithely. "The birds were singing, and all the world was at peace. As soon as my pater saw me he had a fit. He thought——"

"Stop that idiotic nonsense!" thundered Fenton. "Who on earth told you to gabble out that rubbish?"

"You did! You told me to give an account of myself——"

"You're a pretty decent kid as a fag, but you've got enough cheek for a whole school!" interrupted Fenton. "I don't mind it as a rule—it amuses me. But just now I'm in no mood for humour."

"No, Fenton," said Willy humbly.

"Why wasn't this study finished ten minutes ago?" demanded Fenton.

The fag whistled.

"Here, I say—chuck it!" he retorted. "Go easy, Fenton! You told me to get everything done by five o'clock, and it was done by five o'clock. So what's all the noise about? What's biting you?"

The captain's lips twitched.

"Yes, after all, you managed to get done at the specified time, didn't you?" he admitted thoughtfully. "All right, young Handforth. We'll let it drop."

"Shall I put your cane in the corner?" asked Willy gladly.

"I'll put it there myself," replied Fenton, walking to the corner. "Here, I say—Hi! Great Scott! I can't turn my back for three seconds without you making a dive for the door. Come back at once!"

Willy came into the centre of the room resignedly.

"What have you been doing this afternoon?" asked Fenton.

"What have I been doing?"

"Yes—what have you been doing?"

"Oh, all sorts of things!" replied Willy reminiscently. "I had a go at my wireless set, I remember. Then Chubby Heath came nosing round, and I had to rub his face in the coal-box. Then I went into the tuck-shop, and wangled a couple of doughnuts out of Mrs. Hake on tick. Which reminds me—I've got to see my major on urgent business!"

"You know as well as I do that I don't want to hear all these things," said Fenton grimly. "Look here, I'll be more explicit. What were you doing at Moat Hollow this afternoon?"

"Ah!" said Willy mysteriously.

"Eh?"

"I mean, yes," said Willy hurriedly. "Oh, at Moat Hollow?"

"At Moat Hollow!"

"That place down the road?" asked Willy. "Between you and me, Fenton, Moat Hollow isn't all it's supposed to be. Standing there, facing the river—— By the way, the river's looking fine just now," he added carelessly. "We shall be able to have some bathing soon. I was saying to Chubby only this afternoon——"

"I don't care what you were saying to Chubby, or anybody else!" interrupted Fenton wrathfully. "Are you going to answer my questions, or must I fetch that cane out of the corner again?"

Willy gave a deep sigh.

"Oh, leave the cane where it is!" he said. "The poor thing's overworked!"

CHAPTER III.

THE SUMMONS FROM THE HEAD.



"EVERYTHING ready?" asked Morrow briskly, as he hustled into Fenton's study. "Oh, hallo! Still giving your fag a dressing-down! I must say he's put on a bit of speed," he added, as he glanced round.

"It's all right—I'm just going to pitch him out," said Fenton. "I am trying to get the young beggar to give an account of himself. I believe he's mixed up in that Moat Hollow affair."

"Believe?" said Morrow sarcastically. "Did you ever know this kid not to be mixed up in every piece of mischief that's afoot?"

"That's the worst of having a reputation," said Willy bitterly. "I'm blamed for everything; I'm always being dropped on. If the main electric cable suddenly fused, I should be accused of putting a match to it!"

Morrow closed the door and sat down.

the same—monitors and prefects; they're all sworn enemies of society. There's one thing I've always longed to see," went on Willy musingly. "It's the dream of my life—to stand by and see a gang of prefects ducked!"

"Or is it?" said Morrow glaring.

"Prefects," went on Willy, "are the blight of every Public school. They're always nosing about, catching chaps on the hop, and——" Willy paused, turned slightly pink, and grinned.

"Well?" asked Fenton ominously.

"Oh, nothing!" said Willy, brushing a speck off his sleeve.

He had suddenly remembered that both

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"Yes, what about that Moat Hollow business?" he asked. "According to some of the fellows down in the senior day-room, there's been an unholy shindy. A most frightful rag, in fact."

"I should say there has!" agreed Willy. "The best rag of the term! Old Grimesby Creepe and all his giddy monitors were chucked in the moat. And the whole school's holding a barring-out."

Morrow and Fenton exchanged glances.

"Then it IS true!" said Fenton slowly.

"Of course it's true," said Willy. "The only pity is, I wasn't there when Creepe and his monitors were ducked. They're all

Fenton and Morrow were prefects—the fact had apparently escaped him at the beginning of his discourse. Under the circumstances, his remarks had been hardly tactful.

"You were in the middle of a sentence," said Fenton politely. "Don't let us interrupt the flow, young Handforth."

"Oh, it's all right—nothing important," said Willy carelessly. "Oh, well, I suppose I'd better be going," he added, edging towards the door. "You fellows want to be alone, don't you? So long!"

This time he succeeded in dodging out before either of the prefects could collar

him. By the time Morrow got to the door Willy had vanished. Morrow came back, red in the face.

"Infernal young sweep!" he said warmly.

"He can't help it," grinned Fenton. "It oozes out of him by the pint. More often than not he's cheeky without knowing it. But I say, about Moat Hollow. There's been a regular rumpus down there. The whole school's talking about it. I'm wondering what the Head's going to do."

"It isn't our affair," said Morrow.

"Isn't it?" retorted Fenton, spooning tea into the teapot. "It wouldn't be our affair if those Moat Hollow chaps were alone in this rebellion. But they're not. I hear that young Hamilton is in charge of it."

"Young Hamilton?" repeated Morrow.

"Yes—Nipper."

"Oh! Why didn't you say Nipper at first?" said the other. "Yes, I've heard that, too. Like his nerve, to butt into Moat Hollow and start all this shindy. It's giving the neighbourhood a bad name."

"Well, there's some excuse for him," said the captain, diving into the cupboard. "Look here, Arthur. Don't be so confoundedly lazy! Cut some bread and butter—do something for your living. You'll find the butter under that sardine cover. What was I saying?"

"Something about Nipper having an excuse."

"Oh, yes! You see, Watson's down at Moat Hollow. You remember Watson—one of the Fourth Form chaps. His pater got into a mes of some kind, and Watson came to Moat Hollow this term instead of St. Frank's. I believe Nipper went there especially to help his old pal."

Morrow nodded, as he carved the bread.

"Even now I can't see where we come in," he remarked. "Neither Nipper nor Watson are connected with St. Frank's now. What they do at Moat Hollow is their affair—"

"My dear man, haven't you heard?" interrupted Fenton, staring.

"Heard what?"

"Why, three parts of the Fourth fairly raided the village this afternoon, and bought all the grub they could lay hands on," said Fenton. "They paid cash, I understand—that's one thing. Then they carted all this foodstuff to Moat Hollow, and there was a kind of battle royal."

"Ye gods!" said Morrow blankly. "I hadn't heard THAT."

"Well, you're hearing it now," continued Fenton grimly. "And you see how we're involved. I mean, these Fourth Form youngsters are dragging St. Frank's into the whole business. They had a terrific battle, and got the food into Moat Hollow by a trick. I tell you, this affair's big."

Before Morrow could answer, a tap sounded on the door, and Phipps appeared.

"Begging your pardon, Master Fenton," said Phipps politely. "But the Head presents his respects, and would you kindly attend him in his study at once."

"By George!" said Morrow. "It IS big!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE HEAD DROPS A HINT.



FENTON put the teapot down and frowned.

"All right, Phipps, I'll go at once," he said.

Phipps retired. He was really Archie Glenthorne's valet, but in order to justify his inclusion on the Ancient House domestic staff he performed certain duties as the headmaster's butler.

"Just like the Head to send for me before I can get a cup of tea!" growled Fenton. "It's this Moat Hollow business, of course. I expect he'll put his foot down with a considerable slam."

"At a venture," said Morrow, "I imagine that the Fourth will be deprived of the next two or three half-holidays."

Fenton went off without delay, and a few minutes later he presented himself before Dr. Malcolm Stafford. The Head of St. Frank's was gazing rather pensively out of the window into the Triangle, and he turned anxiously as the school captain entered.

"Thank you, Fenton—you are admirably prompt," said Dr. Stafford. "I hope I'm not disturbing you? I fear that you are in the middle of tea—"

"That's all right, sir," said Fenton.

"I wouldn't have asked you to come, only the matter is rather important," went on the Head, polishing his pincenez. "I am worried, Fenton. I have heard that there has been considerable—er—disturbance at Moat Hollow."

"Yes, sir."

"The affairs of Moat Hollow, of course, are not our affairs," went on the Head. "Unfortunately I have been given to understand that a large number of our own junior boys were mixed up in this affray."

"I believe so, sir."

"Isn't that rather—awkward, Fenton?"

"Oh, I don't know, sir," said the captain. "Our fellows didn't do anything disgraceful. It was more or less of a rag. You can't prevent the juniors joining in these matters, sir."

"I suppose not," said Dr. Stafford, putting his glasses on, and regarding Fenton fixedly. "No, I suppose not. At the same time, Fenton, it is all very disturbing. I always like to wink at such—at such exhibitions of exuberance. Happily, I

realise that boys will be boys. We can curb their high spirits, Fenton, but we can't altogether control them."

"That's the only way to look at it, sir," agreed Fenton. "You can trust me to keep the thing within bounds, sir. I'll see that the discipline of St. Frank's isn't abused. I shouldn't worry about it, sir, the fellows have probably expended all their energy by this time."

The Head smiled.

"Perhaps so, Fenton, perhaps so," he agreed. "But I have generally noticed that boys, particularly the junior boys, recover their energy with astonishing speed. I shouldn't like this matter to become a scandal."

"Oh, it's only a rag, sir—"

"Rag or no rag, Fenton, it mustn't go too far," interrupted the headmaster. "Is it true that there is a mutiny at Moat Hollow. Is it true that Mr. Creepe's boys have actually pitched him into the moat?"

"Yes, sir."

"Dear me! It is all very distressing," said the Head. "It wouldn't matter so much if our own boys were not involved. Unless we are careful, Mr. Creepe will come here and make himself most unpleasant."

"That won't be difficult, for Mr. Creepe," said Fenton. "There's one thing quite certain, sir. These Moat Hollow boys have got a strong case. I have every reason to believe that Mr. Creepe is an absolute black-guard. While fooling the village people into believing that he is a kind of saint—kind-hearted and generous and noble—he's really an utter brute. He's kept his boys like slaves ever since the school opened."

"Good gracious! Is this actually true?"

"Unless I was sure of it, sir, I wouldn't repeat such a thing," replied Fenton. "Why, the very fact that Hamilton is the ringleader proves that the boys are fully justified. Young Nipper wouldn't give his time and attention to a bad cause."

Dr. Stafford raised his eyebrows.

"Then it is quite true that Hamilton is in charge of this insurrection?" he asked. "I heard a rumour to that effect, but I discredited it. Dear me! So our own Nipper is at Moat Hollow, eh? I quite agree, Fenton, that these boys must have some kind of justification. I have great confidence in Mr. Nelson Lee's young protégé. When Nipper was at St. Frank's he conducted himself with singular level-headedness. A splendid boy, Fenton—indeed, a boy in a thousand. A boy I always trusted with perfect security."

"And I think you can trust him now, sir," said the skipper. "He's no snob—he's no hankerer after cheap notoriety. When Nipper gives his energy to an affair of this kind his motives are entirely unselfish. I am convinced, sir, that Mr. Creepe is a rogue, and that nothing but good will come

of this mutiny. You needn't concern yourself a bit."

"I rely on your judgment, Fenton," said the Head. "You know far more of these things than I do—since you are constantly among the boys. I am wondering if I had better take any official action?"

"Well, it's not my place to give advice, sir, but I shouldn't do anything, if I were you," replied Fenton. "And if Mr. Creepe comes up here—Well, he'll have a bit of a job to make out a case for himself."

The Head looked relieved.

"Very well, Fenton; I will remain in blissful ignorance of the entire business," he said, smiling. "But don't let the juniors go too far. I rely on you to curb them. That's all, Fenton. You can go back to your interrupted tea. Thank you for coming."

Fenton departed. The Headmaster had only dropped a mere hint, but it was enough. The school captain went back to his own study with perfect understanding.

CHAPTER V.

THE FOURTH-FORM WARRIORS.



"GOOD! I've been looking for you, Ted!"

Edward Oswald Handforth, of the Fourth, frowned severely as his minor confronted him. There was a firm expression on Willy's jaw that Edward Oswald knew of old.

"Clear off!" he commanded imperially.

"That's all right—I'll clear off as soon as you've paid me the five bob you owe me," replied Willy calmly. "Now don't get huffy, old man! It'll save a lot of trouble if you fork out!"

Church and McClure, who were with their celebrated leader, grinned. And one or two other fellows in the Ancient House lobby watched with interest.

"You young fathead!" roared Handforth. "I don't owe you five bob!"

"Yes, you do!"

"Look here—"

"Half an hour ago I decided to get five bob from you," said Willy. "I didn't get it, so now I reckon you owe it to me! If you're short, I'll let you off with half-a-crown."

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Handforth blankly. "I'm blessed if I'll give you a red cent, you young rotter!"

"Who wants a red cent, anyhow?" said Willy. "You can keep your old red cents! I want five bob!"

"Yesterday," said Handforth, "you had nearly a quid!"

"I bought a new valve for my wireless set, another coil, and a couple of terminals," said Willy patiently. "A quid

doesn't go far nowadays, old son. What about that tin?"

For once Handforth remained calm. He even grinned.

"You're welcome to all I've got!" he said blandly. "I spent every penny on grub for those Moat Hollow chaps. I'm broke! Now what have you got to say?"

"Nothing!" said Willy, with a sad shake of his head. "If you're broke, I can't touch you. And as your money was spent on a good cause, I won't even tick you off. By the way, what's the latest?"

"Things seem to be quiet now," put in Church. "Old Creepe has retired into his shell, and Moat Hollow's peaceful. The rebels are probably enjoying a thundering good feed."

"They're laying a solid foundation for the next fight," declared Fatty Little, with a nod. "There's nothing like being prepared. No chaps can fight unless they're comfortably full up. I'm nearly starving—"

"Go and starve somewhere else!" growled Handforth.

"Oh, before I go," remarked Willy; "I've got an idea that there'll be a few squalls soon. Fenton knows all about that bust-up, and not long ago the Head sent for him. I met Phipps, and he told me."

"Phew!" whistled McClure. "I was half afraid of it!"

They went along to the common-room to inform Reginald Pitt of this grave news. As captain of the Fourth, Reggie was in charge of the St. Frank's Flying Squad, so to speak. Pitt & Co. had saved the Moat Hollow mutiny from disaster, and were deeply involved in the insurrection.

"Well, we shall have to face it—that's all," said Reggie, when he heard the news. "I'm not ashamed of anything. If the Head has me on the carpet, I'll tell him the simple truth, and let it go at that."

"Just a minute, you fellows."

Fenton came in, and looked round. The common-room was quite crowded, which was what Fenton wanted. There were plenty of juniors here to hear what he was about to say.

"I say, Fenny, chuck it!" snorted Handforth. "You're not going to jump on us, I suppose? Those Moat Hollow chaps—"

"Wait a minute!" interrupted Fenton. "I've come to speak about Moat Hollow. I know all about that food episode—I know



Mr. Creepe found the man-hole at last. He carefully felt round it and prised it open.

that you fellows have been aiding and abetting the Moat Hollow rebels."

"Now for it!" sighed Jack Grey.

"I don't altogether approve of this reckless behaviour, but this time I shan't take any action," went on Fenton, to the relief of the entire common-room. "In fact, as long as you don't get too excited, I shall ignore the whole business. And so will the Head," he added significantly.

"I say, that's jolly sporting of you!" said Pitt warmly. "Thanks awfully, Fenton!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good old Fenton!"

"Don't thank me—thank the Head!" growled Fenton. "Now, I've told you straight—I always believe in being frank about a thing like this. If you've got any decency at all, don't take an unfair advantage of the position."

"What did you mean about not getting too excited?" asked Pitt.

Fenton walked towards the door.

"Think it over!" he said briefly. "That's all!"

He went out, and there was an immediate buzz of animated conversation. Reginald Pitt was looking rather flushed, and his eyes were gleaming.

"I say, what did he mean?" asked Church eagerly.

"I'm thinking it over—and it's easy!" replied Pitt. "He means, my sons, that he's secretly in sympathy with those poor beggars at Moat Hollow—and that as long as we don't overstep the mark, we're safe."

"By jingo! That's topping!" said Jack.

"Rather!" agreed Handforth. "Fenton's got more sense than I thought."

"But, dear old boys, I'm frightfully puzzled—I am, really!" exclaimed Sir Montie Tregellis-West. "Does this really mean that we can go on helpin' the Moat Hollow rebellion without gettin' into trouble?"

"It does!" replied Pitt. "It means that so long as we behave ourselves and go to work moderately we've got the official O.K.!"

CHAPTER VI.

AMONG THE REBELS.



M O A T H O L L O W hardly had the aspect of a battle-ground.

— All was quiet, and a passing stranger would have looked upon the old place as a kind of grim old country priory. The high walls, entirely surrounding the house, had a prison-like aspect.

It was dusk now, for the March evening was drawing in. The grounds were quite deserted. No living thing was in sight. A brooding silence hovered over the forbidding-looking building.

The dark waters of the moat entirely surrounded the house. They cut it off from the grounds. The moat was fairly wide, and its very presence gave the scene a sinister, grim look.

Within, life abounded.

There were twenty-four Moat Hollow boys, all told—and Nipper as a kind of extra. He had come down from London especially, and he had been so successful that Mr. Grimesby Creepe was now barred out from his own school, with only his six monitors to help him.

The mutiny was a complete success.

The rebels held the school, and meant to stick to it. As Nipper had said at the beginning, the only chance to expose the whole disgraceful truth was to stick the thing out to the bitter end. Publicity was the one factor which Mr. Creepe feared. This rebellion had only to continue for a certain time, and the truth was bound to be unfolded.

For the boys themselves to go about, telling their painful story would have been worse than useless. Nobody would have be-

lieved them. But by sticking to their guns, and fighting, they would bring about a complete exposure.

There was no idleness among the rebels. Work was going on in almost every part of the house, the boys labouring in groups of three and four. And all were engaged upon the same kind of task.

They were setting up barricades before the windows and doors, preparing weapons of defence, manufacturing rough and ready ammunition, and getting into a general state of preparedness.

Nipper was going round continually, helping here and helping there. He would pause and give advice, offer suggestions, and as often as not take an active hand in the actual work.

"We mustn't ease up until after dark," he declared, as he helped Tommy Watson and two Moat Hollow boys to fasten some heavy boards across the front door. "The more we can do now, the better."

"Rather!" agreed Jevons.

"Some of the chaps believe that Mr. Creepe is done," continued Nipper. "But he isn't. He's retired into the gymnasium with his committee of monitors, and unless I'm a Dutchman there'll be some dirty work at the cross roads within an hour or two."

"Well, we're ready for him," said Tommy Watson bluntly.

