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in China!

HANDFORTH CAGED AT LAST!

All about it
—inside!

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Handforth the Hostage!

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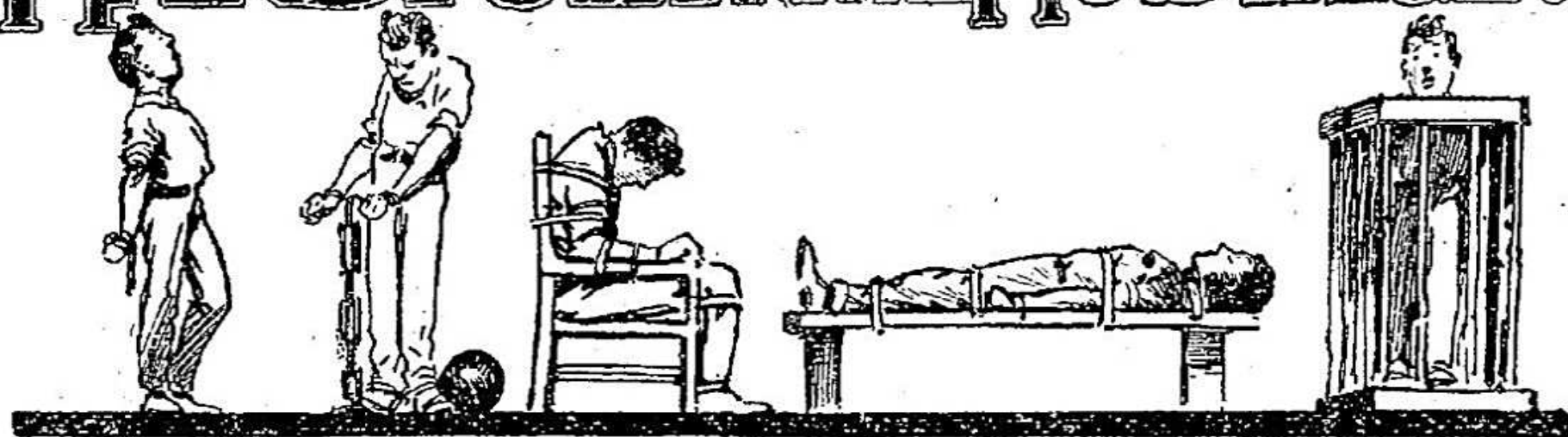
OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

August 21st, 1926.



With a fierce swing the juniors released the Chinese millionaire, and Dr. Foo Chow descended with a resounding splash into the middle of the fountain pool. "St. Frank's for ever! Duck him again!" yelled the excited swarm of juniors.

HANDFORTH THE HOSTAGE!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

Illustrated by Anthony

Dr. Foo Chow tries to force Handy to disclose Yung Ching's hiding-place. Will Handy tell? There are real thrills in this stunning yarn of the Boys of St. Frank's in China!

CHAPTER 1.

THE FUGITIVES OF THE NIGHT.

THE powerful Armstrong-Siddeley car, with the twisted rear bumper and the battered off-side front wing, sped swiftly and purringly through the night, along the great concrete highway.

Those scars were honourable ones, sustained in grim battle.

Lord Dorrimore, at the wheel, was looking thoroughly pleased with himself, and there was an expression of serene content upon his genial features. He glanced round at Mr. Nelson Lee.

"We've had what I call a thunderin' good evenin'," he observed. "I can stand a week or two of sheer laziness now, old man. There's nothin' like a bit of excitement to make a man feel good."

Nelson Lee nodded.

"All the same, Dorrie, you mustn't imagine that we're out of the wood yet," he said. "Dr. Foo Chow, if I know anything of him at all, will exact a grim penalty for what we have done to-night."

"We're his prisoners, anyhow, sir," put in Edward Oswald Handforth, of the St. Frank's Remove. "He can't do us any more harm than he would have done in the first place. And think of the glorious time we've had!"

"And Yung Ching, too, sir!" said Church eagerly. "We've rescued Yung Ching!"

"That, of course, is a feature of the affair which is altogether to the good," agreed Nelson Lee. "But I should be far happier

if I had the remotest idea what to do with the boy. He is rescued only to be delivered into the hands of his torturers again. You surely do not imagine that we can conceal him in the palace? I am greatly worried over the point."

There was a short silence. As a matter of fact, all the occupants of that speeding car had been thinking of the very same thing, and they did not like to answer the unspoken question which had sprung into their minds. What was to be done with Yung Ching?

A casual observer might have imagined that this Armstrong-Siddeley, with its load of Britishers, was progressing along a civilised highway. It was certainly difficult to realise that they were in the heart of China—a portion of China, moreover, which was ruled over by a despotic potentate.

Civilised, perhaps, but in a very primitive way.

The city of Yang Fu, which the car had recently left, was primitive to the last degree. It might have been in its present state of development thousands of years ago. Things move very slowly in the heart of China—in that part of the country which is untouched by the influence of Europeans. And the Chinese themselves encourage this slowness. For they detest anything modern, and discourage anything in the nature of a new innovation.

Yang Fu was a purely native city, and all its inhabitants were subject to Dr. Foo Chow's rule. In all this province, indeed, Foo Chow

was the supreme ruler. He was the Governor, and therefore the last court of appeal. In his own way, he was a kind of petty king.

He had made up his mind to rule over the neighbouring province, too—the rich lands of Hu Kiang, guarded and protected by a more kindly Governor—Yung Li Chang, the father of the rescued boy in the car.

Yung Ching was a member of the St. Frank's Remove, and the holiday party, indeed, had come out to this part of the world to rescue him from the clutches of his Chinese enemies. But when Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore had voyaged upon this adventure, they had never suspected the trials they would be called upon to bear.

For, in a word, the whole holiday party was in Dr. Foo Chow's hands.

Not that he had treated his prisoners badly. Quite the contrary. From the very first moment he had insisted upon regarding them as his guests, and had lavished every luxury upon them. But this did not alter the fact that they were his absolute prisoners, unable to move. The *Wanderer*—Dorrie's sumptuous steam yacht—was even now lying in the river, her captain and crew guarded prisoners, and with Foo Chow's men in control.

And the holiday party was accommodated in Dr. Foo Chow's own superb marble palace, which was perched upon a rocky island in mid-river, and only reached by means of a great drawbridge. There was, indeed, something fairy-like about that enchanted island. Under normal circumstances it would have been a place of joy, but to Dr. Foo Chow's captives it was only made all the more grim by its very beauty.

Yung Ching was to be used as a means of forcing his father's hand. Yung Li Chang's armies were more powerful than Foo Chow's, so the latter was afraid to attempt any invasion of the land he coveted so much. So he was attempting to force a surrender by torturing his enemy's only son. Yung Ching would only be delivered on condition that certain of those lands were given up.

The St. Frank's party was in no way connected with the grim plot. But they knew too much! They knew so much, indeed, that they could stir up a lot of trouble for this ambitious Chinaman, so he was holding them in his grip until his schemes had matured. Both Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore had a fear that their "host" would never let them reach civilisation again.

"We've had a good old spree to-night," remarked Dorrie placidly. "We've pinched one of old Foo Chow's cars, we dashed into Yang Fu, an' we rescued Chingy from under the very eyes of his bally torturers! Not a bad piece of work, takin' it altogether."

"Jolly fine, sir," said Handforth, nodding.

"An' we found you youngsters, too," went on Dorrie. "We thought you'd all been killed, or somethin', but now we can all get back to the palace, an' our party will be as intact as ever. This was certainly one of our lucky nights."

"At the same time, sir, it would be better if we knew what to do with Chingy," said Willy Handforth thoughtfully. "After all, what's the good of rescuing him if Foo Chow can grab him again before the morning?"

"No good at all, Willy," said Nelson Lee. "My great desire is to take the boy over into his father's own province, where he will be perfectly safe. But what chance is there of that? None!"

Yung Ching himself touched Lee's arm.

"I plenty grateful for evel'ying, Mist' Lee. But I affraid no good," he said quietly. "Foo Chow, he catchee me once more. Takee me back plison. Cutee off fingers. Velly bad, but Yung Ching no coward. I spit at these enemies of my honoulable father. They dirt!"

"Good man!" said Handforth heartily. "You've got plenty of spirit, but now that we've got you away from those brutes, we're not going to let you go back. Leave this to me, sir," he added confidently.

"Indeed?" said Nelson Lee. "Have you a plan, Handforth?"

"Rather, sir!"

"We shall all be glad to hear it," said Lee drily. "Unfortunately, the matter is a very serious one, and we cannot waste any time on your usual optimistic illusions. You must not believe that you can conceal Yung Ching anywhere within the palace."

Handforth smiled with superior carelessness.

"I've got a better idea than that, sir," he said. "Leave Chingy in my hands, and I'll see that he's safe. In fact, I want you to drop me off the car in about another mile."

"You can dismiss that idea at once," replied Lee firmly. "We've got you back with us, Handforth, and we're not going to let you go again."

"None of your hare-brained schemes, Ted," said Willy severely.

"You can jolly well mind your own business, my lad," retorted Handforth, with a cold glance. "Look here, sir, I'm determined about this. In fact, I've fully made up my mind."

"I've already told you, Handforth——"

"Give us a chance, sir!" protested Edward Oswald indignantly. "You know when Church and McClure and I fell in the river, and everybody thought we were drowned? Well, we got ashore, and I happened to have a bit of an argument with a tiger."

"We've heard about that, young 'un," said Nelson Lee, with a smile. "It's a wonder you weren't killed! Heaven knows what you will be up to next!"

"Well, the brute was trying to chew up a little Chinese boy," said Handforth warmly. "So I went for the tiger and biffed it! And old Ah Fong, the kid's father, was so jolly grateful that he invited us to dinner."

"You are sure this man was really friendly?"

"Rather, sir!" put in Church. "His whole family was in the same mood, too. They

treated us as highly honoured guests, and did all sorts of things for our special benefit. That feed was a wonderful affair, I suppose, from a Chinese standpoint."

"And this little boy," asked Lee. "Was he badly hurt?"

"Pretty badly, sir," replied Handforth gravely. "He had an awful gash on the shoulder, and that tiger had mauled him about generally. At first we thought he was dead, but we soon stripped him and washed him, and bandaged his wounds in the right way. We're scouts, sir," he added casually.

"This is the first we have heard of this, Handforth," said Nelson Lee, with approval. "You indeed did well! You see how your scouting experiences come in useful even out here in this clime. I understand that the poor youngster was left quite comfortable?"

"Oh, he'll recover all right, sir," said Handforth. "But here's the big idea. I'll take Chingy to— Whoa! Wait a minute, sir!" he added, to Lord Dorrimore. "Pull up! This is where I've got to get off, sir."

Dorrie brought the car to a standstill, and glanced behind.

"Just as you say," he chuckled. "No sign of any pursuit yet. I don't fancy there will be, either. We smashed Foo Chow's car before we came away."

Those scars on the Armstrong-Siddeley had been gained in a good cause. For Dorrie had deliberately backed the car into Foo Chow's luxurious Rolls-Royce, wrecking the steering gear, and rendering the automobile temporarily useless.

"Yes, I think it'll be safe to stay here for a minute or two," said Nelson Lee. "But how do you know this is the spot you want, Handforth?"

Edward Oswald pointed to a sapling just ahead, clearly visible in the brilliant light from the headlamps. It was a little tree which had been torn down and dragged to the side of the road.

"This is the place where we stopped you on the way, sir," he explained. "And Ah Fong's house is right across country in that direction," he added, pointing. "I can find the way all right."

Nelson Lee paused for a moment before replying.

"I wonder!" he murmured. "By Jove, I wonder!"



CHAPTER 2.

HANDFORTH'S MISSION.

HANDFORTH was rather impatient.

"It's no good wondering, sir," he said. "We've got to buck up, you

know!"

"Eh? Oh, yes, perhaps so," admitted Nelson Lee slowly. "But I was wondering if I could allow you to undertake this task, Handforth. I think I had better come with you—"

"No fear, sir!" interrupted Handforth. "You'll be wanted at the palace, when old Foo Chow comes along. Besides, Ah Fong doesn't know you, and he might not be so easy to handle."

"It's a good idea of the youngster's," put in Lord Dorrimore. "His suggestion is that he should take Yung Ching to this Chinaman, and get him to hide him, eh? Sounds promising to me."

"It's a cert, sir," declared Handforth. "Ah Fong's got two or three sons already, and some daughters, too. One more wouldn't be noticed, particularly as his house is a sort of isolated place. He looks after the rice fields and sugar plantations. How would Foo Chow think of looking for Chingy in a place like that? He'll be as safe as houses, sir."

Nelson Lee nodded.

"I'll agree with you, Handforth," he replied. "We couldn't suggest any better plan. In any case, it will be quite useless for us to take Yung Ching to the palace. But I am wondering about you. I don't want you to get lost again, to fall into the hands of these enemies."

"But what's the difference, sir?" asked Handforth, in surprise. "Even if I go to the palace I shall be a prisoner. We're all as helpless as chickens in a run! And I'll promise to come straight to the palace as soon as I've given Chingy over into Ah Fong's care. How's that, sir?"

"All right, Handforth—I'll agree," said Lee promptly. "Since you have made such a definite promise, I'll let you go. You must get back at the very earliest minute you can."

Church and McClure were looking very anxious.

"We shan't see him again, sir!" said Church worriedly. "You know what he is when he gets alone! Can't we go, too, sir?"

"I'm afraid not—"

"But we always look after him, sir," went on Church.

"Look after me!" roared Handforth. "By George! You—you silly fathead! I'm the chap who's always looking after you!"

Lord Dorrimore grinned.

"That's just a delusion of yours, old man," he said gently. "It's the other way about, really. Those chums of yours are always takin' care that you don't stray from the straight an' narrow path. I've been told that they lead a harrowin' existence."

"If we don't go with him, sir, he'll get himself into a hopeless mess!" said McClure, with deep concern. "We've got to go—"

"I wouldn't let you come now if you begged on your giddy knees!" interrupted Handforth coldly. "Look after me, eh? Huh! Of all the blessed nerve!"

Nelson Lee hesitated for a moment. His anxiety concerning Yung Ching was keen. Without any question, the boy would be in terrible peril if he was delivered into Foo Chow's hands again. And here was a chance of having him effectually concealed. Edward

Oswald Handforth was the only one who could accomplish this particular mission, since it was he who had saved Ah Fong's child from the tiger. The Chinaman, if his gratitude was genuine, would do this thing if Handforth asked him.

So Handforth was the only one who could go. Lee would have liked it otherwise, but there was no alternative. He turned to Yung Ching.

"You would like this?" he asked. "We are suggesting that you should be placed in the hands of a friendly Chinaman, and that you should pretend to be a member of his family."

"Heap fine idea, sir," said Yung Ching cheerfully. "I go. Velly glateful, but I not worth all this touble. I cause you enough touble already. I velly solly, Mist' Lee. No wantee get Handforth into soupee."

"He'll be all right," said Nelson Lee. "Very well, Handforth—take Yung Ching, and be off at once. And remember—get to the palace as quickly as you can. I have your promise that you will not engage upon any other enterprise."

"That's right, sir," said Edward Oswald. "Leave this job to me, and it'll be done properly. Come along, Chingy! We've got a two-mile trudge in front of us, and we shall have to knock old Ah Fong up."

He climbed out of the car, and Yung Ching followed him. Handforth seemed to regard the whole affair as a mere trifle. He just waved his hand, and vanished into the gloom. Church and McClure gazed after him with dumb misery. Their agony was apparent in every line of their features.

There was a strong, enduring bond between these three inseparable chums of Study D. Handforth was an aggressive leader, and he was just as liable to punch the noses of Church and McClure as he was to punch any other noses. But they knew his every whim, and they scarcely ever were parted from him. If he was going into danger, they wanted to share it with him.

"Oh, you ought to have let us go, sir," muttered Church reproachfully.

"Goodness knows when we shall see him again," said McClure, with misery.

"Wait a minute, boys—wait a minute," muttered Lee. "You need not suppose that I shall let Handforth be unprotected. But he is a peculiar boy, and it would be inadvisable to let him know my true plans. Umlosi!"

"I am thy servant, Umtagati," rumbled Umlosi, the great African chief, who was Lord Dorrimore's staunch companion.

"Do thou follow the boys, and see them safely to this house," said Lee. "Afterwards, keep the young N'Kose always in sight, and protect him in case of danger. Remain by him until he returns to the palace."

"Even as thou sayest, my master, I will obey," said Umlosi.

He had gone off into the night like a shadow, merging with the blackness.

"You don't mind, Dorrie?" asked Lee.

"My dear man, it's a brain-wave," said his

lordship. "If I wasn't a dullard, I should have suggested the same thing myself."

Church and McClure were looking happy.

"Of course, that's different, sir," said Church, with relief. "Old Umlosi is as good as a hundred chaps like Mac and I. Handy won't come to any harm now. I say, what a ripping stunt!"

"An' all the more rippin' because Handy doesn't know about it," grinned Lord Dorrimore. "Personally, I'm feelin' quite comfortable. I suppose we'll push on now, eh?"

"Yes," replied Lee. "That is the very heart of the scheme. Foo Chow will imagine that we have concealed the boy in the palace, and he will order a search—which will naturally prove futile. And that will be a lever in our hands, too. Our worthy host will be unable to proceed with his plans, and he will not harm us while we hold that secret. I pray that this man, Ah Fong, will be as easily persuaded as Handforth imagines."

The car continued on its way, and, in the meantime, Handforth and Yung Ching trudged across the silent countryside. It was late now—getting on towards midnight—and the scattered villages were asleep. Nevertheless, Handforth took care to avoid every possible habitation. And he wasn't exactly sure that he would be able to find Ah Fong's house, either, although he made no confession of this fear to his companion.

It was much more difficult than he had first believed.

The worst of it was that there were so many clumps of trees which looked exactly like other clumps. And Ah Fong's house, after all, was very similar to the other Chinese dwellings. The pair trudged on, floundering into the muddy rice fields, but generally managing to find a pathway again.

"Ah Fong live long way off," said Yung Ching, at last.

"Oh, not so very far," said Handforth carelessly. "We shall soon be coming to the place now. What have they been doing with you, Chingy?" he added, in order to change the conversation. "Torturing you, eh?"

"Foo Chow velly bad man," said Yung Ching gravely. "Velly wicked lotter. Foo Chow a beast and a luffianly cad. Put me in dirty plison. Foo Chow mean to force my honouable father to sullender muchee land," went on the Chinese Removite. "But my honouable father notee having any. Noteo likely! My honouable father is the big governor of huge plovinee. Plentee soldiers. Plentee guns. Foo Chow makee touble for nothing."

"Why doesn't he go to war, instead of trying these dirty stunts?"

"War notee good," replied Yung Ching, shaking his head. "Notee good for Foo Chow, anyway. My honouable father's soldiers and guns muchee gleater. Foo Chow catchee it in neck if he tly any monkey business with soldiers. So he blingee me here to torture me."

"The miserable rotter!"

"Foo Chow believe that my honouable



Um'osi dashed into the Chinese soldiers like a tornado, while Edward Oswald Handforth gave three Chinks a taste of his famous right. But the pair were in a tight corner—it looked impossible for them to escape.

father surrender if he know that I catchee torture," said Chingy. "Velly simple—but velly foolish."

"But, all the same, your father—sorry, I mean your honourable father—would sooner give up his lands than allow you to be tortured, wouldn't he?" asked Edward Oswald gruffly. "You're his only son, and he looks to you to carry on the good work after he's gone. He wouldn't allow you to be carved up, finger by finger, and toe by toe!"

Yung Ching shook his head again.

"My honourable father notee afraid of Foo Chow," he replied. "No givee in because of thleats. Allee same better for me to be safce. I velly glateful for evelything you do. I notee worth so much tlouble."

"Rats!" growled Handforth. "Do you think we could leave you in that beast's hands to be tortured? This chap, Ah Fong, is only a humble sort of coolie, but he seems to have a good heart. With any luck, we'll get you stowed away as safe as houses."

And they went on through the night, with Edward Oswald still uncertain as to the exact position of Ah Fong's house—and somewhere in the rear came a silent black shadow.

ley, containing the returning adventurers, had arrived at the drawbridge. But the headlights revealed nothing but a yawning chasm, without any protective barrier. The drawbridge was raised, and the palace isolated.

"This is what comes of gettin' home with the milk," observed Dorrie genially. "We find ourselves locked out. It's a rummy situation, when you come to think of it, Lee. We're askin' to be admitted into prison again!"

"And yet it is our only course," said Nelson Lee. "We have had our hour or two of hectic excitement, and now comes the reckoning."

"You think Foo Chow will shove us straight into the torture chamber?"

"Frankly, Dorrie, I haven't the faintest idea what he will do," replied Lee. "Foo Chow is such an extraordinary man that it would be very unwise to make any predictions. Whether we get back into the palace or not, he knows that it is impossible for us to escape the country. So we can't do better than openly admit that we ran wild for a space."

Dorrie climbed out and walked to the front of the car. There was a sheer cliff at his feet, dropping straight down into the dark river. And across the water lay the dark bulk of the island stronghold, with its surrounding wall. In no place were the cliffs of the island less than fifty feet. There was something forbidding and sinister in the place at this hour of the night—with the great gateway illuminated by the headlamps of the car across the chasm.



CHAPTER 3.

THE PERFECT HOST.

URRR-ZURRRRRH!

