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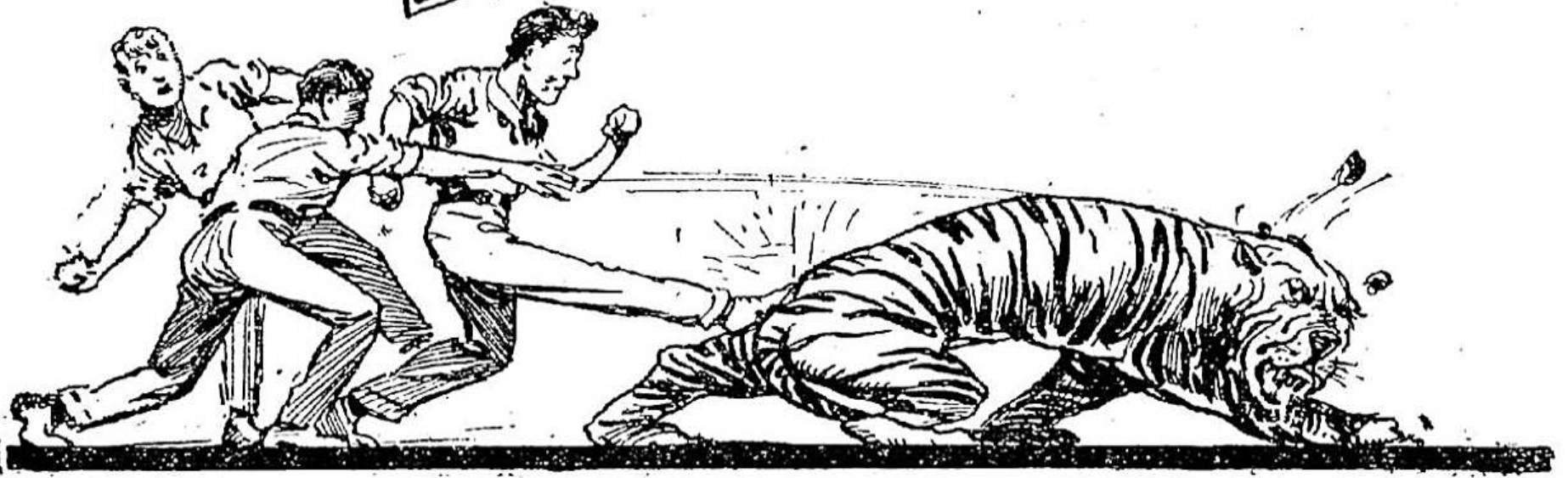
THE PRISONERS of FOO CHOW!

An Exciting Long Complete Story of the
BOYS OF ST. FRANK'S IN CHINA!



Smash ! Nelson Lee's left caught the Chinaman on the point of his chin with such devastating force that he turned a complete somersault, and went hurtling into a far corner. Behind that blow had been all the force of Nelson Lee's volcanic rage.

THE PRISONERS OF FOO CHOW!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

Handy knocks out a tiger! This is only one of many stirring incidents in this week's thrilling long complete yarn of the Boys of St. Frank's in China!

CHAPTER 1.

THE SCREAM IN THE DUSK.

THE dark, lithe form came stealthily through the sugar-canes, emerging into the dusk with noiseless movements. There he stood for a moment or two, looking across the adjoining rice-fields towards the lofty, graceful bamboo trees which formed a dense little wood farther on.

The lithe form moved forward again, vanishing amid some thick bushes like a shadow of the coming night. A tiger! A great, hungry, marauding beast of the Chinese countryside.

The bamboo wood was on rather high ground, overlooking the valley. In the rear the country rose into rocky wildernesses, with the great river vanishing amid the gorges. The view of the valley was a splendid one, although everything was now enshrouded in the deep dusk of evening.

There were stretches of young rice in the near foreground, the patches joining up with one another in successions of bright green, although this green was difficult to distinguish in the half-light. Away to the left was an orange grove, and to the right a field

of sugar-cane. And villages were scattered about in endless profusion, sometimes half hidden among the dark banyan trees. And beyond, now a mere blur, rose the high battlements of the city wall, with a pagoda or two. The roofs of the houses within the city were quite invisible, for these houses were of only one story.

A peaceful scene, but deceptive.

A Chinese boy was wandering idly along a pathway between two of the rice-fields. Just a child, having lost his way, perhaps. Farther away an anxious Chinaman was searching. And the tiger stood concealed amid the bushes, his luminous eyes fixed steadfastly upon that unsuspecting child.

And in the bamboo forest there were voices. Whispering voices, they were, with one decidedly stronger than the other two. And the language spoken was not one of the many Chinese languages, but English.

"I don't see why we should wait here any longer," the loud whisperer was saying. "It's nearly dark, and we might as well be pushing on."

"But you said we should wait until midnight——"

"I've changed my mind!" interrupted the

other. "How the dickens shall we know when it's midnight, anyhow? Our watches have all stopped since we had that ducking in the river, and there's no sense in hanging about, doing nothing. Let's push on to the city—to Yang Fu!"

Edward Oswald Handforth and his two chums of Study D at St. Frank's were the owners of the three whispering voices. Three junior schoolboys—hiding here, bedraggled and dishevelled, in the shadow of a bamboo wood, deep in the unknown recesses of Inner China!

Such a state of affairs seemed rather incongruous; but there was an excellent reason for the presence of these British schoolboys. Some miles away, imprisoned within the grounds of Dr. Foo Chow's island stronghold, were all the other members of the St. Frank's holiday party. And somewhere in Yang Fu, in the hands of his Chinese torturers, was Yung Ching, the little Chinese Removite.

A situation of many possibilities!

"Do be sensible, Handy," urged Church. "It's sheer madness for us to venture into Yang Fu at all, at midnight or any other time; to try to get there now would be nothing else but lunacy. Don't you realise that we should be collared in less than ten minutes?"

"No, I don't!" retorted Handforth. "We're scouts, aren't we?"

"Well, yes."

"We belong to the First St. Frank's Troop, don't we?"

"Of course we do."

"And we're the Tiger Patrol," continued Handforth firmly. "That's enough!"

"Enough for what?" asked McClure.

"Enough to assure us complete safety!" replied Handforth. "What we don't know about night tracking isn't worth learning! And you miserable weaklings squat there and tell me that we can't get to Yang Fu without being collared!"

"Yes, but——"

"You tell me that we can't get across a few miles of deserted country," said Handforth scornfully. "I'm surprised at the pair of you!"

Church took a deep breath.

"If you're surprised, Handy, Mac and I are just about dazed," he retorted. "My only hat! Do you honestly mean to sit there and say that this country is deserted?"

"Well, nearly."

"You—you hopeless optimist!" snapped Church, stung into a display of spirit. "We can't go half a mile without hitting a village! We can't go in any direction without coming across some of Foo Chow's Chinese slaves! We're not in the Sahara Desert, you ass. We're in the most congested country in the world!"

Handforth waved an airy hand.

"We can dodge the villages," he said carelessly.

"And what about the dogs?" asked Church. "As soon as we get anywhere near

a village or a house the dogs will set up an awful din and give the alarm. The whole thing is impossible, anyhow; but to start now would be simply asking for trouble at the top of our voices."

"Oh, what does it matter?" put in McClure. "Might as well get it over and done with. I don't suppose we shall be hurt. They'll just grab us, and take us back to the stronghold. All the better, perhaps."

"All the better?" repeated Handforth.

"Yes," growled McClure. "Mr. Lee and Dorrie and the rest are probably worrying themselves thin over us, and our return would relieve their minds. I expect they think we're all dead."

"Let them think it," said Edward Oswald.

"You—you callous rotter——"

"We're not dead, so what does it matter?" went on Handforth curtly. "If they're silly enough to worry, it's their own fault. We shall soon prove that we're alive and kicking—particularly when we turn up with Yung Ching!"

"What about Willy?" asked Church.

"What about your sister Ena? I expect they're nearly crazy with anxiety about you. And here you sit, jawing about impossibilities!"

Handforth gave a little start.

"Willy, eh?" he said softly. "And Ena! By George! I suppose they *are* worrying a bit, now I come to think of it. But another hour or two won't make much difference——"

"The last they saw of us was when we topped over the edge of the rising draw-bridge," interrupted Church. "Even now I can't understand why we weren't killed. We were swept down the gorge on that current, and everybody naturally believes that we're drowned. It wouldn't matter so much if there was a chance of doing something. But there's no chance at all."

Handforth became stubborn again.

"I tell you we're going to rescue Yung Ching!" he said doggedly.

Church decided to make a last strenuous effort.

"Look here, Handy," he said quietly. "Both Mac and I admire you no end for being so jolly determined. But isn't it about time we looked at the thing from a sensible angle? Think of the situation!"

"I've thought of it——"

"Wait a minute!" interrupted Church. "Yung Ching was kidnapped from St. Frank's, and shoved on board Foo Chow's yacht. And Chingy managed to get a letter to St. Frank's, explaining——"

"Why repeat ancient history?" demanded Handforth tartly.

"Because I want to drive some common sense into your thick head!" retorted Church with exasperation. "Mr. Lee and a whole crowd of us followed Foo Chow's yacht in Lord Dorrimore's *Wanderer*, and then that beastly Chinaman's yacht turned out to be

a warship in disguise, and the *Wanderer* was collared."

"That was the one fatal mistake!" said Handforth indignantly. "I was ashamed of old Dorrie for surrendering—"

"You chump, what else could he do?" put in McClure. "Didn't the *Dragon* fire her beastly guns on us? It was either surrender or sink! And both Mr. Lee and Dorrie had to think of the crowd."

"That's quite right," said Church, nodding. "And after that, Handy, we were brought up the unknown river into this part of China. We were shoved in Foo Chow's palace and treated like lords; but there's no chance of escape."

"You fathead, we *have* escaped!" sneered Handforth.

Church nearly burst a blood-vessel.

"You—you crazy lunatic!" he panted. "If you think we've escaped, you must be off your rocker! There are tens of thousands of Chinese all round us—endless miles of Foo Chow's territory! We can't move a mile in any direction without meeting enemies. So what's the good of trying to rescue Yung Ching? We only know that he's in Yang Fu! It would be like looking for a needle in a haystack."

Handforth was rather impressed.

"I expect you're right," he admitted grudgingly. "But I don't like to be beaten. Even if we fail we shall go down with flying colours. That's my argument. Anything's better than skulking here, idle."

"Foo Chow is a kind of king out here," said Church. "He's the governor of this province, and his word is law. Millions of Chinese are compelled to obey him. And Yung Ching's father is the governor of the adjoining province. And old Foo Chow means to collar his lands—"

"Yes, by torturing Chingy," growled Handforth. "The poor beggar is probably being put through it now! I tell you we've got to get on the move!" He rose to his feet resolutely. "We've got to start on the job at once! So the sooner we're off the better."

"Might as well humour him," muttered Church in McClure's ear. "We shall be copped and taken back to the palace, but—"

"What's that?" demanded Handforth suspiciously.

"Nothing!" said Church.

"If you chaps are going to whisper—"

Handforth broke off with a start. Without warning a sound had come through the night, splitting it with startling suddenness. A scream, a terrified, agonised wail of horror. The last sounds of that dreadful note quivered on the air as Church and McClure leapt to their feet.

"What—what was it?" gasped McClure.

"We'll soon see!" snapped Handforth between his teeth.

He pushed through the trees, with their great stems, and emerged from the edge of the wood. The dusk seemed quite bright

outside after the darkness within. Handforth could see fairly distinctly.

But he only gazed upon the neighbouring rice-field, with a pathway running alongside— But what was that? That dark blur—

The scream was repeated, almost blood-curdling in its agony.

And then Edward Oswald Handforth saw. On that pathway stood a great tiger—and held in its jaws was the figure of an innocent little Chinese child!



CHAPTER 2.

HANDFORTH'S WAY.

"Y George!" breathed Handforth, staggered.

He rubbed his eyes and stared again. Church and McClure had joined him, and they were deathly sick at the sight. Church covered his eyes and turned away.

"Oh, my hat!" he muttered. "Let's—let's get away—"

"You idiot!" snapped Handforth. "We've got to rescue him!"

"Handy," gasped McClure, "it'll be death if you go near that tiger! He's a man-eater! Don't you understand—"

"I understand that that poor little kid is in agony!" interrupted Handforth tensely. "This needs careful handling, but you needn't worry. Huh! Think I'm afraid of a rotten tiger?"

Edward Oswald Handforth was a fellow who never counted the odds. He would cheerfully enter into a fight which meant certain defeat; but he always entered it with the conviction that he would win. His optimism was supreme. His belief in his own powers was without limit.

Until now he had discredited the yarns of tigers in China. He had always pictured China as a place where there were lots of funny bridges, and plenty of opium dens, and endless willow-trees, and any amount of smugglers and secret societies. But he had scoffed at tigers.

Yet here was one in full sight! Here was a man-eater, with a helpless little Chinese boy in its grip! It seemed incredible that these deadly beasts should roam wild in such a populated country. But it was a fact.

Church and McClure grabbed their leader and held him back.

"Don't, Handy!" panted Church. "You'll be killed!"

"What about that poor kid?"

"He's dead already—"

"Think I'm afraid of a cat?" roared Handforth indignantly. "The thing's only an overgrown pussy! You simply need plenty of noise to frighten these beastly things away! Watch me!"

Church and McClure were no cowards, but they were terribly afraid of their leader.

They knew how reckless he was, and they had a terrible dread that he would go to his death in front of their very eyes. They always thought before they acted, and thus they hesitated. But Handforth invariably acted without thinking at all, and in nine cases out of ten he was amazingly lucky.

The tiger was about two hundred yards away, crouching over its prey in triumph. For the moment it was making no attempt to bolt, but stood there in the pathway, its eyes fixed upon another figure, farther along.

A Chinaman had appeared, and he was stunned and frozen. He stood there, just staring. His stupefaction was not difficult to understand, since that little boy was his youngest son. And a Chinaman's sons are precious to him. His daughters are not of much account.

But as for making any effort to rescue the youngster, the Chinaman was helpless. The fright which had gripped him kept him motionless. He could do nothing but stand there and stare, fascinated.

And in the meantime Handforth rushed to the rescue.

Unfortunately, he decided to take a short cut across the rice-field, and plunged deeply into the thick, oozy mud. Rice will only grow in this moist, muddy state. And before Handforth had gone a couple of yards he was half-bogged.

"My hat!" he gasped. "I—I didn't realise—"

Another scream rent the air as the tiger swung his prey clear of the ground. Then, deliberately, he moved off across the rice-field, falling into exactly the same trap as Handforth himself. One bound, and he was hindered by the clinging mud.

Handforth clenched his teeth and made a desperate effort. Somehow he reached the path, having seen that the little Chinese was only held by his clothing. Perhaps he was only just scratched. There was a distinct chance of saving his life, and Handforth thought of nothing else.

Once on the path, he gave a wild bound and rushed in chase of the tiger. The fact that it might turn upon him and strike death in one fearful blow of its paw never occurred to him.

"All right, young 'un!" yelled Handforth. "I'll save you!"

The tiger paused, half-turning. And in that same second Handforth reached for the beast's tail and grasped it. He gave a tremendous tug which nearly pulled it out by the roots; and with a fearsome snarl of rage the brute dropped its prey and swung round.

"Oh!" panted McClure, horrified.

"He's done!" muttered Church, covering his eyes.

But Handforth appeared quite safe so far.

"Take that, you ugly brute!" he thundered.

"He delivered a hefty kick on the tiger's hindquarters. It was only at that moment that Handforth gained a full appreciation

of the situation. The tiger's eyes were upon him, the hot breath was nearly making him sick as the waves of it came to his nostrils, and the brute's jaws were open, the teeth showing in a deadly snarl.

One second later, and Handforth's life would have been forfeited. But the leader of Study D acted first.

Crash!

In spite of the overwhelming sense of fear which came over him—for the tiger's aspect was enough to scare the strongest—he brought his right round with all the force for which it was celebrated. The blow struck the tiger over the left eye with devastating force.

"That's another one to be getting on with!" roared Handforth.

Biff!

"And that's for luck!" he snorted.

Again his fist came round, and this time the tiger was struck on the point of its nose. The great animal didn't hesitate for a fraction of a second. It gave a bellow of fear, turned, and bolted.

In the whole course of its life the creature had never encountered anything of this sort before. Had Handforth attempted to run, he would have been clawed and probably killed. But Edward Oswald, as usual, had taken the offensive, and the rest was a matter of course.

The tiger, startled nearly out of its wits by those two blows, had come to the conclusion that this aggressive fellow was dangerous, and so he turned tail and made off. There was nothing surprising in the fact. Other wild creatures, in other situations, have bolted under similar circumstances. The extraordinary feature of the case was that Handforth had had enough coolness to act in that bold, fearless way.

"My only hat!" he muttered blankly.

He was more surprised than the tiger, for, during those last few moments, he had practically given up hope. Close proximity to the tiger had brought full realisation to him. But now, in a flash, his recent feeling of horror left him, and he looked round with cool contempt.

"Tigers!" he snorted. "Who's afraid of tigers?"

"Handy!" came a yell from the bamboo wood. "Oh, Mac, he's safe!"

"And the tiger's fled!" gasped McClure.

They were simply overwhelmed. Expecting to see their leader mauled and killed before their eyes, they now beheld him the victor. They were so astonished that they could hardly form their words. With one accord they hurried to Handforth's side.

"You scared him!" said Church breathlessly. "I've never seen anything like it in all my life! Handy, it was wonderful—"

"Rot!" interrupted Handforth. "Clear out of the way! By George! Look at this poor kid! He's got to be attended to—quickly. I don't think he's dead, but he's been badly mauled!"

Handforth was on his knees beside the Chinese child. Even in the dimness of the dusk the unfortunate little boy's condition could be seen—blood streaming from his face and chest. He was unconscious, too.

"Let's—let's rush him to the wood!" muttered Church. "That tiger might come back——"

"He'd better not!" interrupted Handforth grimly. "I'll give him another dose if he tries any more of his beastly tricks. Hi, you!" he added, turning and beckoning to the Chinaman. "Do you know anything about this kid?"

The Chinaman, who had witnessed the whole affair, came up with a dazed expression in his eyes. He was an unprepossessing looking fellow, with work-soiled clothing and a greasy pigtail. He was obviously a land labourer—a coolie of some kind.

"It's no good talking to him—he can't understand English," said Church. "We'd better take the kid to a stream somewhere. There's one on the other side of that wood. This man may be a spy——"

"You've got spies on the brain!" interrupted Handforth. "Dry up! Can't you see the man's as harmless as a kitten! He might know where the kid lives, and then we can take it home!"

"The way you scared that tiger was miraculous!" said McClure.

"Bother the tiger!"

Handforth didn't want to hear anything more about the incident, and he gathered up the injured child in his arms, and turned towards the Chinaman, who seemed to be quite dumb and devoid of all emotion.

"This kid," snapped Handforth; "where does he live?"

"Him my son," said the man, in a high-pitched, husky voice.

"Your son, eh?" said Handforth. "By George, you can speak English, then?"

son, he go off. Lostee. Me come search one time. Little Seng badeo boy. Wander away——"

"Seng, eh?" interrupted Handforth. "So that's his name. Well, look here, old crinkled face, where do you live? I'm afraid your son is pretty badly hurt, and he's got to be attended to at once. My hat! He's got an awful gash on his shoulder, here. We've got to bathe him quickly."

"Where do you live?" asked Church hurriedly.

"Me livee just close," replied Ah Fong, pointing vaguely into the dusk. "We goee chop chop. Little Seng muchee hurt. Allee same bad."

"Well, lead the way, and we'll do the talking afterwards," said Handforth briskly. "Home!" he added. "Get a move on!"

The Chinaman understood by Handforth's gesture more than his words, and hurried off down the path. By this time Church and McClure had completely forgotten any possibility of recapture.

This incident had altered the whole course of events, and it hardly seemed likely that Ah Fong would give information against the boys after one of them had saved the life of his son.

But Church and McClure were rather doubtful even on this point. They had heard that the Chinese are peculiar in their ideas of gratitude. They had also heard that the Chinese regard hu-

man life very cheaply. There was no telling what might happen during the next hour.

But one thing was certain. Sheer humanity made it imperative for them to take this injured boy to his home, and render first aid. The chums of Study D were all Boy Scouts, and were fully acquainted with every essential in first-aid work. Their Scouts' training was promising to come in very useful.

That Ah Fong should speak English—although a very broken pidgin English—was another surprise. The juniors had taken it for granted that all the people here would understand nothing but their own language. This doesn't mean Chinese, but their own brand of Chinese. In the neighbouring province of Hu Kiang, ruled over by Yung Li Chang, the language was probably totally and absolutely different. There are many distinct languages in China, which makes it so difficult for the foreigner to attempt any learning of the native tongue. The Chinese of the different provinces can only converse

ON HOLIDAYS?.....

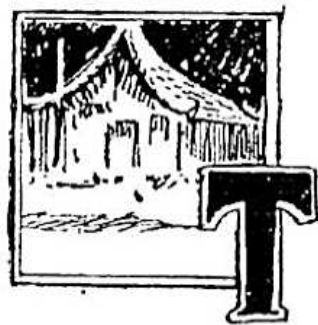
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.....FREE GIFTS!

CHAPTER 3.

THE HOME OF AH FONG.



THE Chinaman nodded vigorously, the words having apparently brought him back to a normal state.

Until that moment he had been held in a kind of trance, still terrified by the knowledge that the tiger was near at hand.

"Me Ah Fong," he babbled. "Poor Chinaman—makee living watchee lice fields. My

if they happen to understand the peculiar pidgin lingo which is universal.

Ah Fong happened to be one of these men. He had lived for some years in Canton, and had come in contact with Europeans. So he did not regard Handforth & Co. with the distrust and suspicion that a purely local native might have done.

Without another word, he led the way through a clump of sugar-canes, and then round a willow-lined stream to a characteristic Chinese house of the lower order. It was little more than a hut, but had the distinction of standing alone. Some distance farther on was a village, with the houses clustered together with unnecessary congestion. Ah Fong's house was isolated because he was a watcher—a man who kept guard over the rice fields and sugar plantations.

Handforth & Co. found themselves amid strange surroundings. They entered the house, and were rather horrified by the hundred-and-one smells which assailed them. A few pigs were knocking about, and in the dim light from the single native lamp the interior of the house seemed squalid beyond all description.

The juniors didn't realise that this was a perfectly normal Chinese household.

There were several others in the apartment—Ah Fong's wife, a stolid, unemotional sort of woman, who only stared at her injured son with a dull sort of lethargy. There were two older boys and a couple of small daughters. The smell of food hinted that the evening meal was in preparation.