"And those St. Frank's chaps are coming down later on, too," added Jevons, with an eager look. "They told you so, didn't they?"

"Yes," replied Nipper. "We've got to thank them for all that grub—enough to last us nearly a week. We're safe now as long as we can keep the enemy out. I understand that Reggie Pitt is organising a kind of sentry-go."

"How do you mean?"

"The Fourth chaps are going to take it in turns," explained Nipper. "There'll always be somebody on the watch outside—probably perched on the top of the wall. And at the first sign of trouble this sentry is going to nip to the school, and fetch help. So we're lucky."

"Good old Reggie!" said Tommy Watson softly. "Good old Fourth! By jingo, they're a set of sportsmen, Nipper! There's no need for us to worry at all—we can always be sure of help if things get serious."

"Yes, but we mustn't be slack on that account," declared Nipper.

He went off to one of the other points of defence.

It was just the same at the back of the house. Other boys were at work here—and many, indeed, were hard at it on the roof. In one portion this was flat, with a safe, protective parapet. And from this ready-made battlement, enormous damage could be done to an invading force.

For a barring-out, no building could have been better.

Cut off by the moat, and overlooking the entire grounds from the roof, the garrison

could deal with any attack swiftly and decisively. Indeed, as long as they remained on the alert, it seemed impossible for any assault to succeed.

Mr. Grimesby Creepe had a difficult problem to face.

As Nipper had said, Reggie Pitt had promised active assistance. And even at this moment Nicodemus Trotwood of the Fourth was comfortably settled in the fork of a high tree overlooking the grounds. His was the first watch. In an hour's time he would be relieved by Cecil De Valerie.

The period was necessarily an anxious one. There was a feeling of uncertainty in the air. Although the rebels felt safe, they had no idea of what Mr. Creepe's next move would be.

That he would tamely abandon the fight was unthinkable.

Mr. Grimesby Creepe was not that kind of man. He would not give up his school, and all the profit it meant to him, without a grim struggle. And he was cunning and tricky.

But there was a feeling of confidence among the mutineers. It was mainly Nipper's presence, perhaps, which caused this. Leaderless, the Moat Hollow boys would have been very different.

"Do you think he'll make another attack soon?" asked one of the rebels, as Nipper paused to lend a hand at a barricade. "It's getting awfully dark now—"

"Don't you worry about the darkness," interrupted Nipper briskly. "Creepe can't hurt us as long as we're watchful. He won't try any massed attack—as some of you fellows believe. The old rascal's too cunning for that."

"You don't think he'll hire lots of roughs and try to drive us out?"

"That's about the last thing he'll do," replied Nipper. "There's nothing sensational like that about Mr. Creepe. He'll do his best to beat us by guile—not by force—he's too much afraid of publicity."

And Nipper's judgment was sound.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. CREEPE DECIDES.



"ANOTHER cup of tea, sir?" asked Kirby hesitatingly.

"No, no! Certainly not! Eh?" Mr. Grimesby Creepe started. "Tea? Yes, of course!"

Thank you, Kirby!"

The barred-out schoolmaster and his monitors were making the best of things in the gymnasium. This was a smallish building in the grounds, mid-way between the moat and the outer garden wall.

Mr. Creepe was thankful that the building was, indeed, separated from the school.

For it enabled him to remain on his own property, locked away behind the closed gates. The position was bad enough in all conscience, but it would have been a hundred-fold worse if he and his monitors had been pitched right outside into the public highway.

At least the schoolmaster was saved the humiliation of public curiosity. Although barred out of his house by his own school-boys, he was still on his own property—still within the high walls of the Moat Hollow grounds.

And his monitors were loyal to him. Not that this loyalty was strong. Only by liberal payments, and promises of further sums, did Mr. Creepe keep his helpers by his side.

But they were better than strangers. If only he could quell this rebellion privately—without seeking help from outside sources—all would yet be well. There would be a lot of talk, perhaps, some scandal, but in a week or two all this would die down.

The gymnasium was quite comfortable. A big iron stove glowed, radiating grateful warmth. A kettle was singing on the top of it, and an upturned packing-case contained the remains of a recent meal.

Mr. Grimesby Creepe sat in the deck-chair, and his six monitors were grouped about on boxes or stools, in various stages of untidiness. One or two, indeed, were hopelessly muddy and dishevelled. They bore the traces of the recent fighting. Mr. Creepe himself looked more like a tramp than anything else.

A storm-lantern was burning, perched on top of some steps. It cast a weak, uncertain light.

Mr. Creepe stirred his tea meditatively. His fury had died down, and he was now cool and grim. He knew well enough that the position was grave. For years he had run his school like a prison, and at last a point had been reached where his pupils had been goaded too far.

Mr. Creepe had often sneeringly declared that none of his boys would have enough spirit to rebel against their fate. Now he was proved to be wrong, and the shock of it was still heavy on him.

For, to him, it meant everything.

Moat Hollow was his own property, but if his school was disbanded and closed up—as it certainly would be if the authorities found out the truth of it—the house would be a dead loss. His income would cease. His future would be black. Indeed, prison itself loomed before him.

So Mr. Creepe was thinking hard.

He thought of ways and means, and dismissed idea after idea. But his cunning brain was always active—always formulating something fresh. But at every turn he was baffled. There seemed to be no adequate way of dealing with this appalling situation.

To frankly promise the rebels a better time in future, their liberty, immunity from

all punishment, would be worse than useless. The boys wouldn't believe him. They would regard such an offer as a trick. And in this the boys would show their common-sense—for such an offer would be nothing less.

Mr. Creepe admitted that he was at a deadlock. He gave his tea a final stir, and sipped it.

"Pah!" he exclaimed disgustedly. "Cold! Stone cold! Who gave me this filthy concoction?"

"It was hot when I poured it out, sir," growled Kirby, the chief monitor. "You've been stirring it for about five minutes—not that that made any difference, because we haven't got any sugar!"

"Supplies are awfully short, sir," added Tarkington.

"Indeed!" retorted Mr. Creepe. "Is there anything alarming in that? There are plenty of supplies in the village—and I shall send one of you out presently to get everything necessary. You appear to forget, boys, that we are masters of the situation."

The monitors grunted in various keys.

"We can't forget something we never knew, sir," said Kirby bluntly.

"So you deliberately affront me, Kirby?" exclaimed the schoolmaster, his puffy eyes gleaming. "You as good as call me a liar! I say that we are masters of the situation."

"Well, I can't see it—that's all!" growled Kirby.

"Neither can we!" said the others.

"That is because you are dull-witted and foolish!" replied Mr. Grimesby Creepe. "Good gracious! Have you no sense at all? Look at the position—consider it carefully!"

"We've been doing it for an hour," said Kirby.

"In that case, you ought to know that these infernal boys are living in a fool's paradise," retorted Mr. Creepe sourly. "They think that they have succeeded in this insane rebellion."

"Haven't they got reason to think it, sir?" asked Kirby. "They've collared the school, they've barred us out, and those confounded St. Frank's kids are always ready to drop on us as soon as we start something. If I was one of the rebels, I'd think I was victorious, too!"

Mr. Creepe waved his hand impatiently.

"Their strong position is false," he persisted. "It is only strong in theory. They are hemmed in, and cut off by the moat. We have only to besiege the place, and in the long run they are bound to surrender. We, on the other hand, are in an ideal position."

"It's glorious in here, sir," said Kirby sarcastically.

"An ideal position!" repeated the schoolmaster. "We can watch everything the rebels do, we can check any fresh development, and we are securely protected from prying, inquisitive eyes. And we have the

additional advantage of freedom. We can leave the school premises as we wish. I tell you, boys, the trump card is in our hands! It only remains for us to play it!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PLAN OF ACTION.



MR. CREEPE'S cunning was already at work.

His talk impressed the monitors, in spite of their scepticism—as Mr. Creepe had intended it should. He knew that Kirby & Co. were wavering, and his first task was to put some spirit into them.

It was Mr. Creepe's position that was false—not the rebels'. But the schoolmaster put it so suavely that the monitors drank it in. None of them were renowned for excessive brain-power.

"Public opinion is a strong factor in this case," went on Mr. Creepe. "That is why I am being careful—very, very careful. The village people see us moving about as we wish—they can detect no difference in our outward demeanour. All this is very important, boys. We must spread the impression that we are indulgently patient over this regrettable incident. To have public opinion in our favour will be a great asset."

"There's something in that, sir," admitted Kirby.

"There is everything in it——"

"All the same, I don't quite see what we can do," put in Tarkington. "There are only seven of us, sir, and we can't fight against twenty-five. Besides, there's the moat, and the barricades——"

"Bah! Do you think I care for their childish barricades?" sneered Mr. Creepe. "We must employ subtlety, Tarkington. There are ways and means. It is a pity that you are all so dense—a thousand pities!"

The monitors were not quite so despondent.

"Wouldn't it be a good idea to hire a crowd of roughs from Bannington, sir?" asked Kirby eagerly.

"No, it wouldn't be a good idea—it would be a very bad idea," interrupted Mr. Creepe curtly. In fact, Kirby, it would be an act of insanity. We had quite enough of those infernal village youths! I exceedingly regret we employed them! They were far more trouble than they were worth!

Mr. Creepe was referring to the incident where Lumpy Bill & Co. had—for a consideration—helped to battle against the St. Frank's Fourth. In the finish, the village louts had been completely routed.

"But we can't beat these rebels alone, sir," suggested Fryer.

"We can, Fryer—and we shall," replied

Mr. Creepe. "I am resolved to act alone. It can be done—if only you boys will give me your whole-hearted support. I need not remind you that I shall reward you fittingly when success is ours."

"That's all very well, sir," objected Kirby. "But we're absolutely helpless. If there was the smallest chance of success——"

"Let me think—let me plan something!" interrupted Mr. Creepe. "It is only a matter of careful consideration, and there must be a way. Roberts! You seem to be the most presentable of us all. Tidy yourself up, and go to the village for some groceries."

"Right you are, sir," said Roberts readily.

"You will be doubtless stopped and questioned," went on Mr. Creepe. "If so, make light of this affair—say that I could gain command at once if I chose to use brute force. Inform your questioners that I am kind-hearted and lenient, and that I prefer gentle methods. "You know the sort of thing, Roberts."

"Yes, sir," grinned Roberts. "You can trust me!"

In the meantime, the rebels were slacking down a bit.

Everything was tight for the night. The sentries were all posted, the barricades were complete, and no precautions had been neglected. And now that the hard work was done, the rebels naturally thought of food.

Half a dozen boys were down in the kitchen, busily preparing supper. And at this point a discovery was made. Jevons, in the act of filling a big kettle at the scullery tap, found that the water supply had given out.

"Hallo! No water!" said Jevons. "All hands to the pump!"

"Yes, we'd better do this at once," said Nipper. "Water is just as important as food—in fact, more important. By you talking about a pump, Jevons, I gather we're not on the main here?"

"Nobody's on the main in this village," replied Jevons. "There's a big well here, and we always pump the water up every night. There's a whacking great tank in the turret—and that supplies the whole house."

Nipper gave instructions for the tank to be re-filled. He, indeed, took the first spell at the pump. This was a massive arrangement, which worked stiffly. Usually, it required two boys to manage it.

Nipper had hardly started when Tommy Watson came dashing in.

"There's something brewing!" he panted excitedly.

"What?"

"They're going to make an attack!" gasped Watson. "They're moving about like shadows at the rear. But we spotted the rotters, and I thought I'd better come down and report!"

Nipper nodded.

"Come on—we'd better go and have a look at this!" he said quickly.

He hadn't expected an attack so early, and he was rather puzzled. But, sure enough, one glance at the dim grounds convinced him that Watson was right.

Several shadowy forms were lurking about near the moat. They appeared to be carrying something. And the first thought that entered Nipper's head was that a temporary bridge was being thrown over the moat.

"A bit more this way—that's right."

"Good! Now heave!"

Nipper recognised the voices of Kirby and Tarkington. The watching rebels were excited and tense. But Nipper kept his head. He could see nothing to occasion the slightest alarm.

"There's something rummy about this!" he muttered, frowning.

"They're going to attack us!" whispered Jevons.

"They can't—there's only a blank wall down there," replied Nipper.

They were on the roof, leaning over the parapet. It was very dark now, and it was impossible to see the movements of the dim figures with any distinctness. And the thing became even more unaccountable five minutes later.

For the figures moved off into the gloom, and disappeared completely. There had been no attack, and no attempted attack. What was the explanation?

Nipper said nothing, but he was vaguely uneasy.

CHAPTER IX.

MR. CREEPE'S MASTER STROKE.



As silently as a ghost, Mr. Grimesby Creepe padded over the ground. He was comparatively near the school, on the west side of the building. He was invisible in the deep shadows of the thick laurel-trees which grew near by.

Mr. Creepe was looking for something.

An idea had occurred to him ten minutes earlier—an idea which came as a flash of light out of the surrounding darkness. He wondered why he had not thought of it before. Strangely enough, Nipper himself was referring to the same subject at almost the identical time.

The water supply!

It was the keynote of the situation. Yet Mr. Creepe had not even thought of the water until now. The rebels had food in plenty, but if their water was cut off, they would be in a sorry plight.

There was the moat, certainly, but the boys would rather surrender than drink the muddy, stagnant water from that dead pool.

Nipper would undoubtedly forbid any attempt to drink it.

Mr. Creepe was not a mechanical man. He only knew that the plumbing at Moat Hollow was unusually good for a country house. This was mainly due to the enterprise of a German-American millionaire who had once owned the property. The notorious Mr. William K. Smith—a name that the St. Frank's juniors sometimes conjured with—had spent tens of thousands of pounds recklessly on his great schemes in the neighbourhood. And as Moat Hollow had been his own headquarters, the old-fashioned water supply had been scrapped, and the latest plumbing methods adopted.

Mr. Creepe had known all this when buying the house—and he had got a bargain. And now, peering about through the gloom, he was searching for a round iron man-hole. He knew that it was somewhere in this immediate vicinity.

He had never actually investigated them, but he had learned from the house-agents, on acquiring the property, that the water-pipes and drains were exceptionally efficient. The man-hole, he understood, admitted one into a kind of inspection pit, in case of burst pipes or blocked drains.

And it had occurred to Mr. Creepe that the main water-pipe must be easily get-at-able beneath this man-hole. And his heart throbbed with anticipated triumph as he searched about.

He had purposely sent four of the monitors to the rear, in order to attract the attention of the rebels. It would never do for them to see him getting down this man-hole! They would suspect things at once.

There was a deep well at Moat Hollow. As is often the case, it was not situated within the house, but some distance from it. Originally there had been a pump immediately over the well. But nowadays the pump was in the scullery, and pipes were laid underground. The man-hole would undoubtedly lead down towards this supply pipe. Thus, if that pipe was cut, no water could be pumped indoors.

Mr. Creepe's cunning mind fully grasped the fact that the tank must now be nearly empty. Amid all the excitements, the boys wouldn't think to refill the pressure tank until the taps failed to function. How near to the truth Mr. Creepe was has already been shown.

The tank was actually empty, and would now be in the process of refilling, but for the fact that the rebels had been called away by the alarm. Mr. Creepe's plan of sending the monitors to the back was a master stroke.

"Ah!" he murmured. "As I thought—as I thought!"

He had found the man-hole at last. He

would have discovered it in a second or two had he brought a light, but it was necessary to work in the dark. Going down on his hands and knees, he carefully felt round the man-hole and prised it open.

It took all his strength to lift it right back. But at last he succeeded, and a yawning cavern lay before him. Gingerly lowering himself, he felt cautiously with his feet. They encountered some steps, and he descended.

He had hardly expected such a deep pit as this, and after a few moments he paused and pulled a small electric-torch from his pocket. He felt that it would now be safe to use it. In any case, he was nervous about descending further without a light. He had a horrible feeling that he would plunge down into the well, although he knew that the well was twenty yards away. But the feeling was there, and he was nervous.

He switched the torch on, directing the light downwards. The battery was weak and the light insignificant. But it seemed a dazzling blaze to Mr. Creepe. He caught his breath in sharply. He was not only surprised, but genuinely delighted.

The pit-like cavity was of concrete, and very clean and tidy, which was not surprising, considering that the plumbing operations had only been performed a year earlier.

"Splendid!" murmured Mr. Creepe. "I had no idea of this."

He went down some more steps, and then found himself at the bottom of the pit. Here there were many pipes, some big, some small. But the main supply pipe for the pump was unmistakable. A cold water-pipe needs very little identification.

Mr. Creepe placed his electric-torch on one of the other pipes, and then produced something from the big inner pocket of his jacket. It was, in fact, a hack-saw. Only for a moment did Mr. Creepe hesitate.

"A pity—a thousand pities!" he murmured. "This will be an expensive job to repair. Confound these infernal boys! But it must be done—I must not waver!"

He started operations on the spot, and the hack-saw got to work. The keen blade bit into the metal, and the fragments of iron showered down.

For ten minutes Mr. Creepe worked—aching, perspiring, but determined. Once, after he had penetrated the upper half of the pipe, a spurt of water came hissing out. But it soon died down, owing to the lack of pressure. Unless the pump was working, there was no suction.

And at last the pipe was severed. With a final heave, Mr. Creepe bent the ends slightly apart.

"There!" he panted triumphantly. "Now, my young friends, get your water, if you can!"

CHAPTER X.

THE DISCOVERY.



TOMMY WATSON was grinning cheerfully. "Just having a game with us, I suppose?" he asked. "But I'm blessed if I can understand why old Creepe should play a trick like that. Those monitors weren't trying to cross the moat at all!"

"I wonder why they were out there?" asked one of the boys timidly.

"I don't know—don't worry about it," said Nipper. "They've gone now, and everything's quiet. You'd better go down to the kitchen, and help with the supper. I'll have a last look round."

That sense of uneasiness was still with Nipper. He couldn't get rid of it. Common-sense told him that Mr. Creepe was not the kind of man to send his monitors to the back of the house for nothing. There had been some object in that mysterious move.

"A decoy of some kind," thought Nipper. "That's obvious, but there's been no attack in any other quarter. So it couldn't have been a decoy. Perhaps they're just doing it to keep us on the jump."

This seemed the only possible explanation. Nipper not only went round the roof, but he visited every window overlooking the moat in every corner of the house.

And all the sentries reported quietness.

There was certainly no attack brewing. Somewhat relieved, Nipper went down into the kitchen again, and had a look at the supper preparations.

"Finished that pumping yet?" he asked.

"Oh, corks! I forgot all about it!" said Jevons. "And we want some water in the kettle, too."

"The kettle's on, Jevons—it's nearly boiling," said little Smithson.

"So it is," agreed Jevons. "That's why we didn't remember the pump. You pumped some water into the tank, didn't you, Nipper?"

"Yes, about two gallons," replied Nipper. "It must be practically empty again by now. All right, I'll finish my whack at the handle."

He went to the pump, raised the handle, and then used all his force to pull it down again, as he had done on the former occasion. But this time the handle came down with a swinging rush, and Nipper was flung backwards.

"Great Scott!" he gasped.

His hand tingled, for the handle had crashed hard against the other metal. The clang had been noisy.