Lord Dorrimore cheerfully pressed the button of the electric horn, and the powerful blast awoke the echoes of the night. The Armstrong-Sidde-

"Nothin' doin' apparently," remarked his lordship. "How about makin' a trip down the causeway to the landin'-stage? We might be able to pinch the yacht——"

"My dear Dorrie, the yacht is anchored in mid-stream, and guarded by a swarm of Foo Chow's troops," interrupted Lee. "The recapture of the yacht is our one hope, but I am afraid there is little or no chance of success in that direction. There are only two of us, remember——"

"What about us, sir?" put in Willy as he jumped out of the car. "Do we count for nothing? Church and McClure and I can help a bit if there's any fightin' to be done."

Nelson Lee laughed.

"Imagine it!" he said dryly. "Two men and three boys—proposing to capture a yacht! I admire your optimism, Willy, but I am afraid——"

"Hallo! Here comes the bridge!" interrupted Lord Dorrimore. "I suppose the guards have had to turn out especially."

They watched in silence as the great bulk of the drawbridge slowly descended from the island. It fell into place with a soft thud, and now a clear road lay in front of the car. Lee and Dorrie and Willy got back into their seats, and they were soon gliding forward.

Once through the impressive gateway, further progress was hindered by a strong cordon of gaudily uniformed soliders. These latter, however, held themselves in readiness to leap to safety in case the car failed to stop. But Dorrie applied the brakes.

"Well, here we are," he said genially.

One of Dr. Foo Chow's officers came forward and eyed the group keenly.

"You come back?" he asked in stilted pidgin English.

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" remarked Dorrie with a yawn. "The fact is, old man, we're all feelin' a bit tired an' sleepy. Heard anythin' from Foo Chow yet? We had a bit of a shindy in the city, you know, an' I've got an idea that Foo Chow will kick."

The Chinese officer looked expressionless.

"Excellency not come," he said, saluting.

He added some words in Chinese, and the soldiers stood aside. A moment later the car was gliding past the Oriental gardens towards the great palace which stood in the centre of the rock island.

"It is fairly evident that these officers here are without any definite instructions," remarked Nelson Lee. "They know that we broke out, and they know that Foo Chow himself is still absent. I expect they are very surprised to see us back—although they don't allow their emotions to be seen. I rather think we had better carry on as though nothing had happened."

"Go to bed, you mean, sir?" asked Willy.

"Yes. You boys will certainly go to bed," replied Lee. "Your brother, Willy, can hardly be expected before the morning, so there is no reason for us to lose our sleep.

And there is no need for anxiety, either. We can trust Umlosi."

"Rather, sir," agreed Willy. "I'm not worrying about Ted in the least. And after all this excitement I can do with some sleep."

Dorrie stopped the car on the terrace, just in front of the imposing entrance. And at that moment Mr. Beverley Stokes came out, accompanied by William Napoleon Browne, of the Fifth, and Dick Hamilton and Reggie Pitt and one or two other Remove fellows.

"Oh, guv'nor!" shouted Dick, running up. "We didn't know what had happened to you! Where the dickens have you been all this time?"

They swarmed round animatedly.

"We heard the commotion an hour or so ago, when you broke out," said Barry Stokes quickly. "Fortunately, Joyce and the girls have been asleep all the time, and know nothing. What happened, Lee?"

"Dorrie had a sudden wild desire for action, so we broke loose," smiled Nelson Lee. "Very fortunately, too. For we not only found Handforth and Church and McClure, whom we all thought dead, but Handforth minor had also got into trouble. And we ended up by rescuing Yung Ching from his torturers."

"By jingo, you've been busy, sir!" said Dick Hamilton eagerly. "Handforth & Co. alive! I say, you chaps, this is ripping!"

"You bounders!" said Pitt, slapping Church and McClure on the backs. "You don't know how we've been worrying——"

"Oh, we were all right," said Church awkwardly.

"One moment, brothers," said Browne. "While rejoicing in a general way, it appears to me that something is lacking. It is not customary for Brother Handforth to make himself obscure. We do not hear his manly tones, neither do we see his rugged features——"

"Handy's gone off with Yung Ching," explained McClure. "The idea is to leave Chingy in the hands of a friendly Chinaman, so that he'll be safe. But you needn't worry. Umlosi's looking after Handy."

Explanations followed swiftly.

"Why, this is splendid news," declared Mr. Stokes enthusiastically. "My only regret is that I should have been left out of this joyous adventure. It was too bad of you, Dorrie, to go off without me."

"Hear, hear, sir!" said Dick indignantly. "Why couldn't we have joined in the fun?" he added, turning to Nelson Lee. "I must say it was a bit too thick to leave us here!"

"Murky in the extreme," agreed Browne sadly.

"Sorry, you fellows, but the whole thing happened so infernally unexpectedly that we had no time to pass round a general call," chuckled Dorrie. "But don't you be too previous. It's more than likely that we shall have to suffer tortures as a punishment. The

rack, I expect—with the thumb-screw thrown in as a sideline."

"Well, I fancy we shall soon know our fate," remarked Nelson Lee, glancing round. "A car is approaching, and if it does not contain Dr. Foo Chow I shall be much surprised."

Lee was right. A small car purred up, and the Chinese millionaire alighted from it and bowed with all his customary courtesy.

"Congratulations, my friends, on your excellent coup," he said softly. "I can find nothing but admiration for such an exhibition of daring."

"I hope your Rolls-Royce isn't particularly crooked?" asked Lord Dorrimore with mock solicitude. "It always gives me a pain when I spoil the beauties of a Rolls!"

Dr. Foo Chow was in no way put out.

"I regret that the car is considerably damaged," he replied. "But as for that—a trifle. Cars are things of commerce. We can obtain others. One, more or less, makes no difference. I have already ordered a duplicate from my reserve fleet. I trust that you are all unharmed, and in no way the worse for your encounter with my hot-headed soldiers?"

The Chinaman's solicitude sounded so earnest that it was difficult to credit that his sincerity was forced. Yet it could be nothing else—since he himself had ordered his soldiers to capture the rescue party.

"We are all quite well," said Nelson Lee curtly.

"I am relieved," purred Dr. Foo Chow. "Pray do not imagine, gentlemen, that I am annoyed by the recent escapade. It is the natural outcome of this unfortunate—but necessary—confinement. I have done my best to make your captivity pleasant, but I realise that there comes a time when action can no longer be avoided. An exuberant burst of high spirits, eh? A little lifting of the safety-valve? Naturally—naturally. You can be quite assured that I am full of admiration, and that I shall forget this excess of zeal."

"That's very handsome of you, Dr. Foo Chow," said Dorrimore, adopting the same mood. "We had an enjoyable time, an' now we're goin' to get a little sleep. You don't mind tellin' the lackeys that we shan't need callin' until about ten o'clock?"

The Chinaman bowed.

"Your wishes shall be attended to," he said politely. "I would like to mention that there is one little condition which, very reluctantly, I must impose."

"Condition?" repeated Lee.

"A mere trifle," said Dr. Foo Chow, smiling. "You will naturally realise that I am anxious concerning the welfare of Yung Ching. I shall therefore be obliged if you will tell me precisely where he can be found?"

"Why not find him yourself?" asked Dorrie curtly.

"I have mentioned that I am willing to overlook this escapade completely," pursued Foo Chow. "I must remind you that I will

do so on condition that Yung Ching is produced without any unnecessary delay."

"You can go to the deuce!" said Lord Dorrimore, snapping his fingers. "You an' your threats are about as useful as a kid's pop-gun. Yung Ching was taken out of your clutches—an' he'll stay out. I'm fed up with these politenesses. Let's have somethin' plain!"

Again Dr. Foo Chow bowed.

"As you wish," he said smoothly. "It is always better to have a thorough understanding. I regret, however, that our amicable relations are becoming strained. I am far from blind, and I observe that two members of our party are missing." He looked round and nodded. "Our young friend of the aggressive voice, and the excessively black gentleman from Africa," he added, smiling. "No doubt they will inform me as to Yung Ching's whereabouts—when I question them later."

Nelson Lee felt rather anxious. He could imagine Dr. Foo Chow's methods with Edward Oswald Handforth if the latter refused to give satisfaction—as he certainly would refuse.

"We understand, then, Dr. Foo Chow, that it is not your intention to make any reprisals for our recent activity?" asked Lee pointedly. "Since we have abandoned pretence, it would be as well to be quite frank."

"Splendid," said the Chinese millionaire. "No, gentlemen, there will be no reprisals. I am not vindictive. I do not indulge in petty revenge. Moreover, I realise how excellent your excuse is. However, I would like to add that my forgetfulness will entirely depend upon the alacrity with which Yung Ching's hiding-place is vouchsafed. For the present, let us call a truce."

He smiled and walked into the palace. His words had been mild and polite, but there had been something in his tone which had sounded utterly devilish. Foo Chow was not the type of man to display his emotions. But Nelson Lee could guess that he was consumed with rage at the trick which his prisoners had played upon him under his very nose.

For, regarded in a cold light, the exploit had been an amazing one. This Chinese potentate's captives had actually broken loose, had wrested Yung Ching from his clutches, and had spirited the boy away! As a piece of unadulterated nerve, it would have required some beating. As a colossal achievement, it was a gem.



CHAPTER 4.

HANDFORTH DOES THE TRICK.

"HANK goodness!" murmured Edward Oswald Handforth, with intense relief.

"Pardon?" asked Yung Ching politely. "You speakee?"

"Oh, nothing!" said Handforth.

He did not wish to explain to his companion that he had been completely lost. During the last fifteen minutes he had had no idea of his bearings, and had begun secretly to despair of ever finding the home of Ah Fong. But now, rounding a clump of trees, he recognised his ground. Ah Fong's house was actually within sight.

"You pleased, eh?" smiled Yung Ching. "You glad because you're notee lost any more?"

"Eh?"

"I savvy fine!" smiled Yung Ching. "You plentee wollied, and talkee to me about St. Flank's and footer and clicket. And allee time you lostee. I glad you allee light now."

Handforth grunted.

"Fat lot of good trying to spoof you!" he said tartly. "As a matter of fact, I did get out of my bearings a bit, but you needn't think I was actually lost, you young ass! I've only been here once before—and all in the dark, too!"

"You plentee clever!" agreed Chingy enthusiastically.

They approached the house, and Handforth was wondering how he could awaken the Ah Fong family. But it was an unnecessary thought. For Ah Fong himself appeared in the doorway as the pair approached.

"Me makee gleeting," he said impassively.

"By George, this is a bit of luck!" said Handforth as he peered forward. "I thought you'd be asleep, Ah Fong."

"No sleepee."

"How's little Seng?" asked the leader of Study D.

"My son allee same good," said Ah Fong. "Sleepee fine, then wakee. Me put cold water on bandage. Seng sleepee more. Plentee getee well."

"That's the way!" said Handforth with approval. "You can't do better than keep to the cold-water cure. It'll do him more good than all your heathen treatments put together. Me wantee flavour," he added, dropping into his own brand of pidgin in order to make himself understood.

"Flavour?" repeated Ah Fong, puzzled.

"Yes, me wantee flavour—you do me goodee turn," explained Handforth. "This Chinese boy my fliend," he added, indicating Yung Ching. "Him wanted badly by Foo Chow. You hidee him?"

The Chinaman regarded Yung Ching with the same impassive look.

"Who this boy?" he asked.

And, without waiting for Handforth to reply, he spoke rapidly in Chinese. Yung Ching spoke in Chinese, too, and Handforth listened wonderingly. He couldn't understand how on earth anybody could make head or tail of such gibberish. As a matter of fact, Yung Ching's language was totally different to Ah Fong's, for they belonged to different provinces.

"Him boy flom Hu Kiang," said Ah Fong, turning to Handforth. "Him boy belong to

Excellency Yung Li Chang. Notee one of Excellency Foo Chow's people."

"He's Yung Li Chang's own son!" replied Handforth promptly.

Ah Fong was startled into a sharp cry.

"Son of Excellency Yung Li Chang!" he exclaimed, his voice trembling as he gazed at Yung Ching with awe. "I not know. Allee same solly!"

He positively bowed and scraped before Yung Ching, much to the latter's discomfiture.

"Allee peoples honour Yung Li Chang," explained Ah Fong softly. "Him gleat man. Excellency Yung Li Chang gleatest man in China. Good luler—plentee kind to peoples. No taxee. Allee people in Hu Kiang plovinee plentee money. No starvee. No plague. Excellency Yung Li Chang gleat and honoulable man. I do allee for savee honoulable son."

"I don't know what the dickens you're getting at, but I suppose you mean you'll hide Chingy away?" asked Handforth.

Yung Ching nodded.

"My honoulable father muchee esteemed by evelybody," he explained. "This man is fliendly. I safe, Handy. This is good. Plentee blains for you to blingee me. Ah Fong goodee man."

"Ah Fong do all he can," said Ah Fong quickly. "Honoulable white boy savee my son from tiger. Me do muchee in leturn."

He led the way into the house and made it clear that he would not only conceal the fugitive, but guard him with his own life. Handforth, with great difficulty, managed to make Ah Fong understand that it would be a good idea to supply Yung Ching with a complete change of native clothing, and to send one of his own sons away before dawn to some relatives in the city. Yung Ching would then take the place of this absent son, but would only show himself occasionally, and at a distance from any neighbours.

It was quite a good idea, for an addition to the household would have been at once noticeable, and commented upon. A few simple precautions would probably make Yung Ching quite safe.

"Well, that's all settled, then?" said Handforth at last. "It'll be getting daylight soon, so I'd better clear off. We don't want anybody to see me in this particular district, Chingy. The sooner I get back to the palace, the better."

Yung Ching nodded.

"Plentee blainy idea," he agreed promptly.

"Well, so long, old son!" continued Handforth, shaking hands. "You can rely upon us to get you out of this fix in next to no time. Just stick here, and pretend to be one of Ah Fong's sons, and go easy with the neighbours. We'll come for you as soon as ever we get the chance."

"I wait," said Yung Ching placidly.

After shaking hands with Ah Fong—much to that gentleman's consternation—Handforth went off. His plan was to reach the highway

as quickly as possible, and to walk to the palace. Once on that concrete road it wouldn't matter if Foo Chow's men discovered him, for they would not be able to tell from which direction he had come.

Now that the night's excitement was over, he was beginning to feel tired and sleepy. He realised that he hadn't been to bed, and that the past ten or twelve hours had been packed with action. As a natural result, he was bodily weary, and his steps became flagging.

"Still, it's no good getting slack now," he told himself. "I'll tumble into bed as soon as I get to the palace, and have a good sleep. Chingy's all right, and those rotten soldiers of Foo Chow's will never find him."

He reached the highway after an hour's walk across the deserted fields, and dawn was now beginning to show itself in the eastern sky. However, it was still gloomy in the extreme, and the whole countryside looked dead and deserted. Handforth found it difficult to realise that he was really in the midst of countless enemies.

He realised it a few minutes later, however. For, without warning, two groups of men rose from the undergrowth on either side of the road and bore down upon him. Evidently Dr. Foo Chow had these men placed there in readiness.

Handforth paused, all his weariness gone.

"All right!" he said aggressively. "Come on!"

A moment's consideration would have told him that it was a sheer waste of good energy to fight. He was going back to the palace, anyhow, so there was nothing to be gained by showing battle. But it was Edward Oswald Handforth's nature to show battle. He just couldn't help himself.

He didn't even wait for the soldiers to pounce upon him. He saw that they carried no rifles, and that their swords were sheathed. Then he sailed in with both fists.

Crash! Slam!—Biff!

In rapid succession he delivered three rapid blows, and a trio of Chinamen went down, howling. Handforth was feeling thoroughly fit again.

"Come on!" he roared. "I'm not afraid of you fatheads! Try to touch me, and I'll jolly well smash the lot of you!"

They closed in upon him relentlessly, and although several of them were hurt, they soon rendered him incapable of further action.

"Yang Fu—Yang Fu—Yang Fu!"

The Chinamen were talking excitedly and volubly, but the only words which Handforth could understand were "Yang Fu." It was obvious that they had received orders to convey him to the town of Yang Fu—and not back to the palace. There was something significant in this.

"You—you rotters!" he panted, as he was held. "So you're going to take me to Yang Fu, are you? By George! Torture! You're going to shove me in old Chingy's prison, I'll bet! You—you——"

"Be thou of good cheer, young master!" came a booming rumble from the outer gloom. "I, Umlosi, come to aid thee! And am I not a warrior of warriors? Wau! These insects are but vermin beneath my contempt!"

"Hurrah!" roared Handforth. "Good old Umlosi!"

He recommenced his own struggles, astonished to find Umlosi so near. He had had no inkling that any other member of the St. Frank's party was within a mile of him. But the African chieftain, true to his promise, had never allowed Handforth out of his sight.

He dashed into the Chinese soldiers like a tornado sweeping across a stricken city. The damage he wrought within a single minute was startling—and he had nothing but his bare hands, aided by his stupendous strength.

The Chinamen were sent this way and that—knocked over like skittles. Umlosi simply forged a way through the soldiers to the side of Edward Oswald, and the whole scene was one of confusion.

Half a dozen men were clawing at the black giant at the same time; whilst others rushed upon him in a frontal attack. Contemptuously, he drove them off, lifting man after man, and hurling them from him as though they were mere dummies. Not once did they attempt to use their swords, having obviously been forbidden to do so.

And at last Umlosi's efforts were rewarded. He forced a way through the yelling, screaming crowd, and he and Handforth won free. The concrete highway was left strewn with battered Chinamen.

"By George!" panted Handforth. "That was the way to do it, Umlosi, old son! You put up a ripping fight, and I'm proud of you!"

"'Twas nothing, my young master!" growled Umlosi. "Thou art the one to be praised—since thou, a boy, didst account for many of these sons of pigs!"

They hastened on, and as the dawn light increased they glanced back and saw the defeated Chinamen picking themselves up, and limping away across the grassland which bordered the road.



CHAPTER 5.

IN THE LIMELIGHT.

RENE MANNERS stared, and rubbed her eyes.

"Doris!" she exclaimed breathlessly. "Quick—quick! Umlosi's out here,

coming towards the palace! And there's somebody with him— Oh, quick! Tell me who it is!"

Doris Berkeley came to Irene's side. They had nearly finished dressing, and were almost ready to go down, and Irene was standing at a window which overlooked the long, palm-bordered drive which led from the palace to the drawbridge. Mary Summers and Winnie

Pitt were dressing, too, but they all came to the window.

"What is it, Renie?" asked Doris quickly. "You sound quite excited! Umlosi isn't so very marvellous——"

"Oh, don't, don't!" interrupted Irene tensely. "Who is it with him?"

All the girls stared out wonderingly, struck by Irene's tones. Of course, they knew nothing of the night's happenings, for they had gone up to bed before Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore had set off on their adventure. In fact, they had gone up to bed with the conviction upon them that Handforth & Co. were dead.

They didn't know it, but Mr. and Mrs. Stokes were waiting in the big foyer of the palace to tell them the good news as soon as they appeared. Church and McClure and Willy Handforth were now fast asleep.

"Why, it's—it's——" began Doris, as she took a quick breath. "But it can't be—Winnie, you tell me!"

"It's Ted Handforth!" said Winnie Pitt joyously.

For just one moment they continued to gaze. The two figures were far down the drive. Umlosi's being naturally an unmistakable one. His companion was a nondescript sort of individual in rags and tatters. He was too far distant for his face to be recognisable. But there was something eminently characteristic in his walk and his bearing.

"It's Ted—it's Ted!" cried Irene excitedly. "And—and we thought—— Oh, but we can't be sure yet! Let's rush down and meet them!"

She flew to the door, but Winnie pulled her back.

"You haven't got your shoes on!" she exclaimed. "And Doris isn't finished, either! We can't go down——"

"Here you are, Renie—here are your shoes!" put in Mary breathlessly. "Don't trouble to lace them up. Oh, we must find out about Ted!"

A minute later they all dashed out into the wide upper corridor, and found Ena Handforth with one of the other girls—and Ena was looking pale with excitement, too.

"Have—have you seen him?" asked Doris.

"Yes—my brother!" breathed Ena. "Oh, I can't believe it! After—after what we all feared——"

She didn't finish, but sped downstairs. Mr. and Mrs. Stokes were talking to Nelson Lee, and they attempted to pull the girls to a halt.

"We can't stop!" cried Doris. "Ted's come back!"

"But we want to tell you——" began Mrs. Stokes.

"Handforth back!" broke in Nelson Lee. "Come, Barry, we'd better make certain! I hope the girls are right! I've been anxious ever since he went off with Yung Ching."

Outside, Handforth was standing in the middle of the drive, nearly scared out of his

wits. Five or six girls were rushing upon him, and Umlosi's black face was wreathed in smiles.

"Thou art come to life again, my young master," he murmured. "For did we not all think that thou and thy friends were dead?"

"Ted!" shouted Ena, as she fairly flung herself into her brother's arms. "Oh, Ted, you bouncer! Where have you been? Why didn't you come back yesterday? We all thought——"

She broke off, hugging and kissing him—much to Handforth's embarrassment. All the same, it was jolly good to be back again—even though the palace was as much a prison as all the rest of this enemy-ridden country.

"Ted! You're alive!" cried Irene happily.

Almost before Ena could release him, Irene had given him a kiss of welcome—and poor old Handy was flushing to the roots of his hair with discomfiture. But he was thrilled as well. By George! He had never dreamed that Irene would be so worried!