"Water!" said Handforth, after he had recovered from his first surprise. "Come on, Ah Fong, or whatever your name is. I want a bowl of water and plenty of bandages. Some ointment, too, if you've got any."

Ah Fong stared.

"No savvy," he said, shaking his head. "Speakee too quickly. Ah Fong not understand—"

"Water!" interrupted Handforth distinctly.

"Me fetchee doctor?" asked the Chinaman.

"Blow the doctor!" retorted Handforth. "I've heard about your native doctors! He'll probably kill the kid before he gets a chance to recover. I'm going to attend to him myself. Water!"

The Chinaman understood, and spoke to his wife. She vanished into another hovel-like apartment, and presently returned with an earthenware bowl of cold water. By this time Handforth had placed the injured child on the table, and was stripping off its muddy and blood-bespattered clothing.

"Good man!" he said heartily. "Now some rags. This stuff!" he added, indicating his shirt. "Linen! Cotton! Heaps of it!"

"Plentee cotton," said Ah Fong unemotionally.

"Mac, come and help here," went on Handforth. "Don't be squeamish, you two! It's

a pretty nasty sort of job, but it's a matter of life and death. We've got to put a hustle on, too."

For the next fifteen minutes very little was spoken.

Handforth & Co. not only stripped the unfortunate child, but carefully bathed his wounds, the Ah Fong family watching, meanwhile, in a silent circle. There was something rather pathetic in their very silence. They seemed to know that these strangers were better able to attend to little Seng than they.

Furthermore, they were incapable of washing and binding the wounds as Handforth was doing. They watched with ever-growing admiration, although they said nothing, and only allowed their thoughts to find expression in their gaze.

Little Seng's hurts, much to Handforth & Co.'s relief, proved less serious than they had appeared at first. When the child had been stripped he had seemed beyond all hope of recovery—a poor, pitiful, mangled scrap of humanity, smothered in mud and blood in a horrifying fashion.

But the liberal application of cold water made a startling difference.

There were only two serious gashes—one on the shoulder, and one in the back. The rest were mere skin-deep scratches, which had bled profusely, but which now revealed their true character. Seng, too, under the soothing cold water treatment, was conscious, his little eyes wide open, and his face screwed up with pain. He moaned slightly, but bore up well.

"You're the boy!" said Handforth enthusiastically. "By jingo, he's a little brick! Some more of those rags, Church! Buck up!"

Church and McClure were surprised by the tenderness which their usually clumsy leader was displaying. Handforth was always the same. When it came to a matter of really vital concern, he was fully capable.

He had washed the wounds with great care, and had bandaged them scientifically—as his Scouts' training had taught him. By the time he had finished, and when little Seng was wearing a clean outfit, he looked amazingly different.

"There you are," said Handforth. "There's nothing to beat cold water. What you've got to do, Fong, old chap, is to take those bandages off night and morning, and keep the wounds thoroughly clean. Understand?"

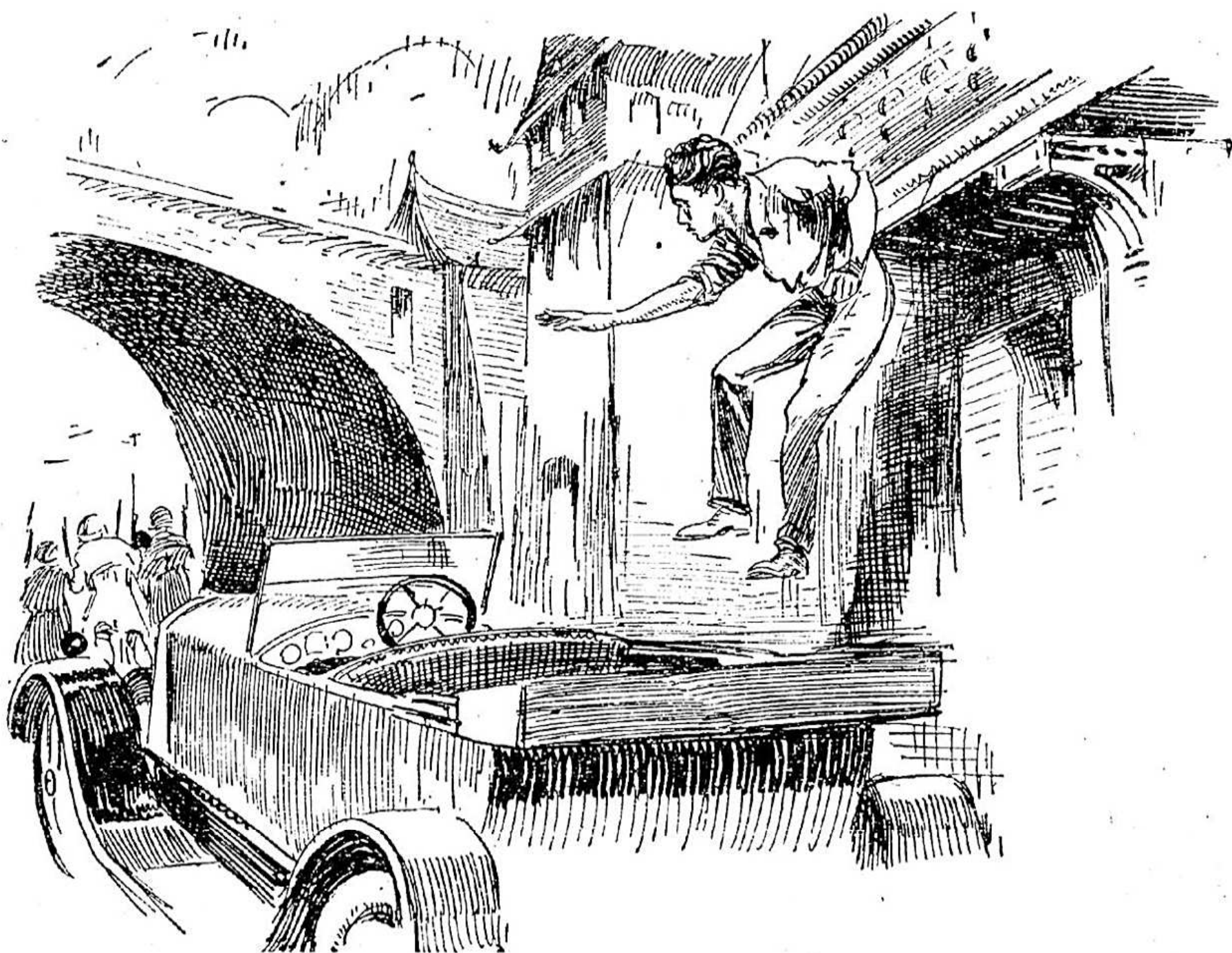
Ah Fong looked rather blank.

"You speakee too quick," he said, shaking his head. "No savvy."

"Don't try, Handy," advised Church. "You've done everything possible, and you can rely upon the boy's mother to look after him now."

Handforth turned to the good lady.

"Put him to bed," he suggested. "He needs sleep."



The moment that the backs of the soldiers were turned, Willy dropped sheer from the window into Foo Chow's car. He was taking a desperate chance, but he meant to do his bit towards rescuing Yung Ching.

Not being able to understand a word of English, pidgin or otherwise, Mrs. Ah Fong merely looked stolid. But her husband grasped the idea, and the injured boy was carried gently out, and when Ah Fong returned he spoke rapidly for some time to his family.

From the actions he made during the course of this recital, it was evident that he was giving a description of Handforth's fight with the tiger. Until his son had been dealt with he had said nothing, but now he made up for his previous silence.

"What's the ass saying?" growled Handforth suspiciously. "Telling 'em about what happened, I suppose? It's all rot! There's nothing to make a song about."

"They're all looking pretty excited, anyhow," said Church. "Even Mac and I haven't been able to say much, Handy. But the way you scared that tiger was worth a million quid! I can't understand why the dickens you're not dead! The brute might have killed you on the spot!"

"We don't want to talk about trifles," said Handforth curtly. "We've done everything we can, so we'll be off. Perhaps Ah Fong can put us on the right road to Yang Fu. He might be able to show us a bit of the way."

Handforth paused, for Ah Fong was regarding him and his chums with a rather peculiar expression. Perhaps he was taking stock of the three British boys. They certainly presented an incongruous appearance.

While Church and McClure were dressed in stained white shirts and flannel trousers, Handforth was wearing Chinese costume. He had borrowed this clothing as a disguise, having had a wild idea of escaping from Foo Chow's island stronghold as a Chinaman. But all three juniors had been in the river, and their clothing had dried on them, with devastating effect. They were a disreputable-looking trio.

"You foreign boys from Excellency's palace," said Ah Fong, at last. "You not dead. You muchee alive."

"Not dead?" said Handforth. "Of course we're not dead."

"Plentee talk that you die in liver," explained Ah Fong.

"In liver?" said Handforth, staring.

"In the river, you ass!" whispered Church.

"Oh, the river?" said Handy. "Yes, we were in the river—"

"Coolie man say he see you sink," said Ah Fong. "Two coolie man say. Plentee soon Excellency hear, and not believe. Him

sendee soldiers to search. Him soldiers looker for you."

"By George!" said Handforth. "The soldiers are looking for us, eh? I say, that's pretty decent of you to give us a warning."

"You savee my son from tiger," said Ah Fong simply. "Me glateful. My family looker on you as honouable friends. Plentee help. We likee to makee you safe. Excellency killer us if he know. But allee same, safe here."

"We want to get to Yang Fu," said Handforth. "It's jolly good of you to offer to help us, but we don't want to get you in trouble. Just shove us on the right road to Yang Fu, and we'll be satisfied."

Ah Fong looked alarmed.

"Not go?" he urged. "Mucheer danger! Soldiers catchee you. One time chop chop!"

"They catch us which?"

"He means they'll collar us at once," said McClure. "He's right, too."

"You all stayee here," said Ah Fong. "All safee in my house. Eat from my miselable table. You honour us? You agree? Go out and quickly catchee. Stay here, and allee safe. Ah Fong your friend."

Handforth hesitated.

"Perhaps you're right," he admitted. "It might be a lot better to wait until later on. And you said something about a feed, didn't you? What about it, you chaps? Shall we stay here for a feed, or hurry on to Yang Fu?"

Church and McClure were cunning.

"I think we'd better make a move at once," suggested Church carelessly.

"Yes, let's push off," added McClure.

Handforth firmly shook his head.

"Rats!" he retorted. "We'll accept Ah Fong's hospitality, and stay where we are!"

CHAPTER 4.

THE PRISONERS OF THE PALACE.



DR. FOO CHOW took his seat at the head of the main table in the sumptuous dining-hall, and smiled pleasantly upon his guests. As usual, he was spotless. His evening dress was irreproachable, and his whole manner was that of a genial, punctilious host.

The scene itself was one of splendour.

There was nothing Chinese in the appearance of the dining-hall—or, if it came to that, in any of the apartments of this wonderful marble palace. The whole architecture was fantastic, but rather like the dream palace of a fairy-tale.

The dinner-tables were resplendent with snowy linen and glittering silver. The cut glass was of the finest, and there were glorious bowls of flowers at intervals. At the main table sat Mr. Nelson Lee, Lord Dorrimore, Mr. and Mrs. Beverley Stokes, and

Irene Manners and her chums of the Moor View School. At the other tables were the other members of the holiday party, mainly consisting of Remove fellows.

"We are promised a break in the fine weather before long," remarked Dr. Foo Chow, in perfect English. "My learned experts inform me that there is a possibility of rain in the near future. A pity, for it may debar you from the pleasures of my gardens. It will grieve me if there is any hint of monotony. I beg of you to make any suggestions that may occur to you."

The guests were all silent.

"Perhaps I am unwise to make any reference to pleasures this evening," went on Dr. Foo Chow gently. "The tragedy of our three young companions is still weighing heavily upon us. But we Chinese do not regard life so gravely as you British people do."

"By gad, I believe you!" said Lord Dorrimore grimly.

"We hold that our greatest happiness comes after death," proceeded Dr. Foo Chow. "So what is there in life to regret? We leave troubles and woes behind us. Death is the glory we all look forward to."

"It will be better, Dr. Foo Chow, if we avoid these discussions," said Nelson Lee quietly. "Nothing can alter the fact that we are prisoners in your hands—that we must do your bidding under pain of that death of which you speak. It pleases you to treat us as your guests, but that does not make any difference to the concrete facts. I ask you to avoid these controversial discussions."

"Hear, hear!" muttered Lord Dorrimore and Mr. Stokes.

Dr. Foo Chow shrugged his shoulders.

"Perhaps you are right," he purred. "Perhaps the ladies will be interested in the tennis courts which will be open in the Eastern section of the grounds to-morrow. We have rackets and balls and nets in plenty——"

"Please don't!" interrupted Mrs. Stokes coldly. "I can safely speak for the girls, and say that we shall not be interested in any tennis or games of any description."

Several of the girls nodded.

"It is a pity," said Dr. Foo Chow, shaking his head. "I feared that you might adopt this attitude, but I was hoping otherwise. To-morrow, perhaps, you will all realise that this pessimism is quite unnecessary."

None of the guests knew exactly how they got through the meal. They were all feeling highly strung. Lord Dorrimore, indeed, was watched closely and consistently by Nelson Lee, for the latter feared that his lordship would fling himself at Dr. Foo Chow's throat at any moment. There was something fiendish about this cultured Chinaman.

He uttered no threats; he maintained his pretence of being a perfect host. And yet all the time he was a fiend in human form. His very treatment of his prisoners was a form of refined torture. They were all beginning to feel that it would be better if they were flung into prison cells, and treated

frankly as prisoners. Then they would know where they were and what to expect.

But now they lived on the edge of a volcano, never knowing when there would be an eruption. At any moment Dr. Foo Chow might decide to submit them to untold horrors. They were in his grip, utterly and completely.

The "deaths" of Handforth and Church and McClure hung heavily over the holiday party like a brooding agony. They could hardly discredit Dr. Foo Chow's story that the three boys had perished—that eye-witnesses had actually seen them go under, struggling in the deadly current.

For hadn't they seen the chums of Study D topple over the edge of the rising drawbridge? Hadn't they seen them swept down the gorge? There seemed no possibility that they could have escaped death. And they all believed that Dr. Foo Chow's references to tennis and other pleasures were merely his refined methods of torture. With these highly intelligent prisoners of his he preferred mental torture to physical torture, deeming, perhaps, that it would be more agonising. It was an indication of Foo Chow's character.

"Lee, old man, there's a limit to everything, an' I'm just near that limit," exclaimed Lord Dorrimore, as he and Mr. Nelson Lee and Mr. Beverley Stokes strolled in the grounds, in the dusk. "I can't stand much more of this. I'm sorry, but something's goin' to explode soon."

"I must admit I'm feeling the same," muttered Barry Stokes.

They were both looking flushed and tense. Lee, on the other hand, was as cool and collected as ever. His feelings were just the same as those of his companions, but he had trained himself to hide his emotions.

Some little distance in the rear came Umlosi, the giant African chief. Umlosi never allowed Dorrie to get out of his sight. He had a great love for his "N'Kose," and was ready to guard him in the event of any danger. For, although his beloved spear had been taken away from him, he still had his hands.

"I can understand your feelings, Dorrie, old man," said Nelson Lee, at length. "I'm no different. But you mustn't allow that explosion to take place. Our duty is to hold ourselves in check—to set an example of calmness to the young people."

"They're not with us now," growled Dorrie. "I'm tellin' you this in private, an' it's no good beatin' about the bush. Something's goin' to explode," he repeated deliberately. "One more example of Foo Chow's devilry, an' I shall be over the top!"

"It won't do any good——"

"It'll do me good!" interrupted his lordship thickly. "By the Lord Harry, Foo Chow's only got to come along now an' breathe one word about those three poor youngsters, an' I'll land him such a swipe that he'll be in hospital for ten years! Lee, you can say what you like, but I'm at the

end of my patience. I've just got to that stage when I've got to do somethin' or bust!"

Lord Dorrimore spoke with a note of tension in his voice. Even now he was only controlling himself with difficulty. Nelson Lee regarded him rather curiously. As a rule, Dorrie was the most easy-going of mortals, and Lee had never seen him in this mood before.

The sporting peer was essentially a man of action—a man who simply couldn't exist in a well-ordered state of Society. The round of London gaiety—the calm life of a country estate—the everyday circle of normal existence; these things were like poison to him. When he did visit home, he only came for a fleeting week or so. Then he would be off again into the wilds—into some out-of-the-way corner of the globe where he could live the simple life, and fight Nature in her roughest moods.

This present affair, therefore, was a sheer, long-drawn-out agony. His yacht had been captured, and was lying down in the river, almost within sight. And Dorrie knew that her officers and crew were prisoners, too. This farcical pretence of Foo Chow's was galling—exasperating to the point of being a physical pain.

For never had human beings been such utter captives as these "guests" of Foo Chow's. Although they had all the privileges of the palace at their command, the grounds were guarded by thousands of soldiers. Literally, thousands. No matter which direction one wandered in, these soldiers would be encountered.

The palace was surrounded by luxurious tropical gardens, and the whole was encircled by an ornamental wall. Gazing over this, one stared right down—sheer to the swiftly-flowing waters of the stream. For the place was a stronghold—a rocky island in mid-river, with perpendicular cliffs rising straight up from the water. There was only one point which communicated with the mainland, and this was connected by means of a great drawbridge.

Generally this was kept down, but always raised at night. And on both sides it was guarded by hosts of Foo Chow's troops. These men were like ants. For this Chinese potentate had men almost without number at his command. China is a land of teeming millions.

"Yes," repeated Dorrie. "I've got to that condition when another twenty-four hours of this business will drive me crazy. I've got to get into action. Understand, Lee? Action!"

Nelson Lee gripped him by the arm.

"Action!" he repeated. "Yes, I understand, Dorrie. But it so happens that any kind of action is impossible. Cool down, old man, and look at the thing sensibly. I shall be the first to urge activity if the opportunity comes. But there's no sense in beating our heads against a brick wall."

Lord Dorrimore breathed hard.

"I'm not so sure about that," he retorted. "If we beat hard enough we may break the wall down—or knock ourselves insensible. I've just got to that stage when I don't much care which it is!"



CHAPTER 5.

WILLY'S "HUNCH."

ARRY STOKES nodded.

"I feel just the same," he confessed. "Let's make a move, Lee. Let's start something—and to-night.

It doesn't matter what. If we only have a decent shindy with some of these Chinks it'll allow us to blow off a little steam. Anything for a change!"

"Good man!" nodded his lordship. "Well, Lee?"

Nelson Lee was quite firm.

"No," he said quietly. "Absolutely no!"

"But, man alive——"

"Listen to me, Dorrie," interrupted Lee.

"You're not a weakling—you're not a child! And the same applies to you, Barry. Practically the whole of our party consists of youngsters—boys and girls. And most of the boys are fairly itching to get into action. If we start a fight they'll join in—their young spirits won't be able to resist the temptation. And what will come of such a fight?"

"We should probably smash a few heads," remarked Dorrie dreamily.

"Yes, and there would be some deaths, too," went on Lee. "What do these Chinese care for us? They hate us. As long as we remain docile they'll let things go on. But we've only got to fire the spark, and there'll be a ghastly massacre. Don't you see that it's absolutely impossible for us to start this fuse going? All those young lives would be on our heads."

"We should probably go under with the rest," growled Dorrie stubbornly.

"Yes, but I want to die in a better way than that," retorted Nelson Lee. "No, you two have got to show a bit of strength. I tell you it's impossible for us to start any action now. For it will merely precipitate bloodshed, and those innocent boys and girls will be the chief ones to suffer. And perhaps they'll suffer worse than death."

"By gad!" muttered Dorrie.

"Torture is one of Dr. Foo Chow's pastimes," continued Lee. "He's content to let things run as they are, so we've got to keep calm. It's galling, I know, and it calls for courage. Aren't we capable of it?"

Lord Dorrimore and Mr. Stokes were compelled to admit that the schoolmaster-detective was right.

"All the same," said his lordship, "some-thing is goin' to crack!"

It was nearly bed-time for the younger members of the party; and there was nothing to be scared of in this, for the bed-rooms

of the palace were as luxurious as the other apartments. Electric lights gleamed everywhere, and the rooms were airy, cool and comfortable.

Willy Handforth, of the Third, was scarcely himself this evening. For over an hour he had walked alone in the grounds, and nobody had dreamed of going near him, or speaking to him. Even William Napoleon Browne, the tactful skipper of the Fifth, had made no attempt to console the fag.

When Willy approached the terrace he found Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon hovering about, both of them in the last throes of misery. They could not be expected to feel the same agony at the loss of Willy's elder brother, but they were deeply sorry for their young leader. His unhappiness was their unhappiness.

They didn't approach him. Willy was making straight for the group of Moor View girls who were sitting in deck-chairs under one of the big trees. Irene Manners and Mary Summers were bending over Ena Handforth, who had been sobbing intermittently for hours. The other girls were looking on in an unhappy group.

"Chuck it!" said Willy curtly.

"Oh, don't speak so sharply, Willy!" murmured Irene.

"Chuck it, I say!" repeated Willy, grasping his sister by the shoulder and roughly forcing her back. "Crying, eh? What for?"

"I suppose it's beastly weak of me, Willy, but I can't help thinking that Ted is really dead!" murmured Ena. "I didn't think so at first, but the time keeps going on, and——"

"I'm ashamed of you!" said Willy quietly. "My hat! I always thought you were a pretty strong sort of person for a girl. And here you are, blubbing like a kid! Why? Ted's as alive as I am!"

Ena looked at him with a sudden wild hope.

"Have—have you heard something?" asked Mary Summers eagerly.

"No, of course not," said Willy. "I've heard nothing, and I've seen nothing. And my common sense tells me that Ted was drowned. But I jolly well know he wasn't! I've got a hunch that he's safe!"

Ena's eyes became dimmed again.

"It's your common sense that's right, Willy," she said sadly.

"Rats!" said Willy. "Is Ted the kind of fellow to get drowned in a silly river? There's one thing that tells me absolutely that he's alive. Foo Chow has told us all that he's dead! The man's a horrible liar, and he only said that just to torture us. If old Foo Chow had expressed some sort of hope, I should have been in the last stages of misery. But he said that Ted was seen to go under, struggling. Well, that's good enough for me. Ted's alive!"

There was something shrewdly sensible in this reasoning. But Ena Handforth only

shook her head and looked at him with dull misery.

"I wish I could believe you, Willy, but I can't," she said unsteadily. "If there was only some way of proving it. If there was only a chance of finding out——"

"Leave it to me," interrupted Willy calmly.

"Why, what are you going to do?"

