

EXCITING STORY OF THE FLOODS AT ST. FRANK'S — COMPLETE
INSIDE!

THE NELSON LIFE

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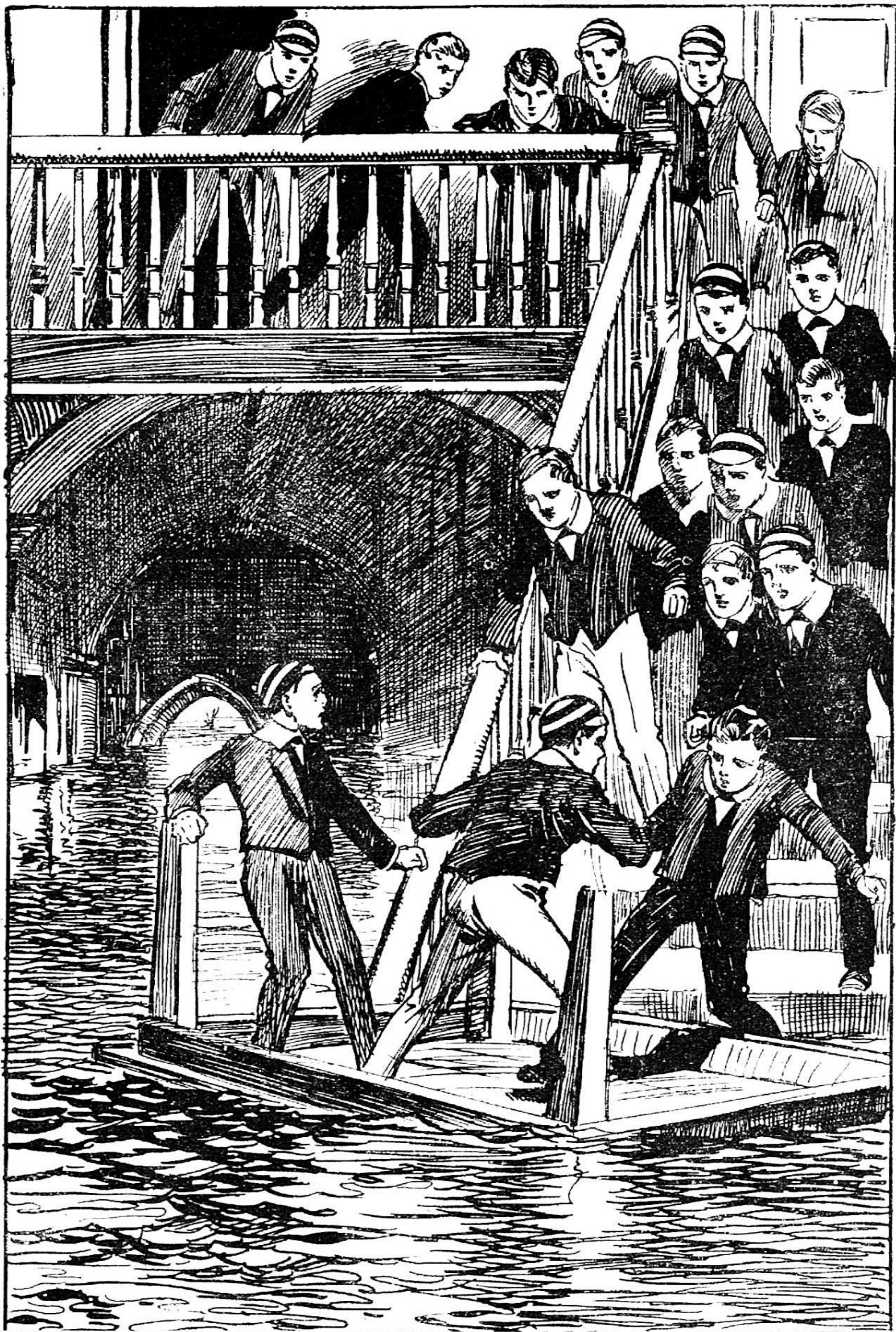
THE MAROONED SCHOOL!

*The Boys of St. Frank's
in a stirring yarn of
school life and adventure.*

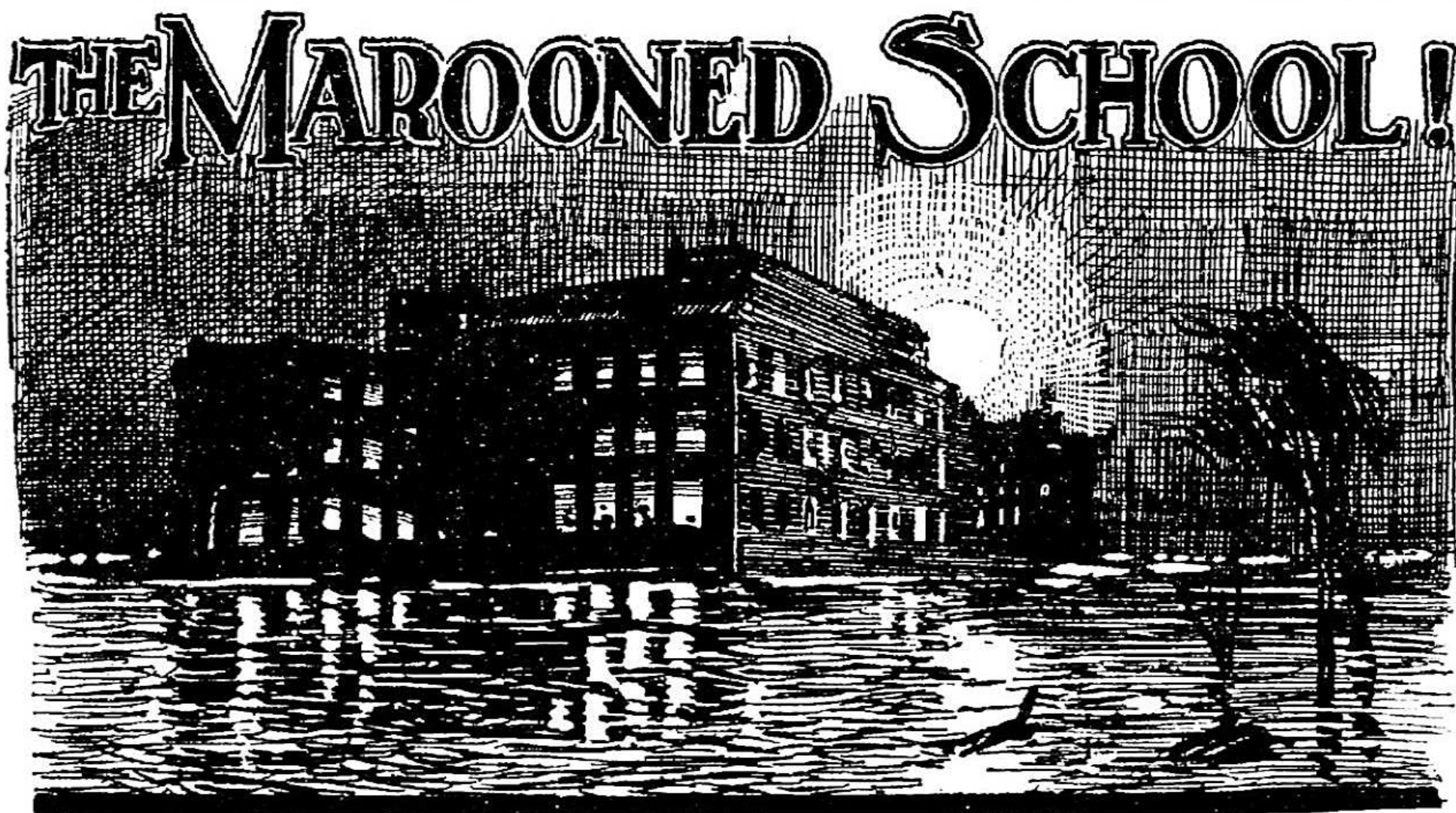
New Series No. 45.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

March 12th, 1927



Willy Handforth and his chums stepped on to the upturned table, which floated like a raft on the waters of the flooded lobby. "Push her off, you chaps!" cried Willy.

St. Frank's Submerged!Rafts to the Rescue!

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

Left without masters—left without food! Read how the Boys of St. Frank's fight amazing floods in this exciting long complete yarn.

CHAPTER 1.

FLOODED!

THE wind came hooting down out of the darkness, and the great pile of St. Frank's seemed to shake to its foundations by the very force of the hurricane. Windows rattled, and the rain slashed mercilessly against the window-panes.

"It's getting worse!" said Handforth, of the Remove.

"Impossible!" groaned Ralph Leslie Fullwood. "How can it get worse? After what's happened this evening, nothing can be worse!"

"That's all you know!" retorted the leader of Study D. "I don't want to be pessimistic, but we've hardly started on this picnic yet!"

"The lights will fail next, I expect," said De Valerie gloomily. "I'm jiggered if I can understand why they're functioning now! The power-house must be flooded, like everything else."

"That's right!" grunted Church. "Be cheerful!"

The group of Remove fellows were standing at the head of the main staircase, in the

Ancient House. They were looking down into the lobby, but the lobby, for the most part, was hidden—hidden by a murky swirl of muddy water, with scum collecting round the walls. Half-way up the stairs the flood reached, and as every minute passed so the water persistently and relentlessly mounted higher.

St. Frank's was flooded!

Outside, the scene was one of unutterable desolation. From the Ancient House windows the juniors could see the lights of the other Houses reflected in the ever-rising flood waters. The old Triangle was a lake—East Square and West Square were lakes, too. And in every direction the water stretched, although the pitchy darkness shut in everything.

It was early evening, too—indeed, only just about tea-time. Normally, afternoon lessons would only have finished half an hour earlier. But the usual daily round at St. Frank's had gone to pieces on this never-to-be-forgotten afternoon.

It was Thursday, and rain had been pelted down almost continuously since the previous Monday—days of drab skies, relentless rain,

culminating in this raging hurricane. The River Stowe, bursting its banks, had risen alarmingly until the previous afternoon, and to-day the rise had become an unprecedented flood. The swollen waters, sweeping across marshes and meadows and fields, were causing perilous inundations.

But the worst feature of all had been the deluge.

The great Pine Hill reservoir, which supplied Bannington with its water, had burst its granite walls, and a raging, roaring torrent had come hurtling down upon Edgemore, St. Frank's and Bellton. This section of the Stowe valley had been converted, within a space of five minutes, into a region of tragedy.

The little hamlet of Edgemore, if not wiped out, was quite under water. But the inhabitants, mercifully, had all escaped in time, owing to the heroic efforts of Dick Hamilton & Co., of the St. Frank's Remove. Indeed, Dick, Tommy Watson, and Sir Montie Tregellis-West had only just got back, after nearly sacrificing their lives in the service of others.

That torrent, bursting upon St. Frank's, had taken the school unawares, although this state of affairs should never have been allowed to exist. On the previous day, Handforth had seen an ominous crack in the reservoir wall, and had warned the school of its danger. But nobody had taken any notice of the imaginative leader of Study D. He had been the laughing-stock of the school, and had, moreover, received six cuts from the headmaster for spreading a false rumour.

Not that the Head was to blame. The borough engineer of Bannington, on being 'phoned, had assured Dr. Stafford that the reservoir was perfectly sound, and the Head's rage and dismay, on learning of the peril, had been considerable.

St. Frank's was suffering from an alarming mischance.

Not a single master remained on the premises—not a gardener, nor a groom, nor a man of any kind! Even Edgar Fenton and his fellow prefects were missing.

They had gone, an hour since, to help save the reservoir. Save it! And the thing had burst before they could lift a finger! It was only by luck that that whole party had not been crushed to pulp in the initial outburst.

The borough engineer learning, too late, of the danger, had rushed every available man to the hills; he had telephoned to St. Frank's, and to every other place where there were men, to request help! He had made a last desperate effort to avert the catastrophe.

But the incessant rain had done its grim work, and those anxious helpers had arrived in time to see the south wall of the reservoir burst asunder as though a mine had been exploded. Helpless, they had watched the water go surging down upon Edgemore, and they had found themselves cut off. Edgemore, St. Frank's, Bellton, and all the cottages and farms in the valley were marooned.

Thus the boys of St. Frank's were left to their own resources.

The school was in a state of utter confusion, for the disaster had only just burst. Nipper, Tregellis-West, and Watson were changing their clothes even now, and the other Ancient House fellows were standing about at the windows, helpless—like lost sheep.

It was the same in the West House, and in the two Houses on the other side of the Triangle. The flood had come so suddenly that practically all the boys had been trapped in their own respective Houses, and all were safe. Everybody had sought refuge on the upper floors, including the maids, housekeepers, and general domestic staffs.

Downstairs, everything was in a state of chaos.

The water was five feet deep in the passages, studies, common-rooms, and dining-halls. Five feet deep—and rising all the time! Fires had been extinguished, and the great boiler-house, which supplied St. Frank's with its radiator heat, had been put out of commission during the first minute. It was rather astonishing that the boilers had not exploded.

Never before had the old school suffered such a devastating blow from the vagaries of the weather!



CHAPTER 2.

WILLY'S MISSION!

BY great good-fortune the electric lights were still functioning. The powerful oil engines and dynamos were silenced, of course, but there were large supplies of storage batteries, and the water, evidently, had not yet seized these in its grip. So the marooned school had, at least, the comfort of the bright electric light. In those first dramatic minutes, indeed, nobody gave a thought to the lights. They were switched on automatically, and nobody wondered when they answered.

In one of the Ancient House dormitories, Nipper was talking with his chums, and Handforth and De Valerie and Fullwood joined them.

"You're junior skipper, Nipper, and we're looking to you to take charge," said Fullwood quietly. "I think old Browne has assumed command among the seniors, but he's got his hands pretty full."

"Yes, I'll take charge here," replied Nipper briskly.

"Far better divide the chaps into two companies, as it were, and have two commanders," put in Handforth. "I'll lead one—"

"Thanks all the same, Handy, but that would only lead to confusion," interrupted Nipper. "In any case, there's very little that we can do. We're all safe, thank goodness, and however serious the flood gets, we're not liable to be washed out of these

upper rooms. As far as I can see, it'll simply be a question of hanging on until help comes."

"Just what I thought," agreed Fullwood. "They're bound to send help later on this evening, I should think."

"I don't know about this evening," said Nipper, shaking his head. "We can't expect anything until to-morrow, at the earliest. The whole valley is flooded, and it's quite likely that scores of people have been washed away and drowned. There'll be more acute distress among the country folk than here, and they'll demand first attention. After all, in a great school like St. Frank's, with all its upper floors, there's plenty of refuge. We may be in a nasty plight, but we're safe enough."

"But what about the masters?" asked Fullwood. "That's the thing that I can't get over! Where are they? And the prefects? And the power-men, and the gardeners and chauffeurs?"

"There's not a man in the place!" said De Valerie.

"There's only one explanation," replied Nipper. "The Head must have got wind of the danger during afternoon lessons. He probably rushed every man off at once, and said nothing to the school. Of course, he thought everything would be all right, and that they would get back about tea-time."

"Well, they're bound to turn up during the evening," replied Fullwood. "They can't leave the school masterless!"

"It's not a question of can or can't," growled Handforth. "How the dickens is anybody going to get here? I don't suppose there's a boat left in the whole district, and the night's shutting down like ink. The gale's roaring worse than ever; it would be sheer madness to make any attempt to get through."

"Brown tried to telephone, but he can't get any reply," put in De Valerie. "All the wires are down, of course. We're just isolated—marooned here like a giddy island in the middle of the sea."

"Let's hope the masters are all safe," said Tommy Watson.

"That's all we can do—hope," replied Nipper quietly. "I'm not worried about the gov'nor—he isn't the sort of man to get drowned in a local flood! Besides, it's always foolish to worry about what might be. Plenty of time to worry when you know."

"Dear old boy, we'd all like to have your philosophic temperament, but I'm afraid we aren't built in the same way," remarked Tregellis-West. "Begad! I'm feelin' frightfully better—I am, really! Tommy, boy, how goes it now?"

Tommy Watson, who had been in desperate plight in the flood, was looking very rocky, but he managed to conjure up a grin.

"I'm all right," he replied carelessly.

"No, you're not," growled Nipper. "The best thing you can do, Thomas, is to get under that blanket, and take an hour's nap."

"Rats!" said Watson stubbornly. "Rot!

What do you take me for—a girl? Think I'm going to be mollicoddled?"

"Talking about girls, I wonder how Irene & Co. have been getting on?" asked Handforth anxiously.

"We've got our own troubles, and you needn't worry about the Moor View School, Handy," said Nipper. "They were warned, and even if they didn't heed, they've got plenty of upper floors. We've got our work cut out to look after ourselves just at present."

He went out briskly, clad in dry clothes again, and he ran full tilt into Willy Handforth, Chubby Heath, and Juicy Lemon of the Third. Willy was looking extraordinarily worried. His face was so haggard, in fact, that Nipper pulled him to a halt. It wasn't customary for the light-hearted Willy to show such anxiety.