"Anything wrong in there?" asked Tommy Watson, staring through the scullery door.

Nipper didn't reply. He lifted the pump handle again, and swung it up and down.

It went freely, proving, without question, that the pump itself was doing no work. No water came, either.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Nipper slowly.

By this time Tommy Watson and Jevons had joined him. They were looking on with interest as he made his tests.

"Something gone wrong?" asked Watson curiously.

"Yes."

"That's queer," said Jevons. "The pump's always been all right—"

"I say, Jevons, where does the supply come from?" put in Nipper quickly.

"Out of the well, of course."

"But where's the well?"

"Oh, I don't know—somewhere outside—"

"Think!" urged Nipper. "It's important."

"We can't get at it, if that's what you mean," said Jevons, staring. "My hat! Do you think the well's run dry? It's over by the school wall— Oh, yes, I remember now! And there's a man-hole just near that big clump of laurels, round at the side. I expect that's the well."

"No, it isn't," said Watson. "It's only a kind of pit, leading down to the pipes. I remember watching, months ago—long before I left St. Frank's—when some workmen were making a repair."

Nipper set his lips.

"Don't say anything to the others yet," he murmured in a low voice. "But we're in a pretty serious pickle. Old Creepe has won a round in the game. In other words, there's been dirty work at the cross-roads!"

"What the dickens do you mean?" asked Watson.

"What I say. Creepe's cut the pipe!"

Watson and Jevons stared.

"Cut the pipe?" echoed Jevons. "But—but— Oh, you mean he's been down that man-hole and chopped off the supply pipe?"

"That's the only explanation for this sudden failure," replied Nipper grimly. "You see, the pump's here, but the well's near the school wall. There must be a pipe connecting the two, and with that severed we might just as well be in the Sahara."

"Oh, my goodness!" said Tommy.

"And now we've got an explanation of that false alarm," added Nipper. "While we were looking at those chaps at the back, Creepe must have been diving through that manhole!"

"Great Scott!"

"Who was on guard at that side of the house?" demanded Nipper. "I shall have to go and look into this! Somebody's deserted his post!"

"I think it was Newton and White—they were there last time I looked round, anyhow," said Jevons. "Oh, yes, and I remember! They came on to the roof when that alarm went up—"

"That's enough!" interrupted Nipper gruffly. "It's a pity these chaps can't stick

to their posts! Not that it would have made much difference," he added. "I don't suppose we could have stopped the thing!"

"And do you mean to say we haven't got any water?" asked Watson.

"Not a drop, except what's in the tank—and that's about a couple of pints!" replied Nipper. "My sons, we're up against a nasty snag!"

CHAPTER XI. INVESTIGATIONS.



"**W**AIT a minute!" exclaimed Watson. "I say, what's the worry about? We've got plenty of water! Have you forgotten the moat?"

"I haven't!" said Nipper grimly. "But the moat water is absolutely undrinkable—it's muddy, stagnant, and foul. Why, if we drank that we should all be down with the fever in a few hours. No, my sons, we can't think about it. It's a good thing we've got enough drinking water for to-night's supper."

The others were rather dismayed—although they didn't quite realise the tremendous importance of the disaster. They were disposed to console themselves with the thought that they had plenty of food. They didn't realise that drink was the more important of the two.

It was impossible to keep the truth from the rest of the rebels, for Smithson happened to come in while Watson was talking, and he immediately shouted out the news. The rank and file of the mutineers were indignant, angry, but not at all startled.

They, too, failed to realise the importance of the matter.

But Nipper, in the scullery, stared at the floor with a fixed gaze. He was trying to think of some solution to the problem. He hated to admit that Mr. Creepe had won a trick.

"Something's got to be done, of course—and quickly, too," he declared. "There's no other water supply—Hullo, what's this? Where does this lead to?"

He was pointing down to one of the square stone flags which paved the scullery floor. The one he indicated was provided with a sunken iron ring.

"I don't know!" said Jevons. "I never noticed it before!"

"Neither did I," said Watson.

"I'm not a bit surprised," growled Nipper. "Most people go about with their eyes shut!"

You must have been in this scullery hundreds of times—I expect you've scrubbed the floor in your turn—and you never noticed this sunken ring! Well, let's have a look at it."

Without delay, they started a few investigations. Heaving at the ring, they succeeded in pulling the flagstone up. A dank, musty odour arose from the depths.

"Ugh! Smells like a graveyard!" muttered Jevons.

Nipper flashed his torchlight down into the cavity. It was a shaft, fairly narrow, leading straight down. And there were iron rungs fitted at regular intervals in one wall, forming a permanent ladder.

"Well, I'm blessed!" said Watson. "I never knew this before! It must be the well! I always thought it was across—"

"This isn't the well," interrupted Nipper. "Look at the pipes running down one side. The plumbers who did this job were experts. Why, this is absolutely elaborate. It must have cost hundreds—By Jove, old Smith! Of course! He had all this done!"

"Old Cyclone!" muttered Watson. "Yes, of course!"

"I'm going down!" announced Nipper.

He lost no time about it, but descended. He only paused once, and this was to advise the others to stick where they were, and to advise Watson to make a round of the sentries. Nipper couldn't quite trust them. These Moat Hallow fellows were a poor lot, on the whole.

At the bottom of the shaft Nipper found himself facing a small tunnel. Along the bottom of it ran a number of pipes, and the tunnel lost itself in blackness at the end of the torch's beam.

"We're learning things!" murmured Nipper. "This tunnel must go right under the moat! Jove, it's a good thing I spotted that flagstone! The enemy might have used this tunnel!"

It was so small that the only method of progression was to get on his hands and knees, and worm his way along foot by foot. But he meant to trace these pipes, and to discover, if possible, the source of the trouble.

It had occurred to Nipper that there might be a tap. If so, it was just as easy for him to turn it on as it was for Mr. Creepe to turn it off. And the schoolmaster would not think of this prompt retaliation. In any case, the rebels would probably be able to fill the tank again.

Quite suddenly, Nipper reached the end of the tunnel. The light from his torch showed him a square concrete cavity. He pushed his head and shoulders out of the tunnel, and at the same time he was seized. On both sides strong arms gripped him.

"Quick!" rapped out Mr. Creepe's voice. "Hold him, Kirby—hold him!"

"I've got him, sir!" gasped Kirby.

Nipper was taken at a complete disadvantage. On his hands and knees, he could

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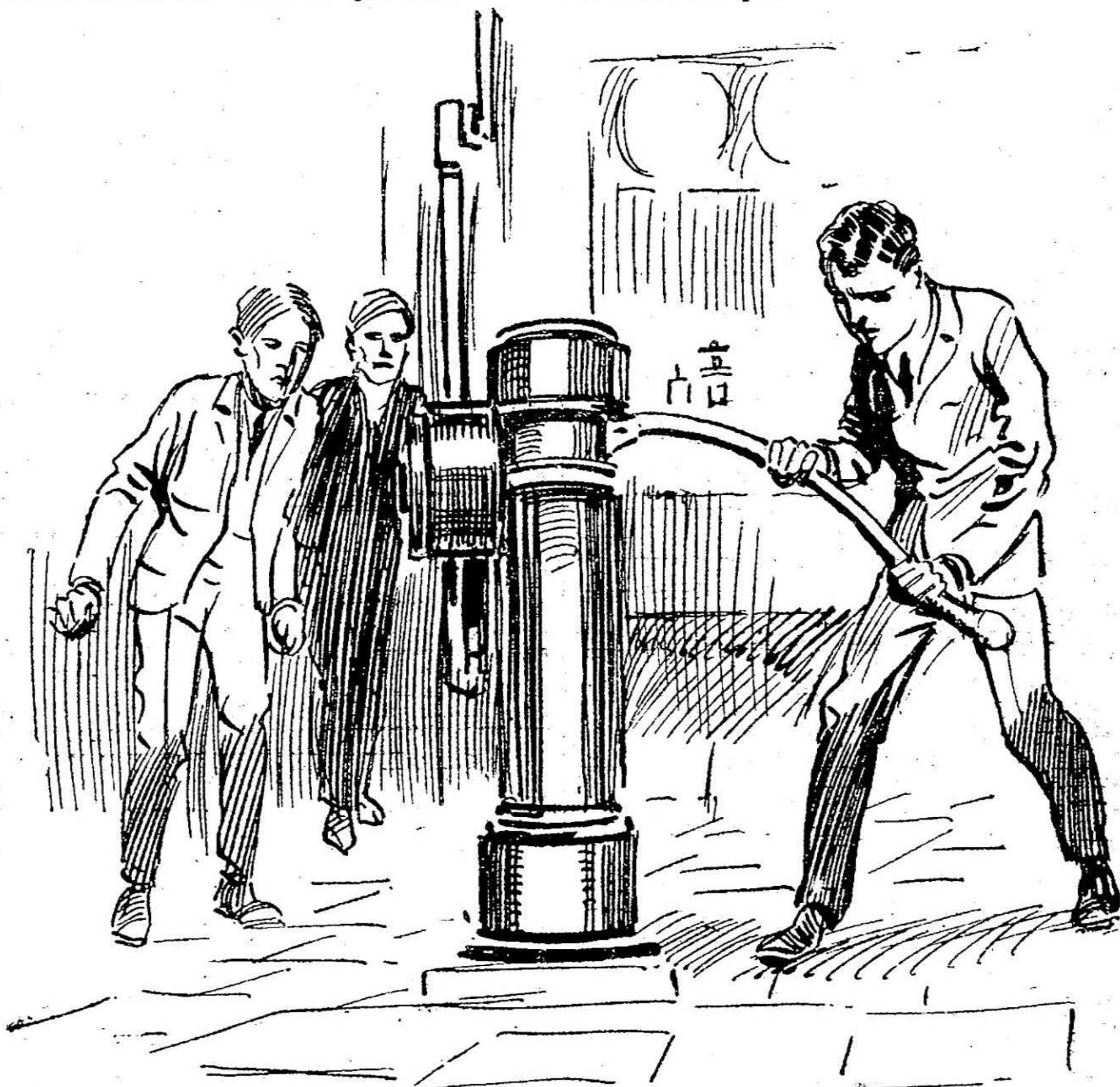
put up no resistance at all. He was half in the tunnel, and half out. And with two strong opponents against him, he made no attempt to get free.

Indeed, before he could even struggle, a rope was thrown over his shoulders, and drawn cruelly tight, binding his arms to his sides.

"All right!" he growled. "Don't get excited about it! You've got me!"

"You are very clever, my lad—very clever indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Creepe triumphantly. "But this time you have overreached yourself!"

The schoolmaster was trembling with exultation. He had hardly hoped for such an early success as this. He, too, had noticed that tunnel—but not until he had finished cutting the pipe, and as he was preparing to leave the pit.



Nipper lifted the pump-handle again, and swung it up and down. It went freely, proving that the pump itself was doing no work. No water came, either.

He spoke quite calmly, but he was furious. He had never suspected that the enemy would be lying in wait for him. He realised, of course, that he was in a pit near the laurel bushes. It was here that he had half-expected to find the safety tap—a provision in case of bursts. But the first glance round revealed the hacked and jagged cut pipe.

He had returned to the monitors full of a new idea. And he and Kirby and Tarkington were now bent upon a little investigation. They were attempting to see if the tunnel actually led into the school. The unexpected arrival of Nipper settled the question.

"Kirby, we have command of the situation!" said Mr. Creepe gloatingly. "With

the ringleader in our hands, and with this tunnel open to us, I can safely promise you that the rebellion will be squashed within the hour!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE DARK HOUR.



CECIL DE VALERIE shifted his position slightly.

"This wind isn't any too warm!" he told himself, pulling his thick overcoat more tightly about himself. "We shall have to see if we can't rig an armchair up here to-morrow."

De Valerie, of the Fourth, was perched up in the fork of a neighbouring tree. From his coign of vantage he could see right over into the Moat Hollow grounds—whilst remaining invisible himself.

His hour was nearly up. For the St. Frank's fellows were taking it in turns to keep a watch over Moat Hollow, in case they were needed. Reggie Pitt would not do his spell of duty until after lights-out, when the risks were greater. Handforth and Tregellis-West and Jack Grey were also included in the night-watch brigade.

Nicodemus Trotwood had reported that all was well, and everything quiet, and it seemed that De Valerie would have the same story to tell. Archie Glenthorne would presently come along. For Archie, of all people, had absolutely insisted upon doing his "whack."

Moat Hollow was quiet and dark. A dim glow of light showed in one or two windows, certainly, and there was a kind of radiance in the gymnasium. But there was nothing to indicate that a barring-out was in progress, and that Mr. Grimesby Creepe and his monitors were locked out of their own school.

"Seems to me that old Creepe's given up the ghost!" murmured De Valerie. "What a swindle! I thought we were going to have all sorts of excitement yet! If old Creepe gives in, it'll be a regular fizzle!"

And De Valerie's sentiments were those of nearly all the Fourth. The juniors were hoping against hope that Mr. Creepe would organise a big attack on the rebels. If so, it would give the Fourth the excuse they wanted for another glorious rag. They revelled in the thought of going to the rescue of the Moat Hollow boys again.

So De Valerie was rather disappointed.

The complete inactivity on both sides worried him. Not being able to see into the school building, he had no idea of the many preparations that were being made.

But just about when Archie was due he bucked up a bit. He had caught sight of a flash near some bushes in the school grounds. It disappeared almost at once, but it showed De Valerie that something was moving down there.

He watched closely, and after a little while he detected some figures moving towards the gymnasium. In spite of the gloom, De Valerie could see that they were carrying something. The gymnasium door was opened, and some light came out.

And for a brief moment the watching St. Frank's junior caught sight of a bound figure being hustled into the building. Then the door closed. He had not had time to recognise any of the party.

But it wasn't exactly a wild guess to assume that the captors were Mr. Creepe and his monitors, and that the victim was a rebel.

"Looks as though somebody's been collared!" muttered De Valerie. "What the dickens can I do?"

There was no outcry from the school, and no unusual sound from the gym. So De Valerie concluded that he must have been mistaken. The glimpse had been so brief that it was already fading from his mind, and he was wondering if he had been mistaken. The total absence of any alarm indicated that all was peaceful.

"What ho! Ahoy there, and all that sort of stuff!"

It was a soft voice from the ground—an unmistakable voice. De Valerie slid nimbly down the tree, and landed with a slight thud.

"All serene, Archie—nothing to report," he murmured.

"Good gad, you nearly dropped on my dashed head, dash it!" said Archie Glenthorne. "I mean to say, these jungle imitations are frightfully disturbing, laddie! The old heart department is working overtime!"

"Don't jaw here—shin up!" grinned the other. "Oh, half a tick! I fancied I saw one of the chaps being carried into the gymnasium about ten minutes ago. I thought he was a prisoner, or something. But as everything's quiet, I suppose I must have been mistaken. Still, keep your eyes open!"

"Oh, rather!" said Archie. "I mean, dash it all, you didn't expect me to indulge in forty of the best and sweetest in the old tree branches? Duty, dear old greengage, is duty!"

"Then do a bit of it!" chuckled De Valerie.

"Absolutely!" said the elegant junior. "I shall now proceed to keep watch over the reptile and all his dashed tribe!"

Archie mounted the tree with astonishing speed. Languid and lazy as a rule, he could always produce a burst of energy at the right moment. He was soon perched in the fork.

"Oddslife!" he murmured. "Not so frightfully bad—what? I feel like one of those dashed chappies in the what-do-you-call-it at the top of a ship's mast! The good old crow's nest, as it were!"

There was nothing very exciting to watch.

In fact, after a few minutes, Archie concluded that this barring-out business wasn't

all it was cracked up to be. It was a bit too slow to be attractive. He would have changed his opinion if he could have seen into the cellar beneath the gym.

Mr. Creepe and two of his monitors were just forcing Nipper down into the depths. And Nipper was hardly himself.

He was bound up tightly, ropes festooning him in very much the same manner as a spider wraps a web round a fly. A thick muffler was round his face, and he was about as helpless as a cat in a sack.

"There!" exclaimed Mr. Creepe pantingly. "That will do, Tarkington! We will leave the wretched boy like this. Fryer, you must stop here, and keep guard."

"Why, I thought I was coming—" began Fryer.

"I can't help what you thought, Fryer," interrupted Mr. Creepe. "I am convinced that this young scoundrel is helpless, but, at the same time, we must make no mistake. Keep your eye on him closely."

And while Fryer remained on duty, Mr. Creepe and the others set forth on their big adventure—which, in Mr. Creepe's opinion, was to bring about the complete rout of the revolutionaries.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GREAT COUP.



"**B**LESSED if I can make it out!" said Tommy Watson anxiously.

He was standing in the scullery, and Jevons and Smithson and a number of other Moat Hollow boys were round him in a group. Watson had been back from his tour of inspection for some time.

He had confidently expected Nipper to be back again. But there had been no sign of the leader since he had penetrated the shaft. And Watson, always a fellow to worry, was more than anxious.

"It's more than I can understand!" he declared. "He's been gone nearly half an hour. I say, I'm getting the wind up! These shafts are awful places, you know—they've got gas down the bottom of them."

"Gas?" repeated Jevons, staring.

"Yes."

"Oh, don't rot! There's no gas laid on, even—"

"I don't mean that kind of gas," said Tommy. "It's a rummy sort—it always collects at the bottom of wells and things. They call it carbon something or other. I believe."

"Oh, that stuff!" said Jevons. "My hat! You don't think—"

He paused, staring at Watson in a startled kind of way.

"He's coming!" panted Smithson suddenly.

Somebody was mounting the iron ladder. Tommy Watson and the Moat Hollow boys turned eagerly. After their fears, it was good to hear Nipper coming back. They were eager for his report.

But instead of Nipper's head and shoulders rising into the scullery, the head and shoulders of Kirby abruptly appeared. And before the startled boys could recover themselves, Kirby gave one spring, and was out.

He had relied upon that element of surprise. If the juniors had acted on the instant, they could have pushed him down the shaft, and slammed the flagstone down. But now it was too late.

"Stand back, you brats!" snarled Kirby harshly.

He stood with his back to the shaft, guarding it—so that the other monitors and Mr. Creepe could have time to join him. Everything, in fact, depended upon these first few moments.

"Kirby!" gasped Watson. "Where's—where's—"

He broke off, and his face flushed with rage. It was unnecessary to ask questions! The facts were obvious! Nipper had fallen into the hands of the enemy, and Moat Hollow was invaded!

"Come on—quick!" shouted Watson desperately. "Back me up, you chaps—chuck him down the shaft!"

He dashed forward, but the other boys failed to respond to his call. They were too thunderstruck to see their old enemy.

Slash!

Kirby had a dog-whip in his hand, and he used it with all his force. It struck Tommy Watson across the shoulders, and he reeled aside, burning with agony. And at the same moment, Tarkington and Roberts and two other monitors came out of the shaft like demons in a pantomime.

"Now then—stand back—the whole crowd of you!" roared Kirby. "You might as well throw up the sponge at once—you're beaten!"