"I don't know—yet," replied Willy vaguely. "But you needn't think I'm going to let things just drag on without knowing something definite. But mum's the word, you girls!" he added warningly.

"Willy!" said Irene, staring.

"Don't use that tone, for goodness' sake——"

"What are you thinking of?" went on Irene, grasping Willy by the arm. "You mustn't try to escape, or anything like that. It's too risky. Promise me that you won't do anything foolish."

"Right!" said Willy promptly. "I promise!"

"It all depends upon the point of view," said Doris Berkeley dryly. "That's an easy promise, Willy. You might consider something quite sensible which we should call a piece of sheer madness."

"It's quite likely," said Willy. "But you needn't get the wind up. I can do a fat lot, can't I? I don't mind admitting that I haven't got the faintest idea of anything definite. But I've got a feeling in my bones that something's going to turn up. That's all. So cheer up, Ena, and look pleasant. Before the morning we'll have Ted back with us, as large and as noisy as ever!"

He walked off, and found Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon.

"Bed-time," he said briefly. "Coming up?"

They followed him to the sleeping compartment which had been set aside for their use. And they were glad to be alone with him.

"Hard lines, Willy," said Chubby Heath awkwardly. "Juicy and I would like to say something, you know."

"We—we want to cheer you up a bit," said Juicy Lemon miserably.

"Don't try," advised Willy. "Judging by the tone of your voice, Juicy, old man, you couldn't cheer up a gatepost! I'm dashed if you're not on the point of blubbing!"

"I'm not!" denied Lemon fiercely.

"And it's my major who's missing," went on Willy. "It would be a different thing if he were dead. What rot! Dead! Piffle! You can't make me believe that tosh!"

His chums couldn't deal with this sort of talk. They felt that Willy was simply fooling himself deliberately, just to keep his pecker up. He hadn't a trace of evidence to support his fantastic "hunch." And Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon undressed and got into bed, silent and forlorn.

Willy made no attempt to retire, however. He walked up and down the stately apartment, his hands thrust deeply into his

trousers-pockets. Now and again he paused and stared out over the gardens through the open balcony window.

Willy was very different to Edward Oswald. He never ventured upon a mission which promised no success. His major would blindly start off on a thing, leaving the main result to chance. But Willy wasn't like that.

He had no desire to escape. What was the good of escaping, anyhow? His one aim was to find out what had happened to Edward Oswald. Supposing he got out in the grounds, what then? He would simply find himself amid totally unfamiliar surroundings, the victim of the first group of Foo Chow's soldiers who happened to spot him. And there wasn't any hope that he would ever get off this island, either. No matter how he racked his brain, there seemed to be utterly no possibility.

"Aren't you coming to bed, Willy?" asked Chubby Heath, at length. "What's the good of mooning up and down the room like that?"

"You're giving us the pip," added Juicy gloomily.

Willy regarded them coldly.

"I'm not feeling sleepy," he growled. "If you don't like me here, I'll go out on the balcony."

He walked to the open window, and his chums sat up.

"Oh, I say!" protested Chubby. "We don't want to drive you out, old son! You mustn't take any notice of Juicy having the pip. Like his callous nature to say a thing of that sort——"

"I didn't mean it!" broke in Juicy Lemon. "We want to cheer you up, Willy. A good sleep is what you need more than anything. You won't make matters any better by getting these fits of the blues——"

Willy grinned.

"You chaps are full of imagination," he interrupted. "I'm not in the blues, and I'm not in need of any cheering. Ted's alive, and I'm just trying to think of some way to prove it. That's all. Go to sleep like good children, and nursie won't spank you!"

He walked out on to the balcony, and Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon, highly indignant, ceased to take the slightest interest in his trouble. Any fellow who could insult them in that way wasn't worth worrying over.



CHAPTER 6.

A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY.

THE balcony overlooked a scene of tropical luxuriance.

Indeed, it was difficult to imagine that this spot was in the midst of a rugged section of a primitive Chinese province. In every sense the outlook was entrancing.

As Willy stood on the balcony he leaned over the marble balustrade and gazed at the scene with wonder. Every time he looked at it, in fact, he wondered. It all seemed so fantastic.

A palatial marble building, with every modern luxury—electric light, super-wireless, hot and cold water, and a staff of servants who were trained in European fashion. Outside, the grounds were laid out into the most perfect gardens one could wish to see. Exquisitely-kept flower-beds of riotous colour, shady paths and velvety lawns. Palm-trees grew round the fountains, and these were playing even now, causing a musical splashing which was cooling to the ear on such a warm night. And everywhere the scene was full of a soft radiance from the many electric standards.

This rocky island in the middle of the river was practically a mile long and over half as broad, and the whole extent of it was covered with gardens and pathways and smooth roads for motoring. And in one direction lay the great avenue, leading straight to the drawbridge.

Beyond, on the farther banks of the river, there was darkness. Barren rocks and rugged peaks could dimly be discerned against the skyline. The city of Yang Fu was some miles away. Dr. Foo Chow was a man who had spent many years in Europe, and his tastes appeared to be cultured. He preferred this sort of home to a purely native one. And so he had built his palace in a lonely spot, distant from all trace of the real China. For Yang Fu itself was a native city in every sense of the word, without a single twentieth century innovation. The contrast in this rock home was, therefore, all the more striking.

"He's a queer beggar," murmured Willy, shaking his head. "I'm blessed if I can understand him. A millionaire, with every luxury imaginable, and yet he's jealous of poor old Chingy's father, and wants to pinch his lands! Some of these people never know when they've got enough." He shook himself. "But this isn't helping old Ted," he went on firmly. "I've got to think of something feasible. It looks as though I shall be thinking all night!"

He idly watched the movements of some of Foo Chow's soldiers. These gentry were attired in gorgeous uniforms—impressive and picturesque. There was the same contrast here as in the other respect. Foo Chow's household troops were indicative of wealth untold; but his subjects in the villages and towns were poor, ragged, poverty-stricken wretches who lived in a permanent condition of semi-starvation. Not that they differed from other people in China. The majority of these millions are fighting constantly for existence.

As if to enhance the sense of normal civilisation, a Rolls-Royce open car came gliding noiselessly along the terrace, and pulled up exactly beneath the balcony on

which Willy was standing. The two richly-attired men in the front seats got out and stood at attention.

"Except for those comic-opera chauffeurs, I might be in Palm Beach, or Miami, or another of those new Florida pleasure resorts," murmured Willy. "What with this gorgeous palace and these palm-gardens, it's just like a super-American resort. What's in the wind now, I wonder?"

He soon knew.

Dr. Foo Chow himself emerged from the palace and spoke a few words to the driver. He and his companion saluted and vanished. Foo Chow climbed into the driving-seat and paused to light a cigarette.

"Ah, gentlemen, this is a pleasure I had not anticipated!" he said smoothly. "My only regret is that I cannot offer to take you for a night blow. Unhappily, the circumstances will not permit of such courtesies."

Willy saw that Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore had just strolled out from one of the shady paths, unaware, until that moment, that their "host" was so near at hand. Probably they would have avoided him if they had known.

"Thanks all the same, Dr. Foo Chow, but we're rather particular," said Dorrie curtly. "Comin' indoors, Lee?"

"I fear I have offended you in some way, Lord Dorrimore," said Foo Chow regretfully. "Can we not remain amicable? Is this veiled hostility really necessary?"

"Under the present conditions, Dr. Foo Chow, would it not be better to avoid these discussions?" asked Lee smoothly. "By the way, would it be impolite to ask whence you obtained your degree?" he added, by way of turning the conversation.

"I am a doctor of science—not of medicine," smiled Foo Chow. "It is a degree which I obtained at your own University of Oxford. A wonderful institution, gentlemen."

Lord Dorrimore nodded.

"It's a pity Oxford didn't know what sort of a blackguard they were admittin' when you went up," he said with some warmth.

Dr. Foo Chow laughed.

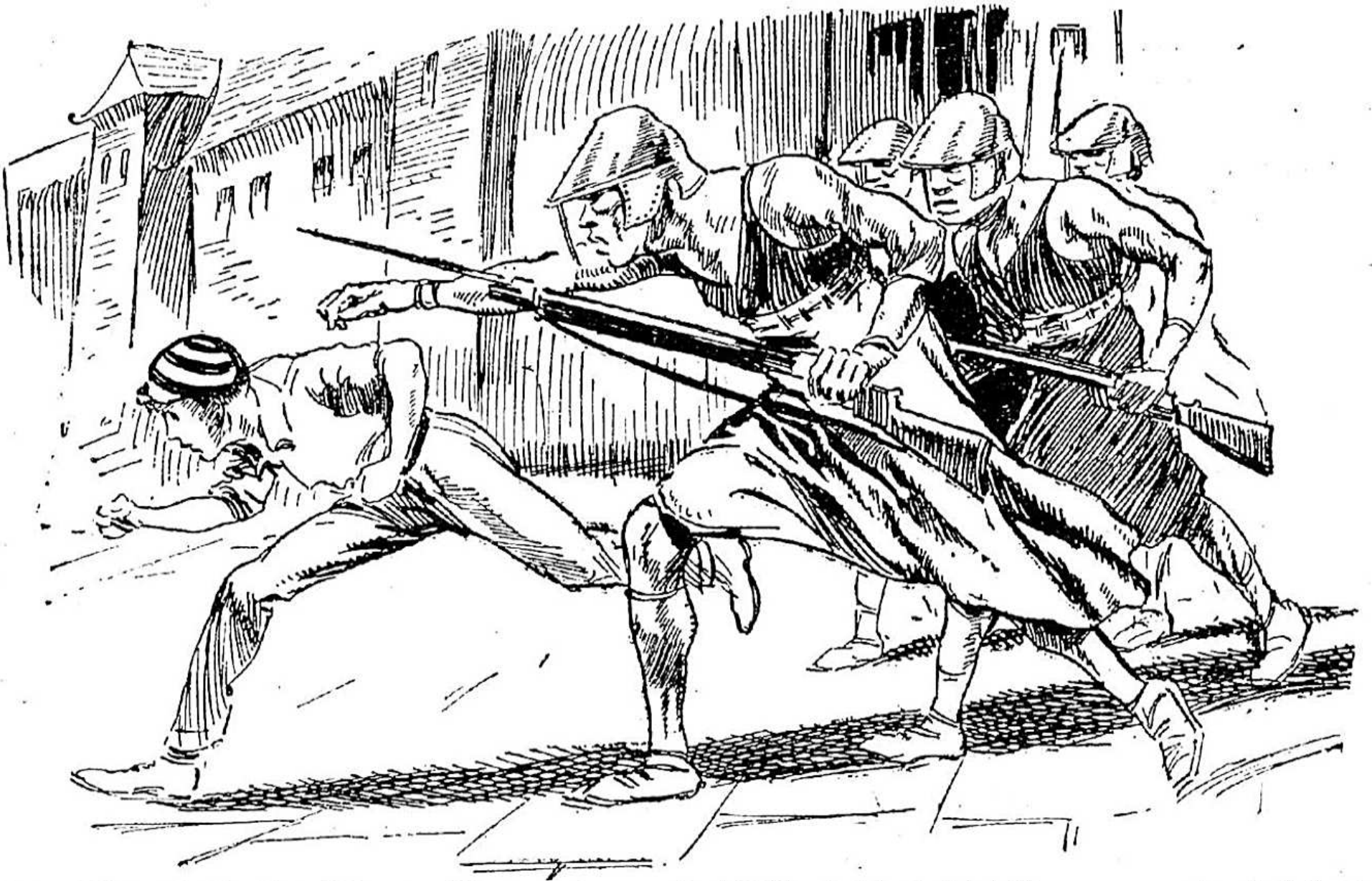
"I can see that it is quite useless to make any attempt to conciliate you, Lord Dorrimore," he said softly. "I am grieved. Perhaps you would care to accompany me, after all? I think it could be managed. And a little change would perhaps help to alter your mood."

"Accompany you where?" asked Dorrie suspiciously.

"I have already mentioned that I am a doctor of science," said Foo Chow. "I have decided that a little scientific experiment shall take place to-night. A question of amputating a forefinger without the aid of an anæsthetic. Quite a novel experiment, and well worth watching."

Lord Dorrimore turned purple.

"You devilish hound!" he shouted thickly. "So you're going to torture that poor boy



Two of the grim-looking Chinese soldiers made a grab at Willy, but he twisted like a young eel and dodged away. Even as he ran, he knew that escape was impossible; his mad venture could only end in capture.

to-night, after all? An' you have the cool impudence to ask me to witness the butchery! By gad, I'll smash—— Let me go, Lee! Confound you, man, let me go!"

"Steady, Dorrie—steady," muttered Lee grimly.

Dr. Foo Chow was chuckling with enjoyment.

"Quite an unwise outburst," he murmured. "You must remember that I have soldiers within call—within sight. You have but to lay a violent finger upon my person, and you will be struck dead by the first bayonet. My person is sacred to these subjects of mine."

An officer came out at that moment and spoke to Dr. Foo Chow in Chinese. The latter excused himself and went indoors. And Lord Dorrimore became suddenly calm, going deathly pale.

"One more affair like that, and I'll break loose!" he panted.

"I don't blame you, sir," said Willy stoutly.

They looked up and saw him on the balcony.

"Go to bed, Willy," said Nelson Lee quietly. "Why are you not undressed?"

"Don't blame the poor youngster," growled Lord Dorrimore. "Hasn't he lost his brother? Look here, Lee, let me wait here for Foo Chow! Let me disfigure that grinnin' face of his! I'd like to mangle it——"

Nelson Lee led the enraged peer away, and Willy pursed his lips.

"I suppose Mr. Lee's right," he murmured, "but it needs a strong will to keep your temper like that. Poor old Dorrie! I believe he'd go dotty with joy if he could only reduce Foo Chow to pulp."

Still leaning over the balustrade, Willy idly contemplated the empty Rolls-Royce. So Foo Chow was going off to Yang Fu? He was going to torture poor old Chingy at once? The dirty mongrel! Willy went hot at the very thought. And there he was, up on that balcony, unable——

"Great guns!" breathed Willy tensely. "I wonder!"

A thought had come to him—a daring idea. There wasn't one chance in a thousand that it would be successful—— There was that car, empty, and Dr. Foo Chow was obviously going to drive it himself, without any of his attendants. He had only been called in unexpectedly, and might emerge at any second. But just now the Rolls-Royce was empty!

And when it did start, it would go straight to Yung Ching's prison—that was the point! That was the one fact which burned its way into Willy Handforth's brain. The car, with Foo Chow at the wheel, was going straight to Yung Ching's prison!

Willy judged the distance with a keen eye. It was an easy drop—right into the rear seat. Yes, by jingo, there were rugs there, too! But what about the soldiers? There were two groups of guards—both on the terrace, on either side of the car, at some little distance. These men were watching.

"It's no good," groaned Willy. "I might have known—— If only I could distract their attention for a tick, though—— My hat, got it!"

In any emergency Willy Handforth's brain acted like lightning. Turning, he ran swiftly into the bed-room, and found Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon asleep. Without disturbing them, he hurried to the wall and removed the two electric-light bulbs from the ornamental bracket. There were several of these brackets in the room, and all the lamps were glowing.

In less than a second Willy was back on the balcony. One glance told him that the car was still empty. He stood well back, so that none of the soldiers could see his movements. Then, with all his strength, he hurled those electric lamps, one after the other.

Willy was famous for the length of his throw on the cricket field, and he sent those bulbs far down the paved path in the direction of the drawbridge. Then, with every sense on the alert, he waited.

Crash! Crash!

The sounds came like explosions—peculiar, muffled reports. Willy had known that any electric-light bulb, being a vacuum, will give this dull report upon violently bursting.

The result was exactly as he had anticipated.

The soldiers, hearing those strange explosions down the path, instantly turned in that direction. Willy didn't even wait for them to move. With one clean leap he was over the balustrade. He dropped sheer, and landed with a soft thud upon the rear cushions of the car.

The next moment he rolled down into the darkness, at the foot of the seat, and covered himself with one of the rugs.



CHAPTER 7.

A REGAL BANQUET.

AH FONG beamed upon Handforth & Co., and his face wrinkled up into a thousand creases. He stood there with folded hands, bowing.

"Dinner, him leady," he explained cheerfully. "Allee same catee!"

"Good man!" said Handforth, smacking his lips in anticipation. "Allee same eatee sounds jolly good to me. We've only had a few raw potatoes and things since midday, and we're just about ready to eat boot leather!"

"Hear, hear!" agreed Church and McClure heartily.

Ah Fong had apparently dressed in his Sunday best for the occasion, for his garments were much cleaner than the ones he had worn previously. Quite a little time had elapsed, Handforth & Co. having been invited to "sleepee" while dinner was being prepared. This was evidently an elaborate business,

judging from the excitement which had throbbed through the modest household.

The three juniors had only been separated from the living-room by means of a thin screen, and they had heard the constant chattering and the clattering of pots. Sundry appetising odours had come to them, whetting their hunger the more.

"Old Ah Fong seems to be quite a decent old stick," Handforth had remarked during these preparations. "He's pally with us because we saved his son from that giddy tiger. Well, if it means a feed, we're in luck. Some of these Chinks aren't so bad, after all."

Now that the meal was ready, the chums of Study D were eager to sit down to it. The wait had seemed an appallingly long one, and they were literally famished.

"By the way," asked Handforth, "how's little Seng?"

"Him sleepee one-time," replied Ah Fong, with a happy nod. "Seng, him die if you not lescue him and washee wounds. Ah Fong glateful. Ah Fong muchee your slave. Ah Fong do anything——"

"Well, don't make a song about it, old man," interrupted Handforth gruffly. "What about Mrs. Ah Fong? Isn't she pleased, too? As long as you change those bandages night and morning, I don't think there'll be much fear of complication. Strictly speaking, there ought to be a few stitches put in that gash in the shoulder, but he'll probably mend without 'em."

Ah Fong shook his head in bewilderment.

"No savvy," he said. "Much speakee no good."

"Oh, I'm a bit too quick, eh?" said Handforth. "All right, I'll have a shot in your own lingo. Seng, him get well plentee quick if you washee muchee. Him sleepee and stopee in beddee. Savvy?"

"Ah Fong savvy?" grinned the Chinaman. "Allee same washee. But dinner leady. "You makee come?"

"You bet!" said Handforth promptly.

They were coming to the conclusion that this meal was to be a somewhat ceremonial affair. Apparently, they were regarded in the light of honoured guests, and were to be treated as such. The meal was to be something of a feast—a celebration of little Seng's salvation.

Ah Fong opened the flimsy communicating door and stood aside. From his voluminous sleeves he had produced two lacquered sticks, and he solemnly raised them to his head. Then he handed them to Handforth.

"Pencils?" said Edward Oswald. "What's this, a present?"

"Him not pencils," explained Ah Fong. "Him chop-sticks."

"By George, chop-sticks, eh?" grinned Handforth. "Have we got to eat with these giddy things? It can't be done, old son. We might be able to pick up some macaroni with 'em, but if you've got rice on the menu, I can see some trouble ahead!"

Fortunately, Ah Fong only understood a very few words from this statement. He could

only follow a conversation when it was in pidgin English, and slowly articulated.

Church and McClure accepted their chopsticks in turn, and then passed into the main living-room. The table was loaded with many dishes, and the air was heavy with the smell of various foods.

"Hallo!" said Handforth, looking round. "What about the ladies?"

Ah Fong's two elder sons were waiting, but there was no sign of his wife or daughters.

"Dry up, Handy," whispered Church. "Haven't you heard that the Chinese never have ladies at feasts? It's only the men who eat. Women are of no account in this country."

"Then it's a dirty trick," said Handforth hotly. "We can't enjoy a feed properly, knowing that Mrs. Ah Fong and the girls are shoved out into the back room. They've got to make an alteration."

He turned to the host.

"How about your wife?" he demanded.

"She no eat," said Ah Fong unemotionally.

"And your daughters?"

"They no eat."

"Oh, I suppose they've had their dinner?" asked Handforth. "H'm! It's a rummy way, but I suppose you know best. Ladies first, eh? Well, that's better. Where do we sit?"

He prepared to seat himself, but Ah Fong grew excited.

"No, no!" he exclaimed. "You sittee here. Me, Ah Fong, host. Me sittee at head of table. You sittee on my left. You most excellent and honourable guest."

"In that case I ought to sit on your right," said Handforth.

Again he prepared to sit down, but Ah Fong was insistent. Nothing would satisfy him but that Handforth should sit on his left. As usual in China, such customs were the exact opposite of the European. The honoured guest always sits to the host's left in China.

Handforth & Co. were rather out of place with all this ceremony, in any case. They wanted the feast, and were not particular about the formalities. They found little bowls in their places, and a spoon, too. This was a welcome discovery, for they could easily handle a spoon.

The meal commenced—curiously enough, with the dessert first. Again, this was in direct contradiction of European custom. There were water-melon seeds, pickled plums, and other curious delicacies. They tasted quite appetising, however, and Handforth and Church and McClure were fully ready for the hot dishes when they were placed in front of them by the eldest son.

"I don't know what this stuff is, but it tastes good," said Handforth, as he juggled with his chopsticks. "It's a rummy idea to eat syrup dumplings with the meat, but I suppose it's one of the customs—and I could eat anything just now. But why do they cut everything into little bits? We're not kids!"

"It's not polite to criticise, Handy," said Church.

"You likee him food?" asked Ah Fong anxiously.

"First chop!" replied Handforth. "Him muchee good! In other words, O.K.! This is the stuff to give the troops! How about some more of that stew?"

Handforth was particularly keen on a meat stew, which tasted very savoury. He couldn't quite name the meat, but it was very tasty. And the meal went on with everybody in the highest good-humour.

The only trouble was that the chopsticks were difficult to manage. All the food was cut up into small pieces, so that it could be handled with comparative simplicity by means of the chopsticks.

"It seems easy enough," murmured Church, as he watched Ah Fong. "But I'm blessed if I can wangle 'em like that."

The host was having no trouble with the chopsticks. He simply put one thumb over both, and pressed the tips of his second and third fingers against the middle of each. In this way he picked everything up with uncanny precision, the lower chop-stick steadying the upper. At a really ceremonial Chinese dinner, a guest would rather go hungry than dare to use his other hand as a help.

"Him tasty piecee," said Ah Fong.

He was offering Handforth a choice piece of meat from his own bowl, held between his chopsticks—which had just come out of his own mouth. Handforth vaguely remembered having heard that it was a mortal insult to refuse such a proffered dainty. He accepted it with polite courtesy.

"I don't suppose I shall be poisoned, so I might just as well do the right thing," he said. "It's a good thing you can't understand what I'm saying, old chap. Now have a chunk of mine!"