"Anything wrong?" asked Nipper sharply.

"Sorry—can't stop," snapped Willy.

"We're off to save lives."

"Save lives!" repeated Nipper. "Who's in danger? This is a job for all of us—"

"No, it's not—it's a job for me!" interrupted the captain of the Third. "Clear off, you Remove chaps! I haven't got time to talk—I've got to act!"

The look of wild apprehension in his eyes was still obvious.

"But who's drowning?" demanded his major.

"Oh, clear off, Ted—"

"You young ass!" roared Handforth. "If there are any lives to be saved, I'll help!"

"They're trapped in the bicycle-shed," said Willy quickly. "Eight or nine of 'em—poor beggars! Hopelessly trapped!"

"The bicycle-shed!" gasped Fullwood. "But that's nearly submerged. The door's under the level of the water, and—"

"I know it!" interrupted Willy. "All those poor lives—"

"But who are they?" yelled Fullwood.

"Well, Septimus, for one," said Willy.

"Septimus?"

"Yes, and Marmaduke—"

"Marmaduke!" roared Handforth. "Your giddy monkey?"

"Yes, my giddy monkey!" growled Willy. "Septimus the Squirrel, Marmaduke the Monkey, Rupert the Rat, Priscilla the Parrot, Ferdinand the Ferret—all of 'em! Even Sebastian the Snake has got to be saved! All my pets are out there in the shed! Nobody's had time to lift a finger yet, but I mean to make an effort—"

"Your pets!" stormed Handforth. "I thought you meant human lives!"

"Well, I didn't—I meant something more important!"

"More important! You young fathead—"

"Yes!" roared Willy, flaring up. "Human beings can save themselves, if they've got an ounce of gumption—but what chance have these poor creatures? They're helpless—in

cages—and unless I do something, they'll all be drowned like rats in a trap."

"By George!" breathed Handforth. "He's right—he's absolutely right!"



CHAPTER 3.

TO THE RESCUE!

NIPPER looked rather sad.

"Poor little beggars!" he said huskily. "I'm afraid there's not much chance, Willy—but I admire you for making an effort to save them."

All power to your elbow, old man. I'd offer to give a hand; but you're capable of this job, and too many cooks spoil the broth."

"I'm going to rescue those poor creatures!" said Handforth firmly. "It's no good leaving it to a silly fag—"

"Hold him!" interrupted Willy grimly. "For goodness' sake, take my major away, and lock him up in an attic! If he starts any of his rot at a time like this, it'll end in tragedy!"

"Why, you—you—"

"Come on, Handy," interrupted Nipper quietly. "These pets are Willy's, and there's nobody on earth who will use better methods to rescue them than he. This is no time for rotting, old man."

"Rotting!" gasped Handforth. "I—I didn't mean—"

"While you're about it, Willy, you might see if there is any sign of poor old Boz," continued Nipper, with a look of pain in his eyes. "Poor little chap! I expect he's gone long ago!"

All the fellows were silent. Here was a little tragedy that they had not even thought of before. Those helpless animals were accommodated in the pets' quarters—a section of the building which really comprised the bicycle-shed. There were two of these sheds—one beyond the wall just outside West Gate, and a corresponding one near East Gate. Willy was concerned only for the pets on this side, for it was up to the Modern House and the East House fellows to look after their own.

Boz was Nipper's own little spaniel, and just at this minute Nipper felt a keen pang of remorse. He felt that he hadn't given his little friend enough attention of late. Nelson Lee had generally taken Boz for a walk every evening, and the spaniel had formed an attachment, too, for Mrs. Poulter, the matron of the Ancient House. On special occasions she would allow him in the kitchen, and his regard was quite genuine, and not influenced by the thought of bones, and such-like trifles. Boz was quite above that sort of thing.

Perhaps he had been swept away during the first minute of the flood; if he had been in his kennel, in the pets' quarters, then there was little hope for him.

"Cheer up!" said Willy, as he noted Nipper's expression. "There may be time yet—and I'm going to act pretty swiftly. Come on, Juicy—come on, Chubby! This is our picnic!"

They hurried off to the rear staircase, Willy having some idea of making his exit by the rear door. This led straight into West Square, and it was only a short distance across to the gate.

But when they commenced descending the stairs, Willy paused. The lights were full on down in the lobby, and the great door stood wide open. At a glance he could see that the flood was six feet deep, at the least.

"We can't wade through this—and we'd never be able to swim against the current," he muttered. "Look at the way it's swirling past the doorway! We've got to think of something—quick!"

"It's no good, old man," said Chubby Heath miserably. "What can we do? Even if we swim for it, and get there, we shall never be able to break in. And we couldn't carry all those animals back—"

"We've got to try!" interrupted Willy fiercely.

He was in despair. He couldn't bear the thought of leaving those helpless little animals to die in misery. But what was to be done?

His poor pets! None of the other fellows quite realised how Willy was attached to them. Very few others had any pets—a white rabbit here and there, or a guinea pig. And these had probably died long since.

"I know!" rapped out Willy suddenly.

"A table!"

"What!"

"A table—there's one at the end of the big landing—a whacking great heavy thing!" said Willy, his eyes gleaming.

"Come on, my lads!"

"Yes, but—"

"But nothing!" interrupted Willy. "Come and get that table!"

"You hopeless ass we mustn't use the furniture like that!" gasped Chubby Heath. "We shall get into a fearful row—"

"What's a table, compared to the lives of my pets?" roared Willy ferociously. "For two pins, I'd tear down a couple of doors, and turn them into a raft! They can get new furniture, but I'll never be able to replace old Septimus and Marmaduke, and the rest! Let's hope they're still living, poor beggars! But I'm afraid we'll be too late!"

Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon could see that their leader was frantic with worry and anxiety. They were rather scared of him. He was usually so sunny and cheerful, that his present mood was something new to them. He was looking quite dangerous.

They rushed upstairs, and paused at the end of the big landing. There was a table there, set against an angle of the wall—a great, heavy table, eight or nine feet long, and about three feet wide. It was a narrow

TALK ABOUT GOOD STUFF!

I Wouldn't Miss It for Anything!

I get round to the shop bright an' early Wednesday mornings, an' the first thing I start on is that long yarn about Pete. Gosh, that nigger's a real scream—makes me bust o' laughing at the things he does, an' you can't read about him anywhere else than in the "Boys' Realm." Once he made that lion of his wear a bowler hat—talk about a joke! He calls the lion a Peruvian mousehound—some mouser! I like those three sailor chaps pretty nearly as much as Pete—specially Dusty Rhodes and Corny. Corny isn't a sailor, though, he's a camel, and he keeps on turning up when they don't want him. Give me the "Boys' Realm" o' Wednesdays, and I don't want anything else once I get dug into the good stuff inside it. The only way they could improve it is to bring it out twice a week—I could always find an extra twopence for it!



table—just the very thing for Willy's purpose.

"Come on—all together!" panted Willy, as he pulled at one end. "Hi, you Remove chaps! Help us to get this table downstairs! Look sharp about it—don't stand there staring!"

"What's the idea?" asked Reggie Pitt.

"Raft!" said Willy briefly.

"Eh?"

"A raft—to launch——"

"By jingo, the very thing I need!" exclaimed Reggie. "I've been cut off from my own House, and several other West House chaps are here, too. We can paddle across the Square in a raft——"

"This is to save my pets!" roared Willy. "My only hat! Haven't we wasted enough time already? Lend a hand, and don't argue so much! You Remove chaps are worse than a crowd of old fish-wives!"

"You cheeky young ass——"

"Willy's all right!" interrupted Pitt. "I didn't know what his idea was at first, but it's up to us to hustle. Grab hold, you fellows! Heave-oh! Good egg!"

The table was lifted bodily, turned upside down, and carried swiftly towards the head of the stairs. Willy, having seen that the work was proceeding satisfactorily, rushed off with Chubby Heath. But he was back before the table had been launched on the flood. He and Chubby now carried two narrow planks, with polished mahogany edges.

"Where did you get those?" asked Hubbard.

"Shelves—out of the top landing cupboard!" replied Willy. "We've got to have paddles, haven't we?"

"You'll get skinned for using——"

But Willy Handforth had no time to listen to these senseless objections. His pets meant much to him. He would cheerfully have torn the lid off the Head's grand piano if it had been available, as a raft. But this big table would serve much better.

"In with it!" shouted Willy. "Don't mess about, you Remove chaps! There's no need to lower it as though it might crack! Just let it go, and it'll launch itself!"

"You ungrateful, young sweep!" snorted De Valerie. "If you can't talk to us in a different tone——"

"Dry up!" said Reggie.

The table was allowed to bump down the stairs, and it took the water with a splash. But Willy was there, having slid down the balustrade at the crucial moment. As the table floated, he landed fair and square. The improvised raft swung heavily round on the scum-covered, murky water.

"Good!" exclaimed Willy breathlessly. "She floats like a battle-cruiser! Come on, Juicy—buck up, Chubby! It'll easily stand the three of us!"

The other fags stepped gingerly upon that upturned table, and clung to the legs. Rather to their surprise, they found that they still floated. The table surged partly under, and their feet were submerged, but the raft was quite stable enough to carry them.

Willy placed the end of his plank against the bottom post of the staircase, and heaved with all his strength. The table slewed round, shot across the flooded lobby, and careered giddily out into the blackness of the night.



CHAPTER 4.

AN ERRAND OF MERCY.

was a near thing.

The flood had risen so high now, that the table only just managed to scrape out under the top

of the doorway.

"The young asses!" said De Valerie, with a frown. "Goodness knows where they'll finish up! They might get lost out in that blackness."

"Not much fear of that," replied Reggie. "The current's sweeping into the Square, and at the worst they'll only be carried down to the old buildings."

"They might be swept under West Arch—and then it would be all up with them!" said Hubbard. "They'd be sent hurtling down into the main current of the Stowe!"

"No need to make all sorts of wild conjectures!" said Reggie. "Willy's after his pets, and he won't allow that table to be carried anywhere! If it was any other fag, I might be worried. But Willy's all there!"

Outside, the three fags were soaked to the skin almost immediately, and half the breath was knocked out of their bodies. The rain was coming down like something solid, and the gale hooted round the angle of the building. The raft, swerving giddily, swept off down the side of the Ancient House wing.

"Use your paddle, Chubby!" yelled Willy. "Now then—both together! We're drifting! Come on; put your back into it!"

Without those planks, they would have been helpless. But they served as excellent paddles, and Willy found that they could use the table legs for leverage, as though they were rowlocks.

The raft was checked, and then, slowly, it made its way laboriously against the steady, powerful flow of the surging waters. Foot by foot, they crept out of the Square, the rain hissing against their streaming faces, the wind buffeting and howling.

"Keep it up!" panted Willy. "We're doing it!"

His heart was heavy as he spoke, for in the reflected light from the many upper windows, he could just see the roof of the long shed. But only the roof! The low building itself was practically submerged beneath the ever-rising waters.

As Willy heaved at his plank, he vaguely wondered why the flood was still rising. Everybody had assumed, that after that first outburst from the reservoir, the level would drop. Instead, the opposite was the case. The flood was getting worse and worse every minute.

The fact was, many of the dykes of the River Stowe had been burst by the deluge, and there was now nothing to keep the river in check. Water was flowing down from the hills continuously, and the river was swelling

amazingly. And still the rain pelted down, only making the general situation more acute.

St. Frank's had suffered floods before, and the boys had rather revelled in them. But they had been floods that one could enjoy, since the level had never got beyond a foot or so. But this was different.

By dint of hard work—and grim determination—Willy manœuvred the raft until it bumped against the wall of the long bicycle house. They were within three feet of the gutter, and could hardly see. The darkness and the rain nearly blinded them. But now that they were here, Willy proved that he had come provided.

"Hang on, Chubby!" he panted, as he shipped his plank. "You, too, Chubby! Grab the gutter, and hang on like grim death!"

"It's no good, Willy!" gasped Chubby Heath. "What can we do? The windows are all under water—the door, too!"

"But the skylight isn't!" snapped Willy.

"Oh, my hat! The skylight!"

The other two fags had forgotten this, not that they gained much hope. It seemed to them that hours had passed since the tidal wave had struck the school. But Willy knew differently. And he also knew that most of his pets were housed in strong, wooden boxes. These boxes—cages which Willy had made himself—had been placed on a long shelf, and had not been fixed. And wooden boxes have a habit of floating.

While Chubby and Juicy held the raft against the wall, Willy hauled himself up, and crouched on the roof. The rain lashed down upon him, and the force of the wind nearly swept him back. Slipping, sliding, and slithering; he edged his way along the roof until he reached the skylight. He clutched it, and heaved with all his strength. But the skylight was secured from inside, and wouldn't budge.

Ruthlessly, Willy drove his heel into the glass, and then smashed the wooden cross-pieces.

"Now!" he muttered, his heart beating rapidly with apprehension.

He pulled out a powerful electric torch, and switched it on. Clinging there, with his head bent over the opening, he could see right into the shed. The bright light from the torch slashed through the darkness.

"Hooray!" gasped Willy joyously.

In that first moment he saw something which filled him with wild delight. But in the next moment his cheer died away, and he stared down with supreme pity. Acute distress was rife below.

Boz, the cheerful little spaniel, was swimming about in the scummy water, only the top of his head just visible. His poor little front paws were beating feebly, and the eyes that he turned towards the light were full of dumb anguish. The little dog was almost at his last gasp.

The flood inside was, naturally, at the



The juniors gazed across the water at the mysterious flashes of light, which seemed to come from Moor View School. "Don't you understand?" cried Nipper. "It's the girls—they're signalling for help!"

same level as outside, and the water was quite close to Willy's outstretched torch. And the whole of that black surface was littered with flotsam. Pieces of wood, odd scraps of paper, a couple of empty tool-bags from bicycles, tins, and—finest sight of all—a number of wooden cages. A chorus of strange little cries sounded in answer to a peculiar chirrup from Willy.

"My goodness!" he breathed. "They're alive!"

His heart was thumping with gladness. The cages were floating about, half-submerged, and the rat, the ferret, and the other little creatures were clinging desperately to the upper woodwork.

And then something came shooting out of the darkness—something from the rafters above. It was accompanied by a chattering and a jingling.

"Marmy, old son!" gasped Willy.

Marmaduke, Willy's clever little monkey, clung to his master's shoulder, chattering with fright and cold. But the joy in his high-pitched voice was almost human in its expression. Willy had been worrying about Marmaduke, but he had hoped against hope that the animal would have smashed his chain.

"All right, old son—cling there!" he muttered. "Come on, Boz, my lad! Good! I've got you!"

The little dog had paddled his despairing way right under the skylight, and Willy just managed, by reaching down, to seize his collar. He heaved Boz up, and pulled him

clear of the flood. The unfortunate little spaniel scarcely moved, for he was done. His chest heaved with the force of his exhausted breathing.

"Here you are, Chubby!" shouted Willy. "Grab him! And hold him in your arms—don't let him down!"

"Are they alive?" gasped his chums.

"Yes; all of 'em!" replied Willy breathlessly. "We're just in the nick of time!"



CHAPTER 5.

THE FLOATING ZOO.

MARMADUKE positively refused to detach himself from Willy's shoulder. When his young master attempted to hand him down, he clung like a limpet, chattering frantically. He had found Willy now, and he wasn't going to lose him again!

"All right—hang on, then!" muttered Willy. "Now for old Septimus, and the rest!"

He found that the cages were floating round in circles, as some peculiarity of the current caused the water to swirl. And leaning down from the skylight, he was able to seize each cage as it came within reach.

He hauled them out in turn, and a close flash of the torch showed him that his pets were all alive. Badly frightened, no doubt, and thoroughly wet—but alive.

There were other pets, too—a box contain-

ing two half-drowned white rabbits. Willy rescued everything that floated. He feared, however, that the other pets had perished, for some of the juniors had fastened their home-made cages to the floor. The unfortunate inhabitants of these death-traps had had no chance.

Willy was feeling supremely happy. All his depression had gone, and he was his old self again. The flood didn't worry him in the least now—his pets were safe, and the wind and the rain could do their worst. When he lowered himself back on the raft, the thing was like a miniature zoo.

It was packed with cages, and there was hardly room for the three fags to navigate the clumsy contrivance.

"We've done it!" said Willy happily.

"Yes, but now we've got to get back!" panted Juicy Lemon. "Thank goodness you've come! Chubby and I are nearly finished! We couldn't have held this beastly thing for another minute!"

"Hi, don't let go!" yelled Willy, in alarm.

But he scarcely realised how difficult it had been to keep the table there, for the current was swirling round the end of the building with tremendous force. Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon released their grip almost unconsciously, and the raft was carried away, bumping ominously against the wall as it was swept along.