"We're not—we're not!" yelled Jevons. "Hi!" he screamed. "Rescue—rescue! Come on, you chaps—"

Slash!

The whip caught him on the legs, and he crashed to the hard scullery floor, writhing. One or two of the other boys made a half-hearted attempt to charge forward, but a hiss of the whip kept them back.

And then Mr. Grimesby Creepe—like the celebrated Duke of Plaza Toro, came up in the rear. He preferred to lead his regiment from behind, it seemed. It was certainly the safer position in case of early casualties.

He took in the situation at a glance.

"Ah, splendid!" he exclaimed breathlessly. "Boys! Obey my orders, and all will be well! Line up at once! Do you hear me? **LINE UP AT ONCE!**" he thundered.

Leaderless, the Moat Hollow boys were suddenly in a state of panic. They looked this way and that, they shivered, and then

automatically commenced shuffling into a double line. There were less than a dozen present, the others being distributed over the house, on sentry duty.

"Shove 'em in the cupboard, sir!" suggested Kirby quickly.

"An excellent suggestion, Kirby—a suggestion, in fact, which I shall at once adopt," said Mr. Creepe. "Tarkington, open the cupboard door."

Leading out of the big scullery there was a dark store-cupboard—a place without windows or even a grating. It was, indeed, a kind of coal-cellar.

"Now then—in with you—and look alive!" commanded Mr. Creepe.

The boys hesitated, a shout from Watson encouraging them. But a lash from Kirby's whip settled the question. The unfortunate youngsters stampeded into the store-cupboard helter-skelter.

And Watson, who was standing apart, received a violent heave from Mr. Creepe that sent him hurtling sideways into the inky, dungeon-like prison. The door was slammed, and a bolt was shot home.

"Well I'm hanged!" said Kirby. "It's as easy as shelling peas!"

"I knew it would be!" said Mr. Creepe gloatingly. "What did I tell you? With that infernal Nipper out of the way, and with Watson dealt with, the rest are easy! It was a black day for us when Watson first came to the school! Our troubles have dated from that moment! But now they are over!"

It certainly seemed like it.

Clearing the rest of the house was easy. With half the rebels captured, the others were a mere rabble, hiding in any corner they could seek. But one by one they were dragged out and captured.

Moat Hollow was once again in possession of the tyrant!

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WHITE HOPE.



"THIS," said Archie Glenthorne, "is getting dashed monotonous!"

He had been in his eyrie for half an hour, and during this time nothing whatever had happened—except a brief but glorious battle between two cats on the top of the school wall. There were still occasional outbursts of hate proceeding from the dense bushes.

Archie was rather puzzled, too. Although everything was quiet, lights had been dodging about from window to window for some little time—as though the rebels were searching for something.

"Dashed rummy!" announced Archie. "Absolutely!"

He adjusted his monocle, and stared at the school more intently than ever. And

it was at this moment that somebody came to one of the windows with a light and quickly pulled the blind down.

"Good gad!" ejaculated Archie, nearly falling out of the tree.

In that instant, he had recognised the figure of the individual at the window. He was no boy—he was Mr. Grimesby Creepe! Archie knew that he was not at fault. There could be no mistaking that squat, thick-set, bull-necked figure.

"Good gad!" repeated Archie blankly.

He found it necessary to re-adjust all his ideas. Until this moment, he had taken it for granted that Mr. Creepe was nursing his sorrows in the gymnasium, with his monitors providing a mournful chorus. Archie had pictured the interior of Moat Hollow as a place of rejoicing, where rebels galloped about from room to room, and where other rebels steadfastly stood on sentry go. And here was Mr. Creepe actually in the school itself!

"Good gad!" said Archie, for the third time.

All other words seemed to have deserted him. But it only took him a brief minute to recover himself. And then he began to reason.

"I mean to say, the bally old posish seems to be somewhat mottled!" he murmured in alarm. "In some foul way, the dashed Creepe bird must have whizzed out from the undergrowth and gained admittance. Gadzooks! The whole frightful business is not merely mottled, but positively gnarled and knotted!"

He regarded the school with an entirely new interest.

"What I mean is, some dashed thing has absolutely got to be done!" he decided. "A few investigations, what? At this point in the proceedings, it seems to be indicated that Archie must abandon his reposeful attitude, and dash forth upon the old trail!"

The Genial Ass descended the tree quickly, having come to his decision. He didn't want to rush back to St. Frank's with an alarm just yet. It would be better to make certain of his facts first. From a hollow space in the tree he produced a rope with a hook on the end of it. Two casts with this, and the hook caught at the top of the wall.

"Tally-ho!" murmured Archie. "That is to say, yoicks! Three cheers for the good old chase! In other words, Archie on the job!"

He swarmed up the rope, reached the top of the wall, and paused for a moment. All was quiet and still. He dropped the rope on the other side, and wriggled his way down it.

"Within the enemy's gates, what?" breathed Archie. "The scheme, from now onwards, is to proceed with a few secret inquiries. But steer clear of the moat, laddie. A false step, dash it, and a fair

and promising young life would be absolutely blighted!"

Archie's first move was to creep towards the gymnasium. It offered the easiest field for investigation—and it was well clear of the moat. A light was gleaming from within, and the window was unshaded. The school, on the other hand, was dark, and lay safely beyond the moat.

Archie stared in the window, and caught sight of Fryer, leaning moodily against the cellar door. The fact that he was alone was significant.

"Oddslife!" breathed Archie. "To be exact, gadzooks! This means that Creepe and his poisonous reptilian pals are absolutely on the job! I was right! The optical department did good service! I mean, this affair is getting somewhat rusty in the axle!"

He wondered what he should do. That something dire had happened was fairly obvious. But the absence of any outcry was puzzling. If Mr. Creepe had beaten the rebels, he had done so swiftly and decisively. But what of Nipper? Where was he in this crisis?

"I can't help thinking," murmured Archie, "that sundry disastrous happenings have marred the peace of the good old evening. What-oh! The chappie appears to have a few spasms of energy left!"

Fryer had moved across the gym, and he went to one of the other windows on the opposite side. He was staring over at the school buildings. He was totally unconscious of the watcher. Presently he turned aside briskly, and there was a kind of smile on his face.

He went to the cellar door, opened it, and stood there.

"Thought I'd bring you the news!" he called down. "I say, Nipper! The game's up! Sorry, old man, but your pals are in the cart—just as bad as you are. Mr. Creepe's got in, and the rebellion's over!"

Archie heard every word—and he breathed rapidly.

"Good gad!" he muttered. "So that's it? So that's the scaly scheme? Dear old Nipper is languishing in the depths of the castle dungeons! And Fryer is on guard. What-absolutely-oh! Unless I get dashed busy on the good old instant, the chance may be gone for ever."

Archie could be quick when he liked. He was quick now. Fryer was the only enemy on guard, all the rest being in the school. And Nipper was a prisoner in the cellar. It was the time for swift action.

Archie leapt round to the door, pushed it open, and strode in.

"Everything all right?" began Fryer.

Then he paused, staring at Archie blankly.

"This," said Archie, "is where we shed sundry pints of gore!"

He dashed at Fryer with his fist clenched. There could be no mistaking his attitude.

The monitor only just had time to put his fists up. The next moment he was desperately defending himself.

CHAPTER XV.

RINGING THE CHANGES.



"THIS," said Archie Glenthorne, "is painful but necessary. Be good enough to take that! And this also! And likewise another one!"

Archie's fists were extremely busy.

Fryer, taken completely by surprise, was still more or less confused. He wasn't much of a fighter at the best of times, and when it came to a genuine scrap he was more or less of a coward. He defended himself weakly, giving ground all the time.

Crash! Biff! Slam!

Archie's blows went home with deadly precision.

"Your chin, dash it, is frightfully hard," observed Archie, as one blow caused his knuckles to tingle. "Fight, you frightful reptile. You're making me feel like a dashed bully!"

Considering that Archie was at least two years younger than Fryer, and decidedly smaller, this statement was rather exaggerated. At the same time, Archie was doing all the hitting.

He drove his opponent back, Fryer making futile attempts to guard himself. Only when his back was to the gymnasium wall did Fryer attempt any sort of retaliation. It was a hopeless display.

"Help!" he roared desperately.

By good fortune his voice cracked at the start of the yell, so that the shout had no penetrating power. He wasn't allowed to attempt another. Archie delivered a fearful blow which knocked Fryer in a heap.

The monitor lay on the floor, groaning.

"All right—I'll give you best!" he panted huskily.

"Oh, I say, dash it!" protested Archie. "Just when the old mill was getting deucedly interesting. You've had enough, what?"

"Yes," muttered Fryer.

"Then sit up, you frightful worm, and obey orders!" panted Archie. "Hold your bally paws in the rear. Absolutely! If you try any tricks, laddie, I shall be compelled to exercise my left with considerable vim!"

While speaking, Archie yanked the scarf from about his neck and tied it rapidly round Fryer's mouth. Then he grabbed a piece of rope from the floor and secured the prisoner's hands. Archie was rather disgusted. This weak submission was all to

the good, but there was something distasteful about it.

He rose to his feet, searched round the gym, and found another piece of rope. With this he secured Fryer's ankles.

"Dash it all, I feel like a bally highwayman!" murmured Archie in distress. "I mean to say, what would the pater say if he could observe the Pride of the Glenthornes doing the dashed Dick Turpin act? But needs must when the what-do-you-call-it drives, as it were. A brief gaze into the offing would not be amiss at this interesting juncture!"

He nipped outside, stared at the school for a moment, and was satisfied. There were no signs of the approaching enemy. Mr. Grimesby Creepe and his other monitors were evidently satisfied that Fryer was capable of looking after himself. And perhaps their own hands were full.

Archie ran back into the gym, hurried to the cellar, and hung open the door.

"What-ho within!" he called softly. "Archie is rallying round somewhat. Be good enough to warble a few strains, old sportsman!"

Silence!

This was not surprising, for Nipper was as helpless as Fryer himself. But he was glowing with sudden excitement. The fact that Archie Glenthorne was at the cellar door meant many things. The situation was not as hopeless as Nipper had begun to fear.

"Good gad!" breathed Archie. "What's this? I mean to say, what foul business is afoot? The prisoner in the dungeons fails to respond to the chirrup of his mate. A swift investigation is indicated."

He dimly saw some steps, and felt his way down them. Then he groped about in the cellar. It seemed very dark at first, but after a few moments he could faintly distinguish a huddled-up object against one of the walls. He had left the cellar door wide open, and a certain amount of light filtered down.

"My only sainted aunt!" murmured Archie,

He had touched Nipper, and he felt the festoon of ropes which secured the unfortunate rebel leader. In a moment Archie's pocket-knife was out, and he proceeded to slash through the ropes with commendable vigour. Then he pulled off the muffler-gag.

"Thanks, old man!" gasped Nipper breathlessly.

"What-ho! Speech proceeds to flow!" whispered Archie. "Good gad! Did you hear that? A rhyme, dash it! Archie is warbling poetry under the stress of the moment!"

"Thanks—that's fine!" said Nipper, as the last rope was parted. "Ooooh! Pins and needles like the deuce! I shan't be a minute—let's grab something, old man!"

He grabbed Archie and held on. The

sudden rush of blood through his freed veins caused excruciating agony for a few seconds, to be followed by acute pins and needles and numbness.

"Good old Archie!" he panted. "I don't know how you did it, but thanks awfully! What's happened? Are there any of the other chaps here?"

"Absolutely not!" said Archie. "But, I say! Dash it all. I'm the chappie to ask what's happened. How is it that the Great Nipper—the Terror of all Evil-Doers—is in this frightful posish? What mouldy circumstances brought you to this pass, old lad?"

CHAPTER XVI.

IN POSSESSION AGAIN.



NIPPER felt almost himself a few moments later.

During the interval he had quickly put Archie in possession of the facts, as he knew them.

"It was all because of that water," he concluded. "Goodness knows what's happened now—but Creepe's bound to have done something drastic—"

"He has!" interrupted Archie. "The frightful old crow is in the school again. From various indications, I gather that the Creepe animal is once again at the helm."

And in turn Archie told his story.

"You saw Creepe at the window, eh?" said Nipper grimly. "And there was no fight, no sound of a scrap? H'm! Looks pretty bad! I expect those Moat Hollow chaps knuckled under without even a run for their money."

"A fairly foul crowd, by all accounts."

"They're not much—and without a leader I'm afraid they would knuckle under in two minutes," said Nipper. "But if Mr. Creepe thinks he's the master of the situation, he's made a mistake."

"What-ho!" said Archie. "Stirring words, laddie!"

"What about the Fourth?"

"Absolutely!" nodded Archie. "What about it? It seems to me that the Fourth is somewhat urgently required to dash into the fray. Shall we leg it forthwith to the old school and raise the alarm?"

"Yes, we can't do better," said Nipper crisply. "If we act at once we can reverse this position, and chuck old Creepe out again. But there's going to be some stiff work before we do the trick."

"Handforth will weep with joy!" declared Archie.

They mounted the cellar steps, and found Fryer in just the same position. Without

hesitation he was carried down into the cellar, and the door was bolted on him.

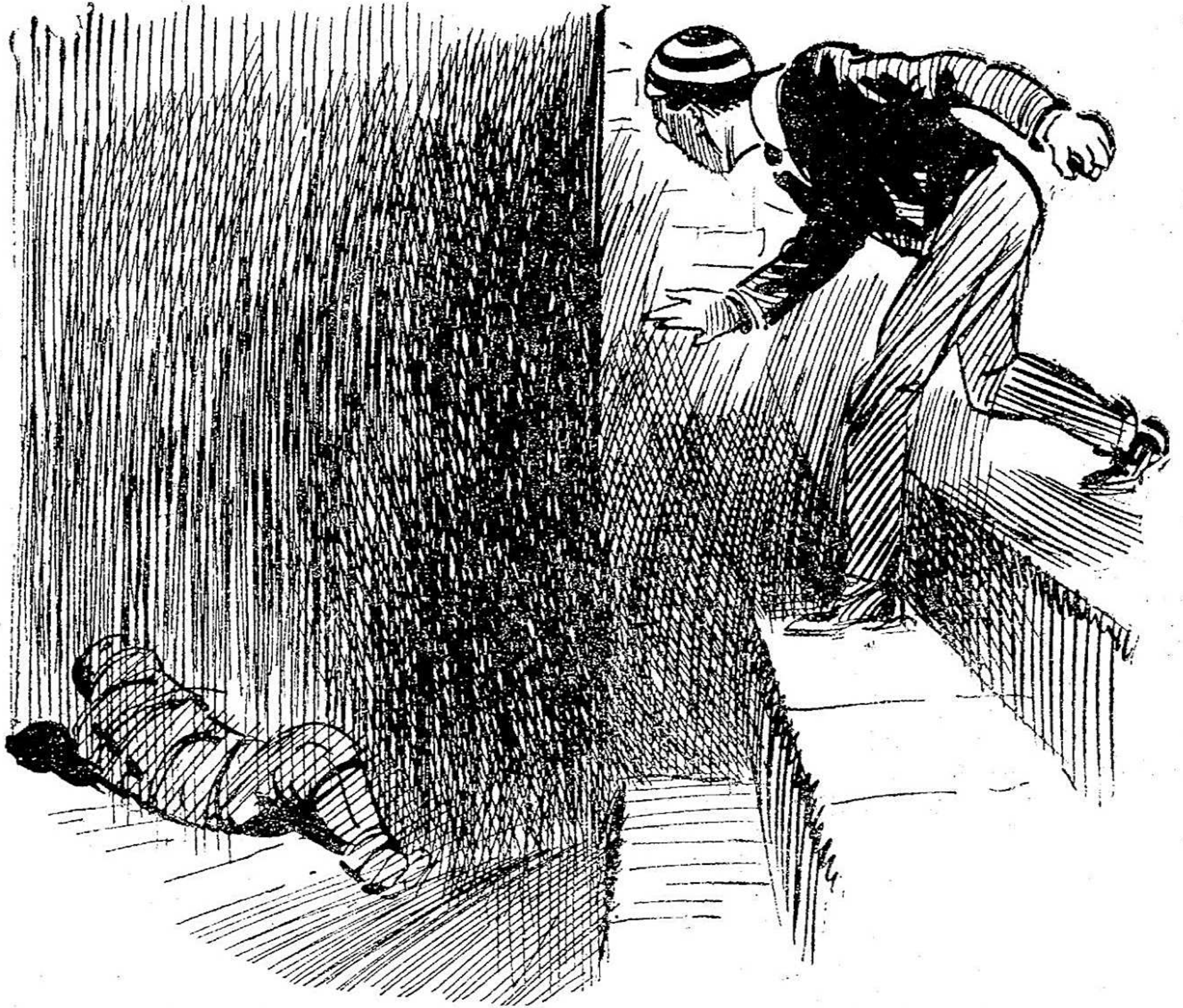
Then Nipper and his rescuer passed out into the school grounds and made for the wall. Only once did they pause. Gazing across the moat, Nipper found it possible to look into the school-room windows. And he caught sight of Mr. Creepe there, talking earnestly with four or five monitors. The total absence of other boys was significant.

"It's a coup all right," muttered Nipper. "Creepe's in possession again, and I expect

of Archie's friendly rope, and dashed off at the double towards St. Frank's.

In the meantime, totally unconscious of this hitch in the scheme of things, Mr. Grimesby Creepe was reviewing the situation. And as far as he could see, everything in the garden was lovely.

A round of the school had shown him that no damage was done, and that ordinary school routine could be resumed on the morrow. Mr. Creepe was so overjoyed with his victory that he indulged his vanity.



It seemed very dark at first, but after a few moments Archie could faintly distinguish a huddled-up object against one of the walls.

he's locked the whole giddy school in the dormitory, or in one of the store-rooms. St. Frank's for us, Archie. Where should we be without the Fourth?"

"In the soup, laddie—absolutely in the soup!" replied Archie. "In fact, dash it, I can absolutely feel the old mock turtle swishing round the ankles already. We must away, friend. We must hie ourselves to the haunts of the waiting warriors!"

They quickly scaled the wall, by the aid

"Kirby! Tarkington!" he ordered. "Go to the store-room and bring the boys out at once! Lead them into the school-room here, in double file. It is my wish to address the school!"

"Think it's wise, sir?" asked Kirby doubtfully. "Oughtn't we to do something with Nipper first—"

"Nipper is a prisoner, and Fryer is in charge of him," interrupted Mr. Creepe untruthfully, although he was not aware of

this. "They can wait, Kirby—they can wait! I have a mind to inflict a few punishments upon the ringleaders—Watson and Jevons in particular. A pity, Kirby—a thousand pities! But discipline must be restored!"

The monitors made no further objection. They went off to the scullery store-room and the door was flung open.

"Come on—out of it!" said Kirby brusquely. "And take it quietly, my sons. If anybody tries to dodge, he'll get kicked. Now then, sharp's the word. Come on, the whole gang of you!"

The rebels came out in a pitiable condition. Most of the boys were sobbing, for they had awful anticipations of what was to come. Only Tommy Watson and Jevons were defiant. But they could do nothing but fall into line with the rest. Individual resistance would have been insanity.