"Better go easy, Handy," said McClure. "He might get the hang of it, and we don't want to offend a friend like this."

Handforth had selected a piece of floppy fat, which he had had no intention of eating himself, and Ah Fong accepted it with huge delight. His sons were grinning with enjoyment, too.

"My hat! We've forgotten to smack our lips!" said Handforth, after a while. "Mustn't overlook a thing like that. Go it, you chaps!"

So accordingly, for the rest of the meal, the three juniors made all the noise of which they were capable. And Ah Fong and his sons were so hugely pleased that their good-humour increased with every minute.



CHAPTER 8.

AFTER THE FEAST!

LAST the chums of Study D had had their fill. Food was still pressed upon them, but they could eat no more. Indeed, now that their hunger was thoroughly satisfied,

some of the oily dishes were somewhat unsavoury to look upon.

But they were all delighted with Ah Fong's well-meant hospitality. There was a great gulf of difference between this humble coolie and his modest feast, and Dr. Foo Chow and all his modern triumphs.

For Dr. Foo Chow was an enemy, and Ah Fong was a friend. This was the astonishing part of it all. Handforth Co. had never dreamed of making a friend like this, and they were grateful for the food and the shelter. But, of course, they couldn't stay here much longer. They had their mission to accomplish, and, furthermore, there was a chance that Ah Fong might get into serious trouble if the fugitives were found on his premises.

"Well, that's that," said Handforth, as he sat back in his chair. "You chaps finished?"

"Absolutely full!" said Church comfortably.

"Couldn't eat another scrap," confessed McClure.

"You gluttons!" retorted Handforth, with a frown. "We'll soon get some exercise to help our digestions, though. We've got a long walk before us. I must say this grub is appetising," he added, regarding the remains of the feast. "I wonder what we've been eating?"

"Tasted like pork to me," said Church. "They eat lots of pork in China. It wouldn't be polite to ask any questions, Handy. Go easy, you know. These Chinamen are touchy about certain things, and you can't be too careful."

But Handforth was not to be put off.

"Heap good dinner," he said, beaming upon Ah Fong. "Plenty nice."

"You likee?" asked Ah Fong, with delight.

"Rather!" said Handforth. "I mean, muchee-muchee!"

"Me gleatly honoured," said the host. "Miselable food, but Ah Fong not lich. Dooe best I can. Muchee honoured."

"What's this stew made of?" asked Handforth, as he drew the dish towards him, and eyed the contents curiously. "This was the stuff I liked best of all. So jolly savoury."

"Him allee sorts," grinned Ah Fong.

"All sorts?"

"Him pork," said the host. "Him dog. Him lat!"

"Dog?" said Handforth, with a violent start.

"Lat?" breathed Church. "You—you don't mean rat?"

McClure merely made a peculiar sound, and dived for his handkerchief.

"Dog?" repeated Handforth, with a gulp. "You—you don't mean that there was dog-flesh in that giddy stew?"

Ah Fong beamed with pleasure.

"Dog-flesh him one piecee good," he replied. "Me catchee lats and put him in. Muchee nicee!"

"Rats?" gurgled Handforth, going pale.

"My only sainted aunt! We've—we've been eating this horrible muck, and didn't realise —"

"I'm feeling sick!" moaned McClure.

"Wait a minute!" went on Edward Oswald, his voice growing faint. "What—what are these, Ah Fong? These things in syrup?"

He pointed to another dish.

"Him dlied cockloaches," smiled Ah Fong.

"Cockroaches?" howled Handforth wildly.

Ah Fong pointed to another dish.

"Him slugs," he explained. "Much nicee—slugs. And him eggs—buried eggs. Me keepee eggs in glound one moon—two moons —"

But the guests had fled. Outside, under the night sky, they wasted a goodly portion of the feast. It was a matter of ten minutes before they began to recover, and before conversation became possible.

"Rat stew!" breathed Church hoarsely. "Dog meat!"

"Dried cockroaches and rotten eggs!" moaned McClure.

"And—and we enjoyed it all!" said Handforth brokenly. "Oh, my goodness! You—you blithering idiots! Why the dickens did you ask him what we'd eaten?"

Church and McClure were suddenly stimulated.

"You howling ass, that was your idea!" snorted McClure. "Didn't we warn you? It serves you right for being so jolly inquisitive. I had a horrible sort of fear that we'd been eating insects and things, but I thought it would be better to let well alone. Just look what you've done!"

"I'll never have another meal with a Chinaman as long as I live!" panted Edward Oswald. "And yet I suppose he meant well," he added. "But—but rats, you know! Cockroaches—"

"Shut up!" hissed McClure.

"Let's—let's forget all about it!" muttered Church. "I want some water! I—I can still taste— Oh! Let's get back to Foo Chow! He may be a rotter, but he gives us decent grub!"

"We've got to get back to Ah Fong," said Handforth. "He'll be wondering what the dickens has happened to us. I don't suppose we can blame him much—these people eat dog meat and all the other things as a matter of course. He'll be awfully cut up if we tell him we don't like—"

"I say!" broke in Church sharply. "What are those lights?"

"And voices?" added McClure, staring.

They moved beyond a clump of bushes, and looked out across the cultivated rice fields and other land. Lights were moving about in the distance, and voices could be distinctly heard.

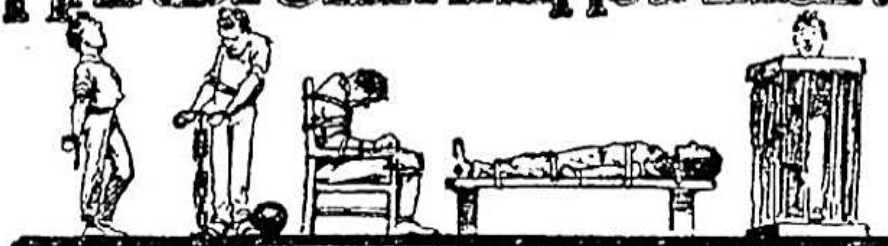
"Rummy!" said Handforth. "By George!" he added, with a start. "I wonder if they're Foo Chow's beastly soldiers searching for us?"

The question was answered by Ah Fong, who came running up in the gloom.

.....NEXT WEDNESDAY!.....

CRAM FULL
OF FUN
AND
EXCITEMENT

HANDFORTH AND THE HOSTAGE!



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"Him soldiers!" he breathed tremblingly. "They-searchee. Muchee danger. Catchee you, and punish one time chop. Makee lun!"

"Do which?" asked Handforth. "Oh, run?"

"Allee same quick," said Ah Fong nervously. "Catchee you here, and Ah Fong die." He hesitated, and then went on. "Me hidee you! Comee one time, and me takee you into loof—"

"Thanks all the same, old man, but we're not going to hide in your roof," replied Handforth firmly. "You and your whole family would be put to death, I expect, if you were caught hiding us. We'll out. It'll take more than Foo Chow's soldiers to catch us. Don't forget we're Boy Scouts!"

"No savvy!" said Ah Fong helplessly.

"That's all right—no time to explain," said Edward Oswald. "Thanks for the feed, and thanks for your hospitality, both of which we appreciate, although we're not accepting any more invites! So-long, old crinkly face!"

He turned to his chums.

"Ready?" he asked curtly. "Come on!"

They waved to Ah Fong, and made off into the night—in the opposite direction to the straggling lights. Church and McClure were alarmed, for it seemed impossible to them that they could avoid recapture.

"It's no good, Handy—we might as well give ourselves up," said Church.

"Give ourselves up?" repeated Handforth. "You silly chump, we can dish these soldiers as easy as winking! Just like the Chinese! They search for us with lanterns, and talk in high voices, on purpose to give us good warning! They're a funny crowd, these Chinks!"

"My hat, there's something in that!" admitted McClure, with a start. Handforth was right. The Chinese are certainly astonishing in their methods, and here was an example of it. They were searching for these three boys—whom Foo Chow obviously thought to be still alive—quite openly, with lanterns! It was characteristic of them. And Handforth

& Co. had no difficulty whatever in avoiding the search parties.

"I hadn't the heart to tell old Ah Fong what I thought of his grub," continued Handforth, as they pushed through some dense clumps of bushes. "It's a good thing he couldn't understand all we were saying—"

"Better go easy here," broke in Church. "That tiger, you know! It might still be lurking about somewhere. I expect that's why those soldiers are carrying lanterns. But we're all in the dark—"

"We're not afraid of any tigers," said Handforth contemptuously. "I'm with you, my lads! If that tiger starts any more of his tricks, I'll give him another punch in the eye! But I'll bet he's miles away by this time, and he hasn't stopped running yet!"

It was rather an aimless trudge through the night. Actually, it was quite early yet, although Handforth & Co. had an idea that midnight was not far distant. They were totally wrong in this assumption. The evening, although dark, was young.

Now and again the three juniors found themselves floundering in muddy rice fields, or picking their way through sugar plantations. But as to any definite direction, they were quite at sea. They only knew that they had avoided the search parties.

"We shall never get to Yang Fu at this rate," said Church at last. "We're simply going across country all the time. It would be a different thing if we could find a road. But there seems to be nothing—"

"What do you call this, then?" said Handforth triumphantly.

They were climbing up a steep, grassy bank, and had just reached the top. And there lay a broad, concrete highway—a most remarkable thing to come across in this land of dirt tracks. It stretched away on either hand, smooth and wide. In spite of the gloom, the three juniors could see the roadway distinctly. It was incongruous in this primitive country.

"By jingo, you're right!" said McClure. "It's the highway right enough! And this is the way to Yang Fu, too—to the left, here. We know it's the only important road, so it *must* lead to the city."

"Rats!" said Handforth. "We go to the right."

"But that's the way to the stronghold," declared Church. "Can't you see the hills in the distance? It's all flat in the other direction, and there's a kind of luminous glow, too. That must be Yang Fu."

Handforth grudgingly nodded.

"Perhaps you're right," he admitted. "Yes, we'd better go to the left. It must be two or three miles to the city——"

"Optimist!" interrupted McClure tartly. "It'll be nothing less than nine or ten! I don't see how we can walk that in less than three hours, allowing for a few stoppages, while we dodge the search parties——"

"Hullo! Lights!" interrupted Church, staring. "Look! I'm jiggered if it's not a motor-car! Can't you hear the purr? Old Foo Chow going into the city to torture Chingy!"

They drew back and crouched down, their hearts beating more rapidly. The lights of a powerful motor-car had appeared in the distance, along that broad ribbon of highway. They had arisen from a dip, and the car was now sweeping down the gradual slope at high speed.

Handforth & Co., concealed by some friendly bushes, caught a brief glimpse of a great Rolls-Royce, with Dr. Foo Chow himself at the wheel. Little did Edward Oswald Handforth dream that his minor had just swept by, too!

There was always an air of uncertainty—a suggestion that at any moment a thunderbolt would drop.

Foo Chow was quite enjoying the comedy. At least, it was a comedy from his point of view. He wasn't quite sure about the three boys who had plunged into the river. He thought they were dead, but he had sent out a few search parties as a precautionary measure. In his own mind, the Chinaman had little doubt that the trio had perished. Indeed, he had sent strict orders down the river for a watch to be kept for their floating bodies.

And now he was bent upon another little pleasant enterprise.

He was about to take the first step in his scheme against Yung Ching's father! This evening the unfortunate little Chinese boy would suffer the first mutilation. Dr. Foo Chow was looking forward to the event with placid anticipation.

He was a man of quick brain, of education, of culture, of world-wide experience. For a Chinaman, he had an unusually rapid mind. There were very few things which Foo Chow neglected—very few things that escaped him.

But, in spite of his keenness, he had not the faintest idea that Willy Handforth was within a foot or two of him at this very moment! Dr. Foo Chow had already picked out Handforth major as the most troublesome of his guests. But Handforth major was gone, and Foo Chow had selected Handforth minor as the one junior to watch closely. He had a shrewd idea that Willy could prove dangerous.

Even so, he knew nothing of Willy's proximity.

The leader of the St. Frank's Third was perfectly calm as he lay flat on the floor of the car, concealed by the rugs. He was so small that a casual glance into the car, even in strong daylight, would have revealed nothing. It merely looked as though the rugs had fallen down in a heap.

But Willy was prepared for instantaneous action. He was ready to pit his nimble muscles and sinews against the strength of his Chinese enemies. In the event of discovery, he was ready to make a swift bid for liberty.

In the meantime, he was still safe, and he was being taken straight to the spot where Yung Ching was held a prisoner! That was a thrilling thought, and perhaps he would get to know something about his major, too. Edward Oswald was far more in his mind than Yung Ching. Never for a moment did Willy accept the statement that his brother was dead. It was far more likely that he was a prisoner in the hands of the Chinese, awaiting torture!

The car continued its rapid dash through the darkness, travelling at something like sixty miles an hour for a great deal of the way. On that broad, concrete highway such speed was purely nominal.

CHAPTER 9.

WILLY ACTS WISELY.



ANY things, indeed, were taking place at one and the same time.

While Mr. Nelson Lee was restraining Lord Dorrimore from some violent action, Willy Handforth had concealed himself in Dr. Foo Chow's car. And Handforth & Co. had been sitting at Ah Fong's table at precisely the same hour. Now, it seemed, events were to merge themselves in a manner that would be surprising for all parties.

Dr. Foo Chow was feeling satisfied with the general course of events. Haste was not one of his weaknesses. He did everything deliberately and thoroughly, and his plans for the seizure of Yung Li Chang's lands were proceeding as he had originally intended.

The intervention of Lord Dorrimore's party had made no difference. They were his prisoners, and so they were helpless. In a way, the wily Chinaman was rather glad of their presence. It enabled him to play the host, and to indulge his whim. It pleased him to treat these helpless victims as guests, and to leave them in a state of suspense.

And a distance of ten miles was covered in very little over ten minutes. Yang Fu was reached almost before Willy could realise it. He could tell that some change had occurred by the greatly decreased speed of the car, and presently, too, there were many bumps as the Rolls-Royce travelled over the uneven streets of the city. Foo Chow had made no change within the gates of his capital. That concrete highway only commenced after the gates had been passed. Within the city the roads were narrow and tortuous.

Willy could tell the change by other signs, too. Voices came to him—shrill, clamorous Chinese accents. Foo Chow, no doubt, was being acclaimed as he progressed through the densely populated city. Those who failed to pay him homage were liable to pay dearly!

"My hat, I'd give quids to take a peep out!" murmured Willy. "I'd like to see exactly where we are, and what route we're taking. It might be important. But it's too risky. I expect they've got lights in the streets, and I should be spotted."

There was a vast difference between the two Handforth brothers. Where Edward Oswald was reckless, Willy was correspondingly cautious. Where Edward Oswald went blindly into danger, Willy used his wits, and tried to prepare a possible retreat.

Edward Oswald was generally excited and headstrong. But Willy kept cool under all circumstances. At the present time he was more icily calm than usual, because he knew, possibly, that his position was fraught with peril.

At last the car came to a bumpy standstill, and Willy heard the clatter of swords. Voices sounded, too—a regular pandemonium of unearthly sounds. To Willy, the Chinese language seemed a mere gibberish. He couldn't understand how these yellow beggars could comprehend one another. They couldn't be such fools if they could get the hang of that extraordinary lingo!

After the first babble of tongues there came a silence.

"Foo Chow has gone in," decided Willy. "The car's left outside, waiting till he comes out again. Gone in where? Yung Ching's prison, for a cert. Willy, old son, this is where we've got to do something. No good sticking here, under these stuffy rugs!"

With excessive caution, he moved the rugs so that his face emerged. One glance told him that there were lamps, for there was no darkness. Above the edge of the car—viewed from Willy's position on the floor—a kind of yellowy radiance was visible.

Inch by inch, the fag raised himself. There was nobody actually near him—nobody in the front seats. At any second he might be spotted and pounced upon, but he felt that he would have to do something. It would be mere idiocy to remain concealed for an indefinite period. Besides, what was the good of the venture unless he took advantage of his opportunity?

"My hat!" he breathed at length.

He was able to look over the edge of the car now, and he saw that his position was not desperate yet. A group of soldiers were standing in front of a typically Chinese building, which Willy took to be the Yamen, or Courthouse—perhaps the prison. These soldiers were clearly visible in the yellow light from two lamps projecting from the wall, one on either side of the doorway.

It was a building which could not be mistaken. Great dragons and other monstrosities were crudely painted upon the walls. The roof was more than usually curled at the eaves, and it was, moreover, a building which stood apart from its fellows.

Gazing in the other direction, Willy found that the place was a kind of courtyard—a sort of cul-de-sac, with only one exit. This was a narrow street, where crowds of natives could be seen, where signs hung down from the buildings, and where lights glimmered dimly in the windows.

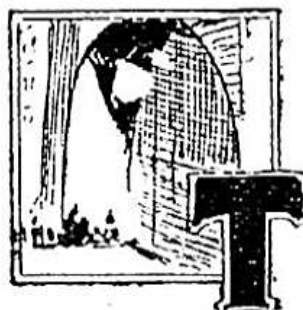
In the courtyard itself there were no people except the soldiers, proving that this was a forbidden place to the general public.

"Well, I can't forget a show like this, anyhow," murmured Willy. "If only I can get to know something definite, though," he added, with a frown. "Chingy's in this building for an absolute cert., but what about Ted? What have they done with Ted?"

He could supply himself with no satisfactory answer, but he had at least come to one certain conclusion. Single-handed, he could do nothing. It would be sheer madness to make any attempt to get into that building and rescue Yung Ching.

Unlike Edward Oswald, Willy knew his limitations, and he decided, then and there, that there was only one sensible thing for him to do—escape from the car, and make his way out of the city in the darkness, trusting to Providence to be spared from capture. In this way he could memorise his route, and take information of the greatest importance to Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore.

Willy was wise, and, without hesitating any further, he softly opened the off-side door of the car and slid out.

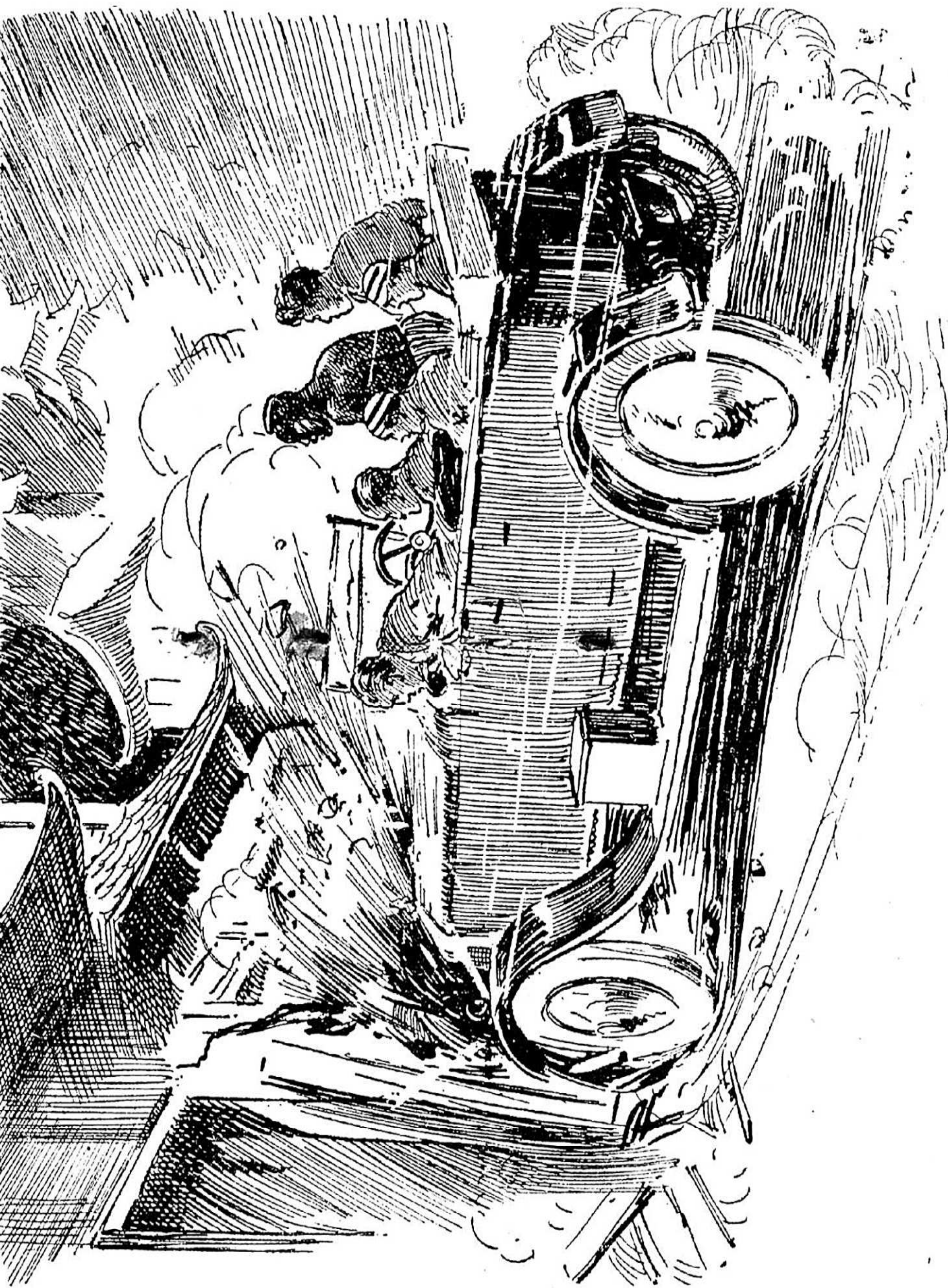


CHAPTER 10.

WITHIN THE GATES OF
YANG FU.

TWO of the Chinese guards had a dim suspicion that a shadow had moved on the other side of the courtyard, but a second glance proved that they had been mistaken. There was nothing there.

This was quite true, for by the time the Chinese took their second glance, Willy had reached the narrow street. In less than a second he had merged with the throng of natives, and now his heart was in his mouth indeed. There were no soldiers here, it was true, but there were plenty of ugly-looking



With a terrific crash, the car struck the side of Yung Ching's prison. Debris hurtled all about Handforth & Co. at the back, and an instant later the machine plunged inside the building!

customers. Coolies were hanging about, apparently idle, and children swarmed in droves. Willy was rather surprised, for he had expected to find the town asleep. He hardly realised that the hour was by no means late.

He had been prepared to fight, to wriggle like an eel out of the clutches of would-be captors, to dodge down alleys, and to engage in a breathless run for liberty.

Instead of that, not a soul molested him.

The Chinese regarded him with open curiosity, crowding round and even following him, child-like in their surprise. Willy was probably the first white boy they had ever seen, and his white flannels, too, were unfamiliar. So he was an object of general attention.