"Paddles!" yelled Willy. "Buck up, Chubby! Grab that plank of yours! In two minutes we shall be swept beyond the end of the West House, and then we shan't be able to get back!"

The danger was acute.

Willy realised it, even if his chums didn't. If they were carried out beyond the end of the West House—out of the protection of that enclosed square—they would be on the open flood. With luck, they might possibly collide with the chapel, but it was very unlikely. The raft would be swept across the submerged wall, and then borne irresistibly along to the raging torrent of the Stowe. And once caught in that deadly current, anything might happen.

Willy knew well enough that the crazy raft could never stand the buffeting of the actual river. It would capsize like a cockleshell. In short, it would mean that the fags would sacrifice their lives for the sake of these pets! So Willy set his teeth grimly.

"Try to swing her round!" he gasped. "Use that plank as a brake, Chubby! That's right—jam it against the leg!"

While Chubby obeyed this desperate order, Willy himself used his own plank as a rudder. Sluggishly, the raft swung round slightly.

"Now!" roared Willy. "Both together!"

They paddled with all their strength, and the raft, checking itself against that flow, hovered near the end of the West House wing.

It was touch and go!

Would they be able to get into the safe area, or would they be carried along? They used those planks with desperate energy, and the raft hovered. It hung there, the strength of the two fags just sufficient to hold it, but no progress was made.

"We've got to keep it up!" panted Willy, between his teeth. "If we get beyond the West House, we shall be done! Juicy, help with that plank! If you fail for a second even, it'll be all up with us! We're nearly capsizing as it is!"

The water was surging over the end of the table, and the whole raft had taken on a dangerous list. At any moment, Willy expected the thing to turn turtle, hurling them into the danger zone. They would never be able to swim back against such a strong current.

And, meanwhile, a number of fellows in the Ancient House were becoming anxious. Handforth was particularly worried, and he was standing at an open window, regardless of the rain, staring into the murk. Willy & Co. had been gone for twenty minutes, and nothing had been seen of them!

"Are they there?" asked Church, from behind.

"I can't see anything—it's as black as ink!" replied Handforth, straining his eyes. "The young idiots! I'm sorry for those pets of Willy's, but it wasn't worth risking his life—By George! Couldn't we rig up a searchlight, or something?"

"We haven't got a searchlight," said McClure.

"Hasn't somebody got an acetylene bicycle lamp?" asked Handforth. "We might be able to see—Dash down to the study, Church, and get—"

"Oh, you ass!" said Church. "How can I get to the study?"

"I'd forgotten!" muttered Handforth. "Everything's submerged, isn't it? I can't see a yard beyond this window!"

The lights of the West House gleamed across the square, and those lights were reflected in the waters which stretched between the two Houses. But out beyond the end of the Square, all was pitchy dark—and that was where the fags had vanished.

Then Handforth gave a start.

"Wait a minute!" he panted. "There's something just at the end of the West House—It's the raft! I can see it now—in that patch of light from the end window."

"Are they coming?" shouted two or three of the juniors.

"I don't know—they seem to be stuck there!" muttered Handforth, staring intently. "Yes, by George, they're paddling like grim death! I know what it is—they're caught in the current, and can't get out of it!"

And Willy & Co.'s peril became known to all. Other windows were opened, and faces crowded at them. But nobody could help—they could only stand there, watching, their hearts in their mouths.

But, inch by inch, the raft was forcing its way out of the grip of the flood. Very few of those tense watchers realised that it was a life and death fight. For if the fags lost, they would never be seen again alive.

The full force of the flood was swirling past the end of the West House, and only a comparatively sluggish current now came into the Square itself, although it had been swift enough earlier. The reason was clear. West Arch was practically under, and the Square had thus become a backwater, since there was no outlet for the flood. If only the raft could be forced into this backwater, the rest would be easy.

"I can't keep it up any longer!" panted Chubby Heath desperately. "It's no good, Willy—we can't do it!"

"We must!" gasped Willy. "We'll all be drowned unless we win! One last effort! Now! All together!"

It was a supreme effort. The table, with its freight, plunged deeply, one end going under in a most alarming fashion. For a second it seemed that the effort had been in vain. Then the table lurched round, bumped hard against the corner of the West House, and slewed into the Square. The flood raged past, robbed of its prey!



CHAPTER 6.

ANOTHER DISASTER!

WILLY & Co. were spent.

The fight was over, and they had won. The raft, in the safety of the Square, jogged leisurely along, and

was allowed to drift. The three fags clung to the upturned legs, trying to recover their breath. Their arms felt as though they had been torn out of their sockets.

"Hurrah!"

"They're safe!"

"The young beggars have done the trick!"

Yells went up from the fellows at the crowded windows. Willy waved his hand, and gave a feeble grin.

"Come on, you chaps!" he muttered. "No need to let them know that we were nearly whacked. Let's paddle the old raft across, and pretend that everything was all right."

But this was quite useless, for all the others knew how desperate the situation had been. The sight from the windows was a curious one.

The raft came leisurely now, with Willy and Chubby Heath operating the paddles. The electric lights streamed out from the windows of both houses, revealing the raft in all its glory. It was being navigated towards the rear door of the Ancient House, Willy meaning to get indoors by the same method as he had come out.

But he had reckoned without his host—the flood.

In the interval the water had risen considerably, and, to Willy's surprise, there was only

a foot or two left. One might swim through the doorway, but the raft could never navigate it.

"We're barred out!" said Juicy Lemon, in dismay. "What's going to be done now? We shall be swept back unless we're careful, these currents are as tricky as the dickens —"

"Hi, you chaps!" interrupted Willy, staring upwards. "Got any sheets or blankets? Throw 'em down and haul us up! We can't get through the doorway, it's nearly gone!"

"Hang on!" shouted his major. "We'll get you up!"

The raft was allowed to drift against the Ancient House wall, and many willing hands lowered blankets to serve as ropes. The raft was secured, and one by one the cages were hauled up. The three fags went last, Willy being at the end of the line. The table drifted away into the darkness.

"Well, we got 'em!" said Willy happily.

"Thanks, old man," said Nipper, patting Willy on the back and causing a splash of water. "Poor old Boz is nearly finished, but I think he'll pull round. I've wrapped him in a blanket."

"That's what I'm going to do to old Marmy," replied Willy. "I'll take all these pets of mine up to one of the attics—"

"Not until you've changed your clothes, you young fathead!" interrupted his major. "You'll catch an awful cold!"

"Rats!" said Willy. "I'll change after I've seen to these little beggars. Don't forget that a man always ought to feed his horse before he feeds himself!"

"What the dickens are you talking about?" snapped Handforth, staring. "These pets of yours aren't horses!"

Willy looked at him pityingly.

"Poor chap!" he said, shaking his head. "He can't help it!"

Fullwood grinned, and held his middle.

"Talking about feeding reminds me of something," he said. "We haven't had any tea, and it's about time somebody thought of grub. We've eaten nothing since mid-day—"

"Don't!" muttered Tommy Watson. "You're making me feel faint!"

"Yes, we've got some more important matters than food to worry about," agreed Nipper. "I don't like the way this flood keeps rising, it'll be on a level with this floor before morning unless there's a change. But that seems impossible," he added anxiously. "There must be a limit!"

He was trying to turn the conversation deliberately, to make the others forget about food. It was a rather hopeless task, for now that the first excitement was over, the paramount thought in every junior's mind was wholly and absolutely connected with eatables. The flood had done its worst—apparently—and everybody was safe on the upper floors. So the next thing was to see about some tea.

Nobody, curiously enough, seemed to be

struck by the fact that this might be more difficult than it appeared. After all, it was only a matter of straightening things out, and utilising the bed-room fireplaces for cooking purposes. Most of the dormitories had fireplaces, although they were never used. And there were the masters' bedrooms, too, and all sorts of other rooms on these upper floors.

Nipper had held a consultation with William Napoleon Browne, of the Fifth, and they had both decided that the situation was far more serious than the rest of the fellows seemed to imagine. But they were by no means perturbed. They were glad enough to discover, after a rough and ready roll-call had been taken, that everybody was safe.

"We ought to get in touch with the masters as soon as we can," De Valerie was saying. "We can't telephone, and we can't leave the school, so it seems that there's only one alternative. We've just got to wait until the masters get to us."

"They'll be here soon, I'll bet," said Hubbard.

"I don't suppose they'll get to us until to-morrow," declared Nipper. "Everybody might as well resign themselves to a pretty uncomfortable night. In this terrific gale there's no possibility of help arriving."

"We don't need help," said Fullwood. "We're comparatively comfortable here, compared with some of the poor victims, I'll wager."

"Don't forget the terrific struggle those fags had with their raft," continued Nipper. "It was as much as they could do to get it into the Square. So how do you suppose help could get here from beyond the flood area? Nobody will venture out until it's daylight again."

"Then we'd better see about some tea," said Handforth briskly. "Let's go and interview, Mrs. Poulter, and offer to help—"

He broke off with a gasp. For, with dramatic suddenness, the electric lights had flickered, and then petered out, plunging everything into inky darkness.



CHAPTER 7.

CUT OFF FROM THE WORLD!
GREAT Scott!"

"What's happened?"

Everyone was shouting at once. The darkness was inky, and from beyond the surrounding pall came the whistling and roaring of the gale, and the beating of the rain upon the windows.

"The light's failed!" roared Handforth.

This piece of information was not necessary. Every electric light in the Ancient House had snapped out, and a single glance through the windows proved that all the other Houses were in a similar plight. The disaster had occurred so suddenly that nobody was prepared for it.

"Keep calm, everybody!" came Nipper's voice. "There's nothing to be scared about! It's a wonder the electric lights have carried on until now. We couldn't expect anything else but this."

"But—but can't we do something?" shouted a voice.

"Yes—light some candles," retorted Nipper promptly.

"But where are the candles?" asked Handforth. "It's all very well to talk about lighting candles, you clever ass, but we've got to get the candles first!"

"It's a good thing there's somebody here with foresight!" came Fullwood's voice. "Nipper had a talk with Mrs. Poulter ten minutes ago, and he found that several packets of candles are usually kept upstairs, in one of the cupboards."

"It's a school rule—in case of emergency," explained Nipper. "Everybody stands just where he is, there'll only be confusion if we start barging about in this darkness. Reggie, come along with me, and we'll get a few of the candles going at once."

"I'm your man," said Pitt. "But it's a beastly business, all the same. I ought to be over in my own House, looking after the chaps there. My hat! What a life!"

After the first shock was over, the juniors resigned themselves to this added discomfort. Before ten minutes had elapsed, candles were burning in the main corridors and in some of the dormitories. But, after the brilliant electric light, the feeble flickerings were depressing in the extreme.

The school was chilly, too, and growing chillier. The gale was of such force that draughts were blowing under every doorway, and whistling along every passage. Every radiator had grown cold by this time, and there was no prospect of them becoming heated again.

The failure of the electric light, however, was a circumstance that could only be expected. The flood, no doubt, had reached the storage batteries, and had rendered them useless. Not that anybody cared about seeking any explanation. The fact that the light was out was quite sufficient.

The plight of St. Frank's was indeed grim.

With the gale at its height, and the rain pelting pitilessly down, any thought of venturing out on the flood was foolish. The water was still rising, the telephones were useless, and it was an established fact that the school was cut off from the rest of the world.

Marooned—and without a single master!

No help could be expected from anywhere, and all the responsible fellows faced the situation. They would have to spend the night just as they were, and hope for the best on the morrow.

A big crowd of fellows gathered in one of the largest upstairs rooms in the Ancient House, a crowd which included seniors and juniors and fags. In a crisis like this there were no age distinctions. This particular room was empty of furniture, and two candles

were burning on the mantelpiece. It had been set aside as a common-room for all, and had already been christened the "general" room.

"I dare say we shall survive," said Chambers, of the Fifth. "All the same, it's a bit thick. The Head ought to have known better. I mean, carting every master off and leaving us in the lurch! I call it thick!"

"An unfortunate circumstance, we will admit, Brother Cuthbert," agreed Browne. "However, I think we may take it for granted that the reverend gentleman acted for the best, without suspecting that he was actually leaving the school distinctly in the soup."

"Soup!" groaned Fullwood. "I'll admit it looks like soup, but I wouldn't like to taste it!"

"Why talk about food?" asked one of the other seniors. "It's bad enough to be hungry without hearing you young idiots gassing about food!"

"Well, everybody deserves all this," said Handforth coldly.

"Harsh words!" protested Browne. "Alas, Brother Ted, I deplore these jaundiced remarks——"

"You can deplore 'em all you like!" growled Handforth. "There's one thing I want to know."

"Only one?" asked Browne. "Your requirements are modest——"

"What happened yesterday?" said Handforth. "That's what I'm asking you. What happened yesterday?"

Browne shook his head in a fatherly way.

"I rather think we are more concerned as to what is happening to-night," he said pointedly. "While striving to take an interest in your recollections, Brother Handforth, I must confess that the immediate future interests me far more than the effete past."

"What happened yesterday?" roared Handforth. "I came here and warned the whole school that a flood was coming."

"You did!" agreed Browne.

"And what did the school do?"

"In a misguided moment, I fear it accepted your warning with sundry cackles of unseemly laughter," replied Browne sadly. "But we must learn to bear these trials with fortitude——"

"I told everybody what to expect, and I was jeered at!" went on Handforth indignantly. "Worse than that even! The Head actually swished me!"

"One of life's major tragedies," said Browne stoutly.

"Six cuts!" snorted Edward Oswald.

"I have detected an unwillingness on your part to sit down——"

"On the hands!" said Handforth coldly. "Six cuts on the hands—for warning the school of disaster! That's the sort of justice there is in the world. Why, if you fellows had had enough sense to take notice of me,

there would have been heaps of time for the whole school to clear out!"

"It's true enough, Handy," said Fullwood. "We admit it——"

"And now you've simply got to put up with what you get!" went on Handforth, with relish. "It serves you right. I'm not so sure I shan't enjoy seeing your troubles."

"Unhappily, they are troubles in which you must share personally, too," said Browne. "If I may be so bold, Brother Handforth, I should like to remark that you made one signal mistake yesterday. Instead of broadcasting your warning to all and sundry, you should have come to me. That trivial omission has led to this acute situation."

"What the dickens could you have done?"

"Ah!" said Browne. "That, of course, is a question which need not be discussed, since the opportunity has passed. As I said before, we must face the facts with stern eyes and stoic hearts. As far as I can see, it would be a brave and brainy course to follow the noble example of Brother Glen-thorne. There," said Browne, "is a man with a master brain!"

"What's Archie done that's so wonderful?" asked Fullwood.

"Brother Archie has gone to bed."

"Gone to bed!"

"Unquestionably, and without doubt, he has gone to bed!" declared Browne.

"Is that what you call brainy?" asked Handforth, with sarcasm.

"In my considered opinion it is a master stroke of genius," declared Browne. "What, after all, is the hall-mark of genius? Simplicity, brothers! You will have noted that the brainiest ideas of all are simple. And what could be simpler than going to bed? In one fell stroke it solves the food problem, since it is not yet fashionable to affix the nose-bag during sleep. What, then, is the net result of this master stroke of Brother Archie's? He spends the night in sublime peace, and awakens with the morning refreshed, and ready for the trials of another day."

Nipper chuckled.

"Browne's absolutely right!" he said firmly.

Browne bowed.

"Than which there is no higher praise!" he murmured. "Brother Nipper, the ruling genius of the Lower School, has approved. I can now seek my cot with contented mind."



CHAPTER 8.

THE GREAT FOOD PROBLEM.
EDWARD OSWALD HAND-
FORTH looked at Browne coldly.

"If that's what you call a good idea, then you can strangle it!" he said. "You can strangle it and drop it into the flood. Do you think I'm willing to go to bed supperless?"

"Alack, brother, it is not a question of willingness——"

"Do you think anybody else is content, either?" roared Handforth. "Why, it's only early evening yet. It's hardly six o'clock."

"An added reason for going to bed," argued Browne. "It is a celebrated fact that time slips by with graceful speed during sleep, and the morning will arrive all the sooner——"

"Rats!" interrupted a dozen voices.

"Piffle!" said Handforth. "Somebody might come and rescue us later on to-night, and we've got to keep awake and on the alert. I don't suppose anybody will sleep to-night, and it stands to reason that we've got to have some supper to fortify ourselves."

"Who said supper?" asked De Valerie, coming into the general room.

"Supper!" echoed a number of other voices. "Good egg!"

The apartment was quite crowded by now, and it was a curious fact that very similar scenes to this were being enacted in the other Houses. Candles had been lighted all over the school, although the responsible leaders saw to it that none was wasted.

It was a good thing that the regulations had provided for those candles. Each house had its own supplies—locked in a landing cupboard. In the event of a light failure, these were for use. But Dr. Stafford had certainly never anticipated such an emergency as this!

"It's all very well for you fellows to talk so glibly about supper," growled Nipper, "but I'd like to know where the supper's coming from. Perhaps some of you clever asses can tell me!"