And so five minutes later the Moat Hollow

boys were once again in the school-room, in their old places, with Mr. Grimesby Creepe again at his desk, and with the monitors standing round.

Mr. Creepe was looking very benevolent. His heavy face wore a smile of genial kindness. Only the evil gleam in his eye indicated his true attitude. He was very dangerous.

Unexpectedly, dramatically, he had turned the tables, and again had full command. And he made the unhappy mistake of assuming that his position was now impregnable.

He failed to realise that the Fourth Form of St. Frank's was preparing even at that moment—preparing to swoop down and deliver a blow from which Mr. Creepe would never recover.

In short, if the rascally schoolmaster had only known it, the end of his brutal career was within sight!

THE END.

By Your Editor:



My dear Readers,

This week's story concludes with victory for Mr. Grimesby Creepe. His unfortunate pupils have been cowed into surrender. For, without Nipper to lead them, they are helpless to defend themselves against their brutal persecutors. But Nipper has been released from his captors, and, nothing daunted by this temporary setback, he is preparing with redoubled efforts to bring about the overthrow of Creepe. How Nipper achieves his object, assisted by his pals at St. Frank's, is wonderfully described next week in the final story of this great series, entitled "FREED FROM BONDAGE!"

MUCH LONGER ST. FRANK'S YARNS.

There is no denying the enormous popularity of our St. Frank's stories, and the decision to make them much longer, beginning the week after next, will be hailed with delight by everyone. To make this possible, I have had to reduce the size of the Mag. and economise in space wherever I can. For the time being, I am incorporating the "St. Frank's Magazine" into the NELSON

LEE LIBRARY, so that I can publish the "Who's Who" and "Portrait Gallery" in any part of the Old Paper, and dispense with a separate editorial by Pitt. Such features as "How to Do It," "In Reply to Yours," and "Our Public School Sketches," will appear alternately every other week. But I hope to continue to devote the usual space to Mr. Brook's weekly chat, "Between Ourselves."

A NEW ADVENTURE SERIAL.

There is nothing like ringing the changes now and again. That is why, instead of the Nelson Lee detective serial, I am beginning after next week a grand new adventure serial about that mystic land of the East—India. Here you will read of some of the wonderful temples and cities of this strange land, of the lurking dangers of the jungle, and many other things that happen in the East. I will give you the title of this fine new adventure yarn next week.

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.



The INVISIBLE GRIP!

New Serial of Nelson Lee and Nipper introducing Professor Cyrus Zingrave

CHAPTER XLI.

MR. MAX KERNER PLANS A COUP!

FOR the fraction of a second Nipper was at a loss—but then he raised his clenched fist with the intention of crashing it into the face of the Chinaman.

But before he could do so his arm was seized in a vice-like grip—a grip which rendered him completely helpless. And at the same second a soft voice sounded in his ears.

"Steady on, young 'un—steady on!" it said, with just a suspicion of a chuckle at the back of it. "Perhaps I shouldn't have descended upon you so unexpectedly—why didn't you take notice of my warning hiss?"

Nipper gave a gasp of astonishment.

"The guv'nor!" he breathed incredulously. "Well, I'm dashed! I—I thought you were a dirty Chink who had been put on watch-dog duty by Kerner! What the dickens are you doing here—in this ghastly rig-out?"

Nelson Lee smiled.

"I have been doing a little scouting this evening, Nipper, and I thought I'd look you up!" he exclaimed, in a whisper. "I happened to conclude my inquiries in this neighbourhood, and I popped in here before returning to Gray's Inn Road. How are things going?"

"They were going great until you 'buted in, guv'nor!" answered Nipper. "Kerner's in the library here, and he's just received a visitor—one of his gang, who's come with information. You'd better get busy and listen to what's going on!"

Nelson Lee nodded, and both he and Nipper bent down and applied their eyes to the tiny apertures which were visible in the fringe of the blind. Kerner and his

man were still talking, and it was evident that they were quite oblivious of the two watchers outside.

"Oh, I see!" they heard Kerner say. "So Zingrave and his companion are taking refuge in a house at George Street, Euston Road, eh?"

Berger nodded.

"Yes, boss—but that's not all I've discovered!" he said. "They've got the Langford apparatus with them in the house, and they're planning to use it to commit another burglary to-night—"

"Oh! Are they?" cut in Kerner, with gleaming eyes. "We'll see about that, Berger—we'll see about that! It is imperative that we get hold of that machine as soon as possible, and we must take advantage of the opportunity which now offers. It is altogether too good to miss!"

Lee and Nipper were listening intently, and they saw Berger nod in response to his master's suggestion.

"Why not go and get it now, boss?" he asked keenly. "We'll never get a better chance. We can have everything our own way if we act at once—for the police are completely baffled."

"What about that confounded detective—Nelson Lee?" asked Kerner, looking at Berger quickly. "He is far more dangerous than the police, and his interference makes me decidedly uneasy! But for him we should have obtained the Langford apparatus at Putney—"

"That's true, boss, but we needn't fear that detective now!" cut in Berger. "He's just as much in the dark as the police are. Clausen has been shadowing Lee, and he reported that he's absolutely off the track! He's on duty in Gray's Inn Road now—ready to 'get' Lee the moment he shows his face! He fired at him last night—but missed!"

Nipper looked at his master quickly.

"So it was one of Kerner's men, after all, who tried to murder you, sir?" he breathed indignantly.

The detective nodded.

"Exactly!" he whispered. "I thought so at the time! I also considered it probable that Kerner would make a second attempt on my life, so I adopted this disguise! Apparently, it was a wise precaution, Nipper! It looks as if Kerner is getting desperate, and we must exercise the greatest caution."

There could be no doubt that the scoundrelly financier was resorting to the most extreme measures in order to obtain Mr. Langford's machine. This admission of Berger's proved that clearly enough. It also convinced Nelson Lee that he had been extremely wise to don the disguise he was now wearing. Thus attired, it was impossible to recognise him, and the man referred to—Clausen—had been unable to carry out his orders to kill the detective on sight. In all probability, Clausen was under the impression that Lee was still in his consulting-room.

Lee and Nipper heard Kerner give vent to an angry grunt.

"Clausen always was a bungler!" he exclaimed, in reply to Berger's words. "If he hadn't been so careless last night, Lee could never have got to Putney, and spoiled everything! But it's no good worrying about that now! We've got to get the machine into our possession to-night—"

"Why not act now, as I said before, boss?" put in Berger. "It'll be as easy as anything for us to grab the machine if we make a surprise attack on Zingrave—"

"No, no, Berger—you are quite wrong!" said Kerner, with a shake of the head. "Professor Zingrave is not the sort of man to be caught napping easily, as his past record shows! It will be far better for us to make our attack later—when Zingrave and his companion are actually engaged in committing the burglary you mentioned. Then our task should prove simple!"

"Why?" asked Berger.

"Because the machine will be in charge of one man only—the man who operates it!" said Kerner shrewdly. "Whether it's Zingrave or his colleague will make no difference to us, for we shall simply overpower him, and seize the apparatus! By acting in that manner there will be no risk at all, and we can rush the machine out of the country at lightning speed!"

Berger was enthusiastic.

"That's a great stunt, boss!" he exclaimed admiringly. "All we've got to do is to take the gang in the car, and follow on Zingrave's tracks! Then, when he and his pal are busy with their burglary, we'll step in and take the machine!"

"Precisely!" said Kerner. "I don't think we can adopt a better plan than that, Berger. We must arrange everything to the last detail, and I shall rely upon you to have the other man in readiness for in-

stant action. There must be no hitch of any sort—you understand?"

Berger nodded, and began discussing the "details" of the precious scheme with his master.

Nelson Lee and Nipper had heard every word which had been uttered, and the detective was extremely pleased with the way events were moving.

"A very pretty little scheme, Nipper!" he breathed quietly. "You and I have learned quite a lot concerning Kerner's arrangements—but I don't think that it will make much difference to my own plans. It will, however, necessitate a slight alteration in your programme!"

"My programme, sir?" repeated Nipper.

"Yes—I have a very important and intricate little commission for you, young 'un," said the detective. "I myself must hurry off to Scotland Yard without a moment's delay, and I want you to undertake the task I am about to explain. But we cannot talk here with any degree of comfort, Nipper."

Before leaving the library window, they had another peep beneath the blind, and saw the man Berger in the act of leaving the room. He was standing with the door partially open, receiving the last of his orders from his employer—who was busy packing some papers into a bag as he spoke.

These preparations convinced Lee and Nipper that they had no time to lose, and the pair silently left the financier's garden, and made their way back to the road.

Here, in a shadowy spot, Nelson Lee explained to Nipper exactly what he wanted him to do. From time to time Nipper nodded enthusiastically, and finally intimated that he understood the position perfectly.

"Right-ho, guv'nor—you can leave it to me!" he exclaimed, with a nod. "I think the wheeze is top-hole, and I don't see how it can fail to bring about the desired result! Good-bye—see you later!"

As he spoke, Nipper slid off into the darkness, and Nelson Lee—knowing that he could trust his cute young assistant implicitly—went off in search of a taxi.

CHAPTER XLII.

A LITTLE CONFERENCE.



CHIEF DETECTIVE INSPECTOR LENNARD looked up from his desk as the door opened, and then stared hard at the visitor who entered.

"Well, upon my word!" he ejaculated, turning round in his swivel-chair in surprise. "Who the thunder allowed you to come in here—and what the deuce do you want?"

It was not Lennard's way to usually greet a visitor in this manner, but on this occasion

there was certainly some excuse for his abruptness. The chief inspector's office was an exclusive sanctum, the privacy of which could only be invaded by specially privileged visitors.

And now Lennard found himself confronted by an almond-eyed Chinaman, who stood before him with a face devoid of expression, and in an attitude of meek humility. But as the Yard man stared at him, his features broke into a broad smile.

"Good-evening, Lennard—I hope you have now recovered from the effects of your recent accident!" he said, with an amused chuckle. "Pardon my somewhat strange appearance—"

"Lee!" ejaculated Lennard, recognising the detective's voice at once. "Lee, by all that's surprising! What the dickens is the meaning of this ghastly rig-out?"

"Oh, just a little precaution, Lennard!" said Nelson Lee, with a smile. "It is sometimes advisable to change one's appearance slightly—especially when there happens to be a sharpshooter lying in wait at unexpected corners! I prefer this get-up, my dear inspector, to acting as the star turn at my own funeral!"

"Good gosh!" exclaimed Lennard. "Let's hear the yarn, old man—"

"Plenty of time for that," cut in the detective, with all his old keenness of manner. "I want you and a few of your men to be ready for another little expedition to-night!"

The chief inspector looked at Lee quickly.

"You don't mean to say that you've got on Zingrave's track already?" he asked eagerly. "I've had two dozen men at work all day trying to locate him, but so far they've drawn blank."

Nelson Lee nodded.

"Yes, I think we can rely upon roping in both the professor and his red-cloaked companion to-night," he said, in a tone of satisfaction. "But you mustn't be too hard on your men, Lennard—they've been working at a great disadvantage, remember. Fortunately, I was not quite so badly handicapped, and I have managed to discover quite a number of interesting little points in connection with this queer business."

Lennard rubbed his hands together gleefully.

"Good man!" he said enthusiastically. "Come along—out with the story, Lee! I'm as curious as a schoolgirl to know all the inner facts! What exactly have you discovered?"

Nelson Lee smiled at his official friend's manner.

"Well, the chief item of news is something which I was lucky enough to learn last night—or, rather, in the small hours," he replied. "I received the information that the third burglary which has been planned by Zingrave and his friend is to take place to-night—at the house of Mr. Jasper Hemming. He's a queer old fellow, who resides at Pine Lodge, Richmond, and he's

reputed to be worth a considerable amount of money."

Lennard nodded.

"You seem to have accomplished wonders, Lee—hanged if you haven't!" he exclaimed. "So they're going to use this machine of Langford's to crack Hemming's crib, eh? Well, they say that being forewarned is being forearmed, and Mr. Jasper Hemming ought to consider himself extremely lucky. This information of yours will enable us to prevent the burglary—"

"On the contrary, Lennard, it will do nothing of the sort!" said Nelson Lee. "The burglary must be allowed to proceed exactly as planned!"

"What?" asked the chief inspector quickly. "Why, you're mad, Lee!"

"I don't think so," answered the detective. "It will be far better for us to allow Zingrave and his friend to think that their plans are unknown, and to proceed with their arrangements uninterrupted. By so doing, we shall not only be in a position to arrest them both, but we shall also have the satisfaction of roping in Mr. Max Kerner as well—to say nothing of his little gang of foreign desperadoes!"

"By glory," said Lennard keenly, "you mean that, Lee?"

"It will be perfectly simple," replied the detective with a nod. "You see, Lennard, it happens that Kerner has arranged a little scheme of his own with regard to the Langford apparatus, and he is fondly hoping to obtain possession of the machine for his own purposes. I fancy that his plans will not be carried out strictly according to programme, because Nipper is even at this moment busily engaged in the task of upsetting his apple-cart, if I may use an expression."

The chief inspector was distinctly impressed by what he had heard, and he was highly elated into the bargain. And he listened very eagerly to Nelson Lee's account of what he and Nipper had overheard in Mr. Max Kerner's library a short time ago.

The detective also explained exactly what Nipper was doing, and what arrangements had been made to enable the police to make a complete haul of all the criminals who were engaged in the operation fixed for that night.

And Lennard was more enthusiastic than ever.

"Great!" he exclaimed heartily. "Immense, Lee! Everything you have suggested is absolutely top-hole, and you can rely upon my co-operation down to the last detail. I'll give orders for my men to get ready at once, and we'll start as soon as you like!"

He was as good as his word, and within the next quarter of an hour he was seated in the largest police-car available, with Nelson Lee by his side. The vehicle also carried ten of the Yard's most reliable plain-

clothes men, and the whole party set off upon their journey to Richmond.

So far as foresight and human ingenuity could arrange, there was no possibility of a hitch occurring, and Nelson Lee and Lennard were confidently hoping that they were now embarking upon the last stages of the singular drama which had occupied their attention so acutely.

A good deal depended upon Nipper's successful carrying out of his special orders, but Lee had no fear upon that score.

For he knew that his young assistant was the acme of reliability, and the famous detective was not to be disappointed.

CHAPTER XLIII.

SETTING THE TRAP.



NELSON LEE laid a hand on Lennard's arm.

"Better stop the car here, I fancy," he said. "Pine Lodge is only a short distance ahead, and it will be

advisable for us to walk the remaining distance."

Lennard nodded.

"Right-ho, Lee!" he said readily. "This is your affair, and what you say goes. We'll park the car down this side street."

He turned to the driver and gave him a quick order. The man acted upon instructions instantly, and a few seconds later the police car was brought to a standstill in a dingy, ill-lit side turning.

The neighbourhood was an outlying district in the vicinity of Richmond, a part which abounded in old houses and dark thoroughfares. Pine Lodge, as Nelson Lee was quite aware, was a somewhat rambling old pile which stood in its own grounds, and which occupied an isolated position.

It would never have done to drive up to the residence of Mr. Jasper Hemming in an open manner, for in all probability the criminals who had selected his house for their nefarious purposes had stationed a scout on duty. In any case, it was better for the raiding party to make their approach inconspicuously and with great caution and it was Lee's intention to do so.

The chief inspector, after directing his men to Pine Lodge, instructed them to separate, and to take up various positions in the grounds. Then he and Nelson Lee walked towards their destination together.

The weather was fine, but a trifle misty, a condition which was admirably suited to the business in hand. The foggy atmosphere, in conjunction with the dimly-lit streets, made the neighbourhood of Pine Lodge exceedingly dreary, and Lee and Lennard scarcely met a soul as they made their way along.

"Bright sort of spot to live in!" muttered

the Scotland Yard man, with a disgusted snort. "I'd rather be buried in the heart of the country than exist in a place like this, with its river mists—Hullo! Who are those two chaps, Lee?"

He jerked his head towards the spot where a couple of gentlemen were standing. Nelson Lee could see that they were within a couple of yards of the gate of Pine Lodge, and he nodded with satisfaction.

"I fancy that is Mr. Roger Langford and his son, Lennard," he said, increasing his pace a trifle. "I particularly asked them to meet me here, and I am glad to see that they have come."

"What the dickens did you do that for?" demanded the official.

"I have an idea that their presence will be in every way desirable," said the detective. "Ah, Mr. Langford," he added, holding out his hand to the old scientist cordially. "I am pleased to see you again, and your son, too. I suppose you have been wondering why I made this appointment with you, eh?"

Mr. Langford nodded.

"As a matter of fact, Mr. Lee, we have," he admitted, taking the detective's hand and shaking it heartily. "No doubt you have a very good reason for bringing us here, and I will not deny that we are curious."

"Naturally," said Lee, introducing Lennard to the father and son. "The chief inspector is here to carry out a little special work in connection with Pine Lodge, and he has brought a few trusty plain-clothes men with him. We are expecting Professor Zingrave and his companion along presently, and they will be armed with your astonishing apparatus, Mr. Langford!"

The scientist was astonished.

"You mean they are going to carry out another burglary, Mr. Lee—with my machine?" he asked.

"That is their intention, certainly," agreed the detective. "But we are going to put a spoke in their wheel, Mr. Langford."

Harry looked at Lee keenly.

"We're going to capture them red-handed, eh?" he exclaimed. "Oh, good! I'm just itching to lay my hands on the skunks who tried to murder my father—"

"You must take no action of any sort until you receive the word!" cut in Nelson Lee warningly. "I appreciate your spirit, Mr. Langford; but any precipitate act on your part might spoil everything. I have asked you and your father to be present chiefly so that you can take charge of your machine after we have captured the criminals, but also because I want you to learn the identity of the red-masked man who is making such a free use of it. I fancy we shall learn some interesting details from him."

Nelson Lee thereupon gave Langford and his son a brief outline of the plans which had been made, and they were greatly pleased—telling Lee that they felt highly honoured at being invited to attend a “round-up” of the criminals.

“We are just going to inform Mr. Jasper Hemming of what is in the wind,” concluded the detective. “It is imperative that he should be in our confidence, otherwise he might become unnecessarily alarmed.”

Nelson Lee entered the gateway of Pine Lodge as he spoke, and the others followed. The drive was dark and weed-grown, and the whole aspect of the lonely old house seemed to indicate neglect.

“But—but he doesn’t like being disturbed so late—”

“What is this—what is this?” said an irritable voice behind the woman. “Come away, Mrs. Robinson, and let me attend to these people. Now, sir, what is it you want?”

Mr. Jasper Hemming, pulling the door open to its widest extent, addressed his question to Nelson Lee, meanwhile glaring at him in anything but a friendly manner. Hemming was a curious-looking man with grey hair and lined features, and he was evidently well on the wrong side of fifty.

Nelson Lee regarded him for a moment in



The powerful rays of the Langford machine were being concentrated upon the door of the safe, and even as Nelson Lee watched, the tough steelwork literally turned to putty.