But nobody touched him, and he soon discovered that there was no hostility in the crowd. These people were just curious. He moved along with greater confidence, and soon began to take an active interest in the quaint sights which were all around him.

"Responsibility again!" murmured Willy. "That's about the truth of it. Rummy crowd, these Chinks! Now then, make way, my sons!" he added firmly. "Can't you give a chap some room?"

He pushed his way on boldly, more and more confident. And his assumption regarding "responsibility" was the actual truth. Willy had read quite a lot about the Chinese, and knew their peculiar ways. And responsibility is one of the keynotes of Chinese everyday life.

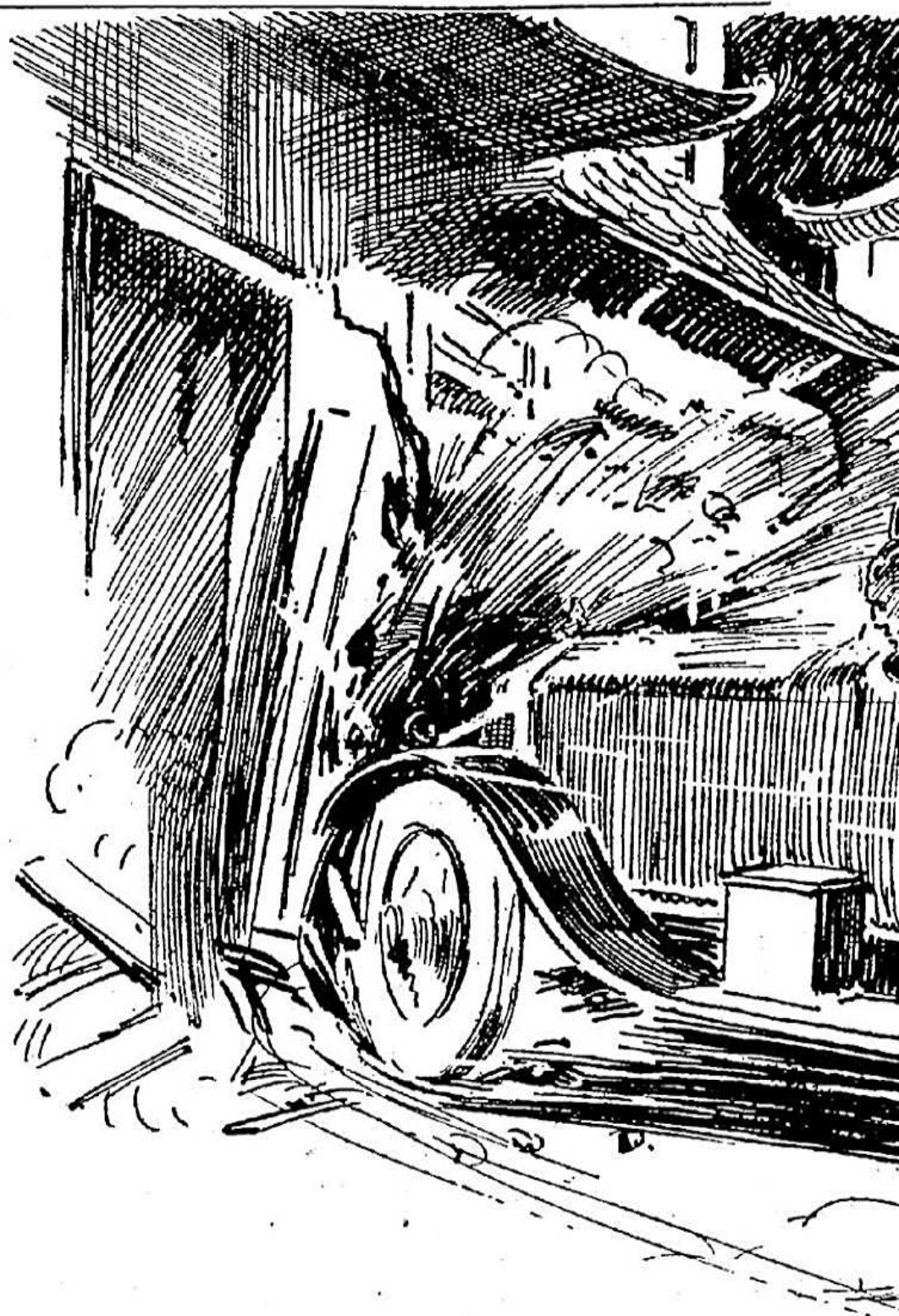
Everybody is responsible for something or other. If there is a murder committed, the head-man of that particular district is responsible—and gets very severely punished, although the crime was not his fault in the slightest degree. But was he not responsible for the district? And so the head-man finds himself on the carpet.

But there was nobody responsible for Willy!

Not one of these curious natives had to answer for his liberty or his capture. Therefore, why should they trouble to hold him? It wasn't their business! A characteristic example of Chinese logic. Willy was free to go where he chose, simply because nobody even dreamed of retaining him. The very idea that he should be captured simply because he was a stranger never occurred to anybody. Why should they do somebody else's work?

And thus the St. Frank's fag was at liberty to go where he pleased. The soldiers, perhaps, might have acted differently, but there were no soldiers here. And although Willy was filled with the keenest anxiety concerning his major, he found time to take an interest in the narrow, quaint streets, and their unfamiliar shops.

Most of the streets were like tunnels. For they were not only narrow, but there were awnings of mats all the way along, stretched from roof to roof. And the shops were ridiculously small. Very few of them dis-



With a terrific crash, the car struck the side of Handforth & Co. at the back, and an instant

played their wares, but all had wooden boards hanging down, with Chinese characters upon them, in letters of gold or red.

"Funny way of doing things," murmured Willy, as he passed along.

The merchants could be seen squatting in their den-like establishments, the majority of them looking fat and prosperous, and mostly clothed in silk. The prosperous merchants could be easily distinguished from the struggling ones, since the former were fat, and the latter normal.

To be rich in China is to be fat. Rather to Willy's surprise, he found that every shop he passed sold shoes—nothing but shoes. And presently he was in a street where crude jewellery was made and sold. And here, again, every shop was of the same sort.

The explanation was simple. In most of the Chinese native cities each class of business has its own particular street—in very much the same way as the London theatres are grouped together in one little section.

Not only the shops, but the people interested Willy. Some of them were well dressed, and others were ragged to the point



ng Ching's prison. Debris hurtled all about
r the machine plunged inside the building!

of sheer disgust. There were six or seven human wrecks coming along in succession, all of them diseased and ghastly to look upon. They were beggars—a recognised class, whom nobody thought of driving from the city. Indeed, these Chinese beggars have such power that they are interfered with by nobody.

At one corner there was a sweet stall, with the vendor sitting in state, and surrounded by a small army of eager children. At another street corner a man was frying cakes, and the smell of the fat caused Willy to hurry past at no lagging speed. It seemed to him that most of the tradesmen transacted their business in the open street, on stalls in front of their establishments. The majority of these were now being cleared away, in readiness for the night.

But although Willy was interested in these native sights, he was far more interested in something else. He was following a definite route.

Ever since he had left that courtyard he had seen the tracks of Dr. Foo Chow's Rolls-Royce, embedded deeply in the soft surface

of these trodden streets. In spite of the crowds, the tracks were still visible.

And Willy was intent upon reaching the city gates.

By this time he had ceased to be alarmed. He felt that he was safe now, that he would be able to get out into the open country without any trouble. And he was looking at every building, at every characteristic point, and storing these sights in his memory, so that they would be familiar.

Apparently, he had commenced his walk in the very heart of the business section, for after a while he found the crowds much thinner, and here there were no shops. But the houses were still as tightly packed as ever, the streets still narrow. And the smells were every bit as overwhelming—indeed, it seemed to Willy that the chief characteristic of Yang Fu was its appalling “niff.” The whole town reeked.

“It’s a wonder to me they don’t all die of fever!” muttered Willy, with disgust. “No wonder they have outbreaks of plague and other horrible diseases! I don’t believe there’s a bit of sanitation in the whole giddy city! They simply chuck all their refuse in the open streets, and allow it to be trampled in the dust. Phew!”

He wondered how many more epidemics would sweep such cities as this were it not for the fact that the Chinese invariably boil their water before drinking it. And tea, again, is the main drink—a drink which wards off many a terrible scourge.

“I don’t blame old Foo Chow for living out on that island,” Willy told himself as he hurried along. “At least, he’s got everything up to date there, and he couldn’t have that palace of his in the city—or, if he did, he’d still have the niffs!”

His eyes gleamed as he saw the high battlements of the city wall looming close. He knew that he had reached the outer wall by the very height of those towering structures. The houses were all of one storey—all flimsy, uniform places of the same style. But the city wall was high and imposing.

The great gates were flung wide, and the darkness beyond was a welcome prospect Willy could even see a glimpse of the concrete highway, which commenced just beyond the city gates. But he paused. There were soldiers here—not a mere half a dozen, but scores of them, both inside and outside the gateway.

“H’m! What’s to be done?” he murmured. “It’s no good trying to rush this lot. And that wall is a bit too stiff for me to climb, too. By jingo, the beggars have spotted me already!”

It was necessary to act at once.

And Willy promptly decided to march boldly forward, and to pass through the gateway as though he were an ordinary citizen. Perhaps these soldiers would take no more interest in him than the other Chinese. After all, they were city soldiers, not men of the palace contingent. So there was a dis-

ting chance that he could spoof them by his very coolness.

Without the slightest indication of haste, he continued his walk, and succeeded in getting past the first group of soldiers without trouble. But they shouted to another group farther on; and Willy's heart thumped as he found himself faced by half a dozen men with fixed bayonets.

"Chuck it!" he protested curtly. "What's the idea?"

The soldiers spoke among themselves, and two of them lowered their weapons and made a grab at the fag. It was evident that these men had received instructions to seize any white boy. Undoubtedly they mistook Willy for one of the three who were supposed to be drowned.

With a quick, eel-like movement he dodged aside, flung himself down, and wormed his way through the human barrier. The next second he shot through the gateway, and believed that he had won his freedom. But another crowd of these swarming soldiers barred his path, and the next moment he was in the midst of them.

"You—you rotters!" panted Willy desperately.

His capture was now certain. Rough hands grasped his shoulders, other hands held his arms. And although he struggled and wriggled, he could do nothing against this excited mob.

On the very point of escape he had fallen into the enemy's hands!



CHAPTER 11.

LORD DORRIMORE REACHES THE LIMIT.

M R. NELSON LEE threw his cigarette-end away.

"Bed?" he suggested,

"No," muttered Lord Dorrimore.

They were both sitting on one of the ornamental seats in the palace grounds. Above them gleamed an electric arc, and in full view was the main entrance of the marble mansion. The air was tranquil, and there was a feeling of peace in the very atmosphere.

But it was a false sense. Dorrie's very being was afire with helpless impotence.

"No," he repeated. "Bed for me? Don't talk about it, Lee!"

"But you're surely not going to stay here all night, Dorrie?" asked Nelson Lee gently.

"Where's the sense of that? Barry Stokes feels very much the same as you do, but he's gone to bed——"

"Barry Stokes has got his wife to think of—and it's his duty to be by her side, in case of emergency," interrupted his lordship. "But we're different. Why in the name of thunder can't we start something, Lee?"

"Because it's impossible——"

"Old man, I'm disappointed," said Dorrie, staring. "I didn't think that word 'impossible' had a place in your dictionary. Man alive, can't you see that it's impossible for us to remain idle?"

"You're using the word yourself now, Dorrie," said Lee with a faint smile.

"Yes, but in another sense."

"Very likely," agreed Lee. "At the same time, the sooner we realise our complete helplessness, the better. Nothing good will come of this fever to 'start somethin',' as you put it. What can we start?"

"Anythin'," retorted Dorrie promptly.

"That's rather vague——"

"Well, how about makin' an attempt to get over the drawbridge?" asked his lordship. "We can have a scrap with those guards, an' get over. Then we'll have a shot at the *Wanderer*—try to get on board, an' recapture her. How's that for a brilliant idea?"

But Lee shook his head.

"It's wild, Dorrie—and you know it's wild," he replied quietly. "Even if we got across the drawbridge by some miracle, do you really suppose that we should ever set foot on the yacht?"

His lordship uttered a growl.

"What does that matter?" he demanded.

"You don't seem to realise what I'm drivin' at. Honestly, I don't care a hang whether we succeed or whether we fail. But it'll be somethin' to do, somethin' to exercise our muscles, and give us a thrill. I'm fed up with this inactivity, Lee. Fed up to the neck! I tell you I *must* do somethin' to-night!"

"Even if it means death?"

"By the Lord Harry, yes!" vowed Dorrie grimly. "If it means death I've just got to have a scrap with somebody! You can't appreciate it, Lee—you're not built like I am. You've got a calmer nature, an' you can stand these infernal affairs."

"But I've always taken you to be a lazy sort of beggar," smiled Nelson Lee, attempting to cool his companion by his own sangfroid. "All you need is plenty of comfort, and plenty of people to wait upon you, and you're happy. And you've surely got everything here?"

Lord Dorrimore glared.

"If you think you can calm me down by that sort of nonsense, you've made a mistake!" he retorted, bending forward and placing his elbows on his knees. "No, Lee. I may be a lazy beggar, but I'm an active sort of chap, too. Too much of this idleness stagnates me. And I've just got to the stage when I'm at the limit of my endurance. It's no good you tellin' me to wait until to-morrow, or to sleep it off. I've made up

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my mind to do somethin' to-night."

"In that case, I suppose I'd better help you," smiled Lee. "I shall certainly not allow you to enter this hare-brained adventure single-handed."

His lordship turned and stared into the bushes.

"Umlosi!" he said sharply.

"N'Kose!" came a prompt rumble.

The African chief appeared noiselessly from the bushes. Never once did he allow his beloved master to leave his sight. It was Umlosi's intention to guard Lord Dorrimore's life with his own.

"Good old coal-box!" said Dorrie approvingly. "I knew you'd be somewhere close at hand. What do you say to a fight?"

"Thou art jesting, O my father," said Umlosi.

"No, honestly."

"A fight!" rumbled the great black. "Wau! Thou art making the blood course rapidly through my veins, N'Kose! These yellow mongrels have taken my faithful spear from me, but with my hands I can crush them to dust. Speak thou the word, my father, and we will commence this glorious battle!"

"As bloodthirsty as ever," said Nelson Lee with a sigh. "I'm hanged if you're not as bad as Umlosi, Dorrie! A precious pair, I must say!"

Lord Dorrimore grinned.

"A precious trio, you mean," he said. "You can't fool me, Lee! You're just as keen on this thing as I am. So don't try to deny it!"

"I do deny it——"

"If you could only see somethin' definite in view, you'd need steel cables to hold you back!"

"Well, I'll admit that I should enter into the affair with enthusiasm under those circumstances," said Nelson Lee. "You've placed your finger on the vital point, Dorrie. You suggest a random fight—a battle without an objective. That's what I jib against. What on earth is the use of starting a lot of trouble when we have absolutely nothing to aim for?"

"It'll act as a safety-valve, anyhow," retorted Dorrie.

"That's the long and the short of it," said Nelson Lee ruefully. "Can't I dissuade you from this insane project, Dorrie? Wait until there's something really definite in view. You won't find me hanging back then. But to blunder headlong into a mere brawl will do far more harm than good. If we're killed—as we probably shall be—these boys and girls will only have Barry to rely upon. He's a good man, no doubt, but three of us——"

"Three of us are no better," interrupted Dorrie. "If Foo Chow means to torture everybody, he'll do it—whether we like it or

not. My argument is that we shall never get anywhere unless we make a move. So let's finish with this hesitation, an' get busy!"

Nelson Lee realised that there was a good deal of common sense behind Lord Dorrimore's apparent madness. He was essentially a man of action, and this enforced idleness was a sheer torture to him. And Nelson Lee himself had precisely the same emotions. But he was better able to control himself.

"I'm infernally sorry I didn't smash Foo Chow when he was here an hour ago," went on Dorrie gruffly. "That was your fault, Lee. I ought to have—have—— Gad, talk of the devil and he appears!"

He stared with excited eyes. And Umlosi instinctively hunched his shoulders and adopted a crouching attitude. A faint purr had made itself heard, and a moment later a big automobile came gliding up to the palace. It contained a single figure.

"That's not Foo Chow's car, Dorrie," murmured Lee.

"Eh?"

"This car is an Armstrong-Siddeley, and the man at the wheel is one of Foo Chow's officers," continued Lee. "If it will give you any satisfaction to disfigure his face, it might be a good idea to start in. Perhaps the exercise will put you into a more sensible frame of mind."

Dorrie stood there without replying. His eyes were blazing with a new excitement, and he watched the officer enter the palace. He made no attempt to adopt Nelson Lee's suggestion.

"The engine's still runnin'," he muttered. "That means that the brute has only gone in for a minute or two. It means that the draw-bridge is still down—an' the road is clear. Good glory! Why not, Lee?"

"You mean——"

"Absolutely!" hissed Dorrie. "Let's grab that car, an' make a roarin' dash to Yang Fu! I've only got to feel my hands on that steerin'-wheel, and my foot on the accelerator-pedal, an'——"

"But what's the use? Why should we——?"

Nelson Lee broke off. He simply couldn't continue his protest; for he was beginning to feel that same wild desire for action that obsessed Lord Dorrimore. The sporting peer had at last broken down the great detective's iron reserve. And although Lee knew that the whole affair was without rhyme or reason, he abandoned himself to it.

Until now he had fought against any activity which promised no definite result. For years Lee had acted upon this principle—he had been a man of grim determination when he had something to aim at, but a man of caution when he was uncertain. For once in his life he let himself go.

"Dorrie!" he said tensely. "We'll do it!"

"Good man!" yelled his lordship. "Let's start!"



CHAPTER 12.

THE DASH FOR YANG FU.

THERE was every reason for this apparently reckless decision.

These prisoners of Dr. Foo Chow's were in such a helpless position that it seemed only remotely possible that their liberty would ever be restored to them. Indeed, Nelson Lee had a shrewd idea at the back of his mind that this Chinese potentate was only holding them unharmed until his plans were mature. If they failed he would possibly allow his prisoners to go. But if they succeeded, his power would be utter and supreme—and then he might indulge in a little amusement, in which torture would play a leading part.

Lee had been in many tight corners in his time. So had Dorrie. Together, they had been in all manner of queer fixes. But always there had been a sporting element of escape. In practically every case there had been a forlorn chance of winning through.

But what chance was there here?

Not only were they guarded by Foo Chow's soldiers, but it was necessary to travel hundreds of miles in any given direction to reach a zone of safety. They were Dr. Foo Chow's playthings, to do as he liked with. The very nature of their treatment only added to the mental torture.

So this swift decision to go into action was only logical.

In all probability they would do no good by their seizure of the motor-car. They would be stopped, and brought back to the island stronghold. But, as Dorrie had pointed out, they would at least have a brief interval of excitement. And this would serve them for the time being. It would restore some of their normal tranquility, and avert madness. Dorrie honestly believed that another day of inactivity would send him off his head.

"You heard that, Umlosi?" he ejaculated, turning to the black giant. "Umtagati is with us! We're going to make a dash!"

"Umtagati is a man of wisdom and much courage," rumbled Umlosi, his eyes gleaming. "Now, indeed, shall I enter this battle with enthusiasm. For is not Umtagati a wizard? Is he not——"

"He's going to whiz this time, anyhow!" grinned his lordship.

"The whole thing's a piece of madness, Umlosi, but we might as well let off a little steam," said Nelson Lee grimly. "The first thing is to get that car, and then we'll see what can be done. Perhaps we might even avert Yung Ching's torture. The main point is to reach the city."

"Good gad!" gasped Dorrie suddenly. "We're too late!"

The Chinese officer had reappeared, and

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was climbing into the car. A dozen soldiers were on the spot, too. The palace was closely guarded at every hour of the day and night.

"Wau!" thundered Umlosi. "Sayest thou that we are too late, N'Kose? Let me deal with this rainbow-clothed dog!"

"Good man!" shouted Dorrie. "Go ahead!"

He ran forward while speaking, and Nelson Lee was by his side. But Umlosi was the first, for he had darted forward with the speed of a hare, in spite of his bulk. The Chinese officer seemed to guess that something was coming, for he snapped out some orders. Four men threw themselves in Umlosi's path.

"Away, mongrels!" roared the African.

He disdained the fixed bayonets which menaced him. With a single sweeping motion he hurled the first aside, and received no scratch in the process. The Chinese soldier smashed into his companions as though he had been hit by a battering-ram. Squealing with terror, they collapsed. There was something in Umlosi's very mien which struck terror into their hearts.

"And thou," shouted the black giant, "as for thou, filth of the gutter, methinks thou art in need of a wash. Hence, thou pig!"

"Good gad!" gasped Lord Dorrimore.

Umlosi was fairly revelling in this sudden fight. He leapt upon the footboard of the car, and seized the frightened officer. With one Herculean movement he raised the screaming man above his head. And then, with a strength which amazed even Lee and Dorrie, he flung the officer aside.

The unfortunate wretch was tossed into the air like a shuttlecock, and he went soaring across the terrace to the neighbouring fountain. And with a tremendous splash he descended into the limpid pool.

But Lee and Dorrie only caught a mere glimpse of this. They were otherwise engaged! Lord Dorrimore was grappling with one of the Chinese soldiers. A swift movement, and the man's rifle was torn away.

Crash!

"How does that taste?" snapped his lordship viciously.

He had delivered a right-hander which laid the man low. Then he sailed into the next soldier. Nelson Lee was similarly engaged, and other members of Dr. Foo Chow's Household Guards were running up.

"By the Lord Harry! This was just what I was pinin' for!" shouted Dorrie exultantly. "Come on! The more the merrier! Gad! Look at Umlosi! It was worth everythin' for this!"

Umlosi was certainly enjoying himself, too. Single-handed, he was smashing into a dozen of the Chinese soldiers. Curiously enough, there was no attempt to fire a single shot, and Lee suspected that they had received definite instructions not to use their firearms.

Otherwise they would never have withheld their bullets.

"Into the car, Dorrie!" shouted Lee. "We can't stay here to fight this out! They'll close the drawbridge—and then we shall have had all this scrap for nothing. We've got to get away!"

"You're right!" agreed Dorrie. "In with you, Umlosi!"

"N'Kose, I come!" thundered the African.

Half a dozen men were littered about him, and the other soldiers were falling away, their superstitions getting the better of them. This black giant was no human being, but one of the demons of the earth in human guise!

Dorrie was already behind the wheel, and as Nelson Lee and Umlosi flung themselves on board the car, he raced the engine. What a glorious feeling! He fairly yelled with happiness as he depressed the clutch-pedal.