Handforth started.

"Isn't there plenty of food?" he asked blankly.

"Yes—under the flood," said Nipper.

"What!"

"Under the flood!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

Shouts of consternation went up from every corner of the room. A hollow moan sounded near the doorway, and a couple of juniors found it necessary to save Fatty Little from falling.

"No grub!" he said, in horror. "Great pancakes!"

"Don't you start, you greedy porpoise!" said Handforth, frowning. "You don't belong to this House, anyway——"

"I can't help that!" panted Fatty Little, his eyes desperate. "I got in here by accident, when the flood came! I want to get back to my own House! I must get back! Good gravy! If I don't get back, I shall die!"

"He's been tearing up and down the House for the last half hour, asking how he's to get back!" explained Jack Grey. "I'll bet he thinks he can get some grub there—which explains all!"

"There can't be less than there is in this rotter House!" roared Fatty.

"Allow me to make a suggestion," said Browne. "I understand that we are harbouring several aliens in our midst. In other words, sundry brothers from the West House are unwilling prisoners beneath this roof. Let them, therefore, place Brother Fatty in the flood, and use him as a raft to accomplish the journey. I will guarantee the raft against sinking. Wet feet positively safeguarded!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, dry up, Browne, and talk sense!" said Handforth gruffly. "What are we going to do about food? That's the point to be considered now. It's only early in the evening, and we're all hungry——"

"Fires are just as important as food," put in Fullwood. "Aren't there some coals upstairs? If necessary, we can tear up some of the attic floors. Anything is permissible in a crisis like this."

"Hear, hear!"

"Alas for my advice," sighed Browne. "I have pointed out the wisdom of Brother Archie's blanket manoeuvres, but I am evidently unheeded. If we all go to bed, we shall need no fires, and food will be a matter of no interest to us."

"My only hat!" said Hubbard. "It can't be as serious as that!"

"Then it is," exclaimed Nipper. "I was hoping that you fellows would forget all about grub, but I can see that it's time to speak. So you'd better realise, at once, that there isn't so much as a biscuit between the lot of us. The school authorities guarded against a light failure by stocking candles upstairs, but they were very thoughtless about the food. They ought to have known that a flood like this is always a likely possibility."

Nipper's gentle sarcasm was ignored.

"Not even a biscuit!" said Hubbard, catching the most vital section of the speech. "But there must be! What about the kitchens and store-rooms? They're packed with grub—there's enough grub to last for weeks——"

"Don't be an idiot!" snapped Nipper impatiently. "All the downstairs rooms are flooded—submerged, in fact. What food there is unfit for eating—even if we could get hold of it."

"There might be some tinned stuff," said De Valerie, hopefully.

"I'll have a tin of salmon for the first course, and finish up with Californian peaches!" said Nipper, with more sarcasm. "You fellows make me tired! We're foodless—so get that in your minds at once, and let it take root."

"Couldn't we dive?" suggested Handforth brilliantly.

"Dive?"

"Go downstairs, and explore the kitchens," said Edward Oswald. "I'm game to have a shot. We can swim in, get to the cupboards, and then form a line. We can pass all the tinned stuff along it, and get



As Tom Burton, with the life-line round his shoulders, reached the submerged building, the girls flung him an improvised rope of knotted blankets. Then they hauled with all their might to pull the exhausted junior to safety.

enough for a big spread in under ten minutes!"

Browne considered the proposal.

"An alluring prospect, Brother Ted, but it appears to me that there is a nasty snag," he commented. "I do not doubt your prowess as a swimmer, but I venture to predict that ten minutes under water would try even your leathery lungs."

"Yes, the scheme's impracticable," said Nipper flatly. "If the kitchens were only half flooded, it would be a totally different thing, but every doorway's completely submerged. Besides, I've had a talk with Mrs. Poulter, and she tells me that all the tinned stuff is kept in the store-rooms, down the cellar. You know there are big basements under the kitchens. How on earth can we ever get to them? It's better to be hungry than dead!"

At last the fellows appreciated the fact that no food was available.

It was a startling shock for most of them. What with all the other excitement, they hadn't given food a single thought until they felt that it was time to be eating. But the flood had left St. Frank's not only in darkness, but destitute of any food supply. The only thing that still functioned perfectly was the water main. And this, in a way,

was adding insult to injury. St. Frank's had all the water that it needed, without any from the taps.

So it seemed that Archie Glenthorne was the most sensible fellow in the school, after all.



CHAPTER 9.

MAKING THE BEST OF IT!

ARCHIE GLENTHORNE had taken a very simple course.

Finding that his own luxurious study was beyond reach, and the upper part of the House a confusion of noise and turmoil, he had sought retirement in his bedroom. Phipps, his faithful valet, had gone off with the masters, so it seemed to Archie that there was really nothing left to live for.

Bed, therefore, was the only possible move.

Taking no notice of the excitement which raged about him, the elegant junior had undressed, and had got into bed, only too glad that his couch, at least, was dry. And within five minutes he was sound asleep, oblivious to all the worries which beset the other juniors.

In a way, it was a master-stroke, as Browne had declared.

And Nipper strongly advised the Remove and the Third to follow Archie's example.

"One or two of us will keep awake, of course," he said. "There's about one chance in ten million that the masters might try to communicate with us, so we shall have to keep watch. But there's no earthly reason for the rest of you to hang about, hungry, cold and miserable. Get to bed, and try to sleep. To-morrow will soon be here."

Hardly anybody heeded this sound advice. It was the same in the Fifth and the Sixth. The seniors had no inclination to go to bed. Nobody could explain why, but there was a sense of vague uneasiness abroad.

It was particularly noticeable among the weaker boys—and there were many such even among the seniors. Age didn't count, for such a fag as Willy could hardly be termed weak. All the nervous ones were apprehensive of further disaster.

They pretended to go to bed, it is true, but sat in their dormitories, hunched up on the beds, talking. The roar of the gale, and the continuous swirling of the flood only tended to increase their uneasiness.

Some talked of the school collapsing.

"It's nothing new!" said Hubbard apprehensively. "Buildings often fall to pieces in a flood, especially when it keeps on like this. The lower walls are undermined, and the top fall in."

"Do you think it might happen at St. Frank's?" asked somebody.

"Nothing's more likely!" said Hubbard, with a kind of gloomy relish. "If we go to sleep, we shall all be killed in our beds! I'm going to keep awake, so that I can make a fight for life, at the first sign of the building crumbling down."

"Oh, my goodness!"

"Do—do you think it'll happen soon, Hubbard?"

"Before the night's out!" replied Hubbard firmly. "I expect we shall hear some cracks first, and the walls will begin to topple——"

"Hubbard!"

Nipper, passing the open door of the dormitory, had heard these words, and he strode in with an angry face.

"You silly idiot!" he snapped. "If I hear you talking rot like that again, I'll punch your head!"

"Well, it's true!" protested Hubbard.

"It's a fanciful fear!" retorted Nipper. "The school's safe enough—these solid walls will stand a hundred floods! So don't talk any of that piffle again! I'm coming down heavily on all scaremongers."

He went out, and Hubbard's companions felt relieved. Further along the corridor, Nipper caught Forrest & Co., the cads of Study A, engaged in very much the same line of talk. They were doing their best to "put the wind up" the nervous ones. It gave these idiots a sort of pleasure to make the very worst of the situation.

"It's a pity you can't go to sleep!" said Nipper wrathfully. "There's no danger to the school, and we'll all be safe as long as we keep within these walls. At the very worst, we shall only be cold and hungry, and you won't even notice those discomforts if you go to bed."

"Thanks all the same, but we'll please ourselves," sneered Bernard Forrest.

"You can clear off, Hamilton!" growled Gulliver. "We don't recognise you as our leader, anyhow!"

"Rather not!" said Bell.

"I couldn't lead you if I tried," retorted Nipper. "The finest leader in the world can't lead insects—they haven't got the brains to follow! But I can put my foot down on mischief-makers!"

Browne was having similar trouble among the seniors, for there were many nervous ones among them, too. Browne adopted his usual airy style, and soon had everybody believing that they were the luckiest fellows in the world to be alive. As for a little food shortage, that was a trifle which would be quickly remedied in the morning.

What the other Houses were doing, nobody quite knew. But lights gleaming across the Triangle seemed to indicate that the Modern House and the East House were managing to rub along. But there seemed to be some trouble in the West House. At last, somebody found out that the West House juniors were yelling from the windows, and Reggie Pitt hurried into a dormitory and stared across the flooded Square.

"Hallo!" he yelled. "Anything wrong over there?"

"Everything's wrong!" came the voice of Nicodemus Trotwood. "There's a riot going on because the chaps can't get any food!"

"That's no reason for a riot!" snapped Pitt. "Can't you fellows face a few difficulties without——"

"It's not me!" roared Trotwood. "A few of the clever know-alls have been gassing—mostly the seniors—and everything's upside down. Can't you come over, Reggie?"

"I'll swim it, if you like," offered Pitt.

"You'd better do that, then," replied Nick. "Some of these chaps are going for the matron, and accusing her of neglecting her duty! As if it's her fault that all the food's submerged!"

"I shall have to come over!" said Reggie Pitt grimly. "Of course, Morrow isn't there, is he?"

He thought for a moment. He didn't quite like getting himself soaked by a swim, but there seemed to be nothing else for it. There was no way into the West House from the Ancient House, although West Tower adjoined the two Houses, and formed their centre as it were. The only means of getting across was to brave the flood.

In the Ancient House, Mrs. Poulter and the other domestics had wisely gone to bed, acting upon the combined advice of Browne and Nipper. But in the West House, it

seemed, there was a good deal of trouble. Reggie, as the responsible Junior leader, felt that his presence there was essential.

"All right!" he shouted. "I'll get across somehow."

He glanced up at the evening sky, having caught a glimpse of a star. And rather to his surprise he found that the scurrying clouds were thinning out a bit. There was scarcely any rain now, although the gale, if anything, was blowing greater guns than ever.

"Let's hope this storm expends itself before to-morrow," he said. "By Jove, it's a pleasure to see a star!"

"A star?" said Fullwood. "Later on, then, we shall have the moon. It's nearly full just now, and it rises pretty early."

"I love the moon, but I'm not particularly interested in it just at this minute," replied Pitt politely. "I'm face to face with a problem. How can I get across this flood without getting my feet wet? Answer me that, old man, and I'll be your friend for life."

Fullwood grinned.

"Nothing easier," he said promptly. "A rope."

"I agree—nothing easier in the world," said Pitt. "But first of all we need a rope, so when you try to be funny again—By Jove, though!" he added. "I wonder—"

"Stunned by a dazzling idea?" asked Fullwood.

"Where's Jerry Dodd?" demanded Pitt eagerly. "Who's seen Jerry? Where's that Australian chap? Or Farman—No, Farman won't do; he's over in the West House. I must have Jerry!"

"Yes, but what—"

"My kingdom for Jerry!" said Reggie Pitt firmly.

"That's all right, you can keep it!" said Jerry Dodd, as he joined them at the window. "What's all the trouble? Here I am, and if I can do anything for you, just pronounce the magic words! Always ready to oblige one of my, best cobbers!"



CHAPTER 10.

RETURNED WITH THANKS!

REGGIE PITT seized Jerry's arm.

"I'm proud to be one of your cobbers, whatever that is," he said briskly.

"I'm not quite familiar with your Australian lingo—"

"A cobber is a friend—a chum," said Jerry scornfully.

"Good man!" nodded Reggie. "You're pretty handy with a rope, aren't you? You can tie a noose in it, and coil it over a twig at a hundred yards' range. I've heard that

you can pick blackberries with your wonderful rope from fifty yards off—"

"Cheese it!" grinned Jerry. "What do you want?"

"First of all, a rope."

"I've got one in my dormitory—"

"Jerry, you're not merely a cobber, but a life-saver!" exclaimed Pitt firmly. "Buzz and get that rope, and then sling it across to those chaps in the West House. My idea is to rig up a line, from House to House. If there's enough rope, we might be able to wangle a sort of cradle. Then we West House fellows can get across to our own quarters."

"That's a real dinkum idea!" declared Jerry, nodding. "I'll fix you up!"

"You seem pretty anxious to leave us, don't you?" asked Fullwood, in a pained voice. "What have we done that we should merit this desertion?"

"I am needed across the way," replied Reggie. "I don't boast of myself as a leader, but if I can't put things in order over in the West House, I'll eat my boots!"

"I think we shall all be eating our boots before long if we don't get some grub," retorted Fullwood. "Perhaps you're right. It's all the better that you should go back to your own quarters. We'll lend a hand with the life-saving apparatus."

"Besides, there's the question of accommodation," continued Pitt. "There are four or five of us over here, and, I believe, a couple of your fellows are over in my House. It wouldn't be so bad if they were equal numbers—we could change beds for the night. But I want some sleep before morning, even if these other idiots don't."

It was, of course, all to the good that each House should have its own complement. Strangely enough, except for these few, there were no misplacements, as it were. And with Jerry Dodd's help, the task would probably be easy.

The Australian junior soon returned, and he carried a long coil of stout rope. Fellows gathered at the adjoining windows to watch the proceedings, for they promised to be entertaining. A rather more cheerful spirit was abroad now, owing, probably, to the welcome cessation of the rain.

But when the fellows looked down at the swirling flood, they were in no way relieved, for there was a noticeable rise. The flood was getting more and more serious. However, this was not a cause for anxiety, so long as they were able to get away from the school on the morrow.

In fact, lots of the fellows were already gleefully discussing the probable outcome of the deluge. Naturally, they would all be sent home, and that would mean a week or two of unexpected holiday. They couldn't be expected to keep on at St. Frank's under these conditions. It would probably be a fortnight before the flood subsided, and St. Frank's became habitable again. But the majority of the boys were more inclined to

think of the immediate trials. They didn't look very far into the future.

Jerry Dodd leaned well out of the dormitory window, and measured the distance with his eye.

"It's a long throw," said Nipper.

"I think I'll manage it," replied Jerry. "I hope those fellows will catch the rope on the other side."

The juniors at the opposite windows were warned to be ready. Jerry stepped back, and then sent the rope coiling and whirling across the Square. It was a wonderful throw. Nick Trotwood and Johnny Onions, at one of the West House windows, grabbed simultaneously, and both held the rope.

"Got it!" sang out Nick.

"Good man!" yelled Nipper. "Hold it tight, and take instructions from this side. We're going to rig up a regular life-line." He turned to Pitt. "It's your scheme, Reggie, and I'm wondering how you're going to work it. This lasso rope isn't strong enough to bear."

Reggie scratched his head.

"I was afraid of that," he grumbled. "Haven't we got any thick rope? No, I suppose not. I say, what a beastly——"

"Hold on!" said Nipper, as a thought struck him. "Weren't there some workmen on the roof last week?"

"I believe so, but——"

"It's been raining ever since Monday, so they've done nothing this week; but all their kelter is up on the roof, I expect," continued Nipper. "There's some scaffolding there, and there's bound to be some rope. I believe they're pointing the bricks round the chimneys. Hold on a minute, and I'll hurry upstairs and look."

Handforth elected to go with him, and they both went up the attic stairs, and then mounted a steep flight which led to a heavy door. Unbolting this, they found themselves on the flat roof of the Ancient House. Each House had two spare ends, higher than the rest of the buildings like squat towers, and these were perfectly flat.

Nipper's electric torch was gleaming, and he uttered a chuckle of satisfaction as he held it steady.

"By Jove!" he said. "Corn in Egypt! Look at this, Handy!"

"A whacking great coil!" said Handforth, with satisfaction. "What a piece of luck! This would do to pull a battleship!"

A lot of scaffolding was built up on the roof, and close against the parapets were a number of pails, tools and other builders' implements. The coil of thick rope was a long one, and it was certainly a find.

Before descending Nipper took a look round.

"Hallo! The moon!" he said, pointing. "It's clearing, Handy, although the wind's stronger than ever. We shall be blown off here unless we're careful. The rain's stopped, too."

"It'll be fine to-morrow," declared Handforth. "I say, what a view! Look at the flood down there——"

"Talking about the view, that gives me an idea," said Nipper keenly. "After we've shipped these West House fellows back to their hutch, we'll go up the big tower, and have a look at the countryside from there. The sight ought to be an interesting one."

"By George!" said Handforth. "That's a stunning idea! As a matter of fact, I was thinking about it myself."

"Any luck?" yelled a chorus. "Hi, you fatheads! What are you mooning at up there? What about that rope?"

Nipper grinned as he went to the edge of the roof and looked down.

"It's all right; we've got plenty of it!" he shouted. "Coming down now! We're in luck's way!"

And twenty minutes later a very creditable cable was rigged up, stretching from House to House. There was even a cradle, and Jerry Dodd's thin rope was utilised to haul the cradle to and fro—the thick rope, of course, bearing the weight.