But the others kissed him just as excitedly.

"Oh, I say!" he protested feebly. "I—I mean—— I'm all grubby and tired, and I need a bath and a change of clothes——"

"But you're safe, Ted!" interrupted his sister happily. "But what about Church and McClure?"

"My hat! Haven't they turned up?" asked Handforth blankly.

"Then they're alive, too?"

"Of course they're alive!" said Edward Oswald. "What rot! Fancy you girls thinking that——"

"Church and McClure are fast asleep," interrupted Nelson Lee, as he hurried up. "Well done, Handforth! I will confess that I have been worrying about you. It's all right, girls. There have been no fatalities, and with Handforth returned we are now a complete party again."

"Everything went all right, sir," said Handforth. "Chingy is safely in Ah Fong's hands——"

"Hush! Not so loud!" warned Lee. "Under no circumstances must we discuss Yung Ching's whereabouts here."

"A crowd of Chinks tried to stop me, sir, but Umlosi came along and we had a bit of a scrap," said Handforth. "I'm blessed if I can understand where he sprang from. Still, we've got back all right."

Nelson Lee did not think it necessary to explain the actual reason for Umlosi's opportune appearance. And Handforth, glad to escape, rushed indoors for a bath and a change. The idea was for him to tumble straight into bed.

But he appeared half an hour later, resplendent in white flannels, and looking quite himself again. He had decided that he couldn't possibly sleep until he had told the girls all the details of his adventures—and until he had shown himself in respectable attire.



"I am about to give the order," said Foo Chow softly. "If you wish to speak, say the one word 'yes.'"
Handforth tried to grin. "I won't tell you about Chingy!" he panted. "Go on! Get it over, you fiend!"

By now there were many of the juniors down, and they were all talking excitedly with the girls. There was such a lot to talk about! Yung Ching had been rescued! Handforth & Co. were alive! And Chingy had been safely hidden away somewhere.

"Hurrah!"

"Here he is!"

"Good old Handy!"

A crowd of fellows swarmed round Handforth, cheering, and all grabbing for his hand. And Edward Oswald was by no means averse to a little limelight. It was just the sort of thing he relished.

"Don't be dotly!" he said gruffly. "You shouldn't be such asses as to think I should get myself drowned! And Church and McClure are fast asleep in their beds—snoring like the dickens!"

"Ted, you've been doing wonders!" said Irene, as she came through the crowd, her eyes sparkling, and her pretty face alight with admiration. "We've heard all about it from Mr. Lee. The way you saved that little Chinese boy from the tiger was just too marvellous for words!"

Handforth blushed with modest embarrassment.

"Oh, it was nothing!" he protested. "I was going to tell you all about it, you know—"

"We've heard everything from Mr. Lee," said Irene. "He told us how you had made

friends with a Chinaman, and how you all went into Yang Fu, and smashed into the prison—and how you rescued Yung Ching. We all think it was simply wonderful! We may be prisoners, but we're still full of spirit!"

"Oh, rather!" said Handforth feebly.

He felt swindled. He had sacrificed his much-needed sleep so that he could tell everybody of the wonderful things that had happened during the night. And now he found that they knew everything. All his thunder had been stolen! It was a bit too thick.

"Handforth, what are you doing here?" asked Nelson Lee, coming up with a frown. "You ought to be in bed. After your experiences of yesterday, and with no sleep during the night, it is absurd for you to dress yourself like this. Church and McClure are in bed—and you ought to join them."

Handforth nodded.

"Yes, I suppose I might as well, sir," he said gruffly. "You've been telling everything, so I'm dished. I might have guessed it," he added bitterly.

"I'm awfully sorry, young 'un!" smiled Nelson Lee. "But, you see, it was quite impossible to satisfy the boys and girls with a mere promise that you would tell the story when you came down. You see, we expected you to be asleep until the evening—"

"Hallo! Here comes Foo Chow!" interrupted Dick Hamilton, with a curious note

in his voice. "He's got a great crowd of armed soldiers with him, too. Doesn't look very healthy, sir."

Nelson Lee turned, and there was a light of anxiety in his keen grey eyes.



CHAPTER 6.

CAST INTO GAOL.

DR. FOO CHOW bowed with suave politeness. His soldiers had halted some distance away, but were in readiness for instant action.

They were picked men, too—Foo Chow's biggest and most imposing guards.

"Ah, my young friend, so you are back within my hospitable grounds," he said gently, as he gazed at Handforth. "We have already noticed the advent of your black friend—but he is of no account. You are the young gentleman I desire to question."

Handforth glared.

"You can question me until doomsday, but you won't get any satisfaction out of me," he replied bluntly. "I suppose you're wild because I broke loose yesterday, and because—"

"On the contrary, I have already forgiven that little escapade," said Dr. Foo Chow. "I make all allowances for the natural exuberance of youth and spirits. At the same time you must remember that I am your host, and that certain courtesies are due to me. You have taken an active part in concealing Yung Ching, and, lenient as I am in most things, I find it impossible to overlook such conduct. I must reluctantly take certain steps to obtain the information I desire."

"One moment, Dr. Foo Chow," said Nelson Lee. "I hold myself entirely responsible for this boy's actions—"

"Nevertheless, my dear sir, it is the boy himself who can supply me with the facts I require," broke in Dr. Foo Chow blandly. "I have a certain form of procedure in these little affairs, and I cannot vary them. This boy has been—shall we say over zealous?—ever since we arrived. I think it is time his wings were slightly clipped. Indeed, I do not intend to be pestered with his high-spiritedness any more."

A note of vindictive hatred had crept into Foo Chow's final words, and as he spoke he made a sign to his guards. They instantly swept up, and swarmed round Handforth. In a moment he was isolated from Nelson Lee and the rest. That movement had obviously been rehearsed.

"What does this mean?" demanded Nelson Lee sharply.

The Chinese millionaire ignored the query, and gave an order. The soldiers whipped Handforth's arms behind him, strapped them, and marched him off. His indignant protests were completely ignored. The group of St.

Frank's juniors and Moor View girls watched with startled dismay.

"It means, Mr. Nelson Lee, that I am master here," said Dr. Foo Chow purringly. "I'm allowing you this semi-liberty for my own convenience—but, in return, I, at least, expect a recognition of the usual amenities due to a host. This particular boy has displeased me, and I am taking him in hand."

Without another word, Foo Chow walked away, and the fellows and girls crowded round Nelson Lee.

"What are they going to do with him, sir?" asked Reggie Pitt anxiously.

"Poor old Ted!" said Ena. "Just when we were rejoicing over his return, too! Oh, they're going to torture him! Please, Mr. Lee, can't we do something to save him from this?"

"Torture him!" murmured Irene, turning pale. "Oh, but that's—that's too terrible! Even Foo Chow wouldn't—"

She broke off, staring rather dazedly. And there were other pretty faces which were pale with anxiety, too.

"There is no sense in denying that the situation is serious," said Nelson Lee gravely. "But you need have no fear that Handforth will be tortured. If there is any question of such a fate overtaking him, I shall supply Foo Chow with the information he requires."

"And will Handy be released then, sir?" asked Dick.

"Undoubtedly," said Lee. "I was afraid of something like this—but we are unfortunately powerless to prevent it."

He walked off, feeling that there was nothing he could say that would satisfy the anxious youngsters. He met Lord Dorrimore and Mr. Stokes further along the terrace.

"You were right, Mr. Lee," said Barry Stokes quietly.

"Yes," muttered Lee. "They've got him."

"I just saw the poor beggar bein' carted off," said Dorrie grimly. "Gad! Isn't there anythin' we can do, Lee? As soon as the young 'un gets back, safe an' sound, he is shoved under arrest! They've taken him into the palace, but about fifty soldiers are guardin' that particular doorway."

Nelson Lee said nothing. Seldom had he felt so utterly powerless as he felt now. Foo Chow had been right when he spoke of "semi-liberty." Here were the members of the holiday party, walking about freely, as though they were guests in all truth! And yet what were they but helpless, impotent captives? Even that night dash was only bringing a mass of trouble in its train! Yung Ching had been hidden away, but for how long could his hiding-place be kept secret?

"If they're going to torture him, Lee, we shall have to speak," growled his lordship.

"Hang it all, Handforth is white—he's British. Better let Yung Ching be tortured than one of our own blood—hateful as it is!"

"We must wait," replied Lee quietly.

"Foo Chow won't do anything drastic at once. It isn't his way. These Chinamen

prefer slower methods. But you may be sure that we shall not allow Handforth to suffer."

In the meantime, Edward Oswald had been taken to a great apartment in a far corner of the palace, where the members of the holiday party were not allowed to penetrate. Foo Chow came there, and found his prisoner arguing heatedly with the Chinese officers and soldiers who surrounded him. But it was a very one-sided argument, since Handforth was doing all the talking.

"Easy, isn't it?" he was saying in a sour voice. "About five hundred of you dropping on one victim! I suppose you're feeling pretty satisfied, eh? You're crowing over your beastly victory? You can all go and boil yourselves! I don't care a snap for the whole cartload of you!"

Dr. Foo Chow approached.

"Very interesting, my boy, but a waste of breath," he said softly. "This spirit of bravado, I fear, is one of your great weaknesses. I do not wish to harm you in any way, neither do I desire to part you from your fellow countrymen. A few words from you will be sufficient to earn an immediate release."

"Oh!" said Handforth coldly. "Go on!"

He deliberately looked Foo Chow up and down with contempt. Handforth was quite fearless. In fact, he took a certain amount of pleasure in openly displaying his disgust.

"You are fortunate in the fact that I am a man of patience," said the Chinese millionaire, smiling. "I hope you will understand that I am the complete master of the situation. You have taken Yung Ching, and you have concealed him. Tell me this spot, and your liberty will be restored."

Handforth laughed.

"That's a good one!" he said mockingly. "Liberty, eh? A fat lot of liberty in this place! I might just as well be surrounded by soldiers here as surrounded by them anywhere else! Liberty! Cheese it, Dr. Foo Chow! I'm not so jolly green as all that!"

"Indeed, you are quite shrewd," replied Dr. Foo Chow. "However, let me point out that there will be a great deal of difference between the types of captivity. With your own friends you will be virtually a guest. But there is another method I can adopt, and that will not be so comfortable."

"You won't get anything out of me, if that's what you mean," said Handforth bluntly.

"You must realise that the finding of Yung Ching will be a comparatively simple matter—a question of time," said the Chinaman. "My countless soldiers have but to search, and Yung Ching will be found. But much trouble will be saved if you speak at once. So, for your own sake, I suggest a little exercise of that voluble tongue of yours. Tell me the hiding-place of Yung Ching, and you shall be returned to your friends."

Handforth laughed again.

"You can go and eat coke!" he said calmly.

"Our native prisons are not particularly cheerful," pursued Dr. Foo Chow smoothly.

"A few hours in one of them—with the addition of a little gentle persuasion—may loosen your tongue. I do not propose to argue, since you are obviously stubborn."

He turned and gave some orders. Handforth was immediately hustled out of the room and taken to a waiting motor-car. Foo Chow had plenty of automobiles at his disposal, it seemed.

Edward Oswald was handcuffed now, with great, heavy manacles which hurt his wrists considerably. And a thick chain was placed at his feet and clamped to either ankle by means of a steel fastening. In addition, he was held by two guards.

"Go ahead!" he said tartly. "You've got me now, and I can't make any fight. But just you wait! Wait until the other chaps get busy! By George, you're going to get a shock, you ugly rotters!"

He was vouchsafed no reply, and the car sped smoothly over the drawbridge, and made a swift run through the country and straight on into Yang Fu. Through the winding streets, and straight to the prison—that prison from which Yung Ching had been rescued.

Handforth was curiously interested. He regarded the whole affair from an outsider's point of view, for he could hardly realise that this business was really grim. Since the party's arrival in China, all the members of it had been treated fairly well, and Handforth did not guess that he was now face to face with the harsh reality of genuine Chinese imprisonment.



CHAPTER 7.

THE THREAT.

YANG FU was teeming with its native population as the car passed through the tortuous streets, and Edward Oswald Handforth gained quite a lot of interest from the curious, unfamiliar sights. But when the prison was reached, he was marched straight in and led down dark passages until he reached a smelly apartment where the only light came from a narrow grating. He was flung in, and the door was closed and bolted.

"By George!" said Handforth blankly.

This was prison indeed! There was not even a bench to sit upon—there was no comfort of any kind. The cell was primitive in the extreme, and the ventilation was bad. Every movement of Handforth's caused him pain, for those ankle chains were heavy, and the clamps bit into his flesh.

"My hat! I'd no idea they were going to start these tricks," he muttered, with an awakening sense of alarm. "Rats! It's only being done to scare me—they won't keep it up for long! Blow Foo Chow and all his gang!" he added defiantly. "They won't get any information out of me!"

He clanked up and down until the pain of it brought him to a standstill. And there he stood, leaning against the wall. Dimly he

could hear the sounds of the city—the strange, Chinese voices, the rattle of a cumbersome native wheelbarrow now and again, the marching of soldiers. And it seemed to Handforth that hours must be passing.

As a matter of fact, the door was flung open within forty-five minutes, and Foo Chow himself appeared. The Chinaman was now attired in native, flowing robes, and looked more impressive.

"Well?" he said gently. "You are less obstinate now?"

"I'm still keeping my tongue quiet, if that's what you mean," retorted Handforth. "It's no good, Dr. Foo Chow. I've put Chingy where you'll never find him, even if you send your armies out in every direction. And I'm going to keep the secret, too."

"You foolish boy!" said Foo Chow. "You do not realise what agonies you are inviting! I will give you this one chance—but, remember, it is the only chance. Speak now—or you will be forced to speak."

"Forced!" snorted Handforth. "Huh! Try it on!"

"You still refuse?"

"Yes, and I'll keep on refusing from now until doomsday!" roared Edward Oswald stubbornly. "I'm not afraid of your beastly threats! You're going to torture me, eh? All right—go ahead! If I speak, you'll only torture poor old Chingy, so it might as well be me. I'm stronger than he is, anyhow."

"That is your final decision?"

"You can go ahead with your dirty work, and be hanged to you!" replied Handforth defiantly. "Do you want to know how much I care about you, old yellow face? Just that much!"

Snap!

Handforth deliberately snapped his fingers in front of Dr. Foo Chow's nose, raising both manacled hands in order to perform the gesture. The Chinaman did not change in his expression in the slightest degree, but his eyes seemed to burn with a peculiar intensity.

"Very well," he purred, his voice silkier than ever, "I shall remember that, my young friend."

He turned on his heel and left the cell. Handforth grinned to himself, and felt that he had fittingly upheld the best traditions of the St. Frank's Remove. It wasn't likely that he, the leader of Study D, was going to be scared by a beastly Chinaman!

Less than a minute later, the door was again opened, and this time Handforth was grasped by two great warders. They were not ordinary soldiers, but villainous-looking brutes, attired in dirty cotton garments which made some pretence of being uniforms.

"All right—don't push!" said Handforth indignantly.

But he was pushed, and very violently, too. Down the dark passage, stumbling over the uneven stone flooring, he was forced to the end, where the smells became even more pronounced. At last a great door was unbarred, and he was thrust through.

He found himself in pitchy darkness, and the door was closed and barred again. He stood there, breathing hard. Vaguely, he had an idea that his captors were about to practise some form of torture upon him.

After a while he found that the darkness was not so intense as it had seemed. A few glimmers of light were coming through a grating near the roof.

And now he was able to see round him. He wasn't alone, as he had thought. This dungeon-like place was peopled by others. Four—no, five—indeed, six. The luckless creatures were leaning against the walls or lying on the floor, and all were chained as Handforth was chained.

"Great Scott!" muttered Handforth, aghast.

The condition of the nearest prisoner appalled him. The man was half naked, too, wearing only a few tattered remnants of black, greasy clothing. He was a cripple, having only one arm. With a shock, Handforth realised that he was looking at a man who had been subjected to torture.

In fact, he felt—he instinctively knew—that he had been placed in a special chamber—one that was reserved for torture subjects! He had never believed that such a noisome dungeon as this could exist, even in China.

"Oh, my goodness!" he muttered huskily.

A clanking of chains sounded, and two of his companions came clawing at him, speaking in Chinese, and staring at him with hollow, wild eyes. One had only a single leg, and the other was without any ears. They looked like monstrous creatures from a nightmare. And they clawed at Handforth's white flannels, their voices grating upon his ears terribly.

"Chuck it!" he muttered. "Oh, my hat! What the dickens can I do? The poor beggars can't help it—they're mad, I believe! Driven off their rockers by torture! And I—I'm in here, waiting for my turn—"

His thoughts shied at the prospect. He couldn't bear to think what the immediate future might bring. He stood there, his whole senses dulled by the abrupt realisation of his true position.

And, in the meantime, Dr. Foo Chow was returning to his palace. These journeys between Yang Fu and the island stronghold were nothing to the Chinese millionaire, for he had modern methods of transport.

All over the countryside, great parties of soldiers were searching—scouring the district for Yung Ching. And Dr. Foo Chow, sitting in his car, allowed his eyes to smoulder with anxiety and hatred. These Britishers had won a trick, and it was foolish to deny the fact. But Foo Chow did not mean to let the affair stand. He was the master, and he would prevail!

When the gongs boomed out for luncheon in the palace, Dr. Foo Chow sat at the head of the centre table, as usual. Not for a moment did he depart from his pretence of being host. But there was a strained feeling in the air.

"Doubtless you are all wondering what has happened to your young companion," he said, before any questions could be asked. "He is quite safe, and unharmed—and will remain safe if he proves sensible."

"What does that mean, Dr. Foo Chow?" asked Lord Dorrimore.

"It means that I am not to be flouted by a mere boy," replied the Chinaman. "This young gentleman—this Handforth—is aware of Yung Ching's hiding-place. So far, he has refused to divulge the secret——"

"Good old Ted!" sang out Willy.

"Hear, hear!"

"Handy won't give the game away!"

"St. Frank's for ever!"

A perfect chorus of defiant shouts came from the juniors.

"I like to see this display of confidence," smiled Dr. Foo Chow gently. "However, I am afraid it is misplaced. My young prisoner will loosen his tongue before another three hours have passed. My methods are always successful," he added silkily. "I am a man who always wins!"

"Does that imply torture?" asked Nelson Lee.

"Yung Ching is lost, but I have another boy in his place, so why should I concern myself?" asked Dr. Foo Chow blandly. "But let us not disturb our meal, ladies and gentlemen. Your young friend will be restored to you before the hour of tea, and I do not think he will be harmed. My methods are very effective, and actual torture will not be necessary."

It was only with difficulty that Lord Dorrimore kept himself down. But he realised the futility of making a scene, and he held himself in check. Later, he unburdened himself to Nelson Lee and Barry Stokes.

"I shan't be able to stand much of this!" he said thickly. "Good glory! That velvet-voiced demon makes me want to strangle him!"

"I seem to have some recollection that you promised to be good for a week," said Lee drily. "You told me that last night's affair would satisfy you for several days——"

"Yes, I know that, but I'm beginnin' to get super-charged again," interrupted Dorrie. "It's Foo Chow, I think. If he'd only keep out of our way, I might simmer down. But the very look of him sends my temperature to boilin' point, an' one of these times I shall start blowin' off steam from every pore!"

"I feel the same way, Mr. Lee," muttered Barry Stokes grimly. "What in the name of all that's fiendish is he going to do with Handforth? The poor youngster is going to be tortured, or I'm a Chinaman myself!"

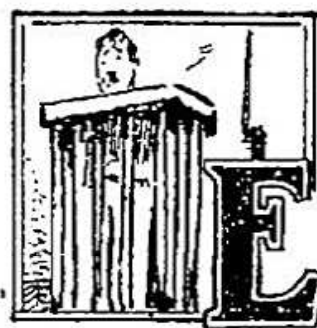
"Hadn't we better reveal Yung Ching's hiding-place?" asked Dorrie.

"Not yet," replied Lee, shaking his head. "Foo Chow will merely threaten, to begin with, in my opinion. And if Handforth still remains obdurate he will tell us, and then we can make terms. But after all our trouble in rescuing Ching, we don't want to give him

up. Remember what we shall be surrendering to!"

"It's an infernally bad position altogether," said Stokes, frowning.

And they were all forced to agree there seemed to be no possibility of an immediate improvement.



CHAPTER 8.

HANDY SAYS "NO!"

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH slept.

Nature, after all, would not be denied, and although his spirit was as strong as ever, bodily weariness overtook him. In that noisome dungeon, with half-crazed human relics as companions, he had felt that he was lost indeed. His stout heart was shaken, but his stubborn will was unmoved.

Those nightmare companions of his had bothered him for a while, but had soon crawled away into their own corners. And Handforth had felt a great tiredness coming over him. But sleep, of course, was out of the question. Under no circumstances would he allow himself to doze. In fact, the very idea of sleep was ridiculous.

Yet he had sunk down into a squatting position, and was now slumbering heavily, snoring with all his usual power. The discomforts of his prison, the horrors of his thoughts, the pain of his manacles, were not sufficient to keep him awake.

He had been on the go continuously for over twenty-four hours. A long struggle in the river, a brief nap in the sun while his clothing dried, and then a night of nervous excitement. And miles and miles of trudging, too. It was small wonder that he slept in the midst of these present discomforts.

But his spell of merciful unconsciousness was not to last for long.