"Look out!" he bellowed.

Snapping in the low gear, he allowed the clutch to fall in with a jerk. He did this deliberately, and the car simply leapt forward like a thing of life. Lee and Umlosi were nearly pitched off—but they had been expecting something of the sort, and managed to hold on.

"Now for it!" said Dorrie gleefully. "Watch our dust!"

He had changed gear already, and in another second he was in top. With the accelerator depressed, and with the engine singing triumphantly in response, the big car shot down the driveway.

The drawbridge was still down!

"We'll do it, Dorrie!" shouted Lee, as thrilled as any schoolboy. "Unless they raise the bridge at once, we'll do it! Faster—faster! We don't want to share the same fate as young Handforth!"

"Perhaps we'll be able to find out what happened to those three youngsters!" muttered Dorrie, as he pressed his foot down harder than ever. "Look out! Be ready for bumps!"

He said this because a swarm of soldiers, alarmed by the shouts from the palace, were crowding and blocking the great gateway which marked the beginning of the bridge. Dorrie was expecting a fearful collision with this crowd.

But the Chinese cling to life as much as any other race; and this particular swarm of soldiers made headlong dives for safety as the car hurtled upon them. Shouting with fear, they scattered. Two of them were just caught as the car thundered by, but their injuries were not severe.

At something like sixty miles an hour the powerful Armstrong-Siddeley leapt across the drawbridge. A second after they had reached the concrete highway beyond, the bridge began to lift! Too late the Chinese engineers had attempted to stop this flight.

The car was already speeding away into the blackness of the night.

"We've done it!" gurgled Dorrie triumphantly.

"Yes, by Jove, and the bridge is going up now!" ejaculated Lee. "We were only in the nick of time, Dorrie! And if they're trying to give chase, they'll be delayed, too!"

His lordship grinned.

"Let them give chase!" he retorted. "This car is a corker! We're doin' somethin' like seventy!"

There was no occasion for this headlong speed, but Lord Dorrimore couldn't help himself. An expert racing motorist, his very veins were throbbing at the feel of the controls beneath his hands and foot. All he wanted was speed—speed—and more speed! The sensation of liberty was so glorious that he gave the car her head.

"That fight wasn't so bad, was it?" he shouted, above the droning of the wheels on the concrete road. "Pity we couldn't keep it up a bit longer; but we were only just in time as it was."

"And what now?" asked Nelson Lee soberly.

"To Yang Fu!" retorted Dorrie. "We'll be there in five minutes!"

"And then?"

"Who cares?" said his lordship. "Another fight! I can tell you, Lee, I'm revellin' in this affair."

Nelson Lee made no comment for a moment. His own excitement had died as rapidly as it had sprung into being. Now that they had won free from the island stronghold, he knew that their whole project was indefinite. They would probably reach Yang Fu—nothing was likely to stop them now. But how would it be possible for them to locate Yung Ching's prison within the streets of that great city? It all seemed too futile. Little did Lee guess that they were being guided by an unseen star of Providence!



CHAPTER 13.

THE REWARD OF DARING.

U MLOSI touched Lee's arm, and the detective, turning, could see a faint gleam of fear in the black giant's eyes. They were fairly rolling. The reflected light of the headlamps showed up his face.

"Wau! I like not this devil's chariot!" he exclaimed tremblingly. "I like not this thing of wheels and roaring demons within! Speak thou to N'Kose, and urge him to give us peace!"

Lee smiled.

"Motor-cars always scared you, didn't they?" he asked. "Cheer up, Umlosi, we shall soon find our feet on solid ground again."

Umlosi grunted, and gazed fearfully over the edge of the car.

"Methinks, my father, that we are more like to meet the ground with our heads!" he muttered. "I am a warrior, a fighter! Death will be pleasant for such men as thou and I if we meet it in battle. But death by means of this speeding fire-wagon would be an insult to our manhood, indeed!"

Lord Dorrimore turned his head.

"Goin' a bit too fast for you, old friend?" he grinned. "All right, we'll settle down to a crawlin' sixty. But we've got to get to Yang Fu as soon as we can, you know. Old Foo Chow is a cunnin' beggar, an' he's probably got a telephone line between the palace and the city."

"I've been thinking the same thing," said Nelson Lee. "In that case, Dorrie, we shall find a hot reception awaiting us."

"The hotter the better!" said the sporting peer with relish. "I'm just in that mood when I don't care if it snows! As a man to man, Lee, I don't care a brass ha'penny if it rains hobnails! I've enjoyed a few things in my life, but this is about the most glorious night on record! Be a pal, and keep your wise counsels in check!"

Nelson Lee laughed outright.

"Dorrie, you're incorrigible," he said dryly. "All right, go ahead! In for a penny, in for a pound! We might just as well have our fling while we're about it."

"Be thou of care, N'Kose!" said Umlosi quickly. "An obstruction bars the road! The enemy is already afoot to hinder us!"

"My hat!" ejaculated Dorrie. "This man's got eyes like gimlets!"

He stared keenly ahead, and felt thankful for the powerful nature of the great lights. There was certainly something looming upon the highway—some obstacle which had been placed in the road with deliberate intention. Umlosi had seen this before the others, however.

"Shall we chance it?" asked Dorrie grimly.

"Better not," replied Nelson Lee. "We don't want to deliberately forfeit our lives, do we? There wouldn't be much hope for us if we overturned at this speed, old man. Better pull up, and make a fight for it."

"By glory, yes!" agreed Dorrie. "Another scrap, eh? That'll suit me all right. I'll bet Umlosi's itchin' for another set-to as well!"

"A fight is more befitting to warriors than this monster of speed," said Umlosi. "Wau! I am ready, my father!"

Lee at once suspected that the telephone had been busy already, and that means were being adopted to bring this sudden flight to an end. Dorrie had reduced the car's speed to a sedate pace by this time, and the glaring headlamps revealed the obstruction as a mere sapling. A tree of small size, and mainly consisting of foliage, had been placed on the highway. From a distance it had



Umlosi was fairly revelling in this sudden fight. He leapt upon the footboard of the car, and seized the frightened Chinaman. With one Herculean movement, he raised the man above his head, and then, with a strength which amazed even Lee and Dorrie, he flung the Chinaman aside.

looked formidable, but now it was obviously of no account.

"Confound it!" snapped Lord Dorrimore. "I'm not goin' to pull up for this bush! Hold tight, you fellows! We'll go slap over it!"

"It'll be the better way," agreed Nelson Lee, nodding.

He was watching keenly—expecting to see some movement from the dark bushes which bordered the road. But there was no sign of any human presence. And Lee was inwardly alarmed.

"An ambush!" he told himself. "I'm afraid this is the end!"

He expected to hear a shattering fusillade of shots at any moment—to feel a dozen bullets searing their red-hot way into his flesh. And, instinctively he prepared himself to duck. And Dorrie accelerated at the same moment.

And then three figures appeared, dashing out from the roadside. Evidently they were aware of the fact that Dorrie was about to charge the obstruction.

"Stop!" roared a familiar voice. "Surrender, you rotters! Give us that car, you Chinese——"

"Handforth!" shouted Nelson Lee thickly.

"Praise from the heavens and the stars!"

rumbled Umlosi. "'Tis my young masters, N'Kose! Alive and well! Wau! Was it not worth our fighting to discover this? Is not our daring rewarded?"

"Dorrie—Dorrie!" shouted Lee. "Stop, man! It's the boys!"

"By the ghost of Oliver Cromwell, so it is!" roared Lord Dorrimore, flushed with excitement and joy. "Thank Heaven they're alive!"

He jerked the car to a standstill right in the middle of the sapling's foliage. But owing to the roar of the engine, Handforth & Co. had heard nothing of the conversation in the car, and the glare from the headlights prevented them seeing anything.

It had been Edward Oswald's idea to place this obstruction on the road. He had told Church and McClure that another car was bound to come along. And he meant to capture it. It seemed as though his plan had succeeded!

"Come on, Church! Come on, Mac!" he panted. "Now for it!"

He made a run at the car, brandishing a huge bamboo stick. There was something distinctly alarming in Handforth's attitude. With a rush he leapt upon the footboard and struck blindly.

"Surrender, you beastly Chinks!" he thundered. "We want this car——"

"Steady, Handforth! Steady, young 'un!"

The voice came to Handforth like something in a dream. The bamboo stick fell from his grasp, and he stood there, gazing amazedly at the face of Nelson Lee. Church and McClure had halted, too, but were too utterly flabbergasted to say a word. They had all expected to enter upon a grim, hopeless battle. And here they were looking at Nelson Lee and Dorrie and Umlosi!

"My only aunt!" gurgled Handforth. "Mr. Lee! We—we thought—— We were going to grab this car, sir, so that we could make a dash into Yang Fu!"

Nelson Lee was grasping him, and Dorrie was wrenching at his hand.

"Never mind about Yang Fu, Handforth," said Lee huskily. "We all thought you were dead. And here you are, not only alive, but as warlike as ever! And your companions are well, too!"

Handforth was beginning to recover.

"Well?" he repeated with a grin. "I should say we are, sir! Great Scott! Did you think we'd pegged out or something?"

"You young bounder, we all thought you were drowned!" retorted Dorrie. "Good luck to you, Handy—and to you other chaps, too! Gad, you've got as many lives as a batch of cats!"

"It's glorious to see you, sir," panted Church, jumping up. "But what's happened?"

"Is there something big on, sir?" asked McClure excitedly.

"You mustn't take any notice of these chaps, sir," said Handforth. "I've had an awful time with 'em. They didn't want to stop this car, but I made 'em help me."

"My boy, never mind that for the moment," said Nelson Lee quietly. "It seems incredible that you can be alive. Let us get accustomed to this glorious fact. How did you manage to escape death?"

"Well, it's a rummy affair, sir," admitted Handforth. "I thought we should have been dead long ago after that rat stew and the slug and cockroach mince! We're probably poisoned as it is!"

"What's the young ass talking about?" asked Dorrie in surprise. "Rat stew? He doesn't even mention the river!"

"Oh, that?" said Handforth carelessly. "There's nothing to tell, really. We just floated down on the current, and got ashore among the rocks, dried ourselves in the sun, and there you are!"

"Upon my word, Handforth, what an extraordinary boy you are!" said Nelson Lee. "You treat these things as though they were trifles! How in the world does it come about that you are here—on this road?"

"Handy had a fight with a tiger, sir, and saved a little Chinese boy from being killed," explained Church. "The kid's father was grateful, and took us in and gave us a feast."

"Oh, indeed!" exclaimed Lee. "Anything else?"

"Good glory! Isn't that enough?" asked his lordship. "Of course, I'm not a bit surprised," he added. "A fellow like Handforth wouldn't dream of fightin' anythin' less formidable than a tiger. He probably wrestles with a couple of elephants before breakfast every morning!"

"It was nothing, sir," growled Handforth. "It was a whacking great tiger, and the brute was mauling that kid to death. So I pulled its rotten tail, and biffed it in the eye! Naturally, it bunked!"

"Any self-respectin' tiger would bunk after bein' biffed in the eye," agreed Dorrie. "Lee, old man, do you believe this wild and woolly yarn? Personally, I think it's the real goods. Handy's capable of anythin'!"

"It is certainly an extraordinary story," said Nelson Lee. "Not that we can stop to analyse it now. Let us hope the tiger was only an old one, or a harmless brute——"

"Harmless!" echoed Church. "Don't you believe it, sir! It was a man-eater! Mac and I thought that Handforth was going to be killed, but he went for that tiger as though it were only a weasel! And the awful beast was so surprised that it bolted. It was just Handy's dare-devilry, sir."

"I believe it," said Nelson Lee, nodding. "Not content with getting nearly drowned, he invited death at the hands of a tiger! And I understand that you have made friends with a Chinaman?"

"Ah Fong, sir," said Handforth. "He can speak pidgin English, too—quite a decent old bird. He made us stop to dinner, and we didn't know what we'd been eating until afterwards. Dog meat, you know. Rats and slugs and things! Thank goodness we got rid of it all!" he added fervently.

"We won't press for the sordid details," said Dorrie gently. "Well, Lee, what about it now? Wasn't it worth dashin' out on the spree? We've found these youngsters, an' everything in the garden is lovely! Now it's full speed ahead for Yang Fu—an' Yung Ching's prison!"

"Hurrah!" shouted Handforth. "That's the idea, sir! That's just what we were planning ourselves!"

"Is it O.K., Lee?" asked his lordship.

"My dear man, you can go straight ahead," replied Nelson Lee resignedly. "Whatever happens now will leave me perfectly cold. I'm past the stage of being surprised!"



CHAPTER 14.

ANOTHER SHOCK.

RUTH to tell, Nelson Lee was so overwhelmingly relieved to find Handforth & Co. alive that he found it impossible to raise any

objections. And something was beginning to

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"HANDFORTH, THE HOSTAGE!"

Handy knows where Yung Ching is hiding, and Dr. Foo Chow means to wring this information from the redoubtable Leader of Study D.

But Handy tells Dr. Foo Chow to go and eat coke.

Whereupon, Dr. Foo Chow adopts other methods of persuasion—Chinese methods!

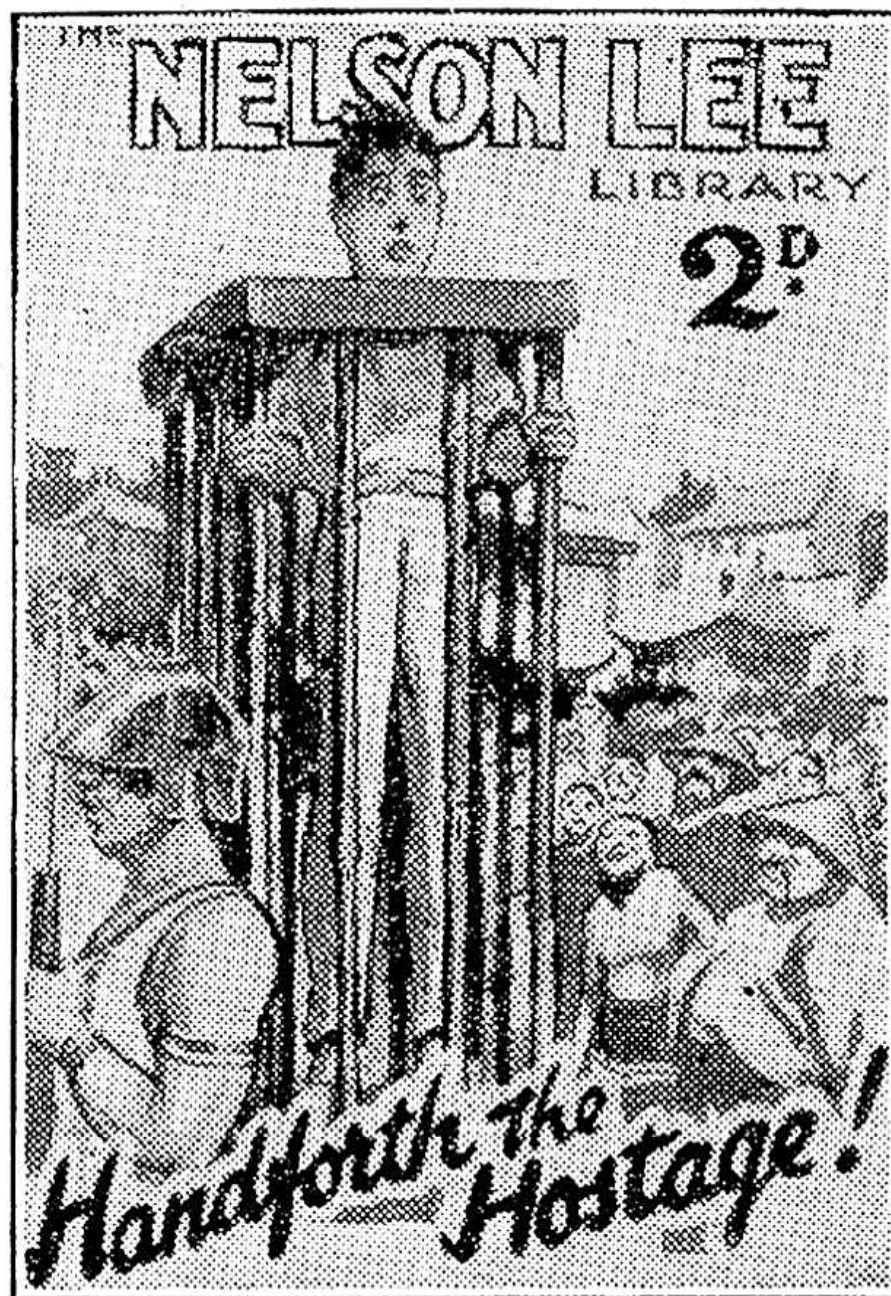
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tell him that this course of events had been planned by some strange trick of chance. It seemed useless to fight against it.

Lee was about the least superstitious man in the world, but, at the same time, there was something, almost uncanny in the manner in which the various happenings of the night had fitted into the general scheme.

And the great detective was beginning to feel, too, that even further success would crown their mission. There was such a feeling of confidence in the whole party that failure was out of the question. It was impossible to tell what would actually happen, but everybody had a fixed conviction that good would come of the whole reckless escapade.

Lee wondered how it was that Willy Handforth had been so utterly positive of his brother's safety. He had felt deeply sorry for the Third-Former, but now realised that his sorrow had been wasted. For Willy hadn't been pretending. He hadn't fooled himself. In some strange fashion he had known. And Lee wanted to take Handforth

back at once, so that all the other members of the party could learn the good news.

Indeed, this desire compelled him to change his views. As the car was speeding onwards again, with Handforth & Co. talking excitedly to Umlosi in the rear, Lee touched Lord Dorrimore's arm.

"Haven't we been successful to-night, old man?" he asked. "Don't you think we'd better return to the palace and let the others know of our good fortune? The party will then be intact again."

"Hang it, Lee, you're not goin' to be a wet blanket again?" protested Dorrie. "Didn't you tell us—"

"That's hardly fair, old man," said Lee quietly. "I'm not the kind of fellow to be a wet blanket anywhere."

"Sorry," apologised Dorrie. "Didn't mean it!"

"I can't help feeling the same as you do—that we ought to go ahead," continued Lee. "Against my better judgment I have an instinctive feeling that we shall do right. At the same time, it's only a vague impres-

sion. As a man of caution, I think we ought to turn a deaf ear to this voice of recklessness and let well alone. And yet, hang it, I want to keep straight on!"

His lordship grinned.

"Then let your caution go by the board for once, an' listen to the voice of the wicked sprite!" he chuckled. "Rummy thing, but I've got exactly the same hunch myself, old son! Let's go the whole hog while we're about it."

"Hear, hear, sir!" said Handforth, from behind. "After all, they can't do much. We're all prisoners in this country, anyhow—so why not have some fun while we're about it?"

"A darned sound argument," said Dorrie approvingly.

The Armstrong-Siddeley was now proceeding at a ridiculously sedate forty, but it was quite fast enough to carry its occupants to the great gateway of Yang Fu within a very few minutes. From a good distance they could see the enormous wall, towering high above—a formidable battlement.

"The gates are open!" exclaimed Dorrie exultantly. "Plenty of soldiers there, too, by the look of it, but we'll soon scatter 'em. These Chinese aren't half so dangerous as they look. As for the army, it's a comic-opera affair. I don't care two straws for it!"

"The fact that the gates are open is an excellent sign," declared Lee. "Our assumption that there is telephonic communication was wrong. Otherwise the gates would have undoubtedly been closed against us."

There was truth in this belief, for as the car approached, the Chinese soldiers not only cleared the roadway, but stood at attention. They clearly understood that the car contained a superior officer.

"Don't you see, sir, we've got all the advantage?" asked Handforth eagerly. "Those headlights are dazzling, and they won't know who we are until we've got through!"

"Yes, that is a great point in our favour," agreed Lee. "Don't go too quickly, Dorrie. Don't give them any chance to suspect."

"Trust me," said his lordship.

"You boys had better crouch down—below the edge of the car," went on the detective quickly. "Umlosi, you do the same. I'll follow your example—"

"What strange words are these, my master?" asked Umlosi, amazed. "Is it that we are to have no fight?"

"It is," said Lee grimly. "We'll fight when we have to, but there's no sense in asking for trouble. We're not all fire-eaters like you, Umlosi. Quickly now, all of you—down!"

Nelson Lee's plan was excellent. The chances were that the soldiers would not take any particular notice of the man at the wheel. Dorrie was crouching as low as possible. And the car glided smoothly to-

wards the gateway, the soldiers still at attention.

Suddenly Dorrie brought the car up with a jerk.

"By all the whiskers of Methuselah!" he ejaculated in amazement.

Lee glanced up sharply.

"What is it, Dorrie?" he asked, his voice keen.

"What is it!" roared Lord Dorrimore. "D'you think we can go ahead, an' leave this youngster in the hands of the Chinks? It's Willy!"

"Willy!" shouted Lee.

"Willy, as I'm a livin' sinner!" retorted Dorrie. "All right, Willy, young 'un! We're here!"

By this time every attempt at subterfuge was at an end. Handforth and Church and McClure were standing upright, staring. The car had come to a halt half through the gateway. And there, held by a crowd of Chinamen, was Willy Handforth, looking flustered and indignant. His eyes were now blazing with excitement as he heard the familiar voices.

"Rescue, St. Frank's!" he sang out.

"By George!" roared Handforth. "Into 'em, my sons!"

Willy gave one screeching yell of fresh excitement. In fact, it was so wild that his captors started back, and there was a momentary confusion. Willy's eyes were alight with joy.

"Ted!" he gasped thickly.

Nothing in the world could have stopped him then. He had taken this great chance in the remote possibility of learning some news about his major. From the first he had refused to believe that Edward Oswald was dead. And here he was, in this car, with Church and McClure, and goodness knew who else!

With one bound he ran through the cordon and hurled himself into the car.

"Ted!" he panted, clutching at his major. "Oh, Ted!"

There was certainly some strange element at work to-night! In spite of their better judgment, the party had continued the journey to Yang Fu. And now they were enabled to rescue Willy Handforth, whom they had all thought safely asleep at the palace.

"Ted!" breathed Willy huskily.

"That's all right, old son!" muttered Handforth, rather touched. "You surely didn't think we were done in? Not likely!"

"Of course not!" breathed Willy. "I knew you were alive all the time; I told everybody so."

"When you youngsters have done, perhaps we'd better get a move on," suggested Lord Dorrimore. "All settled there? Good! Look out!"

He sent the car lurching forward again before the surprised Chinese guards could recover. Everything had happened within a

few seconds, and the soldiers were not particularly brisk in their movements. The car won clear of the cordon, and sped on without being hindered.