"Well, so long, you chaps!" said Reggie. "I don't like to leave you, but duty calls! Let's hope for the best. We'll keep the old flag flying as long as we can, eh?"

"Rather!" agreed Nipper. "St. Frank's doesn't give in easily! We may be without masters, and we may be flooded out, but we've still got plenty of spirit left."

Reggie sat in the crude rope cradle, and gave the signal. The next minute he was swinging out across the flood, and the fellows at the other windows gave a cheer. After all, the evening wasn't proving so dull and miserable as many had predicted.



CHAPTER 11.

FATTY DOESN'T WORRY!

ROWNE came along and gave the proceedings the benefit of his presence as he watched the other West House fellows hauled

across the Square.

"Ah, a few empties being returned, I perceive," he remarked genially.

"You're right about the empties!" said Fullwood. "But if it comes to that, we're all 'empties.' I've got a feeling that the walls of my inside are caving in."

"Largely a matter of imagination, brother," said Browne. "Purely a case of auto-suggestion. Under normal conditions, you would think nothing of going without your tea, and under normal conditions it wants yet an hour to supper-time. Yet, because you know there is no supper available, you feel ravenous. Imagine that you have just eaten a large meal, and that empty feeling will disappear."

"I've got a good imagination, but it's not as vivid as that," replied Fullwood. "The less we talk about grub, the better."

Fatty Little, who was just about to venture on his own trip, was grinning heavily. Indeed, there was something uncannily contented about him.

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"I'm surprised at you chaps, growling about food!" he said. "We don't appreciate grub until we've been without it for a bit. Personally, I'm quite prepared to wait till to-morrow."

"What!"

"I can give you chaps a lesson in fortitude," continued Fatty Little. "I'm going straight to bed now, and—"

"Rats!"

"Food is a good thing to avoid at a time like this," went on Fatty calmly. "There's so much excitement that we don't really need—"

"Cheese it, you spoofing ass!" interrupted Nipper. "You're so jolly keen to get back that you've given yourself away. I expect you've got a food hoard in your bed-room, or hidden away in a box-room."

Fatty started.

"I—I—" he began sheepishly.

"I think we ought to visit those West House chaps," said Fullwood, with a thoughtful frown. "There's nothing like showing a friendly spirit."

"Hear, hear!"

"Let's go over and search the box-rooms and attics," said De Valerie.

"You Ancient House bounders keep to yourselves!" roared Fatty, in sudden alarm.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"A palpable case of food hoarding!" said Browne severely. "Under the circumstances, I suggest that we sentence the culprit to immediate imprisonment—in the Ancient House. In the meantime, let us give our friends the tip—"

"Hi, pull away, you chaps!" roared Fatty. "I'm all ready Haul up, there! These silly fatheads are going to keep me here!"

Nipper & Co. grinned as Fatty sagged out on the line.

"One moment!" said Browne, in alarm. "We need steel cable, I fancy, for this outsize in loads. I fear that mere rope will be unable to stand the strain."

Browne's words were more true than he suspected, for when Fatty Little got half-way across, the line had sagged so much that he was dangling in the water. His yells only caused the watchers to burst into callous laughter. The other juniors had already stretched the rope, and Fatty's extra weight proved too much. In fact, he vanished completely under water, and was hauled along, spluttering, gasping, and yelling. The on-

lookers appeared to regard it as an excellent joke.

The West House fellows rather expected Fatty to complain bitterly when he was hauled in, but to their surprise he assumed a cheerful countenance as soon as he found himself safely within his own House.

"Good egg!" he gasped. "I'm here, anyhow! Thanks, you chaps! It won't take me ten minutes to change. Great pancakes! Lemme get through, there! I'm back! Back in the good old West House! I don't care a rap about the flood now!"

He hurried off, and Reggie Pitt shook his head.

"There's something mysterious about this," he said. "The chap didn't even mind getting wet! Did you notice that light of sheer happiness in his eyes? I never knew he was so true to his House as all that."

"I think we'd better follow him," said Jack Grey. "It's the only chance we've got of finding some supper, anyway."

But nobody took this advice. They all suspected that Fatty had a secret hoard; but if he shared it with one, everybody would want some, and then there wouldn't be a mouthful each. So he was forgotten. And Reggie Pitt set about the task of getting things straight. The West House was in a much more disorderly condition than the Ancient House, for seniors and juniors alike had allowed their fears to get the better of them, and a minor panic had resulted.

Reggie's calm, business-like methods soon made a big difference among the juniors—and the seniors, without even being told, felt compelled to show a dignified front. Within half an hour the West House was facing the night with calm and stoical courage.

There was still no sign whatever of any communication from beyond the flood. With the telephone useless, and all communications cut, the isolation of St. Frank's remained complete.

The wildness of the night only added to the general uneasiness, for each fellow, in spite of his show of calmness, had a vague fear that further disasters might occur. The flood was still rising, and the gale was blowing with tremendous force. And an examination of the sky did not tend to cheerfulness. The rain had certainly stopped, but black masses of cloud were scudding across the heavens, and the moon came out only intermittently.

Several juniors were eager to adopt Nipper's idea of going up to the top of West Tower, in order to view the general surroundings. The tower could be reached from the Ancient House by means of a narrow, stone stairway. It was a relic of the old Ancient House.

Handforth, of course, was prominent in this enterprise, and he imbued Church and McClure with his own enthusiasm. Tregellis-West and Tommy Watson were the others. With Nipper, they made six.

The Third, guided by Willy, had gone to bed. All the fags were ravenously hungry, and as there was no prospect of food,

Browne's idea of drowning one's troubles in sleep was finally adopted. Willy himself was worried about his pets, and after the Third had settled down, he sneaked out and went up to the little box-room which had been selected as a temporary home for his four-legged friends. He was gratified to find that they were all dry and sprightly. But he had no food for them, and he was far more worried over this problem than over the fate of St. Frank's.

As the Remove fellows made their way to the tower, Nipper looked at his watch.

"It hardly seems possible," he said. "It's only just eight o'clock, even now. Feels like two in the morning, doesn't it?"

"Eight o'clock!" groaned Tommy Watson. "Practically twelve hours before breakfast-time! Oh, crumbs! Twelve hours!"

"Never mind about the twelve hours, old boy," said Sir Montie gently. "I'm more worried about the prospect of breakfast. Begad, it seems to me that we shall have the same menu for breakfast as we had for supper!"

"We shall soon forget our troubles when we get to sleep," said Handforth, with a fatherly air. "You fellows had better take my advice, and buzz into bed as soon as we've had a look at the view. Of course, I don't sympathise with you—you deserve all you're getting. I warned you of this flood, and you laughed at me."

"Cheese it, old man!" said Nipper.

"Can't you use an expression that doesn't include food?" asked Watson plaintively. "Why not tell him to dry up? Why not advise him to ring off? Cheese it! The very thought conjures up visions of cheddar, or gorgonzola——"

"All the better!" interrupted Handforth severely. "The more visions of food I can make you conjure up, the better I shall be pleased! It'll teach you to take more notice of me next time."

"We plead guilty, old boy, and humbly hope that you forgive us," said Sir Montie cheerfully. "But let's be gettin' up the tower. I'm frightfully keen on seein' the view."

"You needn't be!" retorted Handforth. "I expect it'll give us the pip when we see it. And we needn't expect any excitement, either—the night's going to be quiet. We're deserted—marooned—and the rest of the world has forgotten us!"

Never had Handforth made a more inaccurate statement.



CHAPTER 12.

THE SIGNALS IN MORSE!

"GREAT SCOT!" muttered Church, in an awed voice.

The others were silent for a moment. They were standing at the very top of West Tower, and from this lofty peak they could see for miles in every direction.

At the moment, the moon was shining brilliantly, and the howling wind had the effect of making the visibility as clear as crystal.

At any ordinary time the view from either of the St. Frank's towers was a very pleasant one. The rolling moor could be seen away to the north-west, and the dark mass of Bellton Wood loomed up comparatively near at hand, with Bellton itself just visible to the southward. And the River Stowe could be seen wending its lazy way between gentle meadows. Quite near, the Head's garden, the playing-fields, and the school paddocks were pleasant enough to look down upon, too.

But now, what a change!

With the exception of Bellton Wood, the landscape was transformed. It had, indeed, become a water-scape, if the term is permissible. And scarcely any of the familiar landmarks were to be seen.

In every direction the vista was one desolate waste.

It was rather a shock for the juniors. For this, of course, was their first sight of the full floods. The deluge had struck the school so abruptly that nobody had had time to think of anything except his own safety. And then the dusk had come down, and until now the darkness had enshrouded the entire country. This moonlight view was the first the boys had had. And it filled them with a new sense of consternation at the magnitude of the disaster.

"My goodness!" said Handforth at last. "I can't believe it!"

The others felt the same, although it had been left to Handforth to make such a truly characteristic remark. The thing was right in front of his eyes, and to disbelieve it was impossible. That scene of wild desolation almost scared him.

The moon disappeared behind a hurrying cloud, but soon came out again. The juniors stood bracing themselves against the wind. Whichever way they turned their gaze, they could see nothing but water. The entire Stowe valley was inundated.

The Head's private residence, on the other side of Inner Court, stuck out of the flood in the most fantastic way. The big barn, at the bottom of the nearest paddock, seemed to be floating on the water. Tree-tops were just awash. Walls, hedges and gates had disappeared completely.

"Look at Bellton!" said McClure.

They turned their attention in the direction of the village.

"Puzzle—find Bellton!" said Nipper. "Not a light there—not a sign of life. By Jove, I believe the whole village is under water! The ground's a bit lower there, you know, and they must have got it badly. I hope to goodness everybody managed to clear out in time, although I doubt it. We shall hear of some tragedies to-morrow, I'm afraid."

"To-morrow?" muttered Tommy Watson. "Crumbs! What's going to happen to-morrow? It's all rot, of course, but I've got a feeling that we're completely isolated from

the rest of the world—that we're the last people alive sort of thing!"

There was some justification for this remark, for that dreary scene was so utterly depressing that one could be forgiven for allowing one's thoughts to grow fantastic. St. Frank's seemed to be in the centre of a vast stretch of water which extended for illimitable miles. This, of course, was a pure delusion, and Nipper hastened to prove it.

"It's not so bad as all that, Tommy," he said gently. "Look at the high ridge beyond Bellton. And the Downs over there, too. And there's Bannington," he added, turning and pointing. "Bannington doesn't seem to be completely washed away."

Faintly in the distance a glow of twinkling lights could be seen—more distinct now, because the moon had once again plunged behind a black cloud, and the whole scene was dark. The lights of Bannington looked almost fairy-like.

"The town's a bit higher than we are," went on Nipper. "Quite apart from that, it wasn't threatened when the reservoir burst. All the water came in this direction. I expect Bannington's flooded, but nothing like so seriously as this district."

"What's that flash over there?" asked Church suddenly.

"Flash? Which flash?"

"I thought I saw— Must have been mistaken," said Church, puzzled. "But I can swear I saw a glint of light! Why, it must be— Yes, it's the Moor View School!"

"Where?" asked Handforth eagerly.

They all gazed in the same direction as Church. They looked into the distance, but Church grunted.

"Not there you asses!" he said. "Here—closer!"

He pointed straight down.

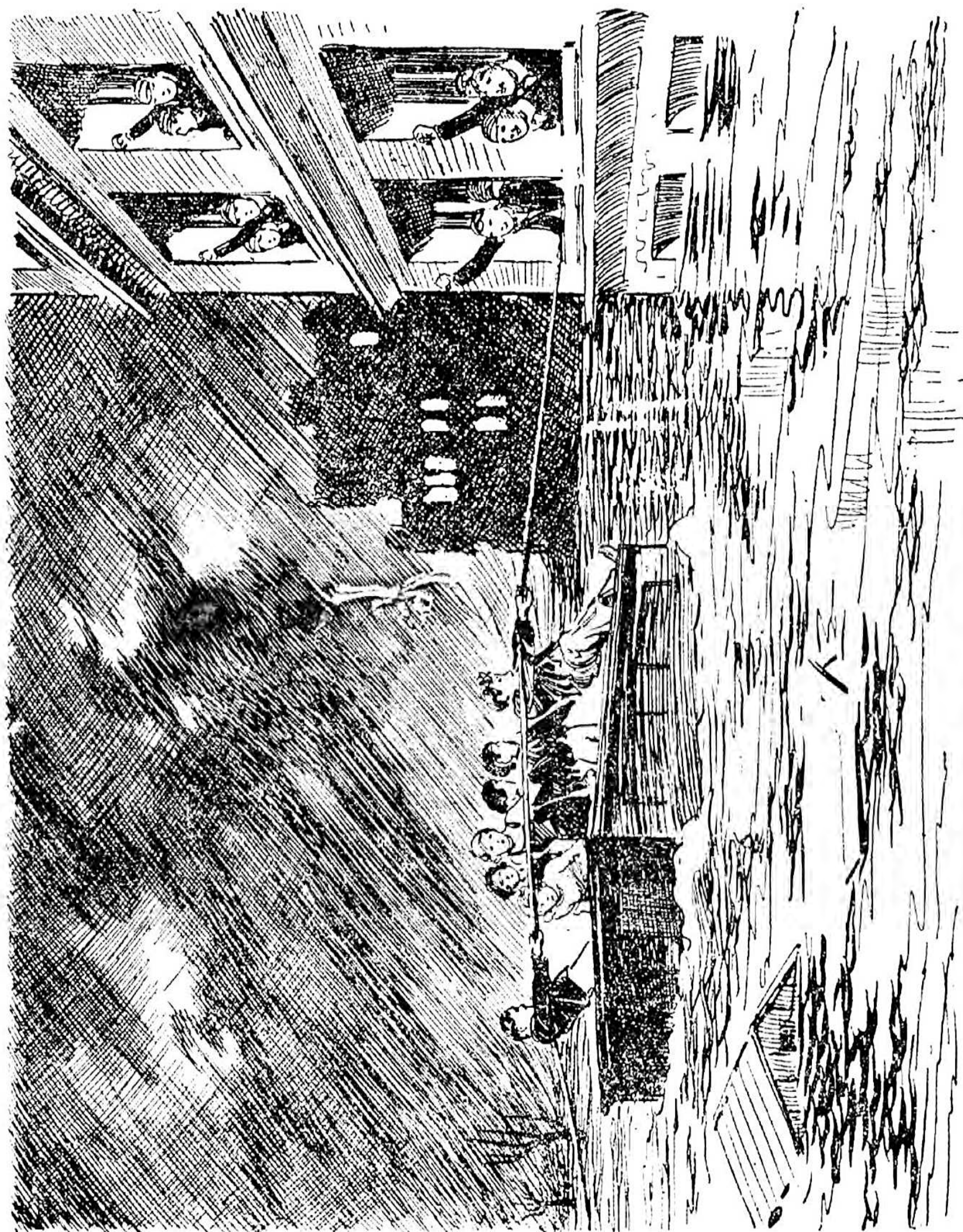
"You fathead!" said Handforth. "That's not the Moor View School! It's not as near as that! My hat, it is, though!"

The height of the tower had the effect of altering the perspective. The juniors were in the habit of judging the distance to the Moor View School by the lane. But the lane wound round a bit, and was deceptive. As the crow flies, the neighbouring girls' school was quite close—diagonally across the paddock, over the lane, and then across the corner of an adjoining field. Seen in a straight line from the top of the tower, the distance was ridiculously dwarfed.

But none of the juniors was thinking of that. The Moor View School itself was claiming their full attention, and they were all struck by the disconcerting fact that not a single light was showing.

Furthermore, the school buildings seemed strangely squat—the effect, of course, of the flood, and of the additional fact that they were looking downwards.

"By Jove!" murmured Nipper. "The flood's hit them pretty badly there! There's only the roof sticking out of the water. I hope to goodness all the girls got away safely."



Heaving on the rope which stretched between the West House and Moor View School, Nipper and Handforth drew the great clothes-cupboard over the water. A cheer rang out as the ferry reached the West House with its load.

"What's that you were saying about a flash, Churchy?" asked Handforth.

"I don't know," said Church. "Must have been the moonlight on some glass—a window perhaps."

"There aren't any windows visible," interrupted Nipper. "There might be a skylight. It's a pretty low building, at the best of times—only two stories, and rambling—"

"There!" gasped Church. "Did you see that? There it is again! Look! Can't you see those flashes?"



CHAPTER 13.

THE CALL FOR HELP.

THE six Remove fellows stood there transfixed.

"Great guns!" murmured Tommy Watson.

"Churchy's right! Looks like flashes from an electric-torch—"

"Wait!" gasped Nipper. "Can't you see? It's Morse! H-e-l-p! Help! There's somebody signalling in Morse!"

"What!" yelled Handforth excitedly.

Utterly startled, the juniors stared. All their former depression had gone, and they were thrilled to the very marrows. Their hearts were thumping wildly, for there was something intensely dramatic in this amazing discovery. Out of the flood came that signal of distress!