Upon arrival at the front door, Lee noted with satisfaction that a glimmer of light was burning within the hall, and he rang the bell at once. After waiting a couple of minutes, the door was opened by an elderly woman, evidently the housekeeper, and she looked at the four visitors who stood upon the doorstep in the greatest surprise.

“Oh! Whatever is the matter—” she began in alarm.

“There is nothing the matter, madam,” cut in Nelson Lee politely. “We merely wish to see Mr. Hemming upon a most important matter. He is at home, I trust?”

“Yes, sir,” said the woman nervously.

silence, and then spoke in his usual smooth tones.

“You must pardon our invasion of your house at such a late hour, Mr. Hemming,” he said; “but we are here solely for your benefit. Your house has been singled out for attention by Professor Cyrus Zingrave and his audacious companion, and we are here—”

“Zingrave and the red-cloaked man—coming here!” muttered Hemming, his face blanching perceptibly. “Good—good heavens!”

He swerved a little giddily as he spoke, and it was easy to see that Nelson Lee’s news had startled him considerably.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE FLY ENTERS THE WEB!



MR. JASPER HEMMING recovered himself quickly.

"You must excuse me, my dear sir," he said. "But your words are sufficiently surprising to cause me the most acute anxiety. I take it that you are police officials, and that you have come here to warn me—"

"I am an officer from Scotland Yard, but this gentleman is Mr. Nelson Lee, the famous detective!" said Lennard brusquely. "You had better admit us at once, Mr. Hemming, so that we can discuss the situation."

The owner of Pine Lodge nodded, and motioned the visitors to enter the hall without hesitation. Then, having closed the front door, he piloted them into his library, and took up his position with his back to the fire.

"Now, gentlemen, I am at your service," he said politely. "If you will kindly be seated, I shall be most happy to listen to anything you have to say, and to learn the details of this extraordinary visit."

Nelson Lee smiled as he seated himself.

"Extraordinary is a particularly apt word to use, Mr. Hemming," he murmured quietly, "for the events which have led up to our appearance here are nothing less. I will explain the position as briefly as possible, and allow you to judge for yourself. But first let me introduce Mr. Roger Langford and his son."

Hemming acknowledged the scientist and Harry with a polite bow, and then listened intently while Nelson Lee put him in possession of all the essential facts. He became more and more surprised as the story proceeded, and when the detective had finished, Hemming rubbed his chin with a very thoughtful air.

"Good gracious me!" he exclaimed. "What an amazing state of affairs, Mr. Lee! You have come here, I suppose, in order to make a clean sweep of the criminals and to prevent them from stealing my property?"

"Exactly!" agreed the detective. "Your property will remain intact, Mr. Hemming. It is our plan to catch the thieves while they are in the very act of committing the robbery, and in order to ensure complete success, it is necessary for you to do your part."

"I am perfectly willing to do anything you like, Mr. Lee," said Hemming.

"That is excellent," returned the criminologist. "Your part will not be unduly arduous, my dear sir, for all I require is that you should go to bed in the usual manner—"

"Go to bed?" repeated Hemming in astonishment.

"Yes," said Nelson Lee. "I want you to act in every way as you usually do, and to lock the doors, put out the lights, and all that sort of thing at the customary hour. It is essential that the criminals should have no grounds for suspecting a trap, and the only way to ensure that is for you to follow your usual habits, which are well known to the thieves, you may be quite sure."

Mr. Hemming nodded.

"Yes, perhaps you're right, Mr. Lee," he exclaimed, glancing at the clock. "Why, bless my life, it is nearly eleven-thirty now—my time for retiring! I had better make my round of the doors, and then go up to my bed-room at once, had I not?"

"Please do so, Mr. Hemming," replied the detective. "By performing your usual routine of tasks you will assist us considerably."

"And you needn't worry yourself about your valuables!" put in Chief Detective-Inspector Lennard confidently. "My men are on watch outside, concealed in various places, and they'll do their share when the time comes."

Mr. Hemming seemed to be perfectly satisfied with the arrangements which had been made, and he was undoubtedly thankful that this little party had come to safeguard his interests.

He told Nelson Lee that the library safe contained a vast amount of valuable property, and that the dining-room also was stocked with a huge quantity of old silver ware. The owner of Pine Lodge, in fact, appeared to be a man of substance, despite the weed-grown and dilapidated appearance of the exterior. He was probably a miserly individual, who begrudged spending an unnecessary shilling for the sake of appearances.

There were several convenient hiding-places within the great library, and the four visitors lost no time in concealing themselves. Then Mr. Hemming switched out the lights, and went round the house in order to lock the doors, and otherwise prepare the house for the night.

Within five minutes the occupants of the library heard him ascending the stairs to his bed-room, and they knew that Pine Lodge—so far as outward appearances went—presented its customary aspect.

There was nothing more to be done now but await events, and Lee did not expect any developments for at least an hour. The detective was quite certain that the thieves had studied the habits of Mr. Hemming very thoroughly before making their plans, and he guessed that they would refrain from starting operations until the owner of the house had had an opportunity of dropping off to sleep.

In the ordinary course of events this would occur somewhere in the neighbourhood of

midnight, and Lee, therefore, was looking forward to the appearance of the criminals some time during the next hour.

The time seemed to pass with unusual sluggishness. Not a word was spoken within the library, and this enforced silence only served to make the passing of the minutes more monotonous.

The great grandfather clock in the hall chimed the hour of midnight after what seemed an age, and then there was another apparently endless period of tense waiting until the half-hour sounded.

But a very few minutes after this, Nelson Lee's quick ears caught a slight sound from the rear part of the house, and he became alert at once. Lennard and the Langford, too, heard the arrival of the burglar, and they braced themselves for what was to follow.

Clearly and distinctly their straining ears heard the man gently forcing a window-catch, and this was followed by the cautious raising of the sash. After that there followed a period of intense silence, and it was evident that the intruder had paused to ascertain if his entry had been heard.

Then, with startling abruptness, the library door was slowly pushed open, and an electric-torch was flashed round the great apartment. A second later a man silently entered the room, and the four watchers—peeping cautiously from their hiding-places—dimly observed his outline.

The light from his flash-lamp was amply sufficient to show that the newcomer was attired in the hideous purple garb of Mephistopheles, and Nelson Lee knew that the fly he had set out to capture had unsuspectingly entered the web which was shortly to entangle him in its meshes!

CHAPTER XLV.

THE INVISIBLE GRIP.



THE man in the red cloak, after glancing round the room keenly, seemed quite satisfied that the coast was clear.

Mr. Hemming's library, of course, had every appearance of being deserted, and the intruder, after assuring himself on this point, at once walked to the window and raised the blind.

Then he noiselessly unfastened the catch, and raised the lower sash slowly and cautiously until it was pushed up to its fullest height.

That done, he again produced his electric-torch, and signalled three quick flashes into the darkness of the night. And a moment after he had done so, Nelson Lee and his companions heard the sound of a softly purring motor-car engine outside the house.

The audacity of the proceeding was amazing in itself, and the fact that a motor-car

was being made use of was nothing short of astonishing. Nelson Lee, from where he stood, could see through the window quite plainly, and he saw that Mr. Langford's apparatus was mounted upon the car, and that the black-bearded man in charge of it was just about to start its mechanism.

Such tactics as these would not have been possible but for the isolated situation of Pine Lodge, but in such a spot the criminals were not likely to be interrupted in the ordinary course of events, as they were quite aware.

Within the library, the red-masked man was standing near the great safe, and watching its door intently. Lee noticed that he took particular care not to stand in front of it, and the detective knew the reason for this caution.

The safe was situated directly opposite the window—a position which was extremely fortunate for the robbers. For it enabled them to make the fullest use of the Langford machine from outside the building, as the interested watchers were soon to learn.

All four of them were now staring at the safe door with just as much interest as the red-cloaked man himself, and the sight to which they were treated was one which they would remember for many a long day.

Without any preliminary warning, and without the slightest sound, the paint upon the safe door suddenly vanished. It seemed to have been scorched off in a twinkling, and this is what actually occurred.

The invisible and colossal power which the Langford machine was capable of producing was being concentrated upon the door of the safe, and even as Nelson Lee and his companions watched, they saw the tough steelwork literally turn to putty before their eyes!

The sturdy metal had been rendered useless by the unseen grip of the scientist's apparatus, and it was now of no more use to safeguard the contents of the miniature strong-room than a covering of brown paper!

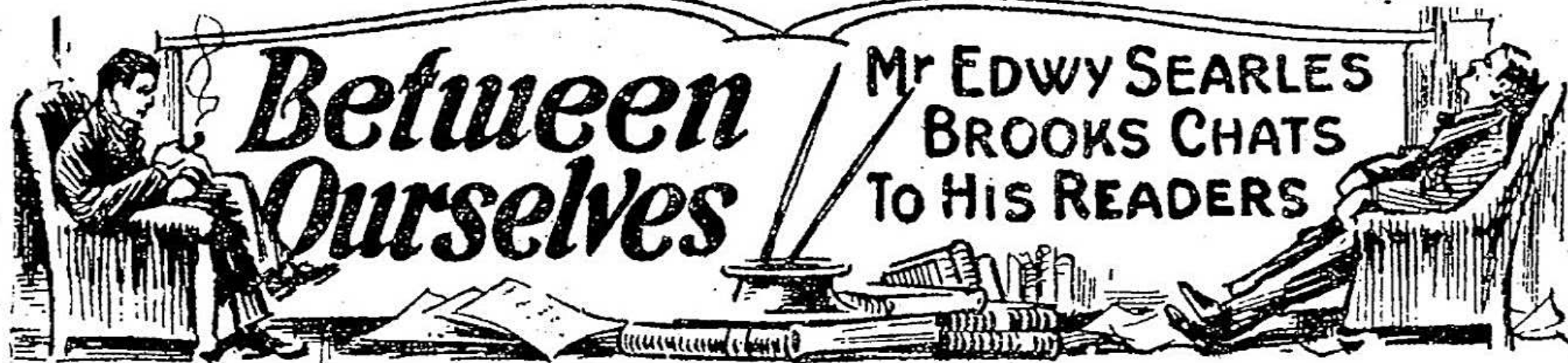
The strange figure behind the safe, after a few moments, turned to again signal to his colleague, but just at that second there came the sound of a quick, shuffling commotion from the direction of the motor-car!

The red-masked man dashed full pelt for the window to ascertain the cause of the disturbance, but before he had taken more than half a dozen strides he found himself gripped firmly from both sides simultaneously!

With a gasp of dismay he commenced to struggle, but Nelson Lee and Chief Detective-Inspector Lennard had no intention of allowing him to escape.

At last they had captured the unknown "Mephistopheles," and his identity would soon be revealed!

(To be continued.)



Mr EDWY SEARLES
BROOKS CHATS
TO HIS READERS

(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: James W. Middleton (Newtown, N.Z.), Ralph Sewell (Kilburnie, N.Z.), J. O'Reilly (Christchurch, N.Z.), Donald Smith (Ashburton, N.Z.), A. C. Cleeve Sculthorpe (Errington, B.C.), John Franklin* (Manchester), Arthur J. Barnes* (Chatham), H. M. (Stoke Newington), "Sportsman" (Aberfan), Gerald K. Lloyd (Streatly-on-Thames), L. R. (Portsmouth), Henry Bruce (Walworth), Diana W. (Staffordshire), George Buckley (Stockport), Herbert Thompson* (Bradford), J. Carlson* (Liverpool), William Slade (Custom House), Fred Griffin (Nottingham), Master Phillips (Deptford), "Supporter" (Haverton Hill), Thomas Streetly (Leicester), Ted Beavington* (Bletchley), F. W. (Bradmore), William Frazer (Edinburgh), "Freestater" (Dublin), "ARDNJNXYZ" (Wolverhampton), Vivian Phillips (Cardiff), E. G. Jarman (Letchworth).

While appreciating your desire to see a New Zealand boy at St. Frank's, I can't promise such a character yet awhile, James W. Middleton. You are not the only one who has made such a request. Why, if I complied with the wishes of all Colonial readers, I should have to forthwith introduce a New Zealand boy, a Canadian boy, a South African boy, and many others—to say nothing of a French, an Argentine boy, an Irish boy, a Scotch boy, and a Welsh boy. And I think you will agree with me that my St. Frank's characters are quite varied enough as it is. If I introduced one of the above new boys, there would be jealousy, and if I introduced the lot, the Fourth would hardly be recognisable.

Even as it is, I am constantly getting readers asking me to feature characters like Ulysses Spencer Adams. Johnny and Bertie

Onions, Larry Scott, Yung Ching, Hussi Kan-jit Lal Kahn, Solomon Levi, etc. And these boys are already in the Fourth, and certainly have a prior claim to any newcomers. In due course I shall bring forward all the lesser characters, and feature them as I think fit. But it's simply impossible to bring everybody into prominence in every story. And I think most readers will agree that Handforth & Co., Pitt, Archie, Nipper, etc., are the ones you like to read about most.

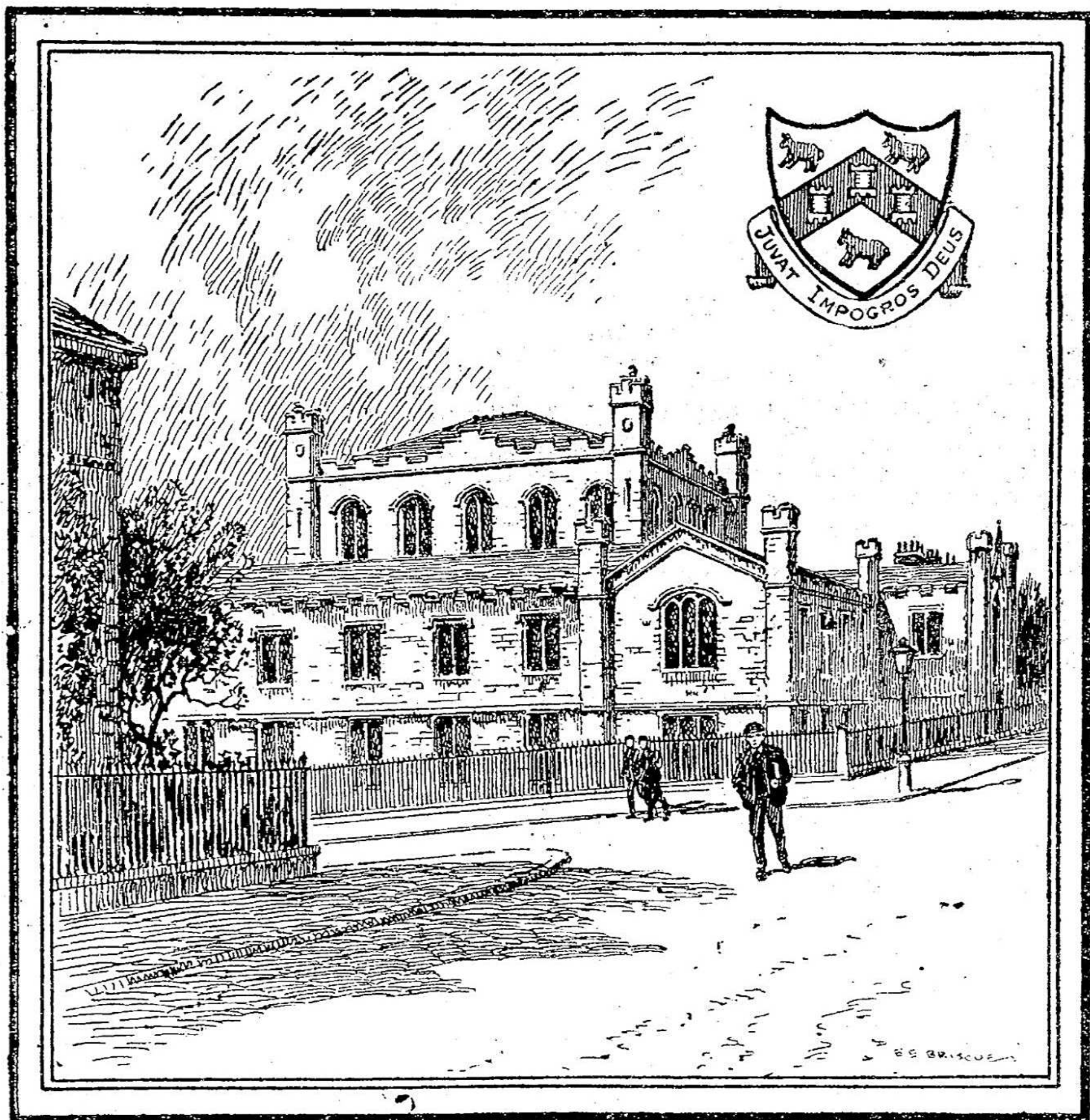
As a poet, Gerald K. Lloyd, I'm afraid you haven't got a dazzling future. The spirit of your verse is splendid. But the rhyming and the metre leave much to be desired. I'd like to give them full marks, but I can't. Thanks, all the same, for the trouble and time you expended. It proves, at all events, that your enthusiasm for the Old Paper is of the right brand.

If you received no acknowledgment to your previous letter, Diana W., I can only conclude that it got mislaid. I have certainly no recollection of seeing it, and I make a point of reading every letter, and at least acknowledging them. You are quite right in thinking that I feel my characters to be real. In fact, to all intents and purposes, they ARE real. If they were mere puppets, without character or shape or form, I should never be able to carry on.

Diana W. also raises the point about the summer holiday series. It wouldn't be a bad idea to say something about the subject now, for many other letters refer to the same question.

I want to thank all those enthusiastic readers who have been good enough to write to me so fully on this matter of the summer stories. And the fact is, I'm in a bit of a mix. While the majority undoubtedly favour foreign adventure with a tropical flavour, there still remains a formidable regiment who desire me to write about the Old Country—with the St. Frank's boys caravanning, or something of that sort.

I shall have to deal with the other letters next week, as I have now come to the end of space allotted to me.



OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS SERIES OF ART SKETCHES.

No. 70.—HUDDERSFIELD COLLEGE.

Huddersfield College was erected in 1838. It stands near the centre of the town and belongs to the Education Committee of Huddersfield. Many famous men were boys at this school, including the Earl of Oxford and Asquith, the distinguished ex-

Premier of England. There are about 400 boys and 20 masters at the school. The big central hall, which can be seen in the sketch rising above the rest of the school, can be seen for many miles round.



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

My dear Chums.

Things are looking pretty bad at Moat Hollow. Grimesby Creepe and his monitors have taken possession of the school, and the rebels, now without a leader, are once more the crushed victims of their headmaster's wrath. These unfortunate boys probably would never have rebelled had they known what would happen. The crafty Creepe seems to have caught Nipper napping. Happily, Nipper has escaped from his captors, and is enjoying a short rest here at St. Frank's.

A SHORT-LIVED TRIUMPH.

We, who know Nipper of old, are confident that before long he will be master of the situation again. The revolt has had the effect of making Creepe realise that his position in the eyes of the world has been seriously undermined. People outside are beginning to ask one another whether this pious fraud is indeed what he makes himself out to be. They may well ask this question. Soon they will learn the truth about Creepe, and it will be Nipper, I fancy, who will bring about his downfall.