"I knew you were alive all the time," went on Willy, pumping his brother's hand with vim. "You should have seen the way the girls were blubbing."

"Blubbing?" said Handforth with a start. "Over me?"

"Over you and the other chaps."

"I say, what rot!" protested Handforth uncomfortably. "I mean— All the same, it's rather ripping to know that— But look here, Willy. What the dickens are you doing here, at the gates of Yang Fu? I'm all mixed up! I'm blessed if I know—"

"By jingo, yes!" interrupted Willy tensely. "I say, Dorrie," he added, with breathless excitement. "I know where Chingy's prison is! If you follow my directions, we can dash straight there!"

Lord Dorrimore fairly shouted.

"What did I tell you, Lee?" he exclaimed gleefully. "Didn't I say there was something in the air to-night? I'm hanged if Willy doesn't know the very thing we're lackin'! Yung Ching's prison! Gad, it seems too good to be true!"

"But are you sure, Willy?" asked Lee.

"Of course, sir," replied Handforth minor. "I'm so jolly happy to find you all here, and to know that Ted's safe, that I can't think clearly! You see, I came to the city with Foo Chow, sir."

"Upon my word!"

"Only he didn't know it, sir!" explained Willy.

"Oh!" said Lee. "I can understand that better. By Jove! Foo Chow's car was standing on the terrace when I spoke to you—"

"That's it, sir," interrupted the fag. "I was on the balcony, and I managed to drop down into the car before it left— Round to the right, sir!" he added to Dorrie. "That's it—straight on! Don't mind the crowds. They'll get out of the way quickly enough!"

The car rolled over the uneven roads, and grew nearer and nearer to the prison where Yung Ching was held captive.

good memory, too, for some of these narrow streets were tortuous, and there were turnings in the most unexpected places.

Although this city was primitive to the last degree, the inhabitants were accustomed to motor-cars. But even these were rare within the gates. For Dr. Foo Chow seldom brought his automobiles actually into the city. It was his general custom to leave the cars outside, and to continue in a stately sedan chair. Only the emergency of the present situation had impelled him to alter this rule.

The people, therefore, scattered in an almost panic-stricken manner as the car glided over the uneven road.

"We don't know what we're going to do when we get there, but we're goin'," said Lord Dorrimore cheerfully. "We've done great work to-night, Lee, old man! We've got Handforth and the other youngsters, an' now we want to grab Yung Ching. I shan't be satisfied with anythin' else."

"It'll mean a terrific fight, sir," said Willy. "Foo Chow's there now, you know. And those beastly soldiers of his are fairly swarming. I don't quite see how we can hope to fight our way through—"

"This is our lucky night," interrupted Dorrie. "We'll manage it."

"Rather, sir!" declared Edward Oswald. "I'm just dying for a scrap, too. I haven't had a minute's excitement ever since we toppled over that drawbridge."

"Not at all!" said Dorrie drily. "Thump-in' tigers in the eye, an' barricadin' the highway don't count, eh?"

"I mean a real fight, sir," said Handforth.

"Don't worry—you'll get one soon," replied Lord Dorrimore. "I don't quite see how we're goin' to manage it— Which way here?"

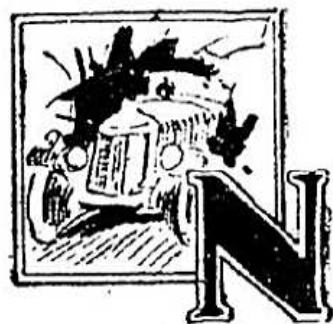
"Straight on, sir," said Willy. "Don't take those other roads. Straight through, and then sharp to the left. We're nearly there."

"That doesn't leave us much time to make any plans," said his lordship. "We shall have to leave it to chance again, Lee. You wouldn't like to stop at one of these shops an' buy a few ornaments, or somethin'? We might as well do some shoppin' while we're in town!"

"I wish we were as care-free as you seem to indicate," said Nelson Lee quietly. "But we're committed to this affair now, and we've got to go through with it. We had better wait until the car stops, and then make a sudden dash for the main entrance of the prison. After that, we can only trust to luck."

"You don't happen to know which part of the prison Yung Ching occupies, Willy?" asked Dorrie.

"Sorry, sir—no," replied Willy. "In fact, it's only guesswork that Chingy's there at all. Old Foo Chow went in the building, and I guessed the rest. But it seems pretty obvious."



CHAPTER 15.

BREAKING INTO PRISON.

NOBODY made any attempt to stop the car.

As the party had first anticipated, the inhabitants took it to be one of

Foo Chow's automobiles, piloted by an officer. So the streets were emptied swiftly as the powerful headlights split the darkness.

Willy was so happy that he could hardly point out the way, although he knew it perfectly. He had memorised every section of the route. And it was necessary to have a

"I'm satisfied, anyhow," said his lordship. "Foo Chow came here especially to superintend the first mutilation— Good gad! It's about time we arrived on the scene!" he added grimly, as he opened the throttle. "Even now we shall probably be too late, poor kid!"

"Now, sir—sharp to the left!" said Willy quickly.

"Get ready!" muttered Handforth. "Leave everything to me! I'll lead the way, and the rest of you can follow!"

"If it's all the same to you, Handforth, I'll do the leading," put in Lee drily. "And Umlosi will be by my side."

"Welcome words, Umtagati," growled the African chief. "Thou and I together will scatter these sons of vermijn like straws before the wind! For are we not warriors?"

Dorrie turned sharply.

"Now then, be ready!" he said tensely. "I'm goin' to shoot up quickly, an' stop with a jerk. Be ready to leap out the instant I pull up!"

"Good!"

"Buck up, St. Frank's!" murmured Handforth. "Remove to the rescue!"

"Hurrah!" breathed Church and McClure. They had actually turned into the courtyard, and Dr. Foo Chow's car was still waiting outside the main doorway of the big, dragon-painted building. There were many soldiers there, too, and the rescue party could see that a grim fight was probable.

Lord Dorrimore opened the throttle wider, and the Armstrong-Siddeley shot across the courtyard. Dorrie was an expert driver, and he planned to pull up with the headlights of the car immediately facing the wall of the Yamen. He was going straight at the building.

At the very last second he trod heavily upon the pedal which operated the four-wheel brakes. Speed was everything in this desperate venture. But Dorrie's foot played him false—or so it seemed at the moment.

At that crucial moment it slipped off the brake-pedal, and jammed down hard upon the accelerator. Before the heavy car was even checked, it leapt forward like a mad thing.

There was no time for Dorrie to pull his foot back, for the next event took place in the fraction of a second. The car, already travelling fast, fairly hurtled forward.

Crash!

It struck the wall of the building with a devastating commotion, and there arose a series of wild and excited shouts. But those in the car had no time to think, or to dodge, or to make the slightest move.

And strangely enough, they were hardly jerked.

For the car, instead of mangling itself up against the wall, went clean through it as a clown will break a paper hoop. The wall of the prison simply burst, and the car plunged headlong into the jagged opening.



CHAPTER 16.

VICTORY!

THE whole affair was a staggering surprise. Lord Dorrimore himself, reckless as he was, would never have adopted such a madly drastic enterprise as this. But Fate seemed to have taken affairs in hand thoroughly on this thrilling night!

Nobody in the car was even scratched.

The collision had been so abrupt that the plaster and lath wall fell to pieces like powder, and before any of the fallen debris could do any harm, the car was through—clean through into the room, and straight on through a *papier mache* partition into the next.

The air was choked with dust, but the car was not merely unharmed, but hardly battered. Even the wind-screen was intact. In just the same way a rapidly moving car will crash through the gates of a level-crossing and come off the victor. It was the speed that did the trick.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Lord Dorrimore blankly.

With a wild lurch the car had pulled up. Those in it were clutching at the sides, their hearts beating madly. They were dazed by what had happened a second before, and they could scarcely credit the truth.

Nelson Lee was the only one whose wits were acute.

And he took in that scene as an impression is flashed upon a photographic plate. It was a scene which burned itself into his vision.

This inner room was an extensive one, purely Oriental in design and character, and there were two yellow-flamed lamps burning. The car had come to a stop half-way through the shattered partition. The people in the room were momentarily stunned into inactivity, and stood there motionless.

And Nelson Lee saw everything in that one second.

Over on one side stood Dr. Foo Chow, as immaculate as ever, his face expressive of consternation. For once the Chinese potentate had allowed his emotions to betray themselves on his yellow visage.

Right in front of the car, in the very centre of the room, blazingly illuminated by the car's headlights, was a chair. And strapped to that chair, facing the Britishers, was Yung Ching, the little Chinese boy!

One of his hands was fixed to a wooden support, so that it was impossible for him to move it—a kind of projection from the arm of the chair. And over him bent a tall, venomous-looking Chinaman, a gleaming surgical knife in his hand! Here, indeed, was a miracle!

The rescue party had broken into this very chamber at the exact moment of the torture! A minute later, and Yung Ching would have

(Continued on page 36.)



BETWEEN OURSELVES

Mr. Edwy Searles Brooks
chats with his readers.



NOTE.—If any reader writes to me I shall be pleased to comment upon such remarks as are likely to interest the majority. All letters should be addressed to EDWY SEARLES BROOKS, c/o The Editor, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Every letter will be acknowledged in these columns, and if of very special merit will be starred.

E. S. B.

Let's "cut the cackle" and get to business. I've got a whole heap of acknowledgments to make!

* * *

George Edward Heape* (Burton-on-Trent), A Nelson Lee Admirer (Clapham), R. Freeman (Shepherd's Bush), George Jones (Wheatley Hill, Co. Durham), A Regular Reader (Habrough), Spartanica (Walthamstow), H. Mayrick* (Walsall), G. T. (Erith), William Thomas Chalmers (Gloucester), E.'s F. P. and L. C. (Bethnal Green), B. L. Abbott (Streatham), Frank C. Sharp (Nottingham), Clarence Boston (Wilstead), F. Mayerl (Shepherd's Bush), S. P. R. R. B. (S. Kensington), R. A. J. A. Gleeson (Limerick), Julius Herman (Graaff-Reinet, S.A.), Votre Ami* (Romford), Wanderer* (Digby), Clifford J. S. Burns (Plumstead), W. Holmes (Glasgow), Wilton Butterworth* (Rochdale), Holly L. Langham (New Malden), Frank Rushton (Stoke-on-Trent), Dorothy C. Knight (Paddington), John Bailey* (Fullerton, Calif., U.S.A.), Prairie Maid* (Toronto).

* * *

I don't think you are quite correct, B. L. Abbott, in stating that most of my characters use the term "ain't" in place of "is not." As a matter of fact, I have, for many years, made a particular point of avoiding this. You will notice that the St. Frank's boys always say "isn't." I think you must be confusing my stories with those of another writer.

* * *

You were pretty clever, R. A. J. A. Gleeson, to forecast such an excellent England Test Eleven. Although you wrote your letter at the beginning of January, you picked A. W. Carr as skipper. Let's wish him the best of luck!

* * *

Thanks, Julius Herman, for your little catalogue of South Africanisms. I could do with some more, if you know of any, for I am always keen to get these glossaries of slang from our Dominions, etc.

* * *

Of course I like your letter, Votre Ami. And I should certainly be pleased if you would write again. As a matter of fact, I always like to hear again and again, even if

I am a bit "stingy" in the space I fill up in replying.

* * *

I am sorry you don't care for St. Frank's with five Houses, Wilton Butterworth. Perhaps this is because you have been reading "The Monster Library." Those yarns, of course, all deal with the old St. Frank's, when there were only two Houses. But I rather fancy the general run of readers prefer the old School as it is now.

* * *

I'm afraid you were too late to get the League number you desired, Dorothy C. Knight. As you asked the Chief Officer to hand your letter on to me, so that I could reply in these columns, I am now doing so. I hope you are not particularly disappointed about your number. After all, nobody in the League gets any "special favours."

* * *

Perhaps I am wrong, John Bailey, but I believe you can buy the Old Paper from the "home town" news-stands in Los Angeles. At any rate, when I was there, I purchased all sorts of English papers from a little bookshop just on the corner of Spring Street and Fifth Street. Perhaps it's a huge place by now—or perhaps the site has been occupied by a new skyscraper. I know that Los Angeles changes its appearance with great rapidity! Yes, I visited Fullerton, and thought it was fine.

* * *

Thanks for your list of Canadian slang, Prairie Maid. I always find these lists useful, particularly as they come from the people on the spot, and my gratitude is quite genuine when I receive them.

Yours until next time,

THE PRISONERS OF FOO CHOW!

(Continued from page 34.)

been mutilated in cold blood, with Dr. Foo Chow callously looking on.

Nelson Lee went absolutely pale.

"Quick!" he shouted tensely.

In one step he was out of the car. Foo Chow made a move towards him, but Lee took no notice. His whole attention was upon the torturer.

Smash!

That blow, from Nelson Lee's left, caught the torturer on the point of his chin with such devastating force that he turned a complete back somersault, and went hurtling into a far corner. Behind that blow had been all the force of Nelson Lee's volcanic rage.

"Hurrah!" roared Handforth. "Come on, the Remove!"

"St. Frank's for ever!"

They piled out of the car, and Foo Chow's voice, issuing orders, was drowned in the general din. The whole affair was happening within the space of a few poignant seconds. It was about the speediest thing imaginable.

Before Dr. Foo Chow could take any action whatsoever, Handforth & Co. reached Yung Ching's chair. They wrenched helplessly at the straps. But Umlosi, with a roar of contempt, tore those leather thongs asunder as though they were made of paper.

"Into the car with him!" rapped out Nelson Lee quickly. "Dorrie, sit where you are—be ready to back out!"

"Right!" flashed back Lord Dorrimore.

Handforth & Co. bundled Chingy into the car before the bewildered boy could understand what was happening. With a leap, Nelson Lee reached the footboard, and Umlosi was only brought back by a sharp command. The African giant was anxious for much more fighting than this.

But Yung Ching had been rescued, and it would be madness to remain.

"All ready?" roared his lordship. "Go!"

He jerked the clutch in, and the car lurched backwards, in reverse. It went clean through that hole in the partition, and then out through the jagged rent in the outer wall. It was an amazing exploit in every sense, and looked like being successful.

"Hold tight!" called Dorrie. "We're goin' to swing round sharply here!"

Out in the open, he sent the car shooting round in a semi-circle, and deliberately backed it with tremendous force into the front wheels of Dr. Foo Chow's Rolls-Royce.

Crash!

"Hi!" roared Handforth. "You've hit something——"

"That's all right!" grinned his lordship. "Just an idea of mine!"

Dorrie's brain had acted quickly in this crisis. He knew that the Armstrong-Siddeley's petrol tank was in the front of the car, and so there could be no danger of

serious damage by that quick backwards crash.

The body was dented badly, and the rear bumper was twisted a bit, but the gallant car was in no way impaired vitally.

But the unfortunate Rolls-Royce was out of commission in a moment.

The full force of that rear bumper struck the front wheels, twisted them round, and put the steering gear out of commission. The radiator was smashed, and the very engine rendered useless. The next moment the Armstrong-Siddeley was going forwards again, having done its deadly work.

"Splendid!" shouted Lee. "They can't follow now!"

"My idea, exactly," grinned Dorrie.

"Look out, sir!" shouted Handforth excitedly. "These soldiers are swarming up by the score! We'd better stop and make a fight for it, sir!"

"Wise words!" boomed Umlosi.

"No, Dorrie—go straight ahead," urged Lee. "We daren't risk another fight."

"This time, old man, I'm with you," retorted Dorrie promptly. "We've had enough excitement for one evenin'—enough to satisfy even me! Now we're off to the palace, an' Foo Chow can do his darndest!"

He took absolutely no notice of the human barrier which had collected at the exit of the cul-de-sac. It was the only possible way out of this courtyard, and it was packed with Foo Chow's soldiery. Lord Dorrimore raced the engine to its fullest extent, but slipped the clutch.

In this way it sounded as though the car was travelling at a much higher speed than it actually was, and the effect was instantaneous. With yelps of alarm, the men sprang for safety. They scattered in every direction, and the car seemed to bore its way through the human mass.

Much as these soldiers feared the wrath of Foo Chow, they feared that car even more! For here was death itself, bearing down inexorably upon them. They squealed in terror, and made way.

Crash! Biff! Thud!

Leaning over the side of the car, Handforth obtained a great deal of satisfaction from landing out promiscuously at every head within reach. Some of his forceful punches got home with deadly effect.

"Come on!" roared Edward Oswald. "We'll show you! Bah! Chinese rotters! You couldn't stop us if you had a battery of heavy artillery!"

"Go it, Dorrie!" yelled Willy. "We're through!"

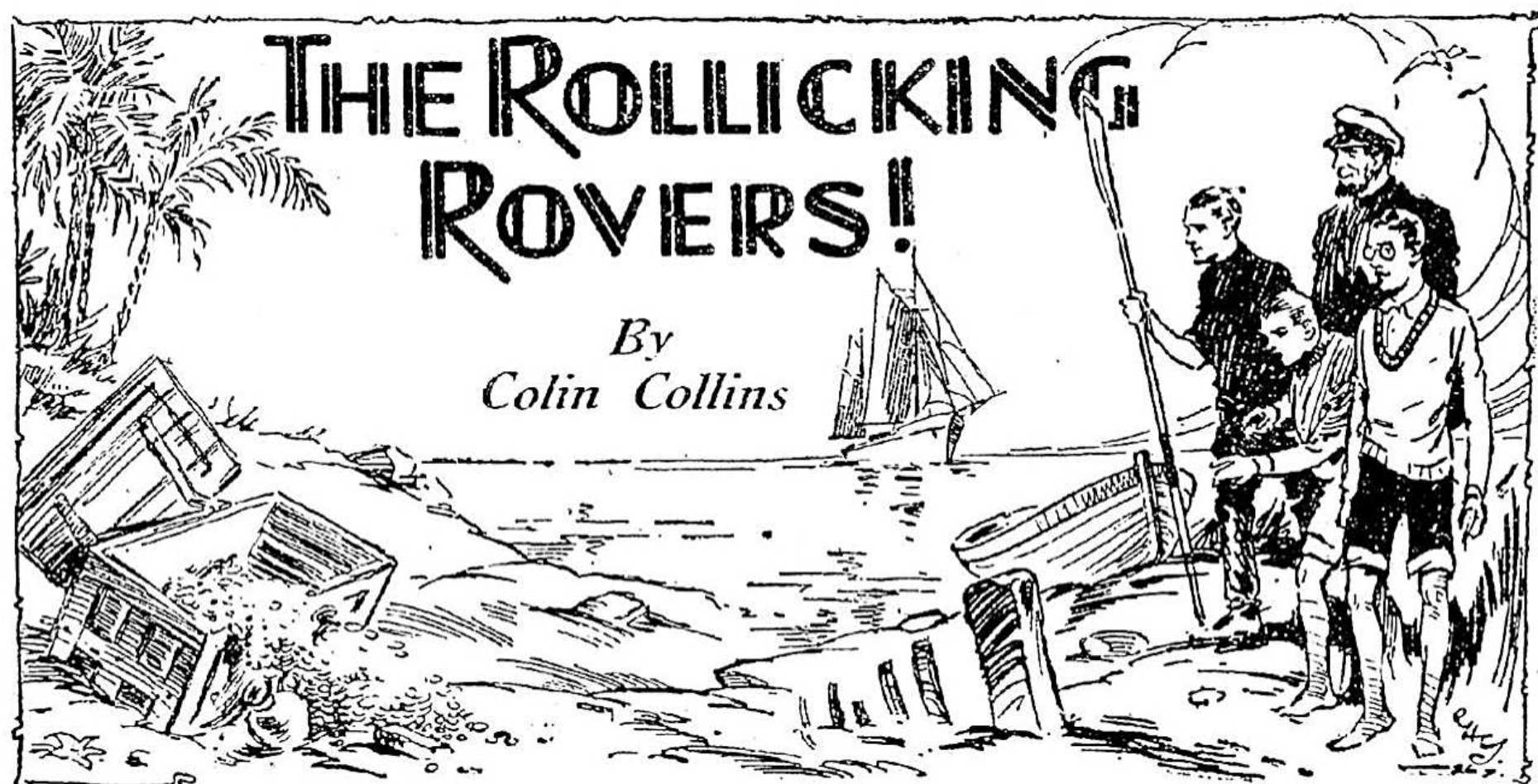
"Of course we're through!" retorted his lordship. "Hang on!"

The exit was won, and they found themselves out in the street. Here there was a dense crowd of the ordinary population, brought hither excitedly by the great commotion. Lord Dorrimore went at a mere crawl, for these people were innocent, and in no way responsible for Dr. Foo Chow's villainies.

(Continued on page 41.)

Fun and adventure!

Begin this yarn Now!



WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE.

BOB DIGBY, HAROLD DWYER, and FATTY VOSS are left a large fortune, to be divided equally between them. The fortune is left them by their uncle, Silas Digby, and the wealth is hidden in a chest which he has buried somewhere during his travels round the world. They have no clue to the whereabouts of this fortune, but enlist the aid of BEN TOPPET, the skipper of the Saucy Ann, who tells them of a chest concealed beneath a tree in their uncle's garden. They dig up the chest and find that it contains documents, a mummified head and hands! The papers are examined, and it is decided to accompany Ben on the Saucy Ann in a world quest for the lost treasure. But there is a member

of the crew named FOXEY, whom they do not trust, and it is arranged to leave him behind. In due course, the adventurers set off on the Saucy Ann, but Foxey has secreted himself on board. They call at Boulogne, and then proceed to the Isle of Koba, off the African coast.

In a large cave, high up on a ledge, Ben finds the chest in which the treasure is supposed to be hidden. But to his disgust the chest contains only bully beef tins. Foxey then meets Froggie Martin, the pirate owner of a slave dhow, and the two rascals plot to capture the Saucy Ann.

(Now read on.)

The Adventurers Attacked.

THE treasure seekers began their climb down to return to the ship in the cave. The Saucy Ann was going to float out to sea at once and give a wide berth to this pirate-infested island.

With a motor aboard they feared no pursuit by any sailing ship.

"We'll be off and out to sea before Foxey Johnson and his niggers can do any damage to us," Ben declared. "Climb down gently, and take your time."

Just as stealthily, and more slowly, the two ruffians behind them descended also, clinging to the rocky wall, and watching Ben's lantern bobbing in the gloom.

The treasure seekers descended, calling to one another as they went, and making so much noise that they gave confidence to the two rascals coming almost at their heels. They suspected no pursuit, and little dreamed that unsheathed knives were glinting not many yards above Ben's head.