All the juniors could understand Morse, for they were Boy Scouts. Flicker, flicker! The flashes came again. And they carried the same message. Help! Three times the light flashed out the Morse signals.

"The girls!" breathed Handforth. "Irene! Doris, and all the rest of them! They're appealing for help, and my sister's there! Quick, we've got to do something! We've got to make a raft, and—"

"Wait a minute, Handy!" interrupted Nipper tensely. "Don't get excited! This is serious. The girls are there—that's certain. I expect they were trapped, and they couldn't get away. And now the flood is menacing 'em."

"We've got to do something!" insisted Handforth frantically.

"Yes, and we shall do it all the better if we keep cool," insisted Nipper. "Those girls understand Morse as well as we do. They're Girl Guides. I expect they've been making these signals for a long time—just on the off-chance that somebody would see them from a St. Frank's window. They know we're here because of the candle lights. But we'll soon reassure them."

All was dark at the Moor View School now, and Nipper's theory was probably correct. Somebody was sending out that brief message at intervals—and by now, perhaps, the girls were beginning to despair. Nipper took the electric-torch from his pocket, and placed his finger on the switch,



Heaving on the rope which stretched between the great clothes-cupboard over the water.

Then he Morsed:

"Have seen. Signal more fully."

With straining eyes the juniors watched, as Nipper's fingers clicked out the last flash. And, sure enough, the light from the Moor View School came at once, and they decoded the message as it arrived.

"Flood upper storey. Now among rafters. Acute danger. Help!"

"My goodness!" gasped Handforth. "The flood's forced them up into the rafters! What can we do?"

"Wait until we've finished," interrupted Nipper.

He levelled his torch again.

"How many?" he flashed.

"All," came the reply. "Help!"

"They're all there—the whole school!" exclaimed Nipper gravely. "And the way they keep repeating the word 'Help' is pretty significant. In one tick we'll rush down—but I must signal again!"

He did so, flashing out the one word "Coming!"

"Thanks!" flashed the other light.



Moor View School, Nipper and Handforth drew the ferry reached the West House with its load.

"You signalled that we're going!" ejaculated Tommy Watson, staring. "How can we? We haven't got a boat, or a raft, or anything. How can we go? It's not fair to tell them——"

"I told the girls that we're going—and that means that we'll send help," interrupted Nipper grimly. "I don't quite know how it's going to be done, but we've got to move heaven and earth. Great goodness! All those girls crouching in the rafters for their very lives—and our chaps snoring in bed! It's terrible!"

"And our fellows growling and grumbling, and getting the wind up!" snapped Handforth. "What have they had to suffer, anyhow? Nothing! By George! The girls must have been having an awful time. I'll tell you what—I'll swim there straight away! I'll dive in——"

"Be sensible, Handy!" snapped Nipper. "Don't be so ram-headed! You couldn't swim against this strong current——"

"Tom Burton might do it," put in Watson quickly.

"Begad! Carryin' a rope, dear old boys!" exclaimed Tregellis-West, his eyes gleaming. "Why not? If we could get a rope across——"

"That's a suggestion, Montie, but we'll discuss it later," interrupted Nipper.

"Later!" yelled Handforth. "We can't waste time——"

"That's why I want you to dry up," interrupted the Remove skipper curtly. "Handy, old man, for heaven's sake, be sensible!"

"But—but——"

"There are a big number of girls there, and it's no earthly use taking half-measures," went on Nipper. "We've got to think of something effective to save them all. And it'll be a case of all hands to the pumps. We shall only delay things if we argue. Are you going to leave me to take charge, or not?"

Handforth took a deep breath.

"All right!" he muttered huskily. "I'll dry up!"

They ran down those circular stone steps as hard as they could pelt. They needed no reminding that the situation was desperate. They had no means of getting to the Moor View School, and yet it was absolutely up to them to devise some workable plan.

The flood was rising higher every hour, and the girls were in a desperate plight already. Any kind of delay might have tragic consequences. The St. Frank's fellows had never dreamed that any crisis like this would suddenly arise.

They had thought themselves in a serious way, what with the failure of the lights and the lack of food. But what, after all, was their situation compared to that of the girls? Irene & Co. were seeking refuge in the rafters of their school—and the flood was threatening to destroy them!



CHAPTER 14.

THE LIFE-LINE.

BY great good fortune, Nipper & Co. ran into Browne and Stevens of the Fifth in the dormitory passage.

"What is this?" asked Browne severely. "Observe, Brother Horace! Are you not shocked? Here we find sundry members of the Junior School marauding—blatantly marauding—at the perfectly indecent hour of eight-thirty! What, brother, is the world coming to?"

"Browne, don't rot!" panted Nipper. "The girls are trapped!"

Browne's manner changed.

"Trapped?" he repeated. "What grim story is this?"

In twenty words Nipper explained.

"Naturally, we've got to act!" declared William Napoleon. "Moreover, we must act quickly! Picture those helpless maidens in

that desperate plight, while we lounge here in the height of comfort! It pains me. Yes, we must move rapidly."

"We'd better rouse the whole House," suggested Nipper. "No need to bother the other Houses, though—let us do this thing on our own. Too many fellows might cause confusion."

"They'll know soon enough," said Handforth grimly. "What we've got to decide is how we're going to help them."

"We'll rush a crowd into the general-room, and hold a consultation," said Nipper briskly. "Once we've decided upon a plan of action, we can get busy on it without delay. It's no good starting a thing until we know exactly what we're going to attempt."

Five minutes later the general-room was crowded with eager, excited fellows.

"We ought to build a raft!" Handforth was saying. "It's the only thing to be done. We'll tear down a dozen doors, and——"

"It'll be no good, Handy," interrupted Nipper.

"Why not?"

"Because a raft would take too long to construct—and I doubt if we could control it, in any case," replied Nipper. "The current is flowing from the Moor View School towards us, and we should never be able to get there. There isn't a boat for miles, and no chance of getting one."

"Then what are we going to do?" shouted De Valerie.

"There's only one possibility—a life-line!"

"A life-line?"

"Yes," said Nipper, his eyes gleaming. "By an amazing piece of luck, we've got the rope—and let's pray that it'll prove long enough. My suggestion is for somebody to carry a thin line to the Moor View School, and then haul in the thick rope after he's got there. We can stretch it from the extreme end window of the House——"

"But how can the girls come across that?"

"In a cradle—similar to the one we used across the Square," replied Nipper. "We've got no pulleys, or proper tackle, but we might be able to manage. Anyhow, it's the only chance!"

"But the girls will get-dragged through the water," protested Handforth. "They'll be soaked to the skin, and half-drowned——"

"Better be half-drowned, brother, than wholly drowned," pointed out Browne gravely. "I second Brother Nipper's proposal. While possessing certain defects, it is, at least, a workable scheme. What matter if the girls get wet? Desperate ills need desperate remedies. And if we can only drag them safely to St. Frank's, we can supply them with any amount of blankets, and

sundry other rearrangements can be made. The first thing is to get them here."

"Now there's the question of the line," continued Nipper. "I'll make the swim—and while I'm gone, you other fellows must be preparing the main rope and the cradle."

"Souse my decks, ship-mate, this is my job!" burst out Tom Burton. "If there's any swimming to be done, I'll do it. A voyage like that won't trouble me!"

"I think I ought to go, Tom," said Nipper quietly. "It's my idea, and I don't want to endanger——"

"You're needed here, to command the whole craft!" interrupted the Bo'sun stubbornly. "Souse me! I'm a better swimmer than you are—and that's not bragging! I'll take that line, and you get the crew to work."

"Burton's right, Nipper!" said De Valerie. "It's his job."

"Brother Burton carries the line," agreed Browne firmly.

And so it was settled. Amid great excitement, Tom Burton tore off his boots, his coat and waistcoat, and his collar and tie. The line was secured round his waist, and three other juniors were told off to pay it out as he swam. Mercifully, the moon was now well overhead, and shining brilliantly. The high wind seemed to be clearing the sky.

"We'll leave it to you after you get there, Tom," said Nipper. "If you are in any difficulties on the way, signal to us, and we'll haul you in. But if it's humanly possible, fight your way through!"

"I don't need telling that," said Burton quietly.

"Signal in Morse as soon as you arrive—I'll have a man posted on the tower to watch," continued Nipper. "Haul the rope across, make it secure, and then send the girls over one by one. Perhaps there'll be no need to use the cradle—they can pull themselves through the flood by means of the rope, and get here more quickly. Anyhow, we'll leave all that until you're arrived."

"Right!" said Burton. "So-long, ship-mates!"

"Good luck, Bo'sun!"

"Give him a cheer, you fellows!"

"Hold on!" shouted Handforth. "I think I ought to go, too——"

"Rats!"

"Chuck it, Handy!"

"This flood's treacherous!" roared Handforth. "If the Bo'sun gets into difficulties, I can carry on——"

"And leave Tom to be carried away with the flood?" asked Nipper tartly. "No, Handy; there's no need for two of you. Tom's the best swimmer, and I have plenty of faith in him."

The Bo'sun waited for no more, but took his dive. The juniors were crowding round the extreme end window at the rear of the Ancient House. Burton plunged in, the

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line hanging loose behind him. He rose to the surface, gasping. The water was like ice.

"It's all right, shipmates!" he shouted, after a dozen strokes. "It's a strong tide, but I think I can beat it!"

"Hurrah!"

"Go it, Burton, old man!"

"Remember, it's to save the girls!"

The Bo'sun needed no reminder on this score, and he struck out with all the power of his strong muscles. It was rather curious, swimming over the school wall, dodging the end of the bicycle shed, and avoiding the clump of big trees at the dividing line between the paddock and Little Side. Never once did Burton feel any trace of bottom. The water was eight or nine feet deep over the paddock, and much deeper beyond, for the ground sloped down in that direction. Towards the River House School, in fact, the flood was appallingly deep, for there was a dip, and even the tree tops were only just awash.

It was a hard fight, for the waters were flowing with a strong, powerful force, and Burton was compelled to battle every inch of the way. He wasn't swimming dead against the current, but at an acute angle across it, and this made his difficulties all the greater, for he was in constant danger of being swept wide of his objective. Most of the landmarks were submerged, and the raging wind caused the water to splash up, the little ripples being whipped off the surface into Burton's face. The icy drops were like hail, and he swam on, more or less blindly.

Only occasionally did he pause to take his bearings, and he was thankful for the occasional moonlight.

From the Ancient House window, the juniors paid out the line, and there were many tense, anxious faces. Now and again a cloud would drift across the face of the moon, and the scene would be plunged into darkness. And when the moonlight came coldly down again, it was more and more difficult to pick out the Bo'sun's swimming figure.

"He's being carried away!" muttered Tommy Watson anxiously, after one of these dark intervals. "Look! Great Scott! The poor chap must be in difficulties! He's being carried——"

"That's not the Bo'sun!" interrupted Fullwood, staring.

"It is!"

"Rot! It's only a piece of drifting wreckage," said Fullwood. "The Bo'sun's further on—straight ahead! Can't you see him? There he goes! Good man! He's making fine headway!"

"Oh, my goodness!" muttered Tommy Watson.

He saw, indeed, that he had been mistaken. But it was so easy to take a piece of drifting flotsam for the swimmer's head. And after that, Burton could no longer be

distinguished. Even the moonlight was insufficient to show him up. The juniors kept on paying out the line.

By this time, too, the West House was thoroughly awake. Reggie Pitt and his men had scented that something was afoot. Not a very difficult guess, considering all the recent shouting! And it had only taken a few minutes for the Ancient House fellows to acquaint their neighbours of the truth.

The Modern House and the East House, on the other side of the Triangle, were out of the excitement, however—and they probably knew nothing of the acute nature of the situation.

Still the line was paid out, and the watchers on the tower waited anxiously, and with ever-increasing concern, for the signal that would notify the plucky swimmer's safe arrival.



CHAPTER 15.

PITT'S BRIGHT IDEA.

REGGIE PITT was a fellow of action.

Indeed, next to Nipper, he was probably the most capable fellow in the Remove. The West House juniors were of the unanimous opinion that Reggie could beat Dick Hamilton by miles—but Reggie himself had no such illusions. While he had plenty of confidence in his own judgment and abilities, he possessed no egotism. He always played second fiddle to Nipper, cheerfully, because he knew he was not Dick's equal.

But when Nipper was fully occupied by urgent matters, Reggie could find plenty of scope for his own wits. And in the West House he reigned supreme among the juniors.

In this present crisis, he came out strongly. "It seems to me, Jack, that it's up to us to do our bit," he said firmly, as he and Jack Grey watched from one of the West House windows. "These Ancient House chaps are doing all the rescue stuff, but that's no reason why we should stand by idle."

"Yes, but what can we do?" asked Jack Grey.

"A lot," said Reggie. "A whole lot."

"How? They've got all the rope over there, and when the girls come in, they'll—H'm. They'll what?" said Jack, with a start. "By Jove, Reggie! Where the dickens are all these girls going to be stowed away?"

"You've hit it!" said Reggie, nodding.

"Hit what?"

"The train of thought that's been buzzing through my fertile brain," replied Pitt. "The girls are going to be accommodated here, my lad."

"Here?" gasped Jack.

"Absolutely here!"

"In—in the West House?"

"Yes, my son, in the West House," said Reggie briskly. "Nipper and his crowd are doing the rescuing, so we'll do the accommodating. This part of the Remove is not going to be left out of the affair—not while I breathe, anyway!"

"But—but—" Jack paused, confused and bewildered at the startling thought. "But, you ass, we can't have all those girls here!" he gasped.

"Why not?"

"Oh, well— Eh? Hang it, Reggie!" protested Jack. "I mean, even in an emergency like this— But where can they go?" he asked blankly. "There won't be room—"

"There'll be plenty of room—because we shall clear out."

"Clear out?"

"Is your brain sluggish to-night, or what?" demanded Pitt tartly. "We shall all clear out of the West House—seniors, juniors—the whole shoot of us. Everybody, except the matron and the domestics."

Jack Grey stared.

"But where the dickens shall we go?" he demanded.

"That's not the point," said Reggie. "I haven't even considered it. The main thing is that the West House will be placed entirely at the disposal of Miss Bond and her maidens in distress. My dear man, they must have bedrooms, and beds and things. They'll all be soaked through when they get here,

and they'll need warmth and comfort. So it stands to reason that they must have plenty of accommodation."

"That's true enough," admitted Jack Grey, nodding.

"As for us, we can go and dig in the Ancient House," went on Reggie. "We shall probably be a bit crowded, but that won't hurt us. The West House has got to be handed over to the girls."

"They're fixing the life-line in the Ancient House—"

"Then they'll have to unfix it," replied Pitt. "Everybody has got to clear out of here at once, with the exception of a picked crowd who will help the girls in. Leave it all to me. I'll go round and tell the fellows. And if anybody starts objecting, they'll soon finish!"

Reggie's idea was undoubtedly a good one—quite apart from the fact that it was imperative. Nipper had his hands full enough, and his thoughts were solely confined to the task of rescuing Irene and Co. from their grave predicament.

So it was fortunate that somebody had had the wit to prepare a refuge in readiness for the Moor View girls. It was necessary, of course, that they should have every comfort when they arrived—they would need warmth. Reggie Pitt was only too sorry that he could not conjure up any hot tea, or food of any kind. But that, after all, was a secondary consideration.