THE WEEK AFTER NEXT.

To pass to other topics more concerning this "Mag.," the time has come when I must announce some important changes that will come into operation the week after next. The "Mag." is being absorbed into its parent paper, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY. By this, I do not want you to run away with the idea that we are graciously departing this life. Far from it. Such popular features as "Who's Who," "How to Do It," "In Reply to Yours," etc., will continue as before, and at some future date the "Old Mag." will blossom forth again as of yore. What we are doing shortly is to cut out everything that we can possibly dispense

with for the time being. This page, for instance, will temporarily disappear, so will the Trackett Grim stories, Lord Dorrmore's pars, and everything except what we can conveniently cram into the four or five pages allotted to us.

OUR POSITION WITH THE "N.L.L."

THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY has been exceedingly generous to us in the past for the amount of space it has given us for the "Mag." We must not grumble now because the Editor has limited us to four pages during the next six months. That would be ungrateful in the extreme. As you know, the "N.L.L." has a large following, and it is entirely due to the express wishes of its numerous readers that we have been asked to reduce the size of the "Mag." in order to give more pages to a longer account of our doings at St. Frank's. Readers generally are more interested in what we do at the old school than in our own literary efforts. Not only that, but the Editor of the "N.L.L." has got a spanking new adventure serial which he has been wanting to publish for a long time. And he is anxious to give you a long instalment every week. So, you see, there is more than one reason why we must sacrifice some of our space.

IN THE AUTUMN.

As compensation, the Editor of the "N.L.L." has very kindly offered me the best position for the "Mag." in the autumn. It will be right in the middle of the paper, so that one can tear out the pages easily and bind them separately. I have not space this week to tell you what my plans will be, but I have quite a brilliant suggestion for improving the "Mag." in the autumn. One of the new features will be the long-awaited map of St. Frank's in sections.

Yours as ever,

REGGIE PITT.



The YELLOW TERROR!

Our Exciting, Thrilling and Startling
New Yarn of Trackett Grim and his
Assistant, Splinter.

By EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH

IN CASE YOU'VE FORGOTTEN:

We left Trackett Grim and Splinter fighting for life in the Chinese Ocean last week, didn't we? Their client, Mr. Theophilus Twiddle, has been carted off by the Chinn-Wagg-Tong. But Trackett Grim has got a clue. He knows that his client is being rushed off to a place called Zam-Buk-Too, in the very heart of China. But things look a bit off, because Splinter has just been dragged below the surface of the raging sea. Has he been grabbed by a shark? Trackett Grim is filled with horror. Now read on.

CHAPTER XIII.

SPLINTER'S ESCAPE.

WITH a shout of horror, Trackett Grim stared dumbly at Splinter, as the latter shot to the surface of the oily sea, in the grip of the biggest shark Trackett Grim had ever seen.

"Help, guv'nor!" howled Splinter. "Buck up, or it'll be too late!"

Whoever appealed to Trackett Grim in that way without response? The celebrated detective could see that his young assistant was in fearful peril. For the shark had grasped Splinter firmly with its awful teeth, and Splinter was like a baby in the hands of a giant.

"All right—keep still, and I'll soon settle him!" roared Trackett Grim, as he yanked out his revolver. "Look out—mind yourself!"

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Three times Trackett Grim pulled the trigger, three times his revolver spurted flame and death. Splinter heard the bullets

whistle past his ear, and they buried themselves in the shark's brain.

With a gurgle of rage and disappointment, the beastly thing relaxed its grip, and Splinter got free of those awful teeth, absolutely unscratched.

"Thanks, guv'nor!" he panted. "He's dead, but I expect there are tons of others knocking about. What are we going to do? We can't swim to China—it's hundreds of miles away."

Trackett Grim laughed carelessly.

"Don't be a young fathead!" he snapped. "There's nothing in the world I can't do, and if you don't follow me, you can jolly well stay behind! We've got to save Mr. Twiddle, and——"

At this moment something happened which startled our heroes so much that they came to a halt, and stared in stupefied amazement.

CHAPTER XIV.

SAVED FROM THE SEA.

THE sea shook and quivered, and something arose out of the depths—something big and grey and terrible.

"My only hat!" gasped Splinter. "A submarine!"

"Rats!" said Trackett Grim. "That's no submarine—at least, not an ordinary one. It's a whale!"

And, as usual, Trackett Grim was right. He had never been known to be wrong. The pair trod water as the whale rose from the sea like some huge liner. Trackett Grim and Splinter swam over, climbed on

(Continued on page 10.)

OUR PORTRAIT GALLERY

SERIES 2—

No. 5.—JOE (CHUBBY) HEATH.

Willy Handforth's bosom chum. (Willy has had more fights with Chubby than anybody in the Third). A reckless, saucy youngster in his own way, but possessing none of his leader's finesse. Chubby is always ram-headed and impetuous, and barges into all sorts of trouble with a cheerful disregard of the possible consequences. His weekly pocket-money only lasts an hour or so, and then he goes through the week without a cent. He is a good little sportsman, and possesses any amount of pluck and daring.



JOE (CHUBBY)
HEATH.

No. 6.—WALLY SULLIVAN.

One of Fullerton's little gang. Wally is not Irish, as his name would imply, and he is a particularly detestable little snob. Although not bad-looking, and apparently harmless, he is unpopular with all the decent Third-Formers on account of his supercilious ways. Wally, in fact, is very much of a humbug, pretending to be good in the presence of masters, but is always performing mean tricks, and acts of petty spite. He has a habit of avoiding another fellow's gaze, and never looks at anybody straight in the face.



WALLY SULLIVAN.

AND WHO'S WHO



THIRD FORM

No. 7.—ERIC GATES.

One of the less prominent Third-Formers. Eric is an extremely simple youth, and his almost helpless innocence has earned him the nickname of "Soppy." Is reputed, in the Third, to be half-human, half-imbecile, but his school reports belie this rumour. He is only simple when it comes to rough games and Form scraps. In class he is a dark horse. But the unfortunate Soppy is always being chipped and buffeted about by his more robust Form-mates. He is an ideal fag, owing to his meek nature.

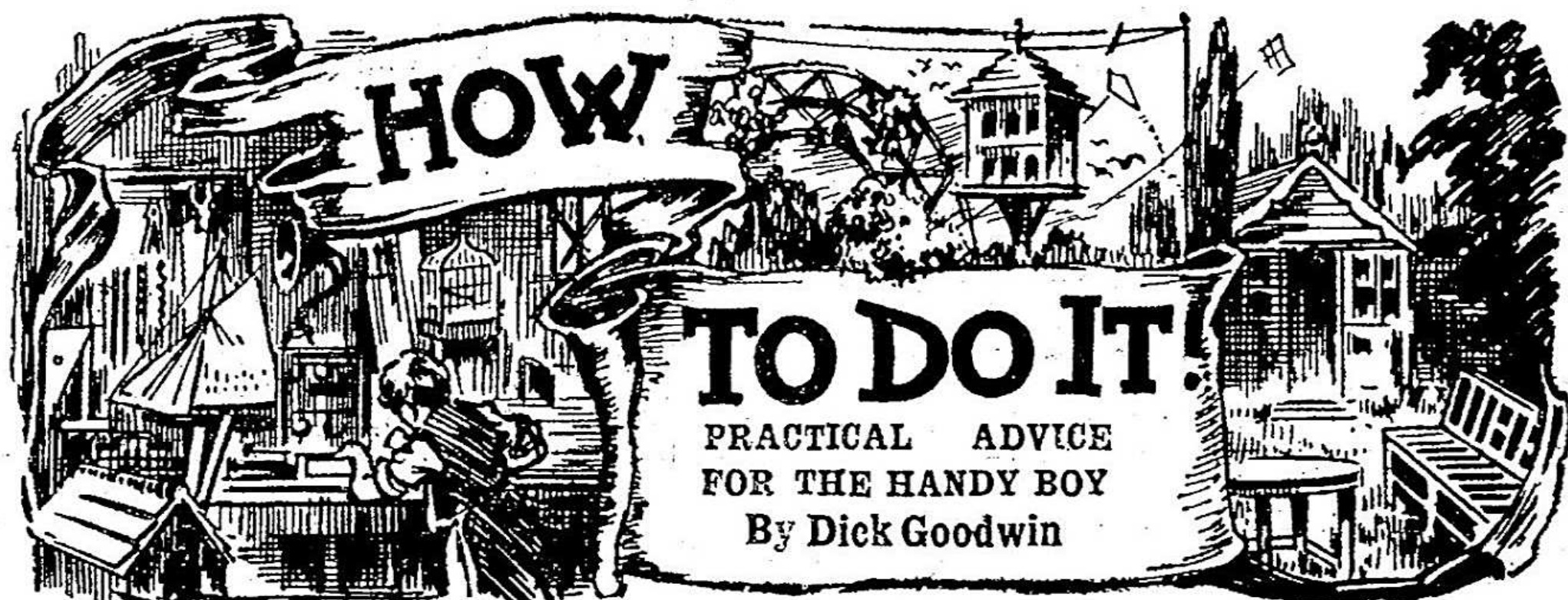


No. 8.—EDGAR BUTTON.

Commonly known in the Third as "The Laughing Jackass." He is a clumsy boy for his age, with a shock of fair hair, and a most exasperating grin. Thinks himself very clever and knowing, but, as a matter of fact, Button is thoroughly deserving of his nickname. He is, of course, quite beneath Willy Handforth's contempt.

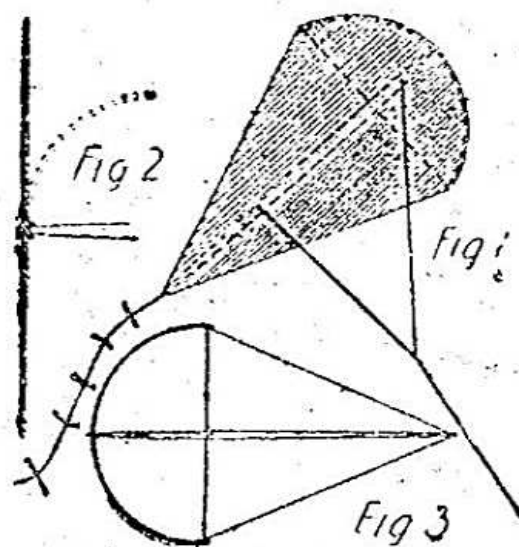
NOTE.—The ages of Third Form boys vary between twelve and fourteen.





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.

KITES AND ALL ABOUT THEM



as I am illustrating will be found enough to give the prospective kite flier a choice.

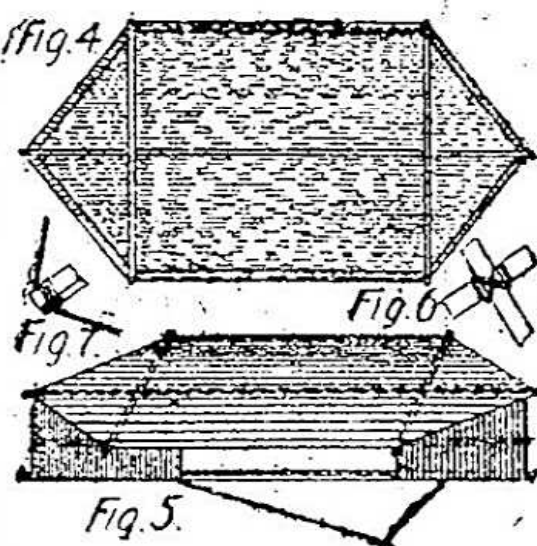
THE PEGTOP KITE.

The most common of the smaller kites and probably the easiest to make is that known as the pegtop shown at Fig. 1. A convenient size is one 3 ft. long, and it is made with a backbone formed from a 3 ft. by 1 in. by $\frac{1}{4}$ in. length of straight-grained wood which can be planed down to $\frac{7}{8}$ in. by $\frac{3}{16}$ in. A 3 ft. 3 in. length of cane is now tied to the top of the backbone, sometimes tapered off as at Fig. 2, and bent to form a semi-circle as indicated by dotted lines and tied to the backbone as at Fig. 3. Strings are carried from the ends of the bow to the end of the backbone as shown.

THE BEST COVERING

The next step is to cover the whole of

NOT only is kite flying an interesting and healthy amusement, but it is productive of scientific data. There are so many different kinds of kites that it is difficult to decide on the most suitable to describe, but I think that six typical and easily made types such

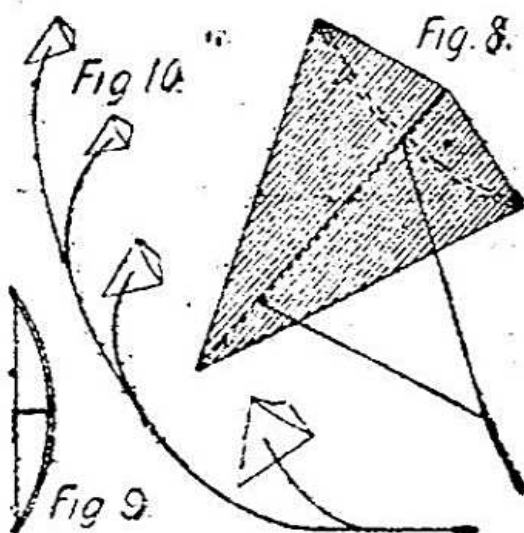


the frame with cambrie, madapolam, or calico, a thin quality of the glazed variety is suitable. The edges are turned over and either sewn or pasted. The string for the bridle is threaded through holes made in the backbone and securely knotted. The tail is made by tying about 20 pieces of the same material as used for covering at intervals to a length of string; the pieces should be about 6 in. long and 4 in. wide.

FLYING A KITE.

This kite requires fairly strong string, which should be wound on a cylindrical length of wood. When flying it, get someone to hold it so that it faces the wind, keep the line tight, and run a few yards in the face of the wind to give the kite an upward start. If it does not rise quickly it is probable that the tail is too heavy, but if it plunges from side to side and dives down head foremost, the tail is not heavy enough.

Another form of simple kite of great lifting power is shown at Fig. 4. It can be made with a length of 3 ft. and a width of 2 ft. It is often made with a fin as at Fig. 5. The construction is simple, the backbone and cross pieces are tied in the centre as at Fig. 6, but the ends of the strips of wood, which should be about $\frac{3}{4}$ in. by $\frac{1}{16}$ in., are sawn down for $\frac{1}{4}$ in. and then bound with fine string or wire as at Fig. 7. This allows of the outside framing string to be securely attached.



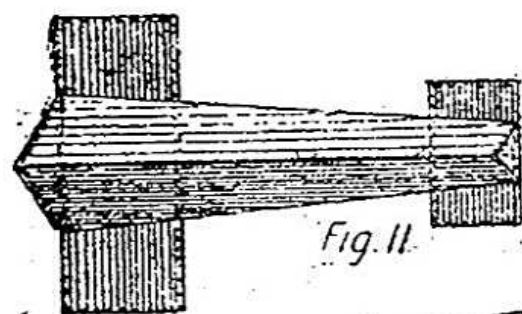


Fig. 11

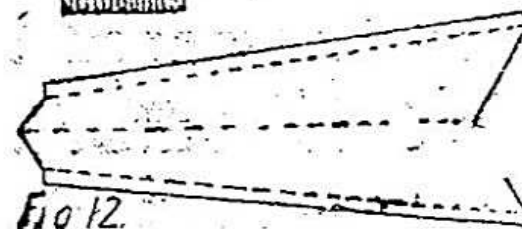


Fig. 12

A TAIL-LESS KITE.

The Eddy kite, as at Fig. 8, is a favourite, as it does not require a tail. It is composed of a backbone and a cross stick which is tied about one-fifth of the way down. The ends are sawn and bound as at Fig. 7 for the outside

string, and then the cross piece is bent by a bowstring which lies clear at the back of the kite as at Fig. 9. The calico covering is made rather wider than the frame so that it bellies out like a sail when the kite is flying. This type of kite is adapted to use in tandem or with a number of others as at Fig. 10.

THE MONOPLANE KITE.

An effective kite is the monoplane as at Fig. 11. The main plane should be about 3 ft. by 1 ft., the tail plane 2 ft. by 9 in., and the connecting strips each 3 ft. long. The covering for the main body shown at Fig. 12 is 3 ft. along the dotted lines and 21 in. and 9 in. across the V's. The bridle is tied about 3 in. from the wide end and 6 in. from the small end.

The box kite at Fig. 13 is a dependable flier with considerable lifting power. Suitable dimensions are a length of 3 ft. 6 in., with an opening of 18 in. The sticks should be 3 ft. 6 in. by $\frac{1}{4}$ in. by $\frac{1}{4}$ in., the material should be in two lengths 6 ft. by 13 in., hemmed at the sides to give a width of 12 in. and joined to form a band. Fold the band in four exactly and press the creases so that they can be tacked to the four rods or longerons as they are called.

Fig. 13

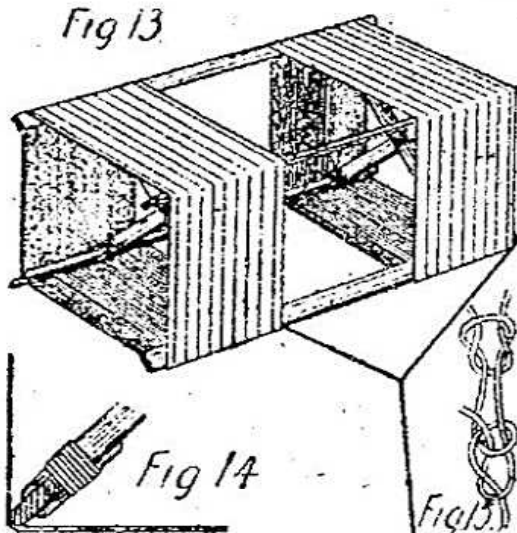


Fig. 14



Fig. 15

STIFFENING THE BOX KITE.

The best way of securing the struts is shown at Fig. 14, but they must fit tightly. The bridle can be attached about 6 in. from each end, or as at Fig. 13.

Fig. 16

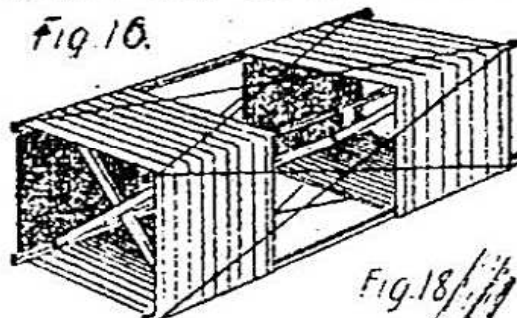


Fig. 18

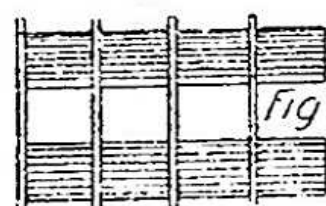


Fig. 17



Fig. 19

The kite line is attached to the bridle with a reef knot and a bowline knot as at Fig. 15, to allow of necessary alterations to the position of the bridle. As a general rule the front line of the bridle is shortened in light winds.