Scarcely an hour had elapsed before the door was unbarred and flung open. Handforth still slumbered, but his maimed and hideous companions scrambled forward, all talking at once, all pleading. Perhaps it was food they wanted, perhaps water—but they were cruelly cast aside by the two brutal warders.

These gentry seized Handforth, and shook him.

"Shurrup!" muttered Edward Oswald irritably. "Do that again, Church, my son, and I'll biff you!"

He was shaken with greater violence.

"Oh, hallo!" said Handforth, opening his eyes. "Rising-bell, eh? By George! What? I—I mean—— Oh, corks! It's you, is it?"

Realisation came to him as he saw the hulking forms of his guards and the stagnant dungeon.

"What's up?" he asked, glaring. "Leggo my arm, blow you! Take your filthy paws off me! I'm not moving for you, or anybody

else! Can't you let a fellow have a nap without bothering him—"

He broke off and struggled violently. But it was useless. He was dragged out of the dungeon, his captors showing no mercy. And Edward Oswald was realising that his muscles were aching severely, the effect of so much walking and exposure during the night. Moreover, those cruel manacles were agony itself.

"You wait!" he panted fiercely. "By George, just you wait!"

Along the dim corridors again he was taken, and then down some uneven steps. This was to be a dungeon in the real sense of the word!

The air did not reek so much down here, and there was a chill feeling in it. Handforth found himself in a great cellar, with a low roof and uneven stone walls. Light was provided by means of two primitive lamps which flickered eerily. Shadows were cast into every corner.

No word was spoken. Handforth was taken to a thick wooden chair, and forced down upon it. Straps were placed round him, so that he could make no movement. And the chair itself was fixed to the floor by means of iron brackets. These very preparations were sinister. They were enough to send a chill into the stoutest heart.

The two warders vanished, and Handforth found himself utterly alone. He looked round wonderingly, now very much awake. Over in one corner there was a kind of forge, with a black opening which was evidently a chimney. A fire was smouldering there, almost dead, and there were irons on a stone block near by. In other parts of the cellar there were curious, primitive contrivances of woodwork and iron.

"By George!" breathed Handforth. "The torture chamber!"

A sort of cold horror came over him as he realised the truth of his guess. And his present solitude had its own significance, too. He was being left alone so that he could see the nature of his prison—so that his spirit would be broken, even before the torture was threatened.

It was a true example of Chinese devilry.

"I'll bet the Spanish Inquisition isn't in it with this," Handforth told himself. "My only hat! I seem to be in for a pretty lively time of it! But I'm not going to give Chingy away—not if they slice me up by inches! The Handforths don't knuckle under to anybody, let alone to dirty Chinks!"

The bulldog defiance welled up within him—that defiance for which he was famous. He actually grinned, although it was a twisted sort of affair. He'd show 'em! What did he care for their rotten torture?

He suddenly started. There was another presence in the room, although the door had not been opened. There was a shadow in the far corner, just beyond the range of Handforth's turned head. He tried to twist round, but could not do so.

"Who's that?" he asked fiercely.

There was something horrifying in the thought of somebody creeping up behind him. Bound and helpless, he felt utterly at the mercy of this unknown presence. But it moved out, so that he could see it distinctly.

"My goodness!" muttered Handforth.

The man was an elderly Chinese, bare to the waist, and with a skin that was like old parchment. His face was wrinkled and wizened, with hollow eyes. He had a single projecting tooth, which added to the general effect of the nightmare. This, without question, was the chief torturer! In his thick-soled native shoes, he padded over to the furnace and set some bellows working.

Then Dr. Foo Chow appeared, entering the cellar by means of the ordinary door.

"You—you rotter!" panted Handforth hotly.

"Well, my young friend, are you in a more pliant mood?" asked Dr. Foo Chow gently. "I do not wish to cause you any unnecessary pain, but you must remember that I am the master here. I demand certain information, and before I have done I shall receive it."

"You're an optimist, aren't you?" said Handforth contemptuously. "But, by George, this tells me something! You haven't found Chingy, eh? Good egg! You won't get any information out of me, you yellow serpent!"

Dr. Foo Chow was as immobile as ever.

"Still arrogant, eh?" he murmured. "You are certainly an unusual boy! I know how you British love to exploit your famous doggedness—but this time the Chinaman will win! You will speak, my friend."

Handforth snorted.

"Do you think your torture will make me speak?" he retorted. "I can stand pain as well as anybody, and you're not going to get me to give Chingy away. You can kill me first!"

"Killing would not suit my purpose at all," replied Foo Chow. "No, my boy, I shall use more subtle methods than that."

"Well, there's one thing—I can only stand a certain amount of torture, and then I'll become unconscious," said Handforth bluntly. "That'll do you a fat lot of good, won't it? Rats to your giddy inquisition!"

Foo Chow made a sign to the torturer. A white-hot iron was withdrawn from the fire, and the half-naked Chinaman came silently over, and Dr. Foo Chow stood well back.

"I am about to give the order," he said softly. "If you wish to speak, say the one word 'Yes.' The operations shall then cease."

Handforth was gazing at the white-hot iron fascinatedly.

"I won't say a word!" he muttered. "At least, I won't tell you about Chingy! Go on! Let him torture me! Can't you get it over, you fiend?"

Foo Chow spoke two words in Chinese. The man with the wizened face came nearer, and the white-hot iron, still glowing with burning heat, was gradually brought nearer and nearer to Handforth's left eye.

"Now!" whispered Dr. Foo Chow. "Just one word!"

"No!" panted Handforth.

"You still have a few moments——"

"No!"

"Blindness is a sad affliction!" said the Chinaman softly. "Remember the years you have to live——"

"No!" shouted Handforth, with defiance. "Haven't I told you that I won't speak? You—you yellow hounds! Do your rotten worst!"

It was impossible for him to withdraw his head, for the chair-back was high, and there was no escape. The iron, now glowing red, came nearer and nearer, until the heat from it was blistering in its intensity. Handforth closed his eyes tightly, and, with set teeth, he waited.

In a peculiarly detached sort of way, he wondered what the first searing pain would be like. He wondered if he would yell. He hoped not, for he didn't want to give Dr. Foo Chow the slightest satisfaction. A kind of perspiration was breaking out over him, but the thought of saying that one word "Yes" never even occurred to him. The mere possibility of giving in did not enter his head.

Minutes seemed to pass, and the heat from that iron grew less. Still the agonising touch did not come. He opened his eyes suddenly, and saw that the wizened man was back at the furnace. And Dr. Foo Chow was close by him, smiling.

"You—you rotter!" gasped Handforth. "Why can't you get on with it?"

"I will give you another chance!" replied the Chinese millionaire. "It is my usual custom to delay the actual mutilation until the last moment. But that last moment is nearly at hand," he added silkily. "I mean to get what I aim for! Never forget that!"

He clapped his hands, and the two warders appeared. Handforth was quickly unstrapped, and his jacket and shirt were stripped off. And now, bare to the waist, he was carried over to a rudely-constructed block. His manacles had been removed now, and he was spreadeagled upon the block, face upwards, and ropes were tied from his hands and feet beneath the block. He lay there, utterly helpless.

"Good!" he said with greater defiance than ever. "I've often wanted to know how you Chinamen tortured your victims, and now I'm having some first-hand exhibitions." He laughed. "By George, I shall be able to shove this in one of my Trackett Grim stories later on! There's nothing like realism!"

Dr. Foo Chow stood there, slowly stroking his chin.

"An amazing boy!" he murmured. "Yes, truly an amazing boy!"



CHAPTER 9.

THE WOODEN CAGE.

THE most peculiar feature of the whole affair was that Handforth still had that feeling of detachment. He couldn't help imagining that he was a mere onlooker. And, again, he felt that this was a giant hoax, and that there was no actual danger. He was inwardly gloating, too. Foo Chow would never adopt these methods if Yung Ching's hiding-place had been discovered. It was a direct proof that the little Chinee was still safe.

So far, Handforth told himself, he hadn't been tortured at all, and he was quite prepared to stand anything these human devils could devise. He didn't appreciate the fact that he was being cruelly tortured all the time. The mental strain alone was a refined calculating torture.

A fellow of ordinary pluck and temperament might have knuckled under before this, and who could have blamed him? But Edward Oswald Handforth was a tartar indeed! Dr. Foo Chow was inwardly amazed at his victim's sustained defiance. There was something about this British schoolboy which baffled him.

"Perhaps the red-hot iron is rather crude," he said gently. "Let us try something more refined."

"You can try any old thing you like," retorted Handforth carelessly. "But if you think I'm going to knuckle under, you've made the biggest mistake of your crooked career! Bring out your thumb-screws and racks, and do your worst! Who cares for a yellow-faced baboon like you? My hat! You make me laugh!"

"Yes, you are certainly an amazing boy," said Dr. Foo Chow, unmoved.

He made a sign, and the wizened man came into Handforth's vision. He was carrying a long, curved knife, and the blade glittered in the flickering light from the smelly lamps.

"Such a pity!" murmured Foo Chow. "You have a splendid chest, young man. A slow removal of a few inches of skin will, I am afraid, leave a nasty scar. And the pain itself will be severe. Always remember, however, that one word will bring the operation to a stop."

FREE GIFTS!.....

Look out for the "Nelson Lee" Man—he is visiting all the seaside towns this season. If he sees you carrying a copy of "The Nelson Lee Library," he will make you a present! Keep this copy of the Old Paper where he can see it.

.....FREE GIFTS!

"Go ahead!" said Handforth cheerfully. "I'm ready!"

He was quite surprised at himself. If he had pictured himself in this position he would have felt horrified. He would have concluded that his fear would have shattered his nerves, and compelled him to give in. But now that the actual thing was happening, he felt as cool as ice. Torture? Why, there was nothing in it! It was simply a matter of keeping your nerve!

He watched the blade as it came nearer to his skin.

"You will say the word?" asked Dr. Foo Chow.

"You can go and boil yourself!" replied Handforth deliberately.

Suddenly Foo Chow snapped his finger. The knife was withdrawn.

"Wonderful!" said the Chinaman. "I can see that these methods are quite useless. Your obstinacy will never be overcome in this manner. You will sink into unconsciousness before you speak."

"You can speak the truth, then?" asked Handforth sneeringly.

"You need a slower form of inducement," continued Dr. Foo Chow. "You are one of those people who require something prolonged. Twenty-four hours of the cage will no doubt bring you into the necessary frame of mind. Yes, my young friend, the cage is the better method."

"Good!" said Handforth. "Lead me to the zoo!"

He was still keyed up to that high pitch of defiance, and he took a sheer joy in answering Dr. Foo Chow in this characteristic manner. By George, what a yarn to tell the chaps when he got free! Handforth never admitted for a single second that he might be held captive for good.

Again he was released, and he was allowed to put his shirt and jacket on. The manacles were not replaced on his wrists and ankles, however. In charge of those two great warders, he was removed from the cellar.

Dr. Foo Chow had changed his plan deliberately. He knew that he was dealing with a youngster of extraordinary obstinacy—and courage. Dr. Foo Chow had never met anybody with Handforth's nature.

The prisoner was taken out into the open air, where the afternoon sun beat down with relentless heat. In the rear of the prison there was a kind of enclosed yard, where refuse was piled promiscuously.

Without pausing, Handforth was taken through the yard, where the flies swarmed in myriads, and out by way of a narrow door. He was marched through the streets, and now a number of soldiers were in charge, pushing the harmless but inquisitive inhabitants out of the way, without ceremony.

At last they reached a square—about the widest space in the whole city. It was thronged with people, most of them attending to their normal daily work. It was a kind of market, by what Handforth could judge, but everybody seemed to leave their business

on purpose to stare at him, and follow the soldiers, in order to find out what the excitement meant.

Edward Oswald's grim courage was still with him. He was sustained by that dogged obstinacy of his, and he vaguely wondered what kind of torture they were preparing for him now. The chances were that it would be something even more devilish than his previous experiences.

At last, almost in the centre of the square, a halt was called. Here there were more soldiers, and they were keeping guard over a primitive-looking wooden cage, which more closely resembled an oblong crate. It was standing on its end, and was rather broader at the bottom than at the top. It was just about the height of an ordinary tall man.

Handforth looked round, half expecting Dr. Foo Chow to appear. But the great war lord did not care to come among his people in this way, for it would probably mean a certain loss of "face." He was a great man, and was obliged to hold himself exclusive.

"So they're going to shove me on exhibition, eh?" said Handforth defiantly. "Well, they'll never make me give in, that's one thing."

One side of the "cage" was opened, and he was forced within. The top was of solid planking, with a hole in the centre. One plank hinged back, and Handforth's neck was thrust in. He now found himself hanging by the neck, for his head could not get through that small hole, and his feet were over a foot from the bottom of the cage.

So this, then, was the end! They were going to strangle him in cold blood, in view of the whole population—

Then he felt something under his feet. He was raised, and the pressure on his neck was relieved. He gripped at the wooden bars of the cage angrily.

"You rotters!" he panted. "Why don't you get it over, and finish with it?"

The officer in charge of the operations looked up at Handforth's protruding head after the door of the cage had been closed.

"So you stay!" he said, in indifferent English. "Under your feet, flat stones. Savvy? To-morrow, one go. Neck stletchee. Next day, two go. Neck more stletchee. Next day, thlee go—"

"If you think my neck's made of india-rubber, you're wrong!" interrupted Handforth coldly. "There's a limit to this 'stletchee' business. But I can see the wheeze, you rotters! My hat! Who thinks of all these tortures? Anyhow, I'm safe for the time being!"

"You say him word, as Excellency want, and allee same good," declared the officer. "I come evely one-two-thlee hour. You speakee word, and quick freedom and go backee palace. Savvy?"

"When I get out of this," said Handforth, "I'm going to smash that ugly face of yours into a mash!"

The officer failed to understand. At least, he looked puzzled for a moment, and then

moved off with his men. Handforth was now left entirely alone. The soldiers, at any rate, left him, but the ordinary population came crowding round, pointing to him, gesticulating, and chattering volubly. Nobody, however, made the slightest attempt to actually approach the cage.

Handforth did not know that this form of barbarous torture was employed as a means of capital punishment. And Yang Fu was by no means the only Chinese city in which such methods were indulged in.

This wooden cage is to be found in many parts of China. The condemned victim is placed on the thin, flat stones, and each day one stone is taken away. And so the added pressure on the ill-fated prisoner's throat ultimately results in strangulation. It is a slow, agonising business, made trebly worse by the mental torture which accompanies it. For the victim knows that the next day the grip on his throat will be tighter.

With the departure of the soldiers, Handforth's defiance also deserted him. He suddenly felt a swift, nauseating reaction. His weakness was startling, and he felt sick and faint. Every limb trembled, and his weariness was a real pain.

He was suffering no physical harm, however—at least, not at the moment. But after a while the discomfort became acute in the extreme. There was absolutely no rest. To lean against anything was impossible, and to relax himself was dangerous, since his neck at once became caught in that wooden hole.

This was genuine torture, without any question. To get any ease was hopeless, to change his position was risky, and he was tired and weary after his recent adventures. And his thirst was increasing as the beating sun blazed down upon his bare head.

But Edward Oswald Handforth's pluck was unimpaired.



CHAPTER 10.

FOO CHOW ASKS FOR IT!

LORD DORRIMORE and Mr. Beverley Stokes were talking together on the terrace of Dr. Foo Chow's palace.

"Looks a bit like thunder," said Mr. Beverley Stokes, as he glanced at a bank of clouds in the distance. "Phew! This heat is stifling! A good storm would clear the air a bit."

Lord Dorrimore threw his cigarette-end away with a growl.

"The weather doesn't interest me, old man," he said. "I can't help thinkin' about that poor young beggar, Handforth. What are they doin' to him?"

"We're all asking ourselves the same question, Dorrie," said Nelson Lee quietly. "But there is nothing that we can do. I don't mind admitting that I have never felt so utterly powerless."

"Can't we make another dash?" asked his lordship.

"Impossible——"

"If we can grab one of these motor-cars, it might be done," urged Dorrie.

"I tell you it's impossible," repeated Lee. "Since our escapade of last night there has been a much greater vigilance. Every car is guarded by soldiers. The drawbridge is only lowered when there is traffic to come upon the island, or leave it. Foo Chow does not mean us to cause him any more trouble. Why, do you realise that this place is surrounded by thousands of armed men? I am not exaggerating. There are literally thousands!"

Dorrie grunted again.

"By gad, I suppose you're right," he muttered. "It wouldn't be half so bad if we only knew what they're doin' to the poor kid. It's not much good askin' Foo Chow, because he'd only tell us a lot of lies."

A group of St. Frank's juniors were talking in very much the same strain, further along the terrace, as they lounged in the shade of a great palm. Irene & Co. were there, too, and every face was concerned.

"This sort of thing can't last much longer," Dick Hamilton was saying. "There's got to be a break, and I expect we shall be the ones to make it. I don't think we could live in these conditions for another twenty-four hours."

"Why not go for old Foo Chow, as soon as he appears, and give him the hiding of his life?" suggested Buster Boots, of the Fourth.

"He'd make it too hot for us afterwards," growled Jack Grey.

"Who cares?" said Boots. "Anything for a bit of a change!"

"Couldn't we torture him until he told us where Handforth is?" asked De Valerie. "Give him some of his own medicine! It's about the only thing he'll understand."

Church shook his head.

"It's no good treating it as a sort of jape," he added bitterly. "Foo Chow's got the upper hand, and he's probably torturing Handy in earnest. We couldn't do anything like that. We're not Chinese."

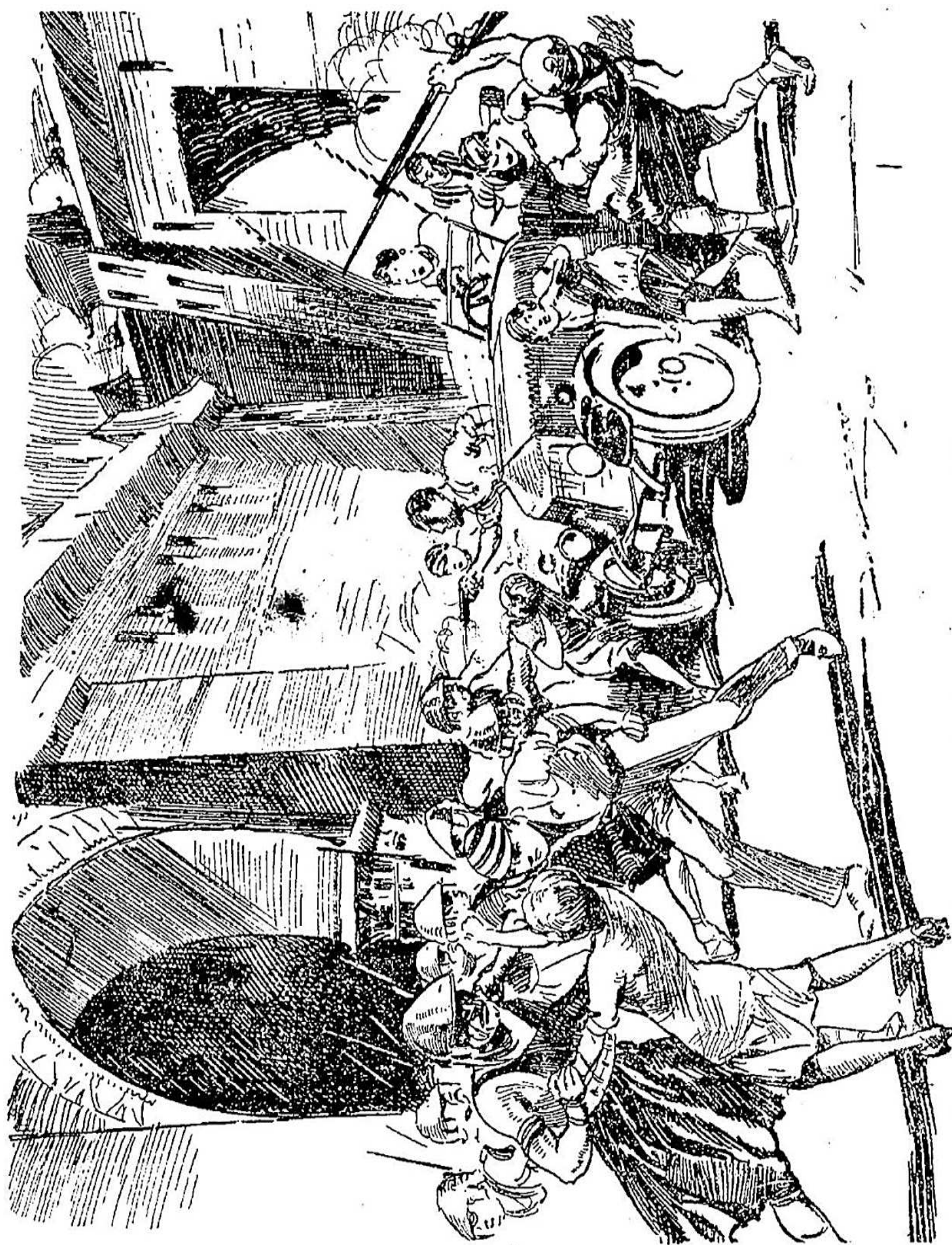
"He's right, you chaps," said Dick Hamilton, nodding. "Our torture would be just an ordinary ragging, and Foo Chow would only make things worse for us afterwards. No, we've got to admit that we're absolutely helpless."

"And poor old Ted remains a prisoner?" asked Irene, in distress.