The Saucy Ann was lying in darkness, according to orders, and Dummy was asleep as usual, having nothing to do.

Their voices, under ordinary circumstances, would not have awakened a deaf man; but

Dummy had a way of actually feeling sound. His eyes opened and his nerves tingled to the echoes in the cave. He saw Ben's lantern, in the sky, as it were, and sat up.

Foxy had utterly forgotten to tell Martin of Dummy's existence.

Ben saw the others down, and came last, with the lantern, lighting them cautiously. When near the ship, a stone rolled on to him from above.

Another stone came trickling down a moment later.

That was odd, because there had been nothing but solid rock for the last fifty feet. Yet another came, this one dropping on the lads as they neared the boat.

"I say, careful up there, Ben," Fatty called up. "That one hit me on the head."

"It wasn't me," Ben called down.

"By its velocity it came from a long way up," observed Goggles. "Oh, there's another!"

They were clambering on the ship now and waiting to give Ben a hand.

"Look out!" Ben roared suddenly, and leaped on deck. "Look out—there's somebody! Lights on, quick!"

Even as Ben spoke something leaped out

of the darkness, almost on to his back. There was no time to get to any light switch. Ben's lantern dropped, but did not go out. There was just light enough to see the feet of the attackers. Someone set the lamp upright on deck, but no one quite knew where the others were.

Ben gave a roar; there was another leap, a blade flashed through the air, a wrist struck him a great thud on the side, and the blade went between his arm and his ribs. Ben gave a groan, fell flat on his face, groaned again, and rolled and lay still.

But he was not dead—nor even scratched! "Got him!" yelled Martin.

Boys are more nimble than men when moved by terror and surprise, and are very hard to catch and hold. They quickly realised that strangers were aboard and an attack was in progress.

"Look out—look out!" Bob yelled, and made a dash for an open space, with someone after him.

Fatty, who had stopped to pick up the lantern, unconsciously made a back, over which Martin, in his chase after Bob, went sprawling.

The supposed dead man, Ben Toppet, as nimble, in an emergency like this, as a cat, sprang to life and caught the intruder, Martin, by the throat from behind. His iron fingers closed on Martin's neck, and never a sound more escaped the pirate.

By this time somebody had switched on the electric light. As it flashed out it revealed the spectacle of Ben Toppet lifting his assailant, Martin, high in the air and flinging him overboard.

Splash!

"That's one!" Ben yelled. "There's another! I saw him—it was Foxey!"

They were just in time to glimpse Foxey as he slid into darkness. Where he went none could tell.

Seeing that the game was up, and he could neither hope to escape by water nor by climbing the cavern side without certainty of pursuit, Foxey fell upon his coil of rope, lifted his secret trap, and slid down into security—the old security that had been so effective all through the voyage.

"He's gone overboard! Bring a light!" cried Ben.

"The brute!" cried Ben in the stowaway's hearing, for he was standing over his head. "Next time we won't wait for knives to flash, we'll get in first. And don't you forget it, my lads. I wish I knew who his pal was—a whiskery ruffian, by the feel of him—but I set about him pretty well!"

"Hadn't we better climb up after Foxey and chase him?" suggested Bob. "He might come back and attack us, Ben."

"What, him, alone, with us all here? Not him! Hallo, is that Dummy there—he's been stabbed!"

"Examine him," suggested Goggles, bringing his lantern down. "He's bleeding—he's dead!"

"Carry him into my cabin!"

Dummy was carried in and found to be badly hurt. Ben gave first aid, assisted by Goggles. Bob, with his revolver ready, stayed outside on deck, watching every shadow for signs of stealing forms, but saw nothing.

It was a pity, because he was dying to let off at someone.

It was nervy work, peering and listening and waiting, and nothing stirring.

Presently queer sounds as of distant ghostly voices and some faint echoes broke on his ears—yes, certainly voices!

It was the crew of the slaver making merry and heaving to at the mouth of this inner cavern about a quarter of a mile away, where they had been commanded by their skipper to lie in wait and block the exit—but without being told that there was another ship further in.

Blowing up the Slave Dhow.

THE Saucy Ann must be got under weigh. Dummy was alive and in no immediate danger. Ben had by this time guessed that Foxey's accomplice must have been recruited from the slaver riff-raff—possibly a man from the actual dhow they had seen out at sea.

"We must go easy, and go slow, and keep our eyes skinned when we get out to sea," he warned the lads. "There may be need of them barkers of yours," he added with a grin; "not as they could do much damage, but barking dogs is allus treated respectful."

The ship began to move very slowly, believing the way out to be clear.

When they came in sight of the narrow exit they beheld the slaver lying there and blocking the fairway, a shadow-boat against the faint illumination of the Cathedral Cave beyond.

"Lights out!" cried Ben in a hoarse, alarmed whisper.

They went dead slow now, but crept nearer.

"Who are they?" Bob asked, he being at the wheel in Dummy's stead now.

"The slaver crew! Look, they're out on the rocks stretching their legs after a spell at sea, drinking and feeding."

Goggles was looking through his night glasses, binoculars with very big lenses, which now proved very useful.

"How many? Can you count 'em?"

Twenty were in sight, but not a soul moving aboard ship.

"If they was to catch sight of us they'd be on us in a couple of ticks," growled Ben.

"Can't we dash through at top speed and surprise them, let fly with our revolvers, and get out?" asked Bob.

"Or sink their old tub by ramming her," added Fatty.

"Pity we can't blow it up," observed Goggles.

"What with?" growled Ben, annoyed.

"Dynamite."

"Well, we do happen to have a stick or two, in case we had to move rocks to get at your uncle's hiding-place; but how are you going to get dynamite aboard and fuse it?"

"Produce your dynamite and we will see!" said Goggles.

Goggles crept to his cabin and, by the aid of a well-screened light, got busy unwinding coils of wire—precious wireless coils to which he had said a sad farewell!—and Ben produced the deadly dynamite charge.

"Who's going to swim to the dhow?" asked Bob, in a whisper. "Me, I suppose?"

"I will, if you'll take charge of my glasses," replied Goggles calmly.

"You, Fatty, had better attend to the battery at this end, and see that Ben doesn't get playing with it."

"Playing with it!" cried Ben angrily.

"This ain't a play job—it's life and death! If you don't get there without being seen—well, you won't be seen by us no more!"

"Two of us had better go," Bob decided. "I'll swim with you, and if they get you, Harold, they may miss me—I can swim under water for longer than anybody I know."

So it was settled that way, and Ben went to the engine to see that all was well, so that they could make a sudden dash out in the confusion that must follow the explosion.

The Saucy Ann was gently moved up a couple of hundred yards nearer the scene of action when the swimmers set out. When they had done a good distance the ship ventured nearer still, invisible against the dark background—and then a little nearer, when the wire strained tight.

Ben was at the wheel now.

The noisy talk and shouts of the men on the rocks was sufficient to drown all other sounds, and grew yet noisier as the ship crept up behind them.

Hand over hand, and very slowly now, the swimmers went on and vanished under the sloping sides of the dhow.

The charge was hung on to a chain.

"Now—back!" gasped Goggles. "I'm pretty well done."

Bob's hand came out to lend aid, and the return was made more slowly.

"Up—aboard, quick!" cried Ben, overjoyed to see them. He helped to lift them, and they dropped on deck exhausted.

"Say when," whispered Fatty, thrilling with excitement, and his fingers itching to touch the switch.

"If—if you'll wait a moment till—till I get

my glasses," faltered Goggles, recovering, "I think I should like to see that all the terminals are correct."

"Ay, ay," replied Ben, respectful at last. "I don't know what you mean, but I suppose ye understand."

"Now!" And Goggles threw the switch.

There was a flash—and a roar as of a thousand thunder claps—lashing winds and heaving water as the percussion of the confined explosion swirled around the cavern. The slave dhow itself seemed to have been kicked on one side by a giant foot; and a gap appeared at its centre like a piece bitten out.

The Saucy Ann itself rocked and shook, and everybody was knocked flat. Ben was the first up, and the engine began to roar.

With swift precision the escaping vessel

was steered to the narrow gap and forged through, catching the sinking dhow a glancing blow and swinging her on one side. The boys yelled in their excitement and looked for the stranded slavers, but none were to be seen. Everybody in the vicinity of the explosion had been laid out on the rocks.

The Saucy Ann serenely made for the centre of the Cathedral and the welcome daylight, and soon was out in the blazing day, its crew blinking in the rays of the setting sun.

The Vanishing Mummy.

THESE was no question about the next move of the Saucy Ann; they must go to the nearest port and procure medical assistance for Dummy, who had been badly wounded by Foxey's knife.

The injured man—without speech, and scarcely able to

move—was very helpless, and could only signal his wishes by the movement of his eyes. The heat was terrific, and his sufferings were intensified.

Sails were set and the motor used as well, sending them out at a spanking speed through the night. No need to economise in fuel now, as they were bound for a civilised port, but they kept a sharp look-out for native boats.

When night fell, and the moon rose, the lads took spells at the wheel; but it was necessary that a conference should be held at which all must be present; so they gathered just round the wheel and settled to discuss their adventure, and the startling reappearance of Foxey.

"The thing that matters most," said Bob, who was at the wheel, "is not what Foxey can do, or is going to do—he's powerless; but where are we going next? We must



examine the diary and find the place before this that uncle stopped at, and see what he said about it. Where's the diary?"

"In the Spanish deed-box," replied Goggles.

"Let's have it up, Ben, and consult upon it here," suggested Bob. "I can't leave the wheel, and I can't think of anything else now but the next place we're to tackle. We struck a snag at the Isle of Caves. It was probably the place before this. Can you remember where, Ben?"

"We touched at so many, Mr. Bob," replied Ben.

"Then let's have up the box!"

"I'll go," Fatty volunteered, and vanished.

He came back staggering under the weight of the box, and plumped it down almost at Ben's feet. Fatty was all impatience; he threw back the box lid, and Goggles directed the light of a pocket-torch into the interior.

There was a roar and a leap from Ben.

"Look!" he yelled, and pointed to the dark hollow.

The mummified head and hands had been restored, and lay on the top of the books and papers!

A strong man's fear is infectious. Ben's fright communicated itself to the others—just a shivery thrill—and they all bent over and peered within, as if half expecting the ghastly things to rise and float out.

Goggles settled his glasses and drew nearer, to get a closer look.

"This is more than magic," he observed quietly. "Who did this?"

"I tell yer the ship's harnted," shouted Ben, "and we'll have no luck with ghosts aboard. Into the sea with 'em!"

"The best place—then Ben will be satisfied," Bob agreed.

"No, no!" Goggles urged. "This needs investigation. There is a mystery here that would gladden the heart of a Sexton Blake."

"What we do want to do is to get at the diary," urged Fatty impatiently, "take those things out and throw them overboard."

"No, no. On further investigation there may be some clue," Goggles insisted. "I'll take them out for the present and put them aside. Heads don't walk without legs and feet. Here—I'll remove them for the present and set them over there."

He acted at once, and carried the grim relics to a point some distance away—a good distance away—from Ben, who was behaving as if the things were explosives. The mummified head and hands were set down upon a coil of rope in a corner—with no suspicion of what, or who, was underneath the coil.

Then they tackled the diary and read many entries—not for the first time—seeking to discover, in some phrase or odd reference, a hidden clue. According to the entries the place touched at by Silas Digby before the Isle of Caves was the very spot they were now making for, the port of Teredos, a coastal harbour chiefly associated with timber.

This was the passage in Uncle Digby's diary which they fixed upon as being rather suggestive and mysterious, and perhaps pointing the way to discovery.

"Teredos. Stayed with my good friends, Monsieur and Madame Rima, at their lumber yard. Deposited with them a few things of value best left ashore, and later to be taken home when sailing north. Bought a few pearls. Left with Rima my box of books, safe enough with him as he only speaks, and never reads our language. Double locked."

"Did you notice that box, Ben?" cried Fatty, who was reading from the diary.

"Ay, I did. A box of books. It was a big box, and he was allus buying books, old 'uns and new 'uns, until he cluttered himself with such a lot he had to burn some, and leave some ashore."

"Who is the person Rima mentioned in the entry?"

"Oh, he's a sort of Frenchman who trades out here. Very fond of your uncle, he was, and never did he pass Teredos without a call. He had clothes sent out from London to there. Anything and everything was left with Monsoo Rima."

"It looks rather odd. A box, and a big box, and double locked! We must make a call on these people!"

"Ay, and glad they'll be to see you. Your uncle allus did promise that some day he'd bring you for the old lady to see."

"More and more suspicious. He always promised to take us when he went to bring home his fortune," said Bob.

"And then, when you was old enough—he forgot where it was! But, I agree, it do look promising," Ben admitted.

"Well, we'll make port by morning. And now put the book back in the box, and them mummy's hands in the sea. We won't havé 'em on the ship an hour longer," said Ben.

"No, no," urged Goggles. "I've been thinking—"

"Overboard with 'em!" Ben bellowed.

"Oh, very well—pitch them in yourself, Ben."

"Not me—I ain't touching the things."

"Here—let me!" cried Bob, replacing the diary in the box and walking to the spot where they had deposited the head and hands, and stooping to pick up the dreaded objects.

He could not find them.

"I say, Goggles, where did you put them?"

"On that heap of tackle."

"Where?"

"There, where you are."

"They're not here."

"Not there?" roared Ben, doing a great jump on one side. "Don't tell me they've vanished again!"

"They have!"

(Another fine instalment of this rousing yarn next week.)

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THE PRISONERS OF FOO CHOW!

(Continued from page 36.)

And a rearguard action was necessary. While Dorrie sounded the powerful electric hooter continuously, and while the frightened crowds were cowering away, Foo Chow's soldiers were making a deadly assault upon the rear of the car. Only in the nick of time did Umlosi divert a bayonet blade which had been thrust with villainous aim at Nelson Lee's side.

He wrenched the bayonet aside, careless of the cuts which were inflicted upon his hands, and swung the butt of the rifle round with appalling effect.

By now the crowd was thinning, and Dorrie put speed on. And still the yellow fiends came swarming after the car, between two fires.

Every inch of that escape was fought desperately.

The gates were in sight at last, and they were still open. But shouts were sounding all round, and the guards were on the move. The brilliant headlights revealed everything.

"They're closing the gates!" shouted Handforth desperately.

"On, Dorrie!" muttered Lee.

Those gates were no flimsy affairs like the

wall of that building. They were enormously heavy, cumbersome gates of solid timber.

He knew that it was a desperate chance, but he took it.

The gateway was wide, and the huge double doors had only just commenced closing, a dozen men pushing at either. And they closed from the outer side, which was favourable. With a deafening roar, the heavy car plunged through the stone archway.

Crash!

One edge of the gates struck the off-side wing, and there was a shriek from the Chinamen as the heavy wooden structure was sent shooting back, shivering and trembling. But the car had passed through, out into the night—out upon that wide, concrete highway.

"All safe?" yelled Lord Dorrimore exultantly.

"Yes!" answered a victorious chorus.

And Dorrie stood on the throttle, and away went the rescuers into the gloom. Success had crowned their efforts! Yung Ching was rescued, and another episode in the battle with Dr. Foo Chow was over!

THE END.

("HANDFORTH, THE HOSTAGE!" is next week's thrilling long complete story of this topping series. Order your copy now and make sure of this stunning yarn!)

HOW TO JOIN THE LEAGUE

ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE APPLICATION

FORM No. 44.

SECTION A	READER'S APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP. I desire to become enrolled as a Member of THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE, and to qualify for all such benefits and privileges as are offered to Members of the League. I hereby declare that I have introduced "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY" and THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE to one new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. Will you, therefore, kindly forward me Certificate of Enrolment with the Membership Number assigned to me.
SECTION B	MEMBER'S APPLICATION FOR MEDAL AWARDS. I, Member No..... (give Membership No.) hereby declare that I have introduced one more new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. This makes me..... (state number of introductions up to date) introductions to my credit.
SECTION C	NEW READER'S DECLARATION. I hereby declare that I have been introduced by (give name of introducer) to this issue of "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY."
(FULL NAME) (ADDRESS)	

INSTRUCTIONS.

INSTRUCTIONS.—Reader Applying for Membership. Cut out TWO complete Application Forms from Two copies of this week's issue of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY. On one of the forms fill in Section A, crossing out Sections B and C. Then write clearly your full name and address at bottom of form. The second form is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out Sections A and B, and writes his name and address at bottom of form. Both forms are then pinned together and sent to the Chief Officer, The St. Frank's League, c/o THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4. **Member Applying for Bronze Medal:** It will be necessary for you to obtain six new readers for this award. For each new reader TWO complete forms, bearing the same number, are needed. On one of the forms fill in Section B, crossing out Sections A and C, and write your name and address at bottom of form. The other form is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out Sections A and B, and writes his name and address at the bottom of the

form. Now pin both forms together and send them to the Chief Officer, as above. One new reader will then be registered against your name, and when six new readers have been registered, you will be sent the St. Frank's League bronze medal. There is nothing to prevent you from sending in forms for two or more new readers at once, provided that each pair of forms bears the same date and number.

Bronze medallists wishing to qualify for the silver or gold medals can apply in the same way as for the bronze medal, filling in Section B. Every introduction they make will be credited to them, so that when the League reaches the required number of members, they can exchange their bronze medal for a silver or gold one, according to the number of introductions with which they are credited.

These Application Forms can be posted for $\frac{1}{2}$ d., providing the envelope is not sealed and no letter is enclosed.

A FEW OF THE ADVANTAGES OF JOINING THE LEAGUE.

You can write to fellow members living at home or in the most distant outposts of the Empire.

You are offered free advice on choosing a trade or calling, and on emigration to the colonies and dependencies.

If you want to form a sports or social club, you can do so amongst local members of the League.

You are offered free hints on holidays, whether walking, biking, or camping.

You can qualify for the various awards by promoting the growth of the League.

If you want help or information on any subject, you will find the Chief Officer ever ready to assist you.

THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE

THE CHIEF OFFICER'S CHAT

All **LETTERS** in reference to the League should be addressed to the Chief Officer, The St. Frank's League, c/o THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4. Any enquiries which need an immediate answer should be accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope.

More right excellent news this week. As you all know, there has been a fair old wow-wow over the great Badge Boom. Were we to have badges or no? That was the question which got asked. I sat up of nights over this business. The pros and cons had to be weighed. You will all be glad to hear the "ayes" had it. It was decided that the S.F.L. must have a badge.

Our League Badge.

Of course, I was not going to rush members into expense. I dare say some of my chums think there has been a lot of procrastination about this subject. But you have to let some things hang fire. There were difficulties to be conquered. Well, all is plain sailing now. In a very short time every member of the St. Frank's League who wants a badge can have it. The member will have only to write in and ask for the little symbol of our league to wear in his buttonhole. It is a capitally designed affair, and I am dead sure Leagueites will say it is in every way suitable and worthy of the League. Full particulars later—but the badges are now being made!

Funniosities from the Gold Coast.

Several readers tell me they have received communications from West Africa. I have seen some of these letters. They are all couched in much the same strain. The senders ask plaintively for socks. But the fact is the Gold Coast is not much of a sock country. When people want to be extra energetic they do not pull up their socks, but give their picturesque white garments a tug. I do not think it is a bit necessary for the recipients of these demands for trifling bits of hosiery to dispatch the articles. Strangers who start a friendship by asking for presents are

going the wrong way to work. You want to be wary of them. Besides, we all have to work so jolly hard these days that there is little enough for presents.

The Advance of the League.

From everywhere I get the same glowing reports of the progress of the League. One special point I am glad to note. Members realise more and more the fact that the S.F.L., with its code of comradeship, is doing great work in a most quiet and unpretentious way. It is creating a finer understanding of duty and of life, and it is just this sort of understanding which sweeps aside difficulties, problems, and worries, and leads to happier days.

BRIEF REPLIES.

Robert Player, 379, Reddings Lane, Hall Green, Birmingham, asks me how he should feed his rabbit. Plenty of green food; let the rabbit have fresh food daily; keep the hutch clean, and provide water. Here is another query: Can a batsman be caught out off his own legs? No, he cannot. The ball must come off the bat to be caught out. Birmingham O.O.'s are Kenneth James, Bank House, Poplar Road, Solihull; Jack Owen, 7, Downing Street, Smethwick; Albert Lawrence, 41, Oxford Road, Acocks Green; Bert Smith, 81, Southern Road, Washwood Heath.

If Miss May Barnes (Stepney Green) will forward her address, I will do what I can in the matter she mentions.

Much obliged to R. E. Brown, Sandown, Biggin Hall Crescent, Stoke, Coventry, for his letter of thanks for the biking itinerary I sent him.

James F. Kistruck, "Glenster," Bounds Green Road, New Southgate, N.11, suggests a uniform for O.O.'s! We shall have to think about this rather ambitious notion.

CORRESPONDENCE WANTED.

League Member 3148, 19, St. Nicholas Church Street, Warwick, wishes to correspond with reader in Australia; subjects: pets, stories, cricket, hockey, running, etc.

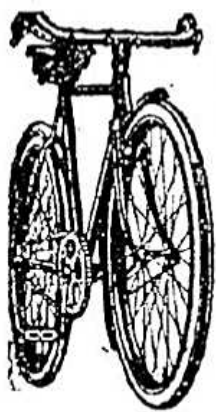
Stanley Crowe, 63, Canterbury Road, Margate, would like to hear from readers in his district.

J. E. Forsyth, 65, Blair Athol Road, Ecclesall, Sheffield, has organised a spanking cricket team; he has got all equipment, but wants to hear of opponents. He has left it too long for this season, but will club secretaries in the district make a note of the fact.

Theo Verschueren, 44, Odenkoven Street, Borgerhout, Antwerp, Belgium, wants a correspondent in the British Dominions.

Harry Grundy, 2, Chapel Street, Clayton-le-Moors, wishes correspondence with readers overseas; subjects: butterflies, birds, etc.

League Member 1252, 15, Princess Street, Dannevirke, H.B., New Zealand, asks for a correspondent interested in mechanics and motors.



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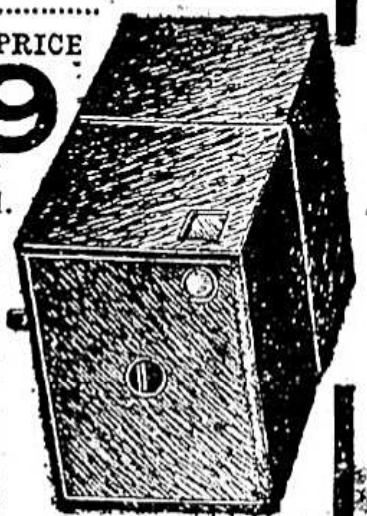
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