The collapsible box kite shown at Fig. 16 is made somewhat similarly to that at Fig. 13, but the longerons project outside the material as at Fig. 17, which shows the spacing. Notches are made on the ends as at Fig. 18 so that strengthening strings can be attached across the outside diagonals. The inner cross struts can be simply notched as at Fig. 19. The longerons are 2 ft. 6 in. by $\frac{1}{4}$ in. by $\frac{1}{4}$ in., the diagonal struts are made from the same material. The cotton covering should be in two pieces 5 ft. by 9 in.

THE TRIANGULAR BOX KITE.

The triangular box kite at Fig. 20 is easily constructed. A simple method is to provide three 3 ft. by $\frac{3}{4}$ in.

dowel rods and two 4 ft. 6 in. by 12 in. lengths of material. The latter is divided into three portions and sewn so as to form a space for the rods to slip in as at Fig. 21. Struts are fitted inside as shown; these can be of $\frac{1}{4}$ in. square wood.

A powerful kite can be made by combining the triangular box kite with a flat kite as at Fig. 22 or, what it amounts to, in filling up the top space and fitting two wings. The construction of the top portion is evident from the dotted lines. It is advisable in a kite of this kind to fit four bridle strings and to use very strong string.

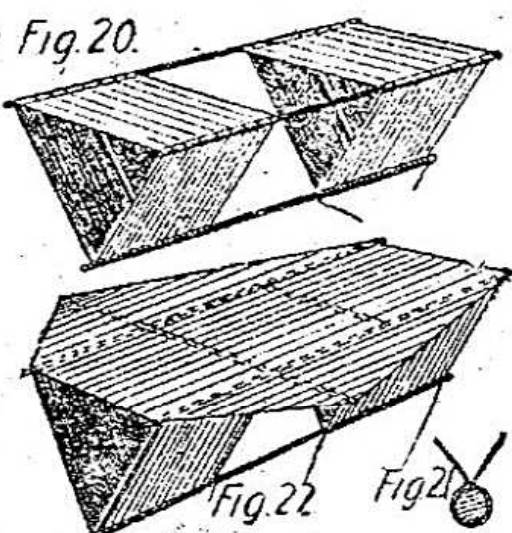


Fig. 20

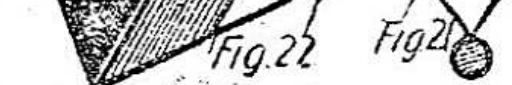


Fig. 21

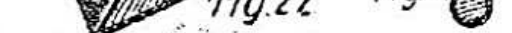


Fig. 22

FANCY KITES.

Fancy kites of all kinds are generally made without much difficulty. One of the simplest and most effective is the butterfly kite at Fig. 23.

This is constructed with cane bent to circular curves and tied with strings as at Fig. 24. The cotton covering should be painted to represent the colouring of a butterfly, but it will be necessary to fix a tail. Another method of construction is shown at Fig. 25; this is more suitable for a larger kite, and will be found quite effective when completed.

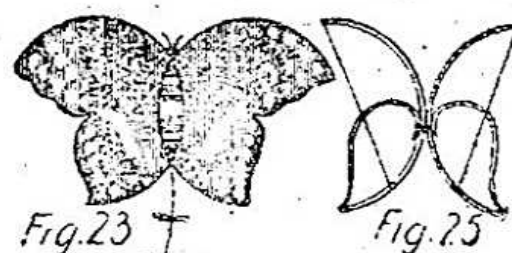


Fig. 23



Fig. 24



Fig. 25

NEXT WEEK!

Goodwin will describe
**HOW TO MAKE
MODEL AEROPLANES!**



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.)

R. E. SMITH (Islington): Altogether too busy to-day to look up that date you want, but I'll tell you next time you write. Are those fingerprints yours?

LUCY (Hanwell): If you think I'm going to excuse that wretched writing, you're jolly well mistaken. You must do better than that if you want a reply.

CLEOPATRA AND HELEN OF TROY (Willesden): Thanks for nice letters. What's the word of six letters, with 2 t's in the middle, beginning with n and ending with y?

WAG (Hull): If I got your last letter, I answered it. Church and McClure take care I don't miss any. You'll be telling me next I haven't answered this one!

REDSKIN ERN (Hale): Willy makes my life wild enough with his confounded pets, without me going in for any. No, a tortoise would be too slow for Willy.

J. O. Z BARNES (Hitchin): You'd better write your letter over again, you fat-head! I haven't got time to keep turning it upside down to read those inverted lines.

REGGIE III. (Wallasey): The idea of writing on a postcard that I'm the best boy at St. Frank's! I don't want everybody to know it, you ass!

AN ADMIRER (Gravesend): Look here, Bessie, when you write to me don't be in a hurry. Such a nice letter as yours shouldn't be rushed. Try again!

AN IRISH COLLEEN (N. 16): How the Dickens can I reply to such a beautiful

letter as yours with Willy bawling "Turned Up" just under my window?
TRUE BLUE (Liverpool): The portraits of Reggie, Montie, Archie have all appeared. So has mine. I couldn't tell the name of the best footabller here without boasting.

CONSTANT READER (E.1): Thanks for your letter about back numbers for sale. I've got Church and McClure busy on this job, and you shall hear from me again soon.

CHARLES PRICE (Leeds): You're improving, Charlie! Ink this time, and nearly a whole sheet of paper, too! Who bit that chunk out of the corner?

AN INQUIRER (Cardiff): I've never counted the boys here—too busy! I'm not a postage-stamp fiend, either. So how the dickens can I answer your questions?

LOTAAD (Aylesbury): When I opened your letter, all those tiny bits of paper fell out, and I thought it was snowing. Not my fault if you missed last reply.

JOHN TOBIN (Brosna): Thanks for your letter, John. See my answer to "Constant Reader" above. I expect you'll be asked to send those back numbers along.

ROSINA HEART (Bermondsey): I wish I had space to write you a long answer. You're a real brick to get all those new readers for the Old Paper. Fourteen in one week, eh?

W. KNIGHT (Bethnal Green): You can't pull my leg like that, and I don't believe Irene even knows you! As for blacking my eyes, just you try it on!

MOLLY (Bury): You're not the only one who thinks I'm wonderful, and when it comes down to brass tacks, I suppose you all know what you're talking about.

BERT LAW (Simonstone): I've got so many letters to answer that I really ought to club them all together, and reply in batches. But I can't be so hard.

S. SIRRAH (Nottingham): You're quite right in saying I ought to have more space in the Mag., but just understand I couldn't be funny if I tried.

R. J. CHAMBERS (Newcastle-on-Tyne): That drawing of yours is jolly good. It's just like Irene. Where did you see her? Come on, out with it!

AN ENQUIRER OF LONDON: As you're a girl I can't call you a fathead. But I'll bet I solved the puzzle of Moat Hollow School long before you did!

G. YOUNG (Henley): When you sign yourself G. Young, and your address is Henley, how else do you think I'd shove your name down? What's the idea?

REDSKIN ERN (Hale): Hallo! What's this? Two replies to you in one batch? Not likely! I'm cramped enough for space as it is, without this rot.

H. A. BURMAN (Bildeston): The Trackett Grim story you want is in the paper already. Don't forget to get all the new readers you can. Now's the time!

RICHARD FAY (Dublin): Jolly nice of you to write such a long letter, but I'm afraid I can't comply with that special request of yours. Sorry, old son!

C. LAWRENCE (Battersea): What do you mean—I don't have much time to go out with Irene Manners? You speak as though I do go out with her! Rot!

AN ADMIRER OF HANDFORTH'S (Stourbridge): Thanks for offer of back numbers. See replies to "CONSTANT READER" and "JOHN TOBIN" above.

W. G. P. (Edinburgh): I'll bet those two letters you wrote in rhyme took you a lot longer than those replies have taken me! All wasted, too!

TED (East Grinstead): I gave that letter of yours to Willy, and he didn't seem to like it. He wants to know what you mean by saying he's a wheedler.

N. B. BURNS (Fulham): I'm all rushed to get out to practice, and I can't stop to read your spidery scrawl. You ought to be boiled for that letter!

R. ROBERTS (Sydney, N.S.W.): Who's trying to trick you? You know that Uncle Edward is me! My dear ass, that secret was out months ago.

NEW ZEALAND (Napier, N.Z.): In answer to your question, No, there's no New Zealand chap at St. Frank's. No room for anything else this time.

W. J. GREIGS (Errington, B.C.): What do you mean by putting your address as "British Columbia, Africa"? I know that British Columbia is in New Zealand.

E. F. WILLIAMS (Islington): Thanks awfully for offer of back numbers. See the three other replies above. All in good time, if you have patience.

F. W. (Bradmore): I've just started your letter, and got down to where you call me a blithering idiot. Do you think I'm going to read any more of it?

MYSTERIOUS X (Botley): There's not much Mysterious X about you when you sign yourself Phyllis. And that ink and paper of yours wasn't wasted at all.

ONE LIKE STARCIE (Nottingham): Next time you write, don't be so wasteful with your paper. Why use such a tremendous sheet? Waste not, want not!

TINKER (Leeds): You say that you're sure I'm not as funny as my photograph. What are you talking about? I'm not funny at all.

A VERY OLD READER (Sparkhill): Do I know something which will make your sister's hair curly? Yes, rather! My new Trackett Grim story will make her hair curl.

E. O. H. (Bannington): I don't mind you taking my initials so much, but to write me a letter that nobody can read is simply adding insult to injury.

ROBIN HOOD (Bradford): It's like your sauce, putting a photograph in your letter of "my future one." You're implying that I've got a present one!

J. BELL (Peckham): Why do so many of you want to know if I can whack Ernest Lawrence? I've never known such a bloodthirsty lot of chaps!

ALECK JOHN THOMAS HANGOUERS (Dublin): It's just as well you ask what I think of your name. I think so much that I can't get a quarter of it in.

DICK (Abingdon): Your writing is pretty good, you ass, but it's no excuse to say that you're writing in bed. That's the place to sleep in!

CECIL SUTHERLAND (Flotta, Orkney): It makes me wild the way you say I bill Church and McClure. You know that I treat 'em like brothers!

G. SAUNDERS (Finchley): If you can't write to me on decent paper next time, instead of on a piece of a torn bag, I won't reply at all.

W. GILLESPIE (Aintree): By the time you see this, I expect you will have had a reply about those back numbers of yours. Thanks for the offer.

W. G. P. (Edinburgh): That's enough of your cheek, my lad! Church and McClure don't keep me in my proper position—I keep them in theirs. You fathead! I'm the fellow who disturbs their peace of mind. If I didn't, they'd peg out!

AN OLD BUT DISSATISFIED READER (Hereford): You've got a fat lot to grumble about! Fancy pining for the old detective yarns of Nelson Lee when you're getting these up-to-date little masterpieces about Trackett Grim and Splinter!

TED.

You must not fail to read the
FINAL INSTALMENT

Next week of
"The Yellow Terror!"

(Continued from page 3.)

the whale's back, and walked about leisurely.

"We ought to be all right now, sir," said Splinter, after the sun had dried them. "This whale's going along as fast as any ship, and if it only takes the right direction, we'll soon be in China."

"It **MUST** take the right direction, Splinter," said Trackett Grim. "My will is stronger than the whale's, and I have concentrated! I just looked into one of its eyes, and my hypnotic glance will have effect. We will reach China as certainly as the sun will sink in the East."

Splinter was encouraged by these brave, bold words, and the whale sped on at full speed. The castaways managed to get hold of some wreckage, including a sail, and with this material they rigged themselves up a shelter. It was a bit awkward, fixing it to the whale's back, but Trackett Grim managed it. He always managed everything.

And on the third day a ship was sighted. They were saved!

CHAPTER XV.

THE IDOL'S VERDICT.

IN the meantime, what is happening to Mr. Theophilus Twiddle? Come, gentle readers, and let us look upon another scene! Let us go into the heart of China and see what is happening to Trackett Grim's client.

Mr. Twiddle is having a pretty rotten time of it.

Secure in the hands of the Chinn-Wagg-Tong, the unfortunate old chap was taken into China, until, at last, they all reached the town of Zam-Buk-Too. By this time, Mr. Twiddle was so sore that he needed some Zam-Buk, too. He was chafing at the delay, so to speak.

Where were Trackett Grim and Splinter?

He had already paid them a deposit, and yet they had allowed him to be seized by the Tong-men, and carried off. What of Trackett Grim's boasted cleverness? Mr. Twiddle was beginning to get the wind up.

Nobody could blame him for this, because he was carried swiftly into the temple of the Chinn-Waggers. And here, bound hand and foot, he was led with faltering stride before the Idol. This was an awful-looking object with whacking great eyes—which were really rubies worth ten million pounds each.

"Takee the plisoner and shootee him at dawnee!" exclaimed the Idol sternly. "Thatee is my verdicttee! I have spoken!"

Smoke poured from the Idol's mouth, and Mr. Twiddle suspected that a Chinaman was in there, having a cigarette. For our brave hero did not believe for a moment

that the Idol itself was really smoking. But what did it matter?

He was to be shot at dawn, and it seemed to Mr. Twiddle that everything else was of minor importance. He gave up hope. His spirits sagged, and his bravery lost its pep.

But he needn't have worried—for were not Trackett Grim and Splinter near at hand?

CHAPTER XVI.

THE TORTURE CHAMBER.

ZAM-BUK-TOO was reached at last. After weary travelling through the heart of China, Trackett Grim and Splinter reached the city where their client was doomed. And it so happened that they arrived on the very evening before Mr. Twiddle was to die.

"Come!" said Trackett Grim curtly. "There is no time to be lost."

He led the way out of the station, and they jumped into a taxi. But before they reached their hotel, a staggering thing happened.

In the thick of the traffic, the taxi was stopped. And Tong-men swarmed round it, seized Trackett Grim, and rushed him off to the torture chamber of the Chinn-Waggers. It seemed that disaster was to fall upon our friends, in spite of all!

But Splinter had followed, and through a crack in the wall of the torture chamber he looked at the dreadful scene. There was his master, helpless, and an ugly-looking Chinaman was about to start work. A fearsome instrument of torture was ready—eager to commence its deadly trickery!

If you miss next week's instalment, you'll miss something good! It's all about Chinese torture, and poor old Trackett Grim goes through it properly! So look out, if you want a few thrills!—AUTHOR.

NOVEL COMPETITION!

A special football story containing mistakes made purposely appears in this week's

BOYS' REALM

out on Wednesday.

Now, all you competition enthusiasts, get to it. Find as many mistakes as you can, and you may win the

£5 PRIZE

MY ADVENTURES WITH HIPPOPOTAMI

By **LORD DORRIMORE**

4.—A MOTHER HIPPO AND HER BABY.

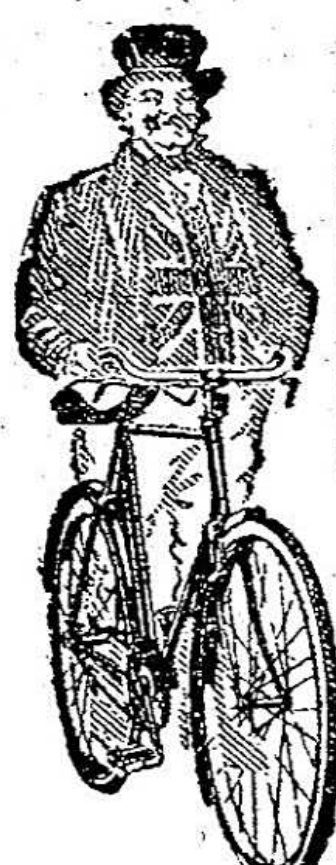
WHILE I was hunting and shooting hippos in West Africa, a curious experience befel me, which, though it threatened me with no personal danger, vividly illustrated the perils which are always present for the natives. One day, after shooting four hippos, I happened on a man and a boy fishing near a little islet. I asked the man to sell me some fish, and he said he would, and would bring it to my tent.

When we got a short distance away we heard an agonised scream, and, on turning, we saw that a hippo had attacked the man and boy, upset their canoe, and was trying to grab one of them, while they made frantic efforts to beat it off. We hurried to the rescue, but just as we arrived the

man was dragged under the water. Although there was grave danger of hitting the man, I fired at the hippo, wounding him. He came for us, his bulk showing well out of the water. Again I fired, and then again, and Mr. Hippo disappeared.

The boy was still on the wrecked canoe, crying lustily for help. We rescued him, and he told us his story. From this it appeared that this hippo had a baby on the island, which they had discovered, and would have killed, but they had left their weapons at home. They meant to capture it next day.

The mother hippo they had never seen until she attacked the canoe. But she had evidently seen them, and instinctively knew that danger threatened her young one. The boy's father was never seen again. Probably he was seized by a crocodile—a quite common occurrence. A cow hippo with a calf will attack anything or anybody, and so will a bull who wanders about alone, for he is probably ill-tempered. The natives give both a wide berth; for if they escape the hippos there are always the crocodiles.



26

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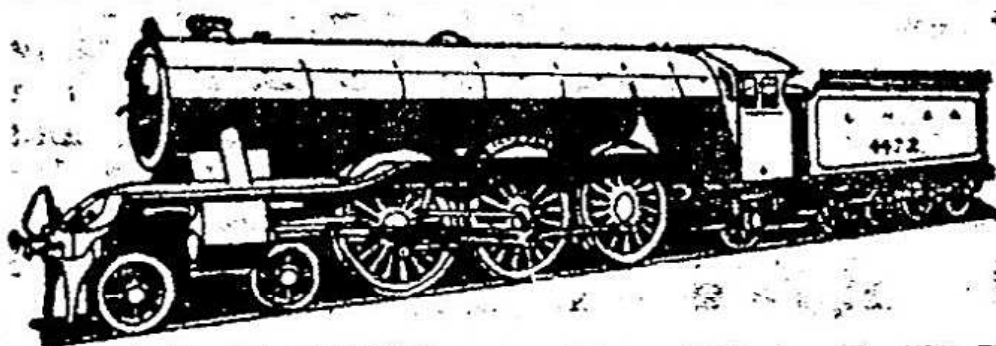
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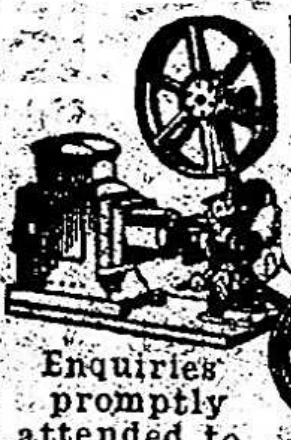
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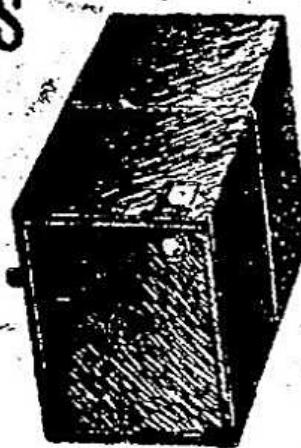
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