"Sorry, old girl, but I don't see that we can do anything," said Dick. "If there was the remotest chance——"

"There's Foo Chow, now!" interrupted Reggie Pitt.

The Chinese millionaire's car had just come gliding up to the terrace. Dr. Foo Chow alighted, and caught sight of Nelson Lee and Dorrie talking with Mr. and Mrs. Stokes. Umlosi hovered in the background.



With a yell, Browne sent the great car hurtling at the Chinamen as they tried to capture Irene & Co. Browne's revolver barked savagely, while the rest of the boys went tearing into the Chinks with both hands.

always keeping his beloved "N'Kose" in sight.

"You will be interested, perhaps, to hear of your young friend's behaviour under torture," said Dr. Foo Chow smoothly. "I can assure you that the boy is the most wonderful subject we have ever dealt with."

"You cur!" exclaimed Dorrie thickly. "Perhaps you've never tried torturin' a British boy before?"

"I must admit that the experience is a novel one," replied Foo Chow. "The boy Handforth not only refused to speak when threatened with hot irons, but even cold steel had no effect."

"What butchery have you been committing?" asked Lee huskily.

"Have no fear! The boy is not harmed," replied the Chinaman. "I concluded that the usual methods would be futile. His obstinacy is such that it needs prolonged treatment. So he is placed in a cage, with his neck encircled by wooden planks—"

"Have you condemned that poor boy to the *cangue*?" asked Lee, in horror.

"No, not exactly that," said Dr. Foo Chow. "The *cangue* is a wooden collar, as you probably know, encased in which the victim can neither lie down nor feed himself. This cage is different. Your young friend stands upon flat stones, and for the moment he is safe. One of those stones will be removed in the morning, and unless he chooses to speak, he will spend a somewhat uncomfortable day!"

"You hound!" shouted Dorrie furiously.

"Tut-tut! There is no need for this excitement," said the Chinaman. "The boy is quite safe, and he has only himself to thank for his position. On the day after tomorrow a second stone will be taken away. But a third, I fancy, will be scarcely necessary. For he will either earn his release by loosening his tongue, or will be in no further need of attention. You see, I am perfectly frank on this matter. The boy's obstinacy has rather amused me."

"Amused you!" said Nelson Lee, flushing red with an anger that even exceeded Dorrie's. "By Heaven, Foo Chow, there are some things I can stand, but I cannot stand this!"

He leapt forward before Foo Chow could realise his intention.

Crash!

Nelson Lee's fist struck the Chinaman on the point of the chin, and he fell headlong, a sprawling, grotesque figure. In a second Lee was calm again, glad of his action in one sense, but regretting it in another. But it had been utterly impulsive.

"Hurrah!" yelled the St. Frank's fellows, swarming up.

"It's a dirty trick!" roared Dorrie. "I was goin' to knock him down, Lee!"

The air was electric. Foo Chow's soldiers were approaching, most of them dumb with amazement and horror. Foo Chow himself, dazed and hurt, slowly picked himself up. There was an expression on his face which



With a yell, Browne sent the great car hurtling at the C revolver barked savagely, while the rest of the b

indicated that a climax was at hand. This was to be the end of all pretence.

The Chinese millionaire had lost "face" in a manner that appalled him. Before the eyes of his own troops he had been knocked down by this foreign devil! They had witnessed this terrible event! For in the eyes of a Chinaman it was nothing less. Only by drastic methods of the most bloodthirsty type could he save his face. There was black murder in his heart as he prepared to rap out an order.

But just then the St. Frank's fellows were infected by the same irresistible impulse that had affected Nelson Lee. With a chorus of yells they swept down, and Foo Chow was momentarily smothered.

"Hurrah!"

"In the fountain with him!"

"Duck him!"

Foo Chow emerged, held in a spread-eagled position. Then, with a rush, he was swept off to the nearest fountain pool. With a



men as they tried to capture Irene & Co. Browne's went tearing into the Chinks with both hands.

fierce swing the juniors released him, and he descended with a deafening splash into the water.

"St. Frank's for ever!"

"Down with torturers!"

"Hurrah!"

"Duck him again!"

The juniors were swarming round excitedly, and even the Moor View girls were anxious to take a hand.

"Dorrie, this is terrible," muttered Lee. "I was a fool to precipitate this thing! I did the very act for which I criticised you!"

"We're all human," said his lordship bluntly. "You just happened to smash him about one second before me, that's all. So it comes to exactly the same thing. The infernal cur! Gloatin' in front of us! I'm not a murderous chap as a rule, but, by the Lord Harry, I'd like to give that skunk a yard of cold steel!"

"But the price will be deadly!" muttered Lee in horror.

He was referring to the action which had already been taken. But it seemed that Fate was again favouring the holiday party. For just then a powerful car came roaring up at high speed. Even before it had stopped a number of officers leapt off.

One of them had seen Dr. Foo Chow, as the latter attempted to scramble out of the fountain. He came running up, ignoring the juniors, and with his face streaming with perspiration, and with his eyes afire with wild alarm.

He spoke rapidly, desperately. At first Dr. Foo Chow was too infuriated to listen, but then his own expression changed. He grasped the officer fiercely, and the man talked more.

For the first time the St. Frank's fellows saw their "host" excited. His eyes blazed. Without giving any of the juniors a glance, he hurried off to the waiting car.

"This looks like somethin' big!" muttered Dorrie in wonder.

"It is something big," replied Nelson Lee quietly.

Other officers were rushing about, shouting orders. The soldiers were forming up and running down towards the drawbridge at full speed. Within three minutes there was not a uniform in sight. Even Foo Chow himself had gone—soaked to the skin, just as he was!

Undoubtedly there was something big in the air.



CHAPTER 11.

THE GUNS OF WAR.

WONDERING what was going to happen next, Irene Manners was in a feverish state of excitement.

"What does it mean?" she asked breathlessly.

"It's no good asking me," replied Doris. "Mr. Lee knocks Foo Chow down, the fellows pitch him in the fountain pool, and then he goes off without even speaking to any of us!"

"And there's plenty of excitement about now, too!" added Dick Hamilton, looking at the palace. "Look at all these Chinks! The servants, and the palace attendants! Why, they're jabbering together, dotty with excitement!"

"I say, there's one man there who can speak pidgin English!" said Reggie Pitt quickly. "Let's go and ask him what's happened."

They ran up, and soon found the man they required—one of the uniformed servants who was generally on duty in the handsome marble foyer. The man was looking a sickly colour, and was trembling with fright.

"Plentee bad news!" he exclaimed, after he had been questioned again and again. "Allee same fighting!"

"What do you mean—fighting?" asked Church.

"Troops of Yung Li Chang sweep into this province," replied the man with chattering teeth. "Heap big armies invade! Thousands—thousands—plentee thousands! Yang Fu allee same plepore for war."

"That's enough for us!" said Dick Hamilton quickly. "Come on—let's go and tell the gov'nor."

They ran back and found that Nelson Lee had already heard the news. As a matter of fact, the great detective had some knowledge of Chinese, and although he had only caught a few words here and there, he had understood the gist of the news that Foo Chow's officers had brought.

"Yes, boys, I know," he said as they excitedly told him. "It is something very big. And, mercifully, the news came at a very opportune moment. Foo Chow was so startled that he did not wait to revenge himself upon us. This other business is a thousand times more important."

"But is it really war, sir?" asked Dick.

"It is fairly clear that Yung Li Chang has taken his enemy completely by surprise," replied Lee. "By what I can gather, there is a huge advance afoot—by Yung Li Chang's picked armies."

"But—but why?" asked Dorrie. "Why is he invadin' this province? I thought Yung Li Chang was a peaceful sort of cove?"

"He is, but Foo Chow has driven him to this action," replied Lee. "It is Foo Chow who desires his enemy's lands, and it is certain that he has told Yung Li Chang that his son is a prisoner in Yang Fu—and that he will be tortured unless certain territories are surrendered. It seems that Yung Ching's father, instead of being intimidated, has called his armies together, and is making a swift advance upon Yang Fu."

"Good gad!"

"Foo Chow's calculations were all wrong, for he had never counted upon this swift stroke on the part of Yung Li Chang," went on Lee. "Our friend has been playing with fire, and he now finds himself being burned. This may mean salvation for all of us."

"Oh!"

"How, sir?"

"Tell us, Mr. Lee!"

"If we fall in with Yung Li Chang's troops we shall be safe, but we must not count too much upon that chance," replied Nelson Lee. "It will be far better if we take some action ourselves. The opportunity has come, and we should be mad not to take advantage of it."

"Hurrah!"

"What can we do, sir?"

"The first thing is to keep calm," replied

Nelson Lee pointedly. "This sudden event has taken Foo Chow and all his officers completely by surprise. It is the very last thing they expected. And so, in consequence, they are in a state of utter confusion. Perhaps it will mean a chance for us."

"Oh, listen!" cried Mary Summers suddenly.

They all were silent, startled by her tone.

"Thunder!" said Reggie Pitt quickly.

"Gad, I knew there was a storm about—" began Lord Dorrimore.

"This is not thunder, but gunfire!" interrupted Nelson Lee. "Listen! That sound is unmistakable!"

"Oh, my goodness!"

"Gunfire!"

"Then it's real war!"

"I—I didn't know these Chinese had guns, sir," said Church. "I thought they were all primitive—"

"A moment's careful thought would have banished that idea, Church," put in Lee. "Foo Chow's army is supplied with the latest type of rifles and machine-guns, so it stands to reason that heavy artillery is also available. And Yung Li Chang is just as progressive as Foo Chow. In any case, the Chinese have used big guns for centuries, although I will not guarantee the accuracy of their aim or the effectiveness of their fire."

Boom—boom—boom!

Reggie Pitt's assumption that the sound was the rolling of distant thunder was excusable. The booms came from a great distance—and were more of a vibration than an actual sound. As yet the guns were far away.

"Yung Li Chang has taken a leaf out of Foo Chow's book by making an unsuspected declaration of war," said Nelson Lee. "More than that—he has invaded this territory. And who can blame him? He has no desire to annex any land, but he is determined to rescue his son from Foo Chow's clutches. The soldiers of Yung Li Chang are sweeping through the province—with the one object, doubtless, of capturing the capital."

"He's caught old Chow on the hop!" said Lord Dorrimore happily. "By glory! No wonder he's scooted without even changin' his clothes. The blighter is scared out of his wits, I expect."

"He is attempting to organise his army," replied Lee. "A big proposition, Dorrie, considering that it is not prepared for active service. Foo Chow's troops will be rushed to the front at a moment's notice, and utter confusion will reign for hours—perhaps for days."

"But—but how will that help us, sir?" asked Dick Hamilton quickly.

"It helps us very materially," replied Lee. "Practically no soldiers are left here, guarding us, for in this acute emergency Foo Chow is far more concerned for the safety of his capital than he is for us. He will concentrate all his efforts upon checking the advance of the invading army. As you have

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seen, every soldier has already been withdrawn from this island."

"But where do we come in?" asked Dorrie.

"The *Wanderer*," replied Lee quietly.

"What?"

"Your yacht, old man——"

"The *Wanderer*!" yelled his lordship.

"You—you think we can grab her an' hold her? By the Lord Harry! That's a scheme, if you like! Lee, old man, you always get the big ideas!"

"Hurrah!"

"We'll capture the *Wanderer*!"

"Let's make a rush now!"

"Steady, brothers—steady!" said Browne, of the Fifth. "We must allow Brother Lee to make all the plans. I will confess that the prospect is enticing, but we must not advance without the general's command!"

The prospect was indeed thrilling. Every face was flushed, and every heart was beating rapidly. The *Wanderer*! Foo Chow's gorgeous marble palace seemed a mere hovel compared to the familiar friendliness of Lord Dorrimore's steam yacht. If only they could get on board once more—and hold the vessel against all attacks! Perhaps they could even reach the open sea, and freedom, and complete liberty——

"Mind you, perhaps this is merely a wild hope, without any prospect of accomplishment," Nelson Lee was saying. "We may find that there are still plenty of soldiers here, so it will be as well to act warily. Our only course, in any event, is to choose our moment, and make a swift dash for the drawbridge—when it is down. Then a swift rush down the causeway to the quay, and after that—— Well, much will be left to chance."

"But if we grab the yacht—what then?" asked Mr. Stokes.

"Let us grab the yacht first."

"But shall we try to get to the open sea?"

"It will be far more feasible, I think, to go up-river, into Yung Li Chang's friendly territory," replied Nelson Lee. "The girls, of course, will be left here in your charge, Mrs. Stokes."

"Oh, no fear!" cried Irene indignantly.

"Not likely!" cried Doris.

"We're all in this!" insisted the others.

"But it's impossible!" said Mrs. Stokes. "There might be a lot of fighting."

"Well, we can fight, can't we?" asked Doris warmly. "It isn't fair that we should be left out if there's any excitement," she added, her pretty face flushed with indignation. "Just because we're girls we're left in the cold!"

"It's a shame!" chorused the other girls.

"All the same, you must allow me to know best, young ladies," said Nelson Lee grimly. "Under no circumstances can you join in this adventure. Indeed, there is no certainty that there will be an adventure. So the sooner you simmer down the better. This affair has got to be organised. We

must do some scouting, and we must see how the land lies. To begin with, we'll pretend to act in the same way as usual—and keep our eyes well open."

And Nelson Lee, talking quietly, gave out concise instructions.



CHAPTER 12.

THE PANIC IN YANG FU.

SOMETHING'S up!"

Handforth came to that conclusion with a bit of a shock. It seemed to him that he had been helpless in that cage for hours—for long, wearisome, tortured hours. As a matter of fact, the period had been only just over two hours. But the tortures he had suffered had almost deprived him of his dogged, bulldog determination.

At the time he had thought that his adventures in that torture-cellar were merely nothing. He had laughed at Dr. Foo Chow's efforts to force him to speak. But now that the reaction had set in, he was feeling weak in every limb. He trembled so much that it was difficult for him to keep upright in that dreadful cage.

Already his neck was so sore that he was almost afraid to move. Now and again he had sagged through sheer physical weariness. But he had always been brought harshly to his senses by that terrible tightening of his throat.

Those flat stones beneath his feet, too, were unstable. With horror he realised that a sudden hasty movement would upset them all—and leave him there, strangling.

And he knew that he could expect no help from the curious crowds. He had long since arrived at the conclusion that these people bore him no actual enmity. But this cage was set there by the soldiers, and to interfere with it might mean death. No, even if Handforth died of strangulation before their eyes, they would not interfere.

The business of the day had continued placidly in the big square. And then came a subtle change.

At first Handforth was only dimly aware of it. The natives had ceased their buying and selling. They stood in groups, talking. A kind of hush had descended over the city. Then came the distant booming of thunder or guns. Handforth found himself awakening from his lethargy. He forgot his thirst and his discomfort.

"Yes, there's something up!" he told himself.

Almost at the same moment a number of soldiers appeared on the other side of the square. They were running and shouting—and, indeed, making as much noise as they possibly could. The manner in which they swept through the square, yelling and gesticulating, was rather extraordinary. Of

soldierly discipline there was not the slightest sign.

And then the crowds became infected with the same panic. Everybody was talking at once, jabbering excitedly, running about in aimless fashion; and as the minutes passed so the panic increased.

More soldiers appeared. From every corner of the city came the same babel of insane excitement.

"They've all gone dotty!" said Handforth, staring. "I've never seen such a thing in all my life! What's happened?"

There was nobody to answer the question, nobody to explain the meaning of this dramatic change. Not ten minutes ago the square had been peaceful and placid, full of drowsy Orientals, on good terms with everybody.

And now it was a seething mass of chaotic humanity!

Soldiers and more soldiers! They came endlessly—long lines of troops rushing along, and all going in the same direction. An extra big batch came along, and the gathering crowds were swept helpless out of the way, trampling one another and screaming wildly.

About fifty helpless natives came rushing towards the centre of the square. With a wild surge they smashed headlong into the cage, and Handforth was sent hurtling over within those treacherous wooden bars.

For a dreadful moment he thought that his last minute had come.

Crash!

There was a splintering of wood, a smashing of timbers, and then the crowd was sent hurtling on, many of the unfortunate Chinese being trampled down and badly injured.

Edward Oswald Handforth, dazed and hurt, was rather astonished to find that he could still breathe. There was a dull pain in his legs—a strangling sensation at his neck. But then, with a sudden shock of relief, he found that his cage was smashed—battered and torn by that sudden collision with the human flood.

The bars were completely shattered on one side; the top of the atrocious affair was separated from the rest of the contrivance. And the leader of Study D, reeling drunkenly to his feet, found that he could walk! Round his neck was that heavy mass of wood, but he was no longer a prisoner.

He never knew quite how he managed it, but he got free of the crowds and sought refuge in a shady corner, a kind of backwater, where, for the time being, he was comparatively safe. Nobody took the slightest notice of him. There was too much panic for that.

If only he could get rid of that great wooden collar, which was now, indeed, like a true Chinese *cangue*. Truth to tell, Handforth was on the point of utter exhaustion. At last his powers of endurance were failing him. The unfortunate junior had gone

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through a terrible experience, and even now his plight was scarcely less serious.

If he attempted to walk, he was in danger of breaking his own neck. For the top of that cage was still unbroken, and it was heavy. He hardly knew how he had reached his present haven, and, with a weakness stealing over him, he made no attempt to get further.

All he wanted to do was to rest; but rest was impossible, for that great wooden collar did not allow him to lie down, or even to sit down. He could only crouch there, in that little backwater, his thirst torturing him, and his brain reeling with the confusion which raged on every hand.



CHAPTER 13.

RAIN TO THE RESCUE.

"READY?" asked Lord Dorrimore tensely.

"Yes, we might as well make the attempt now," replied Nelson Lee. "It

makes little difference, in any case. There will be no tame capture of the *Wanderer*, Dorrie. Foo Chow is not so panic-stricken as we at first assumed."

"All the better," said his lordship. "I'm after some gore, Lee! I like a bit of excitement with my fightin'!"

"Wise words, O my father," rumbled Umlosi, his eyes blazing. "Speak thou the command, Umtagati, and let us enter upon this battle! For am I not longing to slay these unclean sons of dogs?"

Nelson Lee hesitated.

"I don't like the boys being in this fight, but we can't very well help it," he said. "They'll never consent to be left behind, and we need them, too."

"I feel just the same as you about it, old fellow, but we can't afford to be too particular in a big emergency like this," said his lordship. "It's now or never! It's a fight for our freedom! And if some of us get bowled over—well, it's better than all of us waitin' to be massacred."

"As you say, Dorrie, there is no alternative," agreed Nelson Lee. "Thank goodness we have persuaded the girls to remain within the palace."

They were standing near the terrace, in front of the palace, and from this point they could see right down the long drive to the outer gates. These stood wide open, and the drawbridge was down, but there was no clear passage. Lined up near the great gates were fully fifty of Foo Chow's troops, and every man was armed with rifle and bayonet.

Would it be possible to smash through that grim guard?

It was small wonder that Nelson Lee hesitated. He and Dorrie and Umlosi were prepared to fight grimly and tenaciously, but it seemed dreadful to ask these junior school-boys to undertake similar risks.

Foo Chow had left this strong guard deliberately, so that his prisoners could not possibly escape. And the drawbridge was down so that cars could come across at a moment's notice, in the event of an emergency.

Surely those guards would be sufficient? They were armed to the teeth, and these white people were utterly without a weapon. It did not seem that Foo Chow had left anything to chance.

In the distance, the guns were booming more continuously. They were nearer, too. The battle was increasing—developing with a rapidity which heartened the prisoners. Yung Li Chang was making a swift, deadly invasion. Perhaps he would get the decision within a few short hours! But this seemed too much of a dream, and it was useless to take anything for granted. The only way was to act on their own.

And when this opportunity had gone, what then?

The skies were overcast now, and an occasional rumble of thunder was added to the distant sound of the guns.

"Are we ready, sir?" asked Dick Hamilton tensely.

"We're waiting for the order, sir!"

Every member of the party was there—all the men and all the boys. Mrs. Stokes and the girls were in the background, waiting, with fast-beating hearts, to see the result of this dash.

"Think of Handforth, sir!" urged Church. "If we only get free, we might be able to rescue him."

"Yes, rather!"

"And these Chinks will flee as soon as they see us rushing at 'em!" said Reggie Pitt. "They may be armed, but I don't suppose they'll fire. If they do—well, we're ready to go under fighting. Anything's better than waiting for Foo Chow's tortures."

"Hear, hear!"

"Let's make a fight for it, sir!"

"We're all game!"

"St. Frank's for ever!"

And Nelson Lee, in face of that valiant spirit, could not withhold his command any longer. He suddenly made up his mind.

"Yes!" he snapped. "We'll make a fight for it! Come!"

"Hurrah!"

It seemed a mad enterprise indeed, but the madness of it was nullified by the knowledge that Dr. Foo Chow would put them all to the torture if they tamely remained in captivity. Of this Nelson Lee was certain. There had been a look in Foo Chow's eyes which meant evil when he had picked himself up, and when he had been flung into the fountain.

With a wild cheer the juniors swept down the great drive. Nelson Lee, Barry Stokes, Lord Dorrimore, Umlosi and Phipps were in the forefront, for Phipps was anxious to take his share. Archie's valet was no laggard when it came to a desperate encounter.

"Hurrah!"

"Down with Foo Chow and his army!"

"On, the Remove!"