Many of the West House juniors protested

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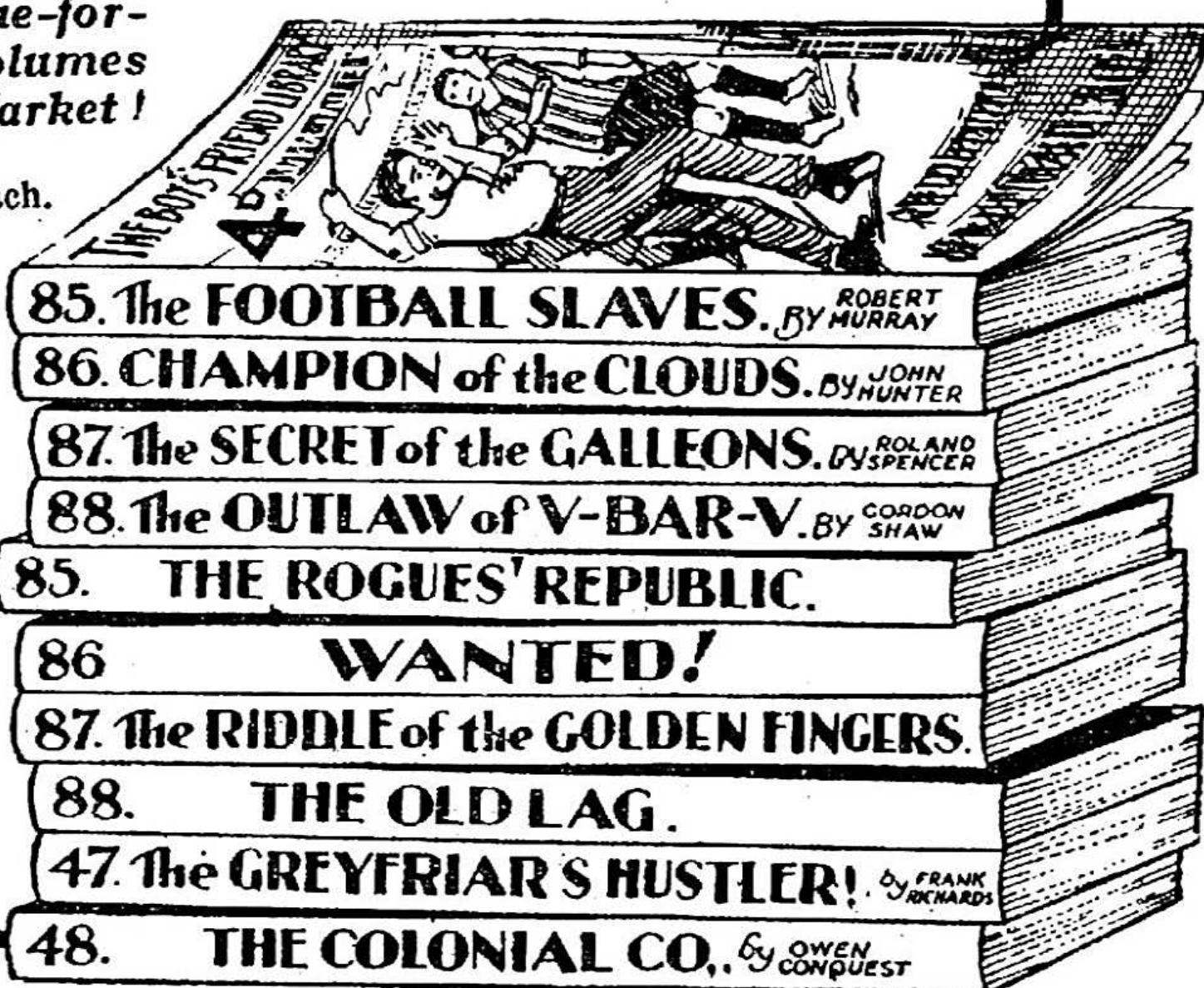
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vigorously when the plan was suggested to them. But Reggie, who kept quite calm, pointed out the impossibility of the Moor View girls being distributed here and there. They would have one House for their entire use. It was the only possible solution to an unexpected problem.

Somebody asked why they should have all the inconvenience. Why shouldn't the Ancient House fellows take their share?

"You hopeless ass, they will!" retorted Reggie Pitt. "After we've piled in on them we shall all be in the same boat. Nipper's lot will have to squash up, and make room for us—so they'll have just as much inconvenience as we shall. It doesn't really matter whether they vacate the Ancient House or we the West House for the girls. It's as broad as it's long."

"By Jove, that's true enough!" said Singleton.

"So let's get busy on the job before those Ancient House fellows think of it, and steal the honour of giving up their quarters!" went on Reggie briskly.

Put in this way, the West House fellows realised the force of Reggie's arguments, and there was a fever of activity. Fellows rushed into their bedrooms, tidied up the beds and the furniture, and grabbed the most essential of their personal belongings.

Nipper, across the Square, had heard what was in the wind, and he approved heartily.

"The West House is the better of the two for the girls," he declared. "We've got more spare dormitories in this House, and we shall need 'em—when the West House fellows crowd over. But all that can be arranged afterwards. The main thing is to get the girls safely here."

"Hasn't the Bo'sun arrived yet?" asked Hitchen, of the Fifth.

"We're waiting for the signal," replied Nipper quietly.

"Isn't it time——"

"Yes—the signal's overdue!" interrupted Nipper. "Burton ought to have got there before this. I hope to goodness he hasn't been swept away by the flood. It's as black as pitch again now—we can't see a thing."

Tommy Watson came running up.

"What are we going to do?" he asked breathlessly.

"Any news?" demanded Nipper.

"Only that the line's nearly all paid out," replied Watson. "We can't tell anything—we don't know whether the Bo'sun is succeeding or not. It's awful! And there's only another few yards of line!"



CHAPTER 16.

THE BO'SUN WINS THROUGH.

WHILE the anxiety increased at St. Frank's, Tom Burton was having a grim battle against the treacherous pull of the flood water.

St. Frank's was uncomfortably close to the

main stream of the Stowe—the river's true course was only just at the bottom of the playing-fields—and this was the reason for the relentless, gurgling swirl of the current.

The floods stretched for miles, and only a comparatively short distance away, the water was more or less calm. But at St. Frank's the full force of the main river was in great evidence.

Tom Burton's swim was a grim one.

He had entered upon it with a light heart, confident in his own strength, and with the full knowledge of his own powers of endurance. But even the Bo'sun had not bargained for such a fight.

The water was chill—icily, appallingly cold. And the wind bustled over the dreary wastes with terrific force. Again and again, Burton found himself at a loss.

While the moon was shining, he felt confident he could get to the Moor View School, for he could just distinguish the tops of the tall poplars in the grounds of Miss Bond's establishment. That was a landmark which guided Burton very effectively. But when the moon was obscured by the scudding clouds, he could see nothing.

And these dark clouds were increasing, and a flurry of rain occasionally came down. The weather had only improved spasmodically, and there were many signs of a return of the cloud pall, and the drenching downpour.

But Burton still swam doggedly on.

He was getting nearer—he knew that much. It was so ridiculous—for the Moor View School was only a minute or two's walk. And here he was, battling every inch of the way, and repeatedly being carried out of his direct course. Once, indeed, the Bo'sun believed that his great effort had been for nothing. For he suddenly found himself held.

The rope round his shoulders became taut, and he swung round, and trod water. With his back to the wind, he could open his eyes fully, and was astonished at the closeness of St. Frank's. He felt that he had been swimming for miles—and yet the school loomed up with its dimly-lit windows quite nearby. Tom Burton raised his voice.

"The rope!" he croaked. "Pay out—let it go!"

But he realised that his voice was totally inadequate against the howling shriek of the gale. A sudden impatience filled him—an impatience that was intermingled with rage. Why had they pulled him up? It was useless to swim on without the rope—

And then the Bo'sun gasped.

The moon, flashing out between two clouds, like the brief switching-on of a pale electric light, revealed the truth. The rope had fouled the top-most branches of a small tree, fifteen feet in the rear. Burton swam back cautiously, doing his best to coil in the slack as he did so—for he was only too aware that an entanglement would spell disaster to the whole project.

It took him five minutes to get that rope clear, and all the time his reserve of strength

was being sapped. But he was game. He faced the lashing spray again, and continued his swim.

But he had lost all sight of the Moor View School. He swam just by his sense of direction, and for some time put his head down, and plunged ahead blindly. But he soon changed these tactics. A head-on collision with a floating hen-coop jarred him considerably. His forehead was gashed by a projecting nail, and he felt dizzy by the force of the blow.

"Souse me for a lubber!" he growled, in his throat. "Looks like I'm not going to do it, after all!"

The very thought steeled him, and gave him added strength.

Once again the moon came out—tantalisingly. And now he could see the upper part of the Moor View School—projecting grotesquely out of the flood. He was much nearer. In fact, he had covered three parts of the distance and he was spurred on by the sight to exert the full energy of his muscles.

Something else he had seen, too. A group of figures on the roof, crouching for protection against one of the chimney piles. The girls were waiting—exposed to all this rain and wind! If the Bo'sun had needed a spur, the spectacle of those helpless girls provided it.

As he grew nearer, it filled him with dismay to see how little of the Moor View School was showing. He knew the ground dipped, but he had hardly reckoned for such a startling sight.

It was curious how his mind dwelt upon general subjects as he swam that last difficult lap. He wondered if the Moor View School was thoroughly insured, and concluded that it must be. After all, when the flood subsided, it wouldn't take long to effect repairs, and make the place habitable again.

And then he became aware of cries—or was it only the wind? He managed to look up, in defiance of the spray which the wind whipped off the ripples. And then he saw that he was only a few yards away from his objective.

A dozen girls were on the roof, waving at him, and shouting encouragement. They were cheering, too, and the Bo'sun managed to wave a hand.

"Hurrah!"

"He's doing it—he'll be here in a minute!"

"Good old St. Frank's!"

Irene Manners, Doris Berkeley, and Ena Handforth were among those on the roof, and they looked sorry caricatures of their real selves. They were soaked to the skin, and their clothing clung limply to their graceful figures. Their matted hair was wild in the wind.

"Who is it?" panted Doris, as she stared.

"Can't see," replied Irene. "But what does it matter?"

"I'll bet it's Ted!" said Ena. "Just like him to—"

"No, your brother couldn't do it, old girl," interrupted Doris. "It's more likely to be Nipper, or Tom Burton——"

"But what's the good of anybody coming like this?" asked one of the other girls, rather fearfully. "The flood's getting worse, and we shan't be able to last out much longer. Just one boy can't help us! He can't carry us across to St. Frank's one by one."

"Let's wait and see," exclaimed Irene tensely. "If they had a boat there they would have sent it. He's swimming because there's no other way to get to us——"

"There's a rope trailing behind him!" cried one of the other girls.

"Why, of course!" panted Irene, her eyes gleaming. "That's it! They've sent him with a rope, and they're going to fix up a life-line, so that we can all get across to safety. Oh, what a wonderful idea! Three cheers for St. Frank's!"

"Hurrah!"

The news went round like lightning, and passed down a great open skylight to the rafter space, where all the girls and the mistresses were crouching for safety. They had been forced up there by the flood, which had not only submerged the lower rooms, but invaded the bedrooms.

The Moor View School was a rather rambling building, and possessed only two floors. Being an old-fashioned place, the rooms were not high, so the rising waters had had a swift, deadly effect.

The girls had felt themselves safe on the upper floor, in just the same way that the St. Frank's fellows felt safe. But with Miss Bond's pupils, the situation was quite different. St. Frank's was a massive structure of stone, and the flood was not likely to have any disastrous effect. The Moor View School was just an ordinary house. The class-rooms had been added only a year or two since, and they adjoined the main building—but they were only single-storied, and there was no refuge there. The house itself was old, and the occupants feared that the walls might not withstand this relentless, surging torrent.

Forced up into the bedrooms, the girls had felt safe. Then the water had risen alarmingly; the landing had become swamped, and there were no attics in which to escape. With rising panic, the girls had been compelled to climb a ladder, and get into the great space between the roof and the open rafters of the upper ceilings.

In pitch darkness, for all lights had failed, they had waited, half-hoping for rescue. But none had come, and none seemed likely to come.

And an occasional match had revealed the rising water—creeping into the bedrooms, mounting foot by foot. Pushing open the skylight, some of the girls had climbed on to the roof, only to appreciate the terrible nature of their predicament.

And then Irene had remembered her knowledge of Morse!



In spite of her soaked condition the schoolmistress faced the juniors calmly. "Since there is no master here," she snapped, "I regard it as my duty to place myself in complete charge of this school!" The boys stared aghast.

CHAPTER 17.

THE RESCUE.



THAT thought had been a true brainwave.

Irene had her electric torch with her, and had been using it when she and the rest of the girls had fled up the ladder into the rafters. There was St. Frank's, looking comfortingly close. At first all the windows had been a blaze of light, and the girls had watched hopefully. Then St. Frank's had been plunged into darkness, and, later, dim lights of another nature had appeared.

Irene had thought of her Morse signalling when the position had seemed beyond all hope. And she had crouched at that skylight, flashing the one word "Help"—flashing it at regular intervals of two minutes, on the off-chance that somebody at St. Frank's would see the winking light, and recognise its purport.

An hour had passed like that—an hour of dreadful suspense.

All Irene's hopes had been dashed by the total absence of a reply. Her battery had begun to run down—the light was becoming

weak. And then came that answering flash from the top of West Tower!

What a moment of joy that had been!

And now, to crown all, the St. Frank's fellows had followed up their cheering message by positive action. The swimmer was close at hand, bringing his line—that line which would mean rescue!

"Lend a hand, girls!" sang out the Bo'sun breathlessly, as he swam gratefully into the lee of the building, where the water was calm. "If you can throw down a blanket, I can grab it."

"Good old Bo'sun!" cried Doris.

"Rats!" gasped Burton. "I haven't dropped anchor yet!"

But a couple of blankets were soon brought—for some of the girls had been thoughtful enough to grab blankets and clothing before fleeing up the ladder.

The flood reached up the school walls until only about five feet projected clear. Two of the girls slid down to the gutter, and dropped the knotted blankets over the edge.

Tom Burton was pulled up into safety, and he was well-nigh spent.

"Well done, Bo'sun!" said Irene enthusiastically. "You've brought a line across, and——"

"Have you got a torch?" interrupted Burton.

"Yes. We signalled——"

"Then signal now," broke in Tom. "I promised to send a flash as soon as I arrived, and, souse me, I'm overdue! Signal O.K., and then hang on to that line tightly."

Irene pulled the torch from her pocket, and flashed it.

And at St. Frank's, a moment later, a tremendous cheer went up—a cheer which was as much of relief as of excitement. Everybody had been fearing that Tom Burton was lost. And now came the glad signal.

"Good man!" said Nipper breathlessly. "He's got there—and the rope's long enough! Splice that heavy cable on, and I'll yell to the look-out to give the signal for Burton to haul in. There's only one fear now—the cable."

"Think it won't be long enough?" asked De Valerie.

"It'll be a miracle if it is—but it's just got to be," replied Nipper. "I've got a dozen fellows searching every room for rope and cord. If we can't use all cable, we shall have to make up with something else. But one thing's certain—we're going to get that life-line across."

"Begad! It's across now," said Sir Montie. "That's only the pilot line, old man," said Nipper. "We've got to have one strong enough to bear a ton weight!"

In the West House, Reggie Pitt and his men were very active. In an extraordinarily short space of time, all the junior dormitories—and the senior dormitories, for that matter, had been made ship-shape and tidy. Nobody wanted the girls to come in and find everything upside down. The matron was bustling about with two or three of the maids, getting ready for the "patients." For the matron insisted upon the assumption that half the Moor View girls would be in a state of utter collapse.

And the West House fellows were revealing their own ingenuity by rigging up a kind of bridge across the Square. Reggie Pitt had conceived the brilliant idea of using the fire-hose as a rope, and had swum across with one end of it to the Ancient House. When this had been stretched as taut as possible, it became a very efficient rope. The more agile fellows were able to swing across, hand over hand.

The main cable to the Moor View School was brought across to the West House, and secured to the end window—so that when the girls arrived, they would actually be in the quarters they were destined to occupy. It would be absurd for them to get to the Ancient House, only to have the trouble of being conveyed across the flooded Square afterwards.

At the Moor View School, the rescue work was beginning.

The problem was by no means easy. Such girls as Irene Manners, Marjorie Temple, and Doris Berkeley were game enough to

pull themselves through the flood, clinging on to the rope, but there were other girls who were not so bold. Many were half-hysterical from their terrifying experience.

As it happened, the problem was solved from St. Frank's, while Tom Burton was fixing his end of the cable securely round a chimney-stack. It was really Willy Handforth's scheme. Willy remembered his table-raft, and it struck him that something of the kind might be employed here.

"I say, Nipper, I've got it!" he said, pushing up, while Nipper was superintending the operations. "Those girls can't come over the flood just on that rope. If they happen to lose grip, they'll be swept away."

"We shall have to fix up a kind of cradle——"

"No good!" interrupted Willy briskly.

"What?"

"Or very little good, anyway," continued the Third Former. "My idea is to make a kind of ferry."

"Ferry!"

"Nothing easier," nodded Willy. "Remember that table I used to rescue my pets with? Well, there's an enormous clothes-closet on the landing—in the recess. If we can drag that out, and get it afloat, it'll make a first-class ferry. It'll hold two or three girls at once—in addition to the ferry-men!"

"But the cable's being fixed to the West House——"

"That's all right—they've got a clothes-closet there just the same," interrupted Willy. "My plan is to fix ropes from the ferry to the cable, so that it can't get away. There can be a chap at each end, hauling the thing by grabbing at the cable. See?"

Nipper was never a fellow to delay.

"It's an idea," he said promptly. "Can't do any harm to test it, anyhow—I'll get a dozen chaps to yank that clothes-closet out in double-quick time."

Handforth himself took charge of the operations, for Handforth was only too eager to do something on his own. With Church and McClure and a crowd of others, he hurled everything out of the great cupboard, and the doors were wrenched off. All the shelves were removed, and the bare shell looked like making an efficient boat.

It was simply hurled out of the window, and by luck it fell flat on its base, and floated buoyantly. Handforth and two others jumped down, and in less than ten minutes the hastily contrived apparatus was ready.