Without a single weapon, without anything but their valiant spirit, the handful of Britishers surged on to the attack. There was something epic in this desperate attempt to capture the *Wanderer*.

Ahead, the Chinese soldiers were preparing. There were more of them now—a hundred strong. What insane folly was this? How could this handful expect to break through such an armed mass?

The troops were collected in the great gateway—packed there. There was no other exit from the island. It was only necessary to hold this one path, and escape was out of the question.

But that attacking force looked deadly, in spite of its small size!

Crack! Crack! Crack!

To Nelson Lee's horror, a splutter of rifle-shots rang out. So these men had been ordered to fire, after all! There was a whine of bullets as they sang overhead. The aim of these men was atrocious, and not one shot took effect.

And then, like some heaven-sent gift, came a sudden spatter of rain. Great drops they were—enormous drops which fell to the ground with distinct splashes. And then came a crashing burst of thunder.

Everything seemed to happen at once.

As that cannonade rolled out overhead, the rain increased in force. And it was at this very moment that the St. Frank's party ran headlong into the Chinese guards.

"Hurrah!"

"Come on, Remove!"

"Wau! This is indeed living!" roared Umlosi, grappling with one of the Chinamen, and whirling him round his head. There was something rather terrifying in Umlosi's terrific strength.

Nelson Lee expected a massacre then and there—a confused firing of rifles—a deadly charge with the bayonet. What chance was there for these unarmed boys against—

Swish—swish! Boom!

The rain now pelted down in blinding torrents, and the thunderstorm was at its height. Screaming and yelling, the Chinese soldiers broke. They turned before the attack of the holiday party, and did not even wait to get to grips. Only Umlosi and Dorrie had had any actual contact with the enemy.

The rest fled before there was any hand-to-hand struggling. They broke in every direction, and ran. It was like magic. In less than a minute the road was clear and the enemy had vanished.

"We've scared 'em off!" gasped Fullwood.

"The way is clear!"

"I knew they'd be scared of us!" yelled Reggie Pitt.

"On, the Remove!"

There was not a minute's delay. Sweeping across the drawbridge, the St. Frank's party found itself still unhindered. Once across that bridge, there now lay the cause-

way—a wide, twisting descent which led straight downwards to the river level. Here there was a concrete quay, where there were boats in plenty. The *Wanderer* was lying out in the stream, guarded by her own batch of Chinese.

"The cowards!" panted Dorrie, as he ran. "Gad, Lee, I never dreamed they'd break like that, though! Doesn't it prove how wise we were to make this attempt?"

"It proves that Providence is on our side, Dorrie," replied Lee. "These Chinese soldiers may not be like our own troops, but they are devils in real battle. They are valiant, too, hurling themselves into untold dangers with a fearless, fatalistic abandon."

"But the beggars bolted!"

"Not because they were afraid of us," said Lee grimly. "It was the rain!"

"Good glory! The rain?"

As they raced down the causeway, Dorrie revealed his astonishment.

"Yes, old man, the rain," said the detective. "These Chinamen are like cats. If there is one thing they dread more than anything else, it is a heavy downpour of rain. They would rather enter the fiercest battle than face a storm."

"But—but that seems utterly incredible!" ejaculated his lordship. "Hang it all, you can't mean it! That's only a yarn!"

Nelson Lee glanced behind.

"Haven't we had concrete proof?" he asked.

It was true. And although most of the boys felt that their desperate charge had scared the Chinese into flight, it was really the thunderstorm which had brought about that amazing effect.

In battle, the Chinese are iron-nerved. They are desperate, grim fighters, careless of death itself, but they will go scuttling for shelter if there is even a shower. A heavy thunderstorm will make them forget battle and everything else. Duty means nothing when there is a drenching in view!

So it was Providence, indeed, which had helped the holiday party on this fatal afternoon!



CHAPTER 14.

A DESPERATE ADVENTURE.

NE moment, brothers—one moment!"

William Napoleon Browne seized Church and McClure, one with

each hand. They had been running together, tearing down the causeway with the rest of the adventurers. Willy Handforth was with them, too, and he checked.

"We can't stop!" panted Church. "We've got to help in capturing the yacht."

"Let the others attend to that trivial affair," said Browne, forcing them to a halt. "Seizing the yacht will be child's-play, and four of us can be easily spared."

They looked at him, aghast.



The rushing crowd upset Handy's cage—smashing it. He staggered dazedly to his feet. The top of the cage still hung round his neck—but he was free!

"But you're not—scared?" gasped McClure.

"Alas, Brother Mac, that a Browne should be faced with such an accusation!" said William Napoleon sadly. "Am I not better known—"

"Sorry!" interrupted McClure. "But it seems so rummy—"

"The rain has come to our aid—the rain has made this adventure possible," continued Browne. "I have heard, on the highest possible authority, that the Chinese would rather face machine-gun fire than a thunderstorm. Judging from their generally uncleanly condition, I believe it. The *Wanderer*, I assure you, will be taken without trouble. We have other work."

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Church. "You—you mean—"

"Ted!" shouted Willy.

"Three minds with but a single thought," agreed Browne swiftly. "We are about to seize the yacht—we are on the point of defying Foo Chow and all his works. But can we call it a success if we fail to rescue Brother Handforth? Let us speed to Yang Fu, and tear him from the grip of his torturers."

"But—but can it be done?" asked McClure breathlessly.

"Why not?" said Willy. "Ted's been shoved into a cage, and it's a cert that he's in that big central square. They always do these things in public. Besides, Foo Chow mentioned something of the sort. We ought to find Ted in no time."

"But how are we going to get there?" asked Church.

"Leave it to me," said Browne calmly. "Would I have suggested this mission if I had had no plan?"

They raced up the causeway again, leaving the other members of the party to engage in the fight for the *Wanderer*. And Browne was undoubtedly right. It was far better for these four to make a lightning raid upon Yang Fu, and rescue their unfortunate schoolfellow. Even now, perhaps, it would be too late, but an attempt was essential.

At the top of the causeway Browne paused, and pointed.

An open car was standing there, having been abandoned at the outset of the down-pour. Owing to the blinding rain, scarcely anybody had noticed it, and the heavens were still delivering sheets of water.

While this was terrifying to the Chinese, it was a glorious gift to the whites. The air was cooled, and the drenching was a welcome relief. But the greatest feature of all was that the rain rendered the enemy well-nigh powerless. It seemed absurd, but it was a fact.

That car had contained two officers, and they had evidently come to the island stronghold on an urgent mission. Yet, in spite of this urgency, they had leaped from the automobile at the first downpour of rain, and had dashed for shelter beneath a thick banyan tree. In every respect it was characteristic of the Chinese.

"Come, brothers!" said Browne firmly.

They made a swift rush for the car, and piled in without any attempt being made to stop them. It was a powerful two-seater of racing type, without any hood. Browne pressed down the electric starter, and the engine roared.

"Hurrah!" yelled Church. "We're off!"

"Off to Yang Fu, to rescue Handy!" breathed McClure. "It—it seems too good to be true! I don't suppose we shall be able to find him. In any case, isn't it like going out of the frying-pan into the fire? Isn't it like deliberately entering the lion's mouth?"

The car was now roaring along the highway, Browne at the wheel, and his companions packed in next to him, and all soaked to the skin.

"It would be more correct to say, into the dragon's mouth," remarked Browne. "But do not be alarmed, brothers. I would not have suggested this scheme had there been no hope of success. I am relying upon the rain to continue."

"Great Scott! You mean that we shan't be stopped in the city?" asked Willy.

"If the storm is still raging, the streets will be empty," declared Browne. "For in Yang Fu there is plenty of shelter—and where you find shelter, there you will find Chinamen, when it rains. If this storm abruptly ceases before we reach the city gates, we shall reluctantly turn back."

"Not without Ted!" said Willy.

"Without Ted!" said Browne gravely. "For what help can we be to Brother Ted if we, too, are swiftly conveyed to the chamber of horrors? But be not pessimistic. The storm increases rather than diminishes."

It was a fact.

Ever since mid-day the air had been heavy, and in the early part of the afternoon the clouds had been gathering. And the storm was now raging with intensified fury. The lightning blazed, and the thunder rolled; but the latter sound was like sweet music to the four St. Frank's fellows in the car.

It was fortunate that the great highway was clear, for Browne was driving at something like fifty miles an hour, and the downpour was so tremendous that the visibility was poor. The flooded road sent up great sheets of water as the car hurtled over it.

With a sudden pressure of his foot, Browne jammed on the brakes, and the powerful automobile went skidding giddily sideways. But the Fifth Former regained control at once, but only in the nick of time. The gates of Yang Fu had loomed up out of the blur of rain, and the car simply shot through the gateway and into the rough street beyond.

That concrete highway only commenced outside the city, but within the walls the roads were uneven, tortuous, and now deep in mud. But, as Browne had anticipated, the place was like a town of the dead.

There were no human beings within sight.

Incredible as it seemed in the midst of all this excitement, the entire population had scuttled into shelter, and the merciless rain beat down upon the empty streets with tremendous velocity. It could be seen splashing up like a fog from the low roofs. The road, like a quagmire, was causing the car to skid and slither alarmingly, for Browne was still driving fast.

And he only drove at random, too. He kept straight on, and good fortune took him to the big central square. Here the same aspect of desertion was apparent, but there were people visible in doorways, crouching in the shelter. And the rain seethed down as though the heavens were seeking some revenge upon the city.

"What's the use?" shouted Church, the rain pouring down his face. "We've got here, and I don't think we're in much danger. But how can we find Handy in this great place? We might search for hours——"

"I say—quick!" interrupted Willy. "Look at that poor beggar wallowing in the mud there! Pull up, Browne! Oh, these fiends! We can't go by and see the poor brute suffering like that!"

"Brother Willy, your heart is of the right kind!" said Browne firmly.

He swerved, and the car skidded giddily in the mud, and swung round.

Out in the mud, some distance from the nearest building, a poor creature was lying helplessly in the drenching rain, a victim of Chinese torture! Only his head could be seen, and this was protruding through a great, square wooden collar.

It was impossible for the unfortunate one to rise, for that collar was too heavy. Neither could he lay down. He could only crouch there, in a kneeling attitude, resting the edge of that cumbersome collar in the mud.

The sight had touched Willy's heart, and he was burning with rage as he jumped from the car and sogged through the slush to the poor creature's help. It was Willy's intention to remove that barbarous wooden collar.

"All right, old son!" he muttered as he bent down. "We'll soon have you out of this——"

"By George! Willy!" came a low, husky cry from the mud-spattered figure.

LOOK OUT NEXT WEEK!

FREE Badges for all Members of the ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE.

Full particulars next Wednesday.

"THE LEGIONS OF FOO CHOW!"

War is in the air!

The hosts of Yung Li Chang are swarming to the attack of Foo Chow's legions! And the Boys of St. Frank's are in the thick of it!

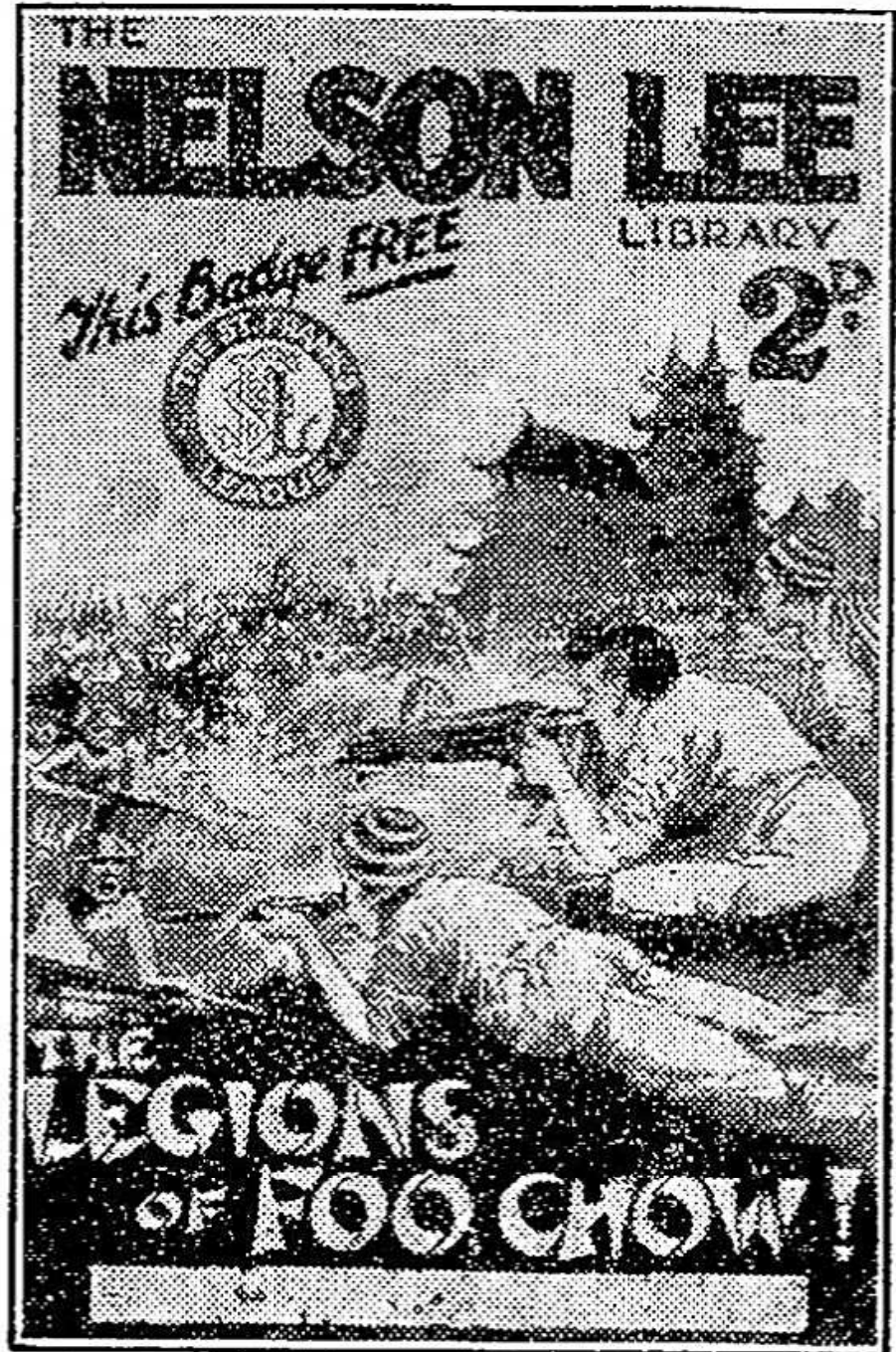
Handy leads a party to the rescue of Yung Ching and lands himself and his chums properly in the soup!

These are a few of the thrills in store for you in next week's topping yarn, which you must not on any account miss.

Look out also for another long instalment of our exhilarating adventure serial:

"THE ROLLYING ROVERS!"

Make sure of your copy by ordering in advance!



The Boys of St. Frank's in action! Look out for this cover next Wednesday.

ORDER IN ADVANCE!

Willy started as though he had been shot. "Ted!" he gasped. "Oh, Ted!"

With blazing eyes, he turned.

"Quick!" he shouted. "It's Ted! If this isn't fate, what is? We didn't even know it was him, and yet——"

"Oh, the brutes—the curs!" shouted Church, as he flung himself into the mud by Handforth's side. "Handy, old man! Poor old Handy! Quick! Can't somebody help me with this fiendish thing?"

"Steady, brother — steady!" urged Browne. "A sudden wrench, and Brother Handforth will be past rescuing! See! Do my eyes deceive me, or is there a primitive metal catch here? Splendid! Coolness, brother, is always the better method."

With deliberate fingers Browne forced back a rude iron catch—which Handforth himself had been unable to reach, or, at least, upon which he had been unable to exert any pressure.

With all his strength Browne strove, and the catch succumbed.

The great collar broke into two, and

Edward Oswald Handforth rolled clear. From all sides eyes were watching through the rain, but not one Chinaman ventured out to interfere with this little drama.

"Ted!" muttered Willy, horrified.

Handforth's neck was swollen and chafed. Indeed, it was so grazed that Handforth uttered a low moan as he put his hand to it. Then he sank back in the mud, overcome by a sudden wave of exhaustion.

"Into the car with him!" said Willy huskily. "Thank Heaven we've found him, that's all! Browne, old man, we've got you to thank for this——"

"Pray defer any thanks, Brother Willy, until we are clear of the city," interrupted Browne in a tense voice. "The rain is stopping and the populace stirs. Let us reveal a modicum of speed."

Gently Handforth was conveyed to the car and placed next to the driving seat. The others clung anywhere—to the footboards, to the rear. Browne let in the clutch, and turned the automobile round.

And out they went through the city, with a clearing sky overhead, and with a glad feeling in their hearts. The rain was stopping, and just overhead there was a patch of brilliant blue.

And as they shot through the great gateway in the city wall and found themselves upon the main highway, the sun burst out from behind the departing storm clouds.

The desperate mission had succeeded!

CHAPTER 15.

THE SEIZURE OF THE "WANDERER."



THE stirring events had been taking place simultaneously.

At the height of the storm the main St. Frank's party rushed down upon the quay and stared across at the *Wanderer*. She could only dimly be seen, out there in mid-river, looking like a ghost in the driving, pelting rain.

"Boats—boats!" shouted Dorrie. "Gad, Lee, there are enough boats here for an army! Come on, lads!"

"Pile in!"

"We'll do the trick all right!"

There was a feeling of supreme confidence. Nelson Lee, who knew the tremendous value of this storm, was anxious to press on without a second's delay. In ordinary calm weather, such a success as this would have been impossible; and as soon as the rain stopped the enemy would awaken to grim life.

It was indeed a question of now or never!

Amid all the excitement, the absence of Browne and his three valiant companions was not even noticed. There was too much to be done!

Nelson Lee's quick brain was already planning ahead—looking into the immediate future. There was a fighting chance of winning the *Wanderer*. This was no hopeless mission, but a possible bid for success. And once the *Wanderer* had been gained, the forthcoming events would be full of promise.

For the yacht was well supplied with weapons!

There were rifles, revolvers, machine-guns! Lee was thinking mainly of the machine-guns. If only the dear old yacht could be recaptured, and every member of the party placed safely on board, she could be converted into a fortress of her own.

There were the officers and crew! Once released, these would form a superb fighting force. No longer would it be necessary to ask these schoolboys to fight such desperate battles.

And with machine-guns ranged all round the decks, hordes of Foo Chow's men could be kept at bay. The winning of the yacht was the one factor which would make for ultimate victory.

So Lee was in the very forefront of this desperate undertaking.

There were sampans and other boats moored near the shore. Nobody quite knew how they got the boats clear, how they fought against the current, and reached the *Wanderer*. But somehow the task was accomplished, and not one boat was swept down-stream on the current. Every boat reached its objective.

With the rain still hissing down, the boarding-party climbed up everything climbable—up the ladder, up ropes, up anything to gain the decks. A desperate encounter was expected then.

But no desperate encounter came.

It seemed as though the *Wanderer* was an empty ship. Not a soul was to be seen. The rain-lashed decks were quite free of humanity. Fellow after fellow came clawing up, to be helped over the rail by those who had got there first.

"We've done it, old man!" shouted Dorrie above the roll of the thunder. "We've bagged the old tub! Umlosi, you black rascal, why don't you cheer? Why don't you let out one of your celebrated war-whoops?"

Umlosi grunted.

"I am sick at heart, N'Kose," he rumbled. "For did I not expect much fighting, and have I not been basely deceived? Wau! Call thou this a battle? 'Tis but work for babies!"

"I'm satisfied, anyhow," grinned Dorrie. "Why, Lee, there's not a soul on board!"

"Don't believe it, Dorrie," said Nelson Lee. "The Chinese guards are sheltering below, and they'll probably show fight as soon as we appear. We must be ready for anything."

"Cheering words, O Umtagati," exclaimed Umlosi gladly. "Where are these yellow curs? Let me get at them!"

The African chief was familiar with every doorway on the *Wanderer*, and he made for the nearest, and found himself within the luxurious lounge of the promenade deck. With a great bellow he charged headlong into a dozen Chinamen who were sheltering there. The fact that they were armed with swords made no difference to Umlosi. Before they could even draw them he was in their midst.

The next few moments were rather thrilling.

As Lord Dorrimore was about to enter, something came hurtling past, something which would have knocked his lordship senseless if it had struck him. The object was a Chinaman. He went clear through the doorway and toppled over the rail into the river.

Another followed, and yet another.

And then Chinamen came screaming out in full flight, madly terrified by this black giant who treated them as though they were mere skittles. Umlosi had driven stark terror

into their hearts. Grim fighters though they were, they were horror-stricken by this African chief. They seemed to regard him as some evil spirit in human form. The stories of Umlosi's strength had already spread, and one sight of him was now almost enough. When it comes to superstitions and the fear of evil spirits, the Chinese are practically without equal.

The Removites were dashing through the vessel with yells of sheer joy. To be on those decks again was a delirious pleasure. It almost seemed, indeed, as though they had completely escaped from Dr. Foo Chow's clutches. It was like a piece of Britain—like a section of home soil.

There were fights in many quarters, but they did not last long.

For luck was with the raiders from the very first. Nelson Lee, fighting grimly with two Chinamen, chased them down an iron stairway after they had fled. And here he came upon Captain Burton and Mr. Stewart, the first officer, and several members of the engine-room staff.

"Praises be!" shouted the old skipper. "Mr. Lee! Does this mean that we're to be released?"

"We've taken the yacht!" panted Nelson Lee.

"Hurrah!"

A shout went up from every throat, and there was a general excitement. None of the Britishers were harmed, but all were wearing chains round their feet, so that any swift movements were impossible.

"The keys—the keys!" said Mr. Stewart desperately. "That slinky Chinaman's got them—the fellow who just bunked! Quick, Mr. Lee! I've got an account to settle with that yellow cur! I've got——"

But Lee did not wait. He sped through an open doorway and overtook the fleeing Chinaman as the latter was scrambling madly up the ladder. The next few moments were interesting. Lee clawed at the man and brought him slithering down the ladder. He fought like a tiger.

But with half a dozen cool, well-delivered blows Lee laid the man low. In spite of his biting and clawing, he was knocked out. And in another moment Lee had secured those fateful keys.

He ran back and unfastened the cruel manacles. Captain Burton and his men were free! And another batch, in another part of the yacht, were released in a similar manner. And then commenced a systematic search. And every Chinaman was either knocked out or chased overboard. Many of the yellow men were so terrified that they leapt over the rail in their fright.

It had been one long succession of excitements, but the *Wanderer* was captured!

The casualties were surprisingly few. Reggie Pitt was suffering from a nasty sword-cut on the forearm—a wound which required careful bandaging. Fullwood was unconscious from the effects of a knock-out

blow. Buster Boots and Johnny Onions were badly battered, but happy. Dick Hamilton had his knuckles bruised, and there was an ugly hack on his left shin. But the rest had come through practically unscathed—that is, the rest of the boys.

Lord Dorrimore and Mr. Stokes and Phipps, however, were mere wrecks, torn and battered. But, after all, the majority of these hurts were superficial. The one great, glorious fact was that the yacht was once more in British hands. As though to help in the celebration of the victory, the skies were clearing, and patches of blue were showing.

"We've done it, sir!" panted Dick Hamilton happily.

"Yes, we've done it; but we've got to have a roll-call at once," said Nelson Lee. "I can see no sign of Browne. And Willy Handforth is missing, too. Perhaps there are others——"

"Oh, they're somewhere about, sir!" interrupted Reggie Pitt. "We all came aboard at once. What about the girls? The rain's stopping, and we'd better get them aboard as quickly as we possibly can. If we don't go now, it may be too late."

"The boy's right," said Dorrie anxiously. "Let's hold the roll-call afterwards. Good glory! We don't want to have this victory spoilt by a tragedy! If Mrs. Stokes and the girls aren't brought aboard, it'll be a hollow sort of triumph!"

But Mrs. Stokes and the girls had their own ideas!

CHAPTER 16.

ALL ABOARD!



RENE MANNERS looked at Mrs. Stokes pleadingly.

"Oh, please, Mrs. Stokes!" she begged. "If you don't give us your permission at once, we'll go without it—and we don't want to do that. Can't we all make a rush together?"

"Yes," cried Mary Summers. "Let's go, girls!"

"Mary, I forbid you——" began the Housemaster's wife.

"Oh, cheese it, Aunt Joyce!" broke in Mary. "You can't expect us to stay here just looking on. They've all been gone for a tremendous time, and there isn't a soldier in sight. If we don't escape now we might be left stranded, and then we shall be in Foo Chow's hands, and there'll be nobody to help us."

Mrs. Beverley Stokes was very worried. She wanted to set out upon this adventure as much as her youthful charges, but she hesitated.

"Mr. Lee distinctly told us to remain here until he and my husband came for us," she said. "Oh, we'd better remain. Think how dreadful it will be if we are stopped by those

soldiers, and there's nobody to help us——"

"We're not babies!" broke in Doris indignantly. "That's the worst of being girls! Everybody thinks we're helpless! I vote we go now, and make a rush for it."

"Hear, hear!"

"Please say that you agree, Aunt Joyce?" said Mary Summers eagerly.

And Mrs. Stokes was compelled to consent. She couldn't very well do anything else, since Irene & Co. were determined. They were all standing in the entrance of the palace, looking straight down that deserted driveway, with the drawbridge in view.

The rain was stopping now—in fact, it had almost ceased. And the sky was rapidly clearing. The Moor View girls were unable to stand the suspense any longer. They were the only members of the holiday party left behind, and they were dreadfully anxious to join the rest.

And so with swift feet they ran down the drive, and at last reached the drawbridge. But here they were set upon by a number of soldiers. With the ceasing of the rain these men had awakened to life once more, and were realising that they had failed in their duty.

The bulk of the prisoners had escaped, but they could at least prevent the departure of these girls!

Mrs. Stokes' worst fears were realised.

Instead of getting clear away, Irene & Co. were grappling with these fearsome Chinamen! To fight was almost impossible, since the yellow men were powerful and relentless.

But, as it happened, the girls could not have chosen a better moment for their dash, foolhardy as it had seemed during the first few moments. For it was just at this period that the rescue party returned from Yang Fu!

With Browne at the wheel, the car came sweeping along the highway and prepared to turn down the long slope which led to the quay. But Browne swerved at the last moment, his eyes gleaming.

"It appears, brothers, that we are needed," he said grimly.

He trod on the throttle, and the car roared over the bridge. The next moment it was almost in the midst of the struggling crowd. All except Handforth leapt out, and Browne was in possession of a revolver. His weapon had been found in the car, and the Fifth Form skipper did not hesitate to use it.

Crack! Crack!

Twice he fired, aiming deliberately at the feet of the Chinese soldiers. Two men fell, howling and squirming, and it was a signal for the others to fall back. In reality there were only a few of the guards here, but they would have been sufficient to recapture the girls unless this opportune help had come.

"Run for it!" shouted Browne urgently. "We'll stay behind and fight a rearguard action! Straight across, sisters, and then down the causeway——"

"Hurrah!" yelled Church. "Here comes another crowd!"

"My hat, yes!" yelled Willy.

Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore and Mr. Stokes were leading a dozen grim men. They came on at the double, and the issue was settled. A shattering volley of revolver-shots were fired into the air, and the Chinese soldiers fled.

"We came out, fearing that we might be trapped, Barry!" exclaimed Mrs. Stokes, as her husband clasped her. "Oh, I thought it was all up for the minute!"

"We can't talk now, Joyce!" interrupted Mr. Stokes. "We've got to make a dash for the yacht!"

"Has it been captured?" asked Irene breathlessly.

"Yes."

"And Ted's here, too!" exclaimed Willy, his eyes gleaming with happiness. "Look! We found him in Yang Fu! The poor old scout is nearly all in, but he's still alive!"

"Oh, Ted!" exclaimed Irene, running to the car and looking at him with tender solicitude. "Oh, how terrible! Foo Chow ought to be hanged for this!"

Edward Oswald Handforth, with his neck entirely bandaged by Willy's shirt, looked up with a twisted smile.

"Don't worry!" he muttered. "I'm going to slaughter Foo Chow later on!"

"He's been torturing you——"

"Never mind about that, old girl," said Handforth pluckily. "I hear that the *Wanderer's* been captured, and I want to get on board. All I need is a good bath and a sleep, and I shall be as right as a trivet again."

There was no time for further talk. The car was taken right down to the quay, and Handforth was gently lifted out. He scoffed at the very idea, and insisted that he could walk, and, if necessary, fight. But his spirit was greater than his bodily strength, for when he attempted to walk he swayed dizzily.

Every minute was of vital importance now.

The sun was again shining, and there were indications of activity from many quarters. The Chinese were beginning to appear everywhere, alive to the fact, now, that these white captives had been intensely active during the recent downpour.

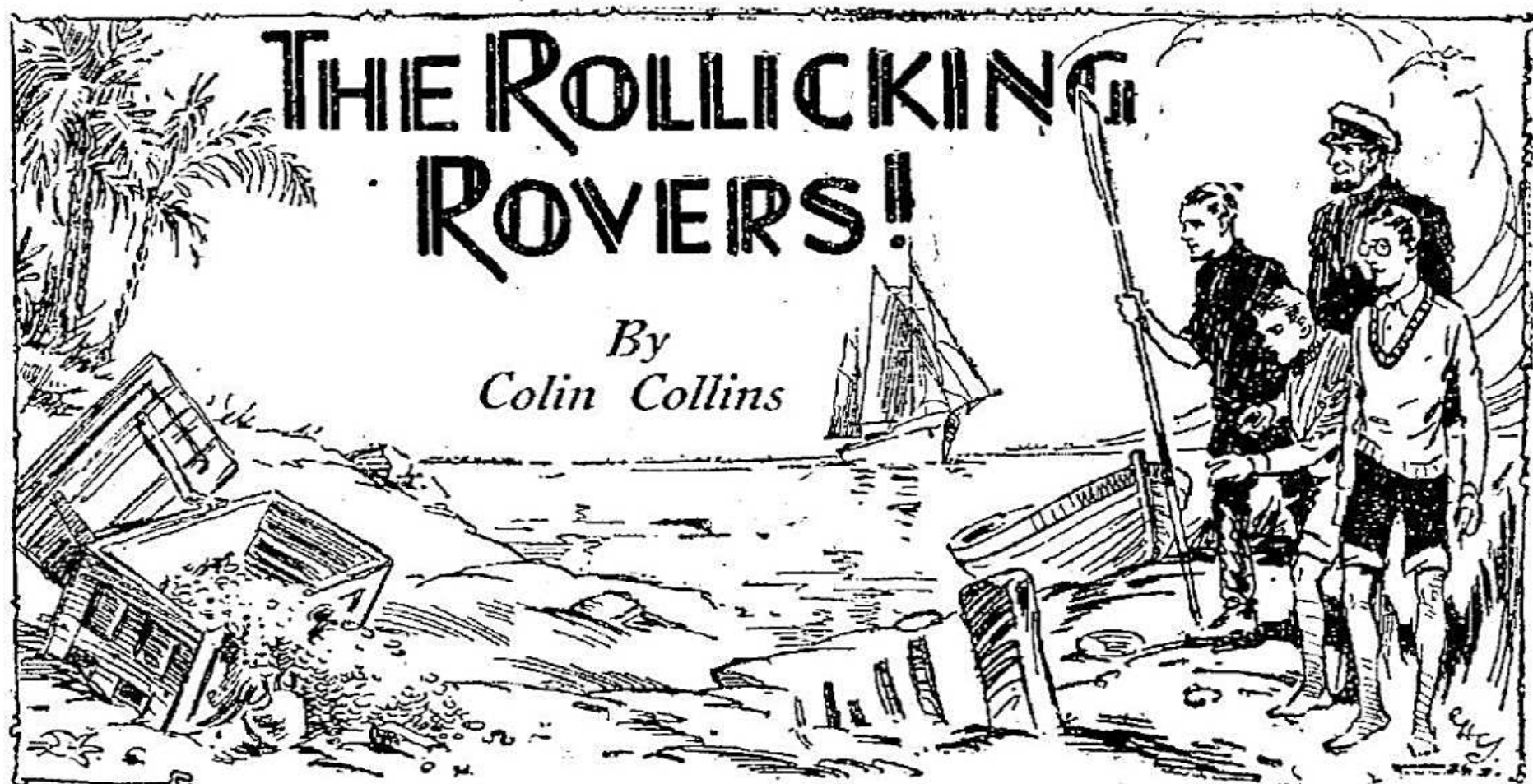
As a matter of fact, the boats containing the girls and the others only just managed to leave the quay in time. For it was soon swarming with the enemy. And many of them were firing their rifles at random, and bullets were falling in the river. A stray shot grazed Lord Dorrimore's left ear, indeed, and his rage was stupendous.

The *Wanderer* was echoing with wild cheering, and the rail was lined with excited St. Frank's juniors.

"It's all right, you chaps?" sang out Reggie Pitt. "They're all coming! I can spot Browne and Willy! All the girls, too!"

(Continued on page 44.)

Get to know our adventure-hunters—they'll keep you thrilled!



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 they are shadowed by

FOXHEY JOHNSON, a crafty rascal, who means to get hold of the treasure for himself. When our adventurers set sail in the Saucy Ann, Foxey conceals himself on board. They take with them the chest containing papers and the mummified remains, and proceed to the Isle of Caves. Here they come across Foxey, who, with the aid of a scoundrelly bootlegger, plans to capture the Saucy Ann. The plot fails, and the rascals are thrown overboard. Foxey clammers back on board and hides. The treasure-hunters now decide to make for Teredos. Then they discover that the mummified remains have mysteriously vanished.

(Now read on.)

The Watchers On Deck!

THEY all searched by the light of the moon and a helping torch; but magic was afoot, for it seemed that no living soul could have removed those things without being seen—and heard! The lads looked at one another, and Goggles drew nearer.

"I say," he whispered. "A word in your ear when Ben is out of sight."

Ben marched away muttering, and hid himself in his cabin to mop the sweat from his brow.

Goggles drew Bob along to where Fatty, who now had the wheel, was looking about him rather nervously, not quite sure an apparition would not jump upon him out of the dark. Goggles held forth in mysterious whispers.

"Look here, you chaps, heads and hands don't walk and disappear—unless other heads and hands assist. There's someone else aboard this ship besides ourselves, and has been all along. Don't you guess who?"

"Foxey!" the others cried in chorus, but in an equally cautious whisper.

"I'll tell you what to do," Goggles went on. "We'll say good-night to you and pre-

tend to go to Ben in his cabin for a talk about the treasure—that's what Foxey is after, not our blood—and shut ourselves in, slamming the door hard. Then silence. But we shan't be in the cabin, we'll keep outside, and wait and watch."

"But where will you watch?"

"There's only one place to watch," Goggles declared, "the place where he is."

"Where's that?"

"Where the Spaniard's head was—he's underneath."

"How do you know?"

"Because that was where the head was. It vanished! It didn't walk. I remember now that that pile of tackle was never moved when we searched the rest of the ship."

"He couldn't hide under a coil of rope, you fathead," said Bob scornfully.

"I saw it lift a little and sink down."

"A trap door!" cried Bob. "Let's look."

"No, no. Keep quiet. Let him come out."

They began to talk loudly about going to Ben's cabin to discuss the next move, looked in a moment, slammed the door hard, and slid about the deck like shadows, creeping and tiptoeing until they were nicely settled full length on the deck, to left and right of

Fatty, who stood valiant at the wheel.

The ruse worked. When silence fell, the hidden rascal—with his ear to the deck planks and his eye to his own special spy-hole—was assured that the coast was clear—except for the lad at the wheel, who could not leave his post.

Foxy was convinced also that the boys held some special knowledge of the treasure, without which he, alone, could not hope to light upon it. Only by listening could he discover what they were up to, and what the next move was to be.

They were in conference now. He was itching to be there and listen—as he had successfully listened before. He had already heard them mention Madame Rima, to whom he had taken many things for storage, including one big and heavy box, about which his late master had seemed unusually careful. If they were after that—he must get there first.

Slowly the lid of the trap lifted, and the coil of tackle rose with it. Fatty's flesh began to creep, and his eyes went nervously towards the hiding-places of the others. He touched his revolver, resolved to use it if he were attacked.

He wished now that some signal had been arranged with his cousins so that he might let them know what he saw—he dared not cry out.

Something moved from a shaded spot to a patch of deck lighted by the moon, and vanished into another shadow patch—a man crawling!

Fatty, in desperation, gave a little whistle, which he quickly turned into a tune—as if amusing himself and relieving the monotony of his vigil.

The others understood by instinct. Fatty would be in no mood for whistling tunes just now. They stared into the dark and could see nothing; so they kept their eyes on the door of Ben's cabin. They were looking out for the shadow of a man passing along, and forgot to look at the deck.

Foxy, like the worm he was, wriggled along till he was level with the door. To the crack beneath he put his ear, expecting to hear voices, loud talk, as before. But now all was silent.

He rose and put his face to the glass panel, hoping to find an opening between the curtains. His movements were now free and unrestrained, because the boy at the wheel was out of sight, and he had this part of the ship to himself.

In the way of youngsters who plot things hurriedly without thinking ahead, no plan of attack had been arranged between

Bob and his cousin. Ought they to shoot and advance together, or wait and watch, and see what the fellow's intentions were?

In their indecision one waited for the other, and both regretted the folly of making no pre-arranged signal.

As Foxy crept round from window to window the light of the moon glinted on the shining blade he always carried when venturing into the open like this. That was too much for them. To attack with their hands only and face cold steel in an uncertain light was more than their courage was equal to.

Bob could endure it no longer. When Foxy came back and knelt by the door, and softly put his fingers to the handle, as if to turn it and leap in—Ben's life was obviously in danger. Up went Bob's revolver, and he took aim.

Bang!

A bullet went harmlessly through a pane of glass and through a picture on the wall of Uncle Digby's nicely furnished cabin.

Ben gave a leap and a roar, and dashed to the door.

Bang went another shot, this time from Goggles. It punctured the door which, a second later, was thrown wide, and Ben leapt right out on to the prostrate form of Foxy.

The rascal had dropped flat in fright at the first badly aimed shot, and the second had warned him to drop again. Ben, tearing out, tripped and fell over him; and Foxy—caught at last—leaped at him, knife in hand.

Foxy Discovered.

IT needed someone nimbler and quicker than Foxy Johnson to get the better of Ben Toppet in a scrambling fight.

Ben had tripped and rolled over the prostrate form outside his cabin door; but, in rolling, he had fallen on his back. He saw a dark form leap up and make a dive down upon him, knife in hand. Ben merely put up his knee and Foxy fell upon it, receiving the crooked knee in his stomach, rolling over sideways, with the descending knife plunging wildly into the deck.

With another roll Ben was upon him; and his iron fingers gripped. When Ben's fingers gripped, the victim might as well surrender at once.

The knife remained on the deck, and Foxy was lifted in the air when Ben scrambled to his feet.

"It's Foxy! It's Foxy!" the boys yelled as they closed round in the darkness.

"Out of the way there!" they heard Ben command, and the giant lifted his kicking, skinny captive on high, high above his head—as

..... NEXT WEDNESDAY!



.....

he had lifted Martin—walking towards the edge of the ship to fling him over.

Ben recovered a little from his fury, thought better of it, and flung his captive down on the deck with a bump that rattled every bone.

Foxy made whining moans suggestive of complete submission.

"Stand up!" roared Ben.

Foxy gathered himself together and rose to his full height, a foot at a time, slowly and cautiously, as if expecting Ben's fist to lay him out again.

"You——"

Ben let go with a flow of language, devoid of meaning, but very expressive.

"And now, what have you got to say for yourself?" Ben demanded after this torrent of abuse.

"Nothing, Ben," Foxy retorted; and indeed there was nothing to say.

The situation was obvious.

The lads explained how they had discovered the stow-away's secret trap. All went to look at it, and, after an examination, realised (from the number of tins and bottles stolen from the stores) that the rascal had accompanied them all the way from home.

They also found the Spaniard's head and hands there.

"So it was you playing tricks on us!" Ben cried at last in a rage. "Here — put 'em up!"

Foxy backed away and refused the challenge, and the boys attempted to get between the two.

"We could put him in irons," suggested Goggles.

"We ain't got no irons."

"We could make some; we have lots of chains."

"Tie him to a mast and let him bide," Ben decided at last. "When we get to shore we can hoof him out and let him fend for himself and murder somebody else."

So Foxy was dragged to a mast and lashed up (as painfully as possible) and left, while the others attempted to sleep. But the short summer night was well on its way to dawn. When Fatty had been relieved at the wheel there was not much more dark. The near prospect of sighting land brought the boys on deck, ready for the landing at Teredos.

Bad News at Teredos.

THE harbour of Teredos is a sleepy, straggling, idle-looking place, with a few wharves, some derelict native boats rotting on the sands, a few loaded dhows waiting for a burst of energy on the part of their sprawling crews, some snow-white, mud-built houses and warehouses, a few straggling palms on the sand-dunes, and an inland country of scrub and desert and rounded hills, with some wooded mountains in the far, far distance.

A line of railway, with a very dirty engine, and a string of timber trucks loaded with mahogany-trees ready for shipment when the next steamer arrived, suggested civilisation of a sort.

"There's old Rima's place!" cried Ben, pointing to a distant house with green shutters. "My word, it's smartened up since last I set eyes on it!"

"And that is where uncle left his box of books," said Bob. "But suppose the box shouldn't be there?"

"It'll be there all right. Old Rima is allus down at his wharf by sunrise—leastways, he allus used to be—the only man who ever worked a full day in this old oven of a place. You'll see his big straw hat somewhere—it was more like an umbrella than a hat, and almost as wide as his waistband. Short, round, fat tub of a man as I

remember him. Can you see him?" Ben demanded of Bob, who was keeping a sharp look-out.

Bob could see none but natives and a few nondescript seamen in scarf headgear and trousers, and nothing else.

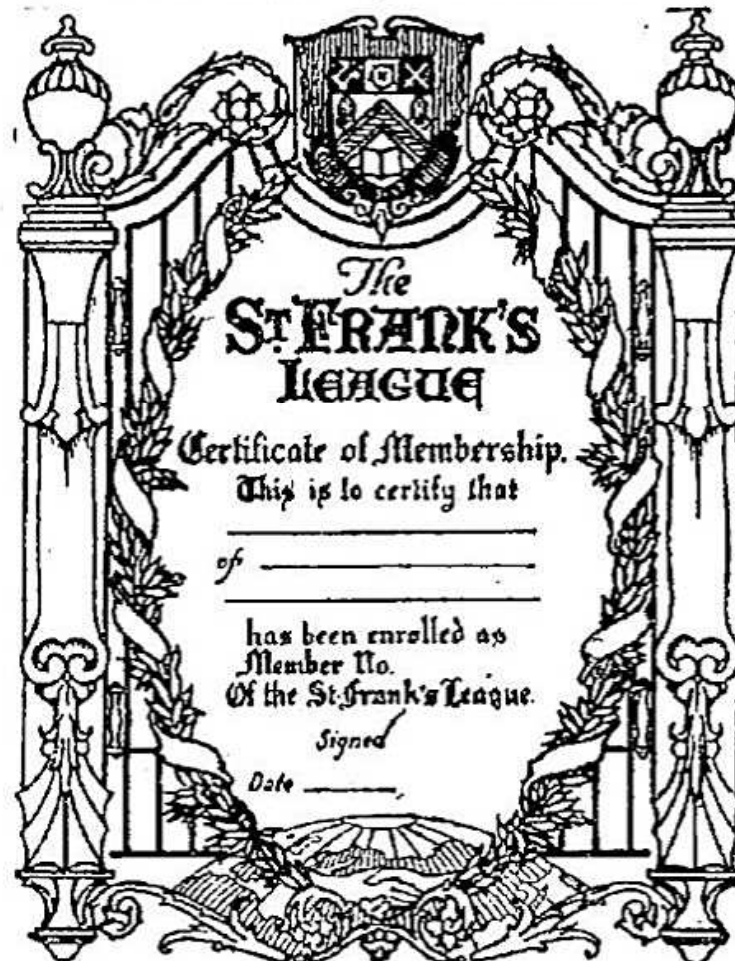
"P'raps he don't rise so early of a mornin' now," muttered Ben. "That's his wharf; we'll hitch up there."

Later, when they had moored securely to the rickety old wharf, Ben stepped ashore and looked around for Monsieur Rima.

A foreman in overalls and a big straw hat came forward and addressed them in French. Goggles interpreted and informed him that they had called on a friendly visit to M. Rima.

The man shook his head and shrugged,

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PAGE 42 AND GET THIS FINE
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and informed them that M. Rima had been dead two years.

They all gasped in alarm at this. So certain were they that the sham box of books was the box of Spanish doubloons, that they cried aloud in their dismay.

"Ask him about the old girl," Ben whispered.

Madame Rima, they were informed, had come upon bad times and had sold the wharf and the house, and gone to reside farther inland.

"And her furniture?" cried Ben. "What of that?"

She had sold her home to the new trader, taking only a few necessities with her, to furnish a modest hut, where she lived as a sort of pensioner of the business, being a lonely soul without any relations in the world. Presently she would come down to the wharf, where she still cleaned out the offices, cooked the meals of the European staff of the lumber business—most of whom lived on the hills—and gave what services she could.

The hours of sunrise and sunset were the only ones in this sun-baked harbour when work was possible to Europeans; and they had not long to wait for the arrival of the port officials, the customs, and the timber merchants.

The treasure-seekers returned on board, still troubled by the problem of Foxey, lashed to the mast, watching and listening—and occasionally whining about the heat of the sun, which threatened him with a torturing death.

"Let him go—kick him ashore!" the boys decided.

They did not literally mean "kick"; but Ben, after unlashng the captive, made it clear that it was to be a real kicking business. Foxey was taken by the scruff of his neck and run ashore by Ben, who administered one parting farewell with his boot.

Foxey Gets Busy.

THERE were no streets in the Teredos, only huts and timber buildings and tents, and native stalls sprawling anyhow, with here and there a European drinking den. There was a sailors' quarter where any rover with a few francs in his pocket could get drink, or opium, or tobacco, or clothes: this was a collection of corrugated iron and timber huts shaded by palms and ringed off by fencing, rather like an encampment.

Each hut bore a sign in some European language; and here the riff-raff of the seaboard found food and drink, and the sound of friendly tongues. Here, for a few days or hours men might speak their own language, and eat food prepared as in their native land.

In the port all work was done by black

coolies—it was too hot for any but a few Europeans to labour.

Foxey made for a thatched hut where some attempt had been made to give the place the semblance of an English bar. There was a lead counter, some beer-handles, a few barrels, many bottles on shelves, and a bench or two made up of boards on boxes. The floor was sawdust; and there was some attempt at cleanliness.

A stalwart man in shirt-sleeves and khaki breeches and an apron was tidying up. He had seen a British flag in the harbour, and was getting ready for customers when Foxey dashed in and reached across the bar, seizing the astonished man by the arm.

"Sammy, I want yer—quick!"

"Why, it's Foxey Johnson!"

"Yes. I want to talk. Give me a drink so as I can loosen my tongue. Quick, or I shall drop!"

"Where's your money?" demanded mine host cautiously before attempting to provide drink; there was no credit given here.

"Give me a drink—and—I'll give you—half!"

"Half what?"

"A fortune! Quick!"

A drink was slowly produced, and Foxey gulped it down.

"What is it, Foxey?" asked the man behind the bar. "Something you've seen washed ashore, or—"

"No, it's here, in this place. Old Rima is dead; where is his missus?"

"She'll be passing by here in a minute."

"Listen! Old Digby, when he was last here, left a box o' books to be took care of by the Rimas. And it wasn't books in that box!"

"Well?" muttered the bar-keeper, not yet understanding.

"Digby is dead," continued Foxey. "I'm after that box—it's full o' gold!"

"How long have you been out in the sun?" asked the man, taking a long and steady look at Foxey.

"Look 'ere, Sammy Barker, I'm tellin' you a straight yarn. We've got to get that box what was left with the Rimas afore Ben Toppet lays hands on it!"

"Is Ben Toppet here?" asked Sammy Barker with a growl. "I owe him one for that dust-up here years ago."

"Look here," Foxey broke in. "You and me must stop the old woman and tell her Digby's in the harbour, and has sent us to fetch his box."

"D'ye think she'll give it up as easy as that?" asked Barker.

"She knows me as Digby's man."

"Yes, but you've got a mug on you, Foxey, as no woman in her senses would ever trust. She'll want the old man's authority. And what about Ben Toppet? He'll want the box, too. What'll you do then? It ain't no use you thinkin' to set yourself up against Ben. And I fer one ain't going to take sides agin him; I know the

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EVERY WEDNESDAY—PRICE TWOPENCE

size of him all right, and I ain't seekin' trouble."

"Then you don't want to go halves with a fortune that'll set you up for life and get you out of this old bakehouse?"

"Yes, I do."

"Then suggest something, quick; the old woman will be coming along in a minute."

"What sort of a box is it?" asked Barker.

"A great big sea-chest, same as that one over there in the corner with the boards across it—as big as that—and full o' gold; same colour as that, and all stuck over with labels and writin', same as that there."

Barker looked at the chest thoughtfully, and observed presently:

"Would Ben Toppet take that one, and not know the difference, if it was handed to him as the goods?"

"He would," replied Foxey, lighting up with hope. "He wouldn't know one from t'other."

"Well, here comes the old woman; go along and pitch your tale, and see what happens. I'll come along to say ditto, and make it seem more real."

The Plot Thickens.

A FAT, short old woman in a big straw hat came waddling along, carrying a bag, and Foxey stepped out to greet her.

"Mornin', marm! You remember me—Jake Johnson, Captain Digby's man?"

"Mon dieu, it is true! It ees Meester Johnson!" cried the old lady.

"Captain Digby is in the harbour, marm."

"What, Captain Digby 'ere? Oh, is it true? It is great news! Ah, but my poor 'usband, 'e is dead! He will nevaire see the captain any more. It is sad. Ah, he love my 'usband!"

"Yes, marm, he's heard all about it—and—he's that upset he won't come ashore. That's so, ain't it, Barker?"

"Yes, madame, he is terrible cut up, is the cap'n. He took to his bed, not feeling very well himself, and he won't come ashore."

"Ah, but I must see Captain Digby. He will want to see Madame Rima. I 'ave things to give Captain Digby. I 'ave save them ever since my 'usband die."

"Yes, his box o' books, marm; it's them he wants. Bein' sick, and a-bed, he'll want his books to read. He's sent me for that box o' books, and Mr. Barker is to help take 'em down to the quay," said Foxey.

"That's so, madame," Barker chimed in, taking out some tobacco and rolling a cigarette to appear calm and unexcited.

"Ah, so 'eavy a box!" sighed the old lady. "So 'eavy those books three men could not lift it, and we dragged it all the way."

"We'll bring as many boys as we want, madame," said Barker.

"And Captain Digby?" cried the old lady joyfully. "It make me glad that he is 'ere, and I shall see him once more. Ah, we all love Captain Digby! I go down to the wharf

to do my work every day. I go aboard to see how much he is ill. In this place there are few white women. I will nurse him to 'ealth, my dear old friend."

"He ain't as bad as that, marm," Foxey observed. "Only just laid low for a day, and not fit to meet a lady. To-morrow he will see you; he said so. 'To-morrow,' he says, 'I'll see my dear madame; but I want my books to-day.'"

"That's so," added Barker.

"Very well, when I come back, when I come from my work. You cannot get the box till I come back."

The old lady took up her basket and prepared to go on. That would never do. She would walk straight into Ben Toppet and hear the truth.

"Our boys are waiting to take the box aboard," Barker insisted. "It won't take madame long to go back and hand over the box. The captain is terrible impatient."

"It is only books," cried the old lady.

"Just so, just so. Can't we go now and find it for ourselves?"

"No, no. I will return now. Follow me."

The plot was working. Foxey and Barker darted off to enlist the services of a couple of coolies to help, promising to be at the Rima hut as soon as madame.

The Box of Books.

DOWN at the quay, Ben and the boys were deciding how best to approach madame when she arrived, and how to break the news of Captain Digby's death.

"She'll be real cut-up about it," said Ben. "The guv'nor was a great favourite with the old girl. And we ain't got no authority to claim his box o' books. We ought to have brought a lawyer's letter."

"She'll give it to us," Bob declared. "She can't refuse."

"Suppose we call and say we've come for uncle's box of books, and say nothing about his being dead?"

"Not a bad idea," Ben agreed. "We could break the news after, when we'd got the cargo safe aboard."

A nigger was dispatched with a note to Madame Rima. He arrived at about the same time as the good lady herself. If the conspirators had arranged things that way it could not have worked better. The old lady entered her tiny house and removed the cushions from the box—which had for long been converted into a couch—and attempted to draw it forth a foot or so.

Impossible. As well try to move a light-house. Its enormous weight suggested lead. And, as everybody knows, gold is actually heavier than lead.

In a few minutes Foxey and Barker and their niggers, pushing a handcart, arrived. They filled her little sitting-room and drove

her outside, and made short work of the removal. They had just got all ready for departure when madame, with an open letter in her hand, asked why the nephews of her old friend were not there, as promised in the note.

"They're coming along, marm, they're coming along," Foxey declared. "And when they does, marm, perhaps you'll be so good as to tell 'em that you've sent the box down to the ship by Mr. Barker."

Away went the handcart; the padlocks on the iron-bound chest rattled, and the wheels sank deep into the sand. Madame was left behind to await the arrival of the captain's nephews.

The thieves, warned in time, took a way they knew where they were not likely to meet the others.

"Better get it aboard a ship and right away out of the harbour," Foxey advised breathlessly, after trotting behind the hurrying coolies.

"Better really find out if we've got what we're after," said Sammy Barker. "Into my shack with it; a crowbar will soon tell us."

So the chest was wheeled under cover and a heavy crowbar made short work of the very ordinary iron padlocks. The lid was opened, and the chest proved to be filled to the brim. On the top the first thing to greet and dazzle their eyes was a silken cloth worked in gold, on which were laid out a collection of daggers and swords with jewelled hilts, and dull yellow beaten plates that looked like gold, some vases of silver, and beads, and rough Eastern ornaments.

One glimpse was enough. They did not trouble to look under the cloth.

"We've got it!" yelled Foxey. "And if we waste a minute we'll lose it. As soon as Ben gets there and learns the box is gone, he'll raise all the town; and the customs and the soldiers will get busy, and not a boat will dare go out, unless it wants to be sunk by the fort. Get it aboard, Barker; you've boats of your own, as I know—you're the worst smuggler in all Teredos—so get a move on."

"I will. I've got a boat that's always ready, and I'm going with it," Barker announced.

"And me, too!" cried Foxey in alarm.

"And you, too, if you like. You shall have your share—but not half. I'm top dog in this deal; you haven't done half the work. Look slippy, find my missus, and tell her I'm out on a rum-runnin' job for a day or two, and she's got to look after the bar till I come back. Now then—shove!"

They dispensed with the niggers once the box was on the cart and pushed the heavy load themselves, winding in and out down narrow alleyways to the shore, where they boarded one of Barker's secretly-owned native boats, roused the crew, and stowed away their load.

The two rascals were unmolested, and the dhow was soon unfurling sail, to catch the very, very light breeze that only just flapped the canvas.

"Wait a moment," cried Foxey, "we've forgotten something. We must send a box to the Saucy Ann, a box of some sort—the one in your bar—or they'll smell a rat. Come along, your niggers can deliver it, and then all will be well—till they open it!"

Forestalled.

WHEN the three nephews of Captain Digby arrived at Madame Rima's house, they were warmly welcomed by that good lady.

"We've come for the gov'nor's books, marm," said Ben. "Shall we come inside?"

"Oh, ze box have gone!"

"Gone!" they all shouted in one gasping cry.

"To ze sheep."

"What sheep? Where?" cried Ben, dancing round and looking for sheep.

"Zee sheep—zee boat," she explained.

"What boat, madame?" Bob asked politely.

"Zee Saucy Ann. Ah, you see, I not forget ze pretty boat, ze Saucy Ann!"

"When?" they asked.

"Just before dis minute. Meester Barker he take it for me on ze trolly truck."

"Oh, we've missed it, then!"

"Ah, oui! It will arrive all right. It is only books."

"Books! Have you looked inside, madame?" Bob asked anxiously.

"Me look inside? Ah, non! It was a trust, and a pleasure to oblige. I not look inside—the padlock was all too much rust, and no key would turn."

They all heaved sighs of relief.

"We must get back, marm," said Ben hastily. "The cap'n won't understand; he's expecting us to bring him his books."

"Yes, we must hurry back," said the others, equally impatient.

"Ah, oui! You must go back. I go back with you to see my dear capitaine and his beautiful ship. But first I must change my old dress."

Here was a predicament. They could not refuse her company, nor tell her there was no captain without arousing suspicion and running risks.

"We'll have to let her come," Bob whispered.

"She can't," growled Ben, "she can't. Tell her the captain's gone up into the hills—on business."

And Bob pitched the yarn, regretting that his uncle was away from the ship for the day, but assured her he would be there to receive her on the morrow. By that time they could be off with their treasure, made for life, and rich for ever.

"Ah, well, I will not change my dress. I come to-morrow to see the dear capitaine.

But I will walk with you to ze quay, that ees my journey every day."

They left her and waved a light farewell, promising, "To-morrow, to-morrow."

When they sighted the Saucy Ann, the niggers and the hand-cart were coming away, having delivered the trunk from Sammy Barker's saloon. The temporary man who had taken Dummy's place was seen on board, tugging at the great sea-chest, vainly attempting to move it.

"At last!" the boys cried to one another. "At last! Hooray!"

Ben Proves Obstinate!

DUMB DUMMY had been sent to the local hospital for treatment, and would be there for a day or two; but, in the excitement, no one gave a thought to Dummy.

Ben and the boys leapt aboard and made a ring round the treasure.

"My hat, it's big!" cried Bob.

"And heavy," growled the new hand.

"Let's get it somewhere out of sight," said Ben, glancing nervously to shore, where the lounging custom officials were keeping an eye on all cargoes going in and out. He gave a tug at the sea-chest, but could not shift the load.

"Feels as if it was nailed to the deck," he growled. "Come on, all of you, lend a hand!"

Their combined efforts were not enough to move it far, and the commotion on deck attracted the interest of the customs' man.

"Here, fetch a crowbar, one of you," shouted Ben, taking off his coat. "We can't spend all the morning drawing out nails."

Two customs officers in showy uniforms, looking more like soldiers or gendarmes than collectors of revenue, invited themselves on deck and interfered.

They waved everybody away from the box and began jabbering French. Finding they were not understood, one of them produced a little English.

"What ees zis box?"

"Books," roared Ben savagely. "Books—my books—personal property."

"I wish to see."

"Well, you can't. Get out. There's no export duty on books."

The men shrugged and signed in lordly fashion that the lid must be opened.

"No," roared Ben. "Look at all the nails."

"It must be opened. It is ze law."

The officers walked round. Ben drew the others aside.

"Pitch 'em off the ship," he whispered.

"And once they're ashore, we'll be off. We've got to make a dash for it—and risk being shot at if they get nasty. They mustn't look inside that box."

(The chums are in an awkward position. It's a risky business interfering with the Custom's officials. Read what happens in next week's exciting instalment.)

HOW TO JOIN THE LEAGUE

ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE APPLICATION

FORM No. 45.

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.

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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.

Our Badge.

There is no pleasure bigger than overcoming a difficulty. I will admit straight away that the question of a League Badge presented a really knotty problem, but I was determined to tackle it, and the St. Frank's League Badge will in a few weeks from now be an accomplished fact. I shall give full details in the next issue of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY. The Badge is a really smart affair, worthy of the League. No half-measures would have been acceptable either to members or to myself.

Look Out Next Week!

Next week's number will contain the complete particulars of the Badge. It will be sent to all members who write to me and say they want it. It is a Badge of which we can all be proud, and, as you can readily understand, it has taken time to fix things up.

A Myriad Requests.

I wonder how many requests I have received for a Badge. I could not count them. At one period the notion seemed unworkable, but after getting to work, one by one the obstacles faded out. It was all an object lesson. Get going and you are bound to win. The S.F.L. Badge will mark a new stage in the progress of the League. I know every member wants "something to show," as it were, a neat little token to wear in his buttonhole. It will be a rallying sign. You will spot a Leagueite at once. In that way, and in lots of other respects, the new Badge will be of real value.

Bear This In Mind.

This week and next, and all the time, please mention to chums and all intending members that the Badge, so long wanted, has become a fact. It will assist the whole working of the League. What pleases me, too, is the thought that in taking this step I am falling in with the express wishes of a legion of loyal supporters. They felt, I know, that there was one thing lacking.

The Next N.L.L.

What I ask my chums to do is to book an extra copy of next week's Badge Number of the famous paper. Then they can pass a copy on to a friend, and so spread the news that the S.F.L. Badge will shortly be in the hands of all members.

Correspondence Notices.

League Member No. 466 (O.O.) wishes to correspond with a reader in America.

Address: 1, Sweden Grove, Waterloo, Liverpool.

P. W. Malaghan (O.O.), 27, St. Paul's Road, London, S.E.17, wishes to hear from all members in his district.

S. Linde, League Member 1263, 7, Kimberley Villas, Observatory, Cape Town, South Africa, wishes to hear from a reader in Australia who collects stamps.

Bernard Samuels, 1845, S. Troy Street, Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A., wishes to correspond with readers anywhere.

Val Phillips, 20, Priory Street, Carmarthen, S. Wales, wants to hear of members in his district who will join a sports club.

William D. Denby, 213, Berkeley Street, Sandyford, Glasgow, C.3, would like to hear from readers who wish to communicate with the African members of the Mermaid Club.

L. Smart, 38, College Rise, Maidenhead, Berkshire, wishes to exchange stamps with a reader at the Cape.

Real Loyalty.

My sincere thanks go to A. C. Cleeve-Sculthorpe, Errington Post Office, Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada. This Organising Officer has done immense service to the League. Despite illness and many other handicaps, he has put up a record fight. To start with, he has had much difficulty in getting extra copies of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY, so that he could show his friends what the League meant. I have been able to make that part good. He lives in a part of the world where newsagents are few and far between, but, nothing daunted, he went right ahead to the goal, writing innumerable letters, and bringing in new members fourteen at a time. I am most grateful to this staunch supporter in the Canadian Bush. When the time comes for the Gold Medal he will be in the first group of recipients.

Handforth For Ever!

Ernest Ash, 12, Sharp Street, Kirkdale, wants a new Certificate, and I am sending this along. I must quote something this correspondent says of a recent yarn: "I am proud of Handforth for giving his place up to his chum, but he shouldn't have tried to break his neck. My eyes were watering with laughter at the tricks he did, and also the way he went mad because he had got his place back in the Test Eleven. That was a good cure for a groggy leg. I suppose he will be in more trouble when he goes to China." Nothing wrong in that supposition, either!

HANDFORTH THE HOSTAGE!*(Continued from page 34.)*

"Yes, but what about Handy?" asked Fatty Little.

"Why, look!" gasped Pitt. "Handy!"

Within a few seconds everybody was freshly excited. And as the boats grew nearer, Handforth was indeed seen.

Handforth was almost overwhelmed by the juniors who came surging round him; but

Nelson Lee ordered them back, and Edward Oswald was taken below and gently tended.

"Well, Dorrie, it's been a marvellous afternoon," said Nelson Lee. "We've got the old yacht again."

"We've put 'paid' to Mr. Canning Foo Chow and his yellow gang—"

"Not yet, Dorrie," interrupted Lee. "We should be foolish, indeed, to assume that we are out of the wood."

(Look out for next week's magnificent long complete yarn: "THE LEGIONS OF FOO CHOW!")

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