Nipper elected to take the trip across the flood, and Handforth insisted upon accompanying him as the other ferryman. The "boat" was leaking slightly through a number of cracks, but Nipper didn't worry about this. Even if the improvised craft became waterlogged, it wouldn't sink. And it was, at least, something substantial for the girls to cross on.

"By George!" roared Handforth. "She goes fine!"

The cable had been well fixed, and it

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stretched from school to school. The two juniors were standing in the oblong cupboard, hauling on the rope with all their strength, and their craft covered the distance in a surprisingly short space of time.

A loud cheer went up from the girls as the moon came out and revealed the oncoming rescuers.

"It's all right now, you girls!" sang out Irene. "These St. Frank's chaps have done wonders!"

"Swab me!" growled the Bo'sun. "Give us a chance. We haven't started yet!"



CHAPTER 18.

SOMEBODY THEY HADN'T
BARGAINED FOR!

THE rescue work went on without a hitch.

The first batch consisted of four of the more hysterical girls, and they

whimpered with fright as they commenced the "voyage." But when they found the

ramshackle ferry answering perfectly, and St. Frank's drew nearer, they recovered a good deal of their courage. Cheers rang out from St. Frank's as the girls were hauled up, one by one, and delivered into the care of the House matron. They were sorry figures, with their soaking clothing and dishevelled hair.

Batch after batch came, but Nipper was cautious—he allowed no overcrowding. There was no danger now, and it followed that there was no desperate hurry.

Rain was pouring down once more, and the night was continuing its wild and tempestuous behaviour. That break in the clouds had only been brief, for the moon was now obscured again.

Once or twice the ferry had to be delayed while baling-out operations were performed. But, on the whole, Willy's idea was turning out a real winner. This rough-and-ready contrivance was better than a cradle, in any case, and there was the advantage that two of the fellows accompanied every batch of schoolgirls.

Irene and her close chums insisted upon

being the last to come—the last, that is, except for mistresses. These had remained at the Moor View School, sending off the girls, batch after batch.

The last three girls of all were Irene, Doris, and Mary—and St. Frank's let out a roaring cheer when they were hauled in.

"Hurrah!"

"That's the lot!" said Handforth. "And everybody's safe, too!"

"It's too bad, really!" protested Irene. "We're turning all you fellows out of the West House, and—"

"Never mind about that," interrupted Handforth awkwardly. "Any port in a storm, you know. We're only too jolly glad to lend a hand. Besides, it won't be for long."

"Of course not," said Church. "The masters will be along to-morrow, and we shall all be rescued, I expect."

"Why aren't there any masters here?" asked Doris, in surprise.

"Not one!"

"Well I'm blessed!" said Doris. "We're without Miss Bond, too!"

"Worse luck!" added Irene, with a curious note in her voice.

"Why, what's up?" asked Handforth, concerned.

"You mustn't stop now—you've got to get back and rescue Miss Broome and Miss Perry," said Irene. "They're the only two mistresses we have. My, haven't we had a time, too!"

"What's the mystery?" asked Handforth, staring.

"Nothing much—only Miss Broome is several kinds of a Tartar," explained Doris. "She's been making our lives a misery ever since the flood started. One of those grumblers, you know—always making a fuss. You see, Miss Bond rushed off to Bannington just before the flood. She'd heard a rumour about the reservoir, I believe, and she took one of the other mistresses with her. Of course, they must have got cut off—"

"Just like our masters!" said Handforth.

"Not quite the same—because we've still got Miss Broome," said Irene dolefully. "Miss Perry's all right—she's a dear. But Miss Broome is senior mistress, and gives all the orders. You'd better go easy when you rescue her, or she might bite you!"

"Still, we're safe, and let's be thankful," exclaimed Doris fervently. "Come on, Renie—we've just got to strip off these wet things."

"Plenty of dry blankets, girls," said Reggie Pitt briskly. "Buzz along to the dormitories, and help yourselves. You'll find Mrs. Bradley and the maids all ready. And as soon as your mistresses have been brought across, we chaps'll clear off, and leave you the House to yourselves."

"But where are you going?" asked Irene, in wonder.

"Never mind that!" growled Reggie.

"I say, you chaps are bricks, you know!" said Doris, with emphasis.

In the meantime, Nipper and Handforth were making their last journey across the flood. Nobody remained at the Moor View School now, except Miss Broome, the senior mistress, and Miss Perry. Tom Burton was there, of course, having insisted on helping from the start. But there would be plenty of room for him.

"This Miss Broome person can't be so bad as the girls make out, surely," said Nipper, as he and Handforth pulled on the line with blistered, aching hands. "She sent the cook and the maids across before she came herself, anyhow. She knows her duty."

"Like a giddy captain—sticking to the ship until the crew had all left!" said Handforth.

"That's what I mean," replied Nipper. "Even if she's a bit unpopular, she's at least kept her head. Wonder why we haven't heard of her before?"

"We have," said Edward Oswald. "At least, I have. Irene told me about her last week. We'll soon see her, anyway."

They were close against the Moor View School, and the ferry was brought up under the roof. Tom Burton had helped the two mistresses out of the skylight, and they were waiting.

"You first, Miss Perry!" said a firm, authoritative voice.

"No, really!" faltered Miss Perry. "After you, Miss Broome—"

"I insist!" commanded the other.

Miss Perry was helped down—for the drop from the roof to the ferry was no light feat. Most of the girls had accomplished it easily enough, because they were athletic and agile. But the unfortunate Miss Perry was almost in a state of collapse when, finally, she almost fell down into the water-logged craft. She had been in a state of tension for hours, and she was nearly exhausted.

But Miss Broome, apparently, was made of sterner stuff.

"I'll help you," offered the Bo'sun, as he clung to the gutter. "Come on, Miss Broome—"

"Nonsense!" interrupted the senior mistress. "I need no help, thank you!"

She was evidently a masterful kind of woman, in addition to being cool-headed. She swung herself over the edge of the roof, and Nipper and Handforth eased her down. She seemed to resent their attentions.

"You needn't maul me about, boys," she said tartly. "It's a tragic thing that my girls should have been compelled to seek aid from a boys' school, but as you have all behaved so splendidly, we will let it pass. I am proud of you all—and Miss Bond, I am sure, will be extremely grateful."

"Why is it tragic that we should rescue the girls?" asked Handforth, staring.

Miss Broome uttered something that sounded like a snort.

"The whole thing's totally wrong," she replied, grumbling. "I am alarmed that my girls should seek refuge in a place where

there are nothing but boys—hundreds of boys! The whole situation is disturbing in the extreme, but I suppose I ought not to grumble."

"By George!" said Handforth grimly. "You suppose right!"



CHAPTER 19.

MISS BROOME MEANS
BUSINESS!

EDWARD OSWALD
HANDFORTH was
thoroughly indignant.

It made his gorge rise to hear Miss Broome's ungracious and uncalled for comments. Handforth, who was not given to deep thought, was dumbfounded by the school-mistress' attitude. He couldn't possibly see why Miss Broome should be alarmed.

But Nipper was more astute.

"You needn't worry, Miss Broome," he said reassuringly. "All the girls will be perfectly safe at St. Frank's——"

"I am not concerned for their safety, young man," interrupted Miss Broome. "But it concerns me deeply to know that they are thrown amongst a large number of boys!"

"As I said before, you needn't worry," said Nipper. "All the West House fellows have cleared out, and Mrs. Bradley is in full charge. Your girls will have the House entirely to themselves, Miss Broome."

"I am glad to hear this—very glad, indeed!" said Miss Broome, with relief. "So somebody has had the commonsense to place one of your Houses quite at my disposal? Your masters, evidently, are men of sense!"

"As it happens, a West House junior thought of it," growled Handforth, as they prepared to haul themselves across. "As for the masters, there isn't one——"

"If you will talk less, we shall make better progress," interrupted Miss Broome curtly.

Handforth gave a gulp, and said no more. Already, he and Nipper were beginning to find that Miss Bond's substitute was, indeed, a Tartar! But Nipper, at least, excused her, realising that she had been through a very trying ordeal. It was only natural that her temper should be on edge.

More cheers went up when this final load safely arrived. On the other side of the Triangle, the boys of the Modern House and the East House were feeling very isolated. They had heard rumours of the excitement, but were not able to participate in it.

Miss Broome and Miss Perry were safely pulled in through the open window, and Handforth and Nipper followed, with Tom Burton bringing up the rear. He had been the first to go, and he was the last to come back. In the general commotion, the

Bo'sun was rather neglected, for nobody thought of giving him a cheer for his heroic work. But Tom was well pleased over this, for he was a fellow of much modesty.

"We'll leave all that tackle just as it is until the morning," said Nipper briskly. "If you'll come this way, Miss Broome, I'll show you to your quarters. Then we fellows will clear out. I am sure you need a complete rest."

Miss Broome looked round her in the candlelight. She was a stranger to most of the fellows, for she had only been at the Moor View School since the beginning of the present term. Whatever her appearance normally, she certainly did not look very prepossessing just now.

She was a tall woman—tall, and inclined to be bony. Her face was decidedly mannish, with a prominent jaw, and a hooked nose that irresistibly reminded Handforth of his minor's parrot. Miss Broome's eyes were rather small, and they shone with a determined light.

Altogether, she was not the kind of lady that the fellows cared for. Her manner was too masterful. She was wet through, her hair was half falling down, and, as Reggie Pitt afterwards expressed it, she looked a perfect sight.

"I will rest, young man, after I have seen that my girls are safe for the night," she replied austere. "I have no wish to criticise this matron you have told me about, but I must see after everything personally. I hope this woman has been thoughtful enough to provide hot cocoa, or some other beverage——"

"Awfully sorry, but it couldn't be done," said Nipper.

"Indeed, and why not?" snapped Miss Broome. "How absurd! These girls need something stimulating——"

"But there isn't a bite to eat, or anything hot to drink, in the whole of St. Frank's," Nipper pointed out. "You see, we're in the same plight as you are, Miss Broome. All our lower rooms are submerged, the electric light has failed, we haven't any fires, and, altogether, we're in a pretty nasty hole. But I dare say we shall last out until the morning. Anyhow, we're doing the best we can all round."

"No food!" said Miss Broome, aghast. "This is terrible! I commend you all highly for what you have done, but I am startled to hear—— But no matter! I must see your Headmaster at once!"

"I'm afraid that's rather difficult——"

"Young man, I insist!"

"Then you can insist, that's all!" retorted Nipper, his patience failing. "Dr. Stafford is marooned——"

"Oh! Of course!" said Miss Broome. "I had not thought—— However, your House-master will suffice! Why is he not here? I am astonished at this gross neglect——"

"There's a very simple explanation, Miss Broome—there isn't a master in the whole

of St. Frank's," interrupted Nipper. "If it comes to that, there isn't a prefect, either. They all went off to help at the reservoir, and we don't even know what happened to them. And I suppose we shall be in the dark until to-morrow!"

The senior mistress was staring blankly.

"Not a master?" she repeated, in amazement.

"Not one!"

"You—you mean that you boys are entirely without discipline or authority?"

"Just that!" said Nipper, nodding.

"But this is outrageous——"

"Oh, cheese it!" growled Handforth indignantly. "We didn't need any discipline to rescue you, did we? I think it's a bit thick, Miss Broome! You needn't come here to grumble."

"Boy!" gasped the lady. "How dare you?"

"Eh? I only——"

"Silence!"

"What?" gurgled Handforth.

"I commanded you to be silent—and I meant it" retorted Miss Broome acidly. "How dare you speak to me in that insolent fashion?"

Handforth fairly goggled.

"In-insolent fashion?" he stuttered.

"Great corks! We—we don't take orders from you, Miss Broome! You're not in control of us——"

"Then it is high time that I assumed control," said Miss Broome.

"Wha-a-t?" gasped the crowd.

Miss Broome, in spite of her soaked condition, was apparently in no hurry to dash off. The news that St. Frank's was without a master had startled her considerably, and she was evidently a woman who made quick resolves. Her masterful jaw set firmly, and a sudden gleam entered her eyes.

"Yes!" she said, in a voice that struck a chill into the hearts of her listeners. "It is high time, I repeat, that I assumed control. Since there is no master in this school, I regard it as my duty to place myself in full charge."

"Full charge?" echoed Nipper faintly.

"Yes, young man," retorted Miss Broome.

"And from this minute onwards all boys will take orders from me, and I shall expect nothing but strict and unswerving obedience!"



CHAPTER 20.

PETTICOAT RULE!

QUITE a crowd had gathered in the corridor by this time, and Miss Broome's dramatic announcement was heard

by all. Furthermore, the fellows on the outskirts, as it were, passed the word along, and it was over in the Ancient House in less than a minute. Everybody there simply refused to believe it. In fact, they treated it as just a little joke of somebody's.

Nipper, who was recognised as the junior leader, felt that it was distinctly up to him to scotch this preposterous scheme on the spot. If William Napoleon Browne had been there, he might have attempted something of the same sort, but Browne was over in the Ancient House.

"I am very sorry, Miss Broome, but I'd like to make a suggestion, if I may," said Nipper firmly. "I wouldn't attempt to set yourself up in authority, if I were you!"

Miss Broome bristled.

"Are you daring to dictate to me, boy?" she asked.

"Not dictate, Miss Broome, but advise."

"I need no advice from boys!" she retorted curtly. "Until to-night, I may tell you, I have always had a wholesome dislike for all boys. You have acquitted yourselves well, and I do not wish to sound ungracious by saying anything severe. At the same time, I am determined to obtain obedience."

"Yes, but look here——"

"I come here quite unexpectedly, and I learn that the entire school is without a master," continued Miss Broome. "That is quite sufficient! Until your normal authority is re-established, I deem it my duty to take the reins. I understand that you boys are leaving this House entirely at the disposal of my girls, Miss Perry, and myself?"

"Well, yes, that was the idea——"

"Then you will leave at once," ordered Miss Broome.

"Well, I'm jiggered!"

"Ordering us about!"

"Great Scott!"

There were many such comments. The fellows were not only startled, but they were filled with anger and dismay. They had rescued this woman, only to learn that she was determined to rule them! It was not merely thick, but positively too galling for words.

Being a woman, she was protected. The boys felt singularly helpless. They couldn't exactly grab her, and dip her in the flood to cool her down. They couldn't openly ignore her, since that would be insulting. In fact, it seemed that nothing could be done at all.

"Come on, you chaps," said Nipper quietly.

"Not likely!" breathed Handforth. "I'm not going to take orders——"

"Shush, old man!" murmured Nipper.

"Let it rest!"

"But this is too steep!" said Handforth thickly.

Miss Broome pointed down the corridor.

"I am waiting!" she said acidly. "How do you boys get across to the other House? I wish to see you go—in fact, I shall not stir until the last one has departed. There shall be no nonsense while I am in control!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

They went down the corridor, rather dazed, making for the window which led to

that improvised rope which Reggie Pitt had fixed up. But before they got there, several doors opened, and a number of grotesque figures appeared. They looked like boys at first, but their heads of hair disproved this.

Irene Manners, Winnie Pitt, Doris, and two or three others came round, all of them chuckling gleefully.

"My hat!" ejaculated Nipper.

"We don't know whose clothes they are, but they're beautiful and dry!" said Doris, smiling. "I say, doesn't Irene look a scream?"

"Speak for yourself!" said Irene promptly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors yelled. The girls were all dressed in Etons! They were collarless, and their hair was fluffy, and after the style of mops. They had evidently discarded their own wet attire, and instead of getting into bed, had dressed themselves in borrowed garments—procured, obviously, from the dormitory cupboards and wardrobes. They all looked extremely grotesque, but they were in the highest of spirits. After their recent misery, they felt that this present adventure was just a lark.

"We simply had to wear something," explained Doris calmly. "We wanted to thank you fellows for being such ripping sports, you know. We just couldn't go to bed without seeing you first, so we grabbed any old clothes we could find."

"That's all right," said Nipper. "You're perfectly welcome. Those clothes aren't ours—they belong to the West House chaps."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I don't suppose they'll mind, either," said Handforth. "If they do mind, I'll biff a few——"

He was interrupted by a loud scream of horror.

Miss Broome, who had stayed behind for a moment, talking to a couple of Mrs. Bradley's housemaids, had come down the corridor, bearing a candle. She stood there, transfixed. She was looking at Irene & Co. with an expression that registered the utmost consternation.

"Good heavens!" she gasped at last.

"Is anything wrong?" shouted Handforth, in alarm.

"Wrong!" screamed Miss Broome. "Girls, get into your rooms at once! I am amazed—shocked—stupefied! How dare you come out before these boys in that——"

"Oh!" said Irene, crimsoning. "We—we didn't think——"

"There's no need to be so alarmed, Miss

Broome," interrupted Nipper gruffly. "What's wrong with the girls' dresses, anyhow?"

"Wrong!" shouted Miss Broome. "They are wearing boys' clothes!"

"Well, what about it?" demanded Handforth. "They forgot to bring their suitcases and trunks," he added sarcastically. "Careless of us not to remind them——"

"Be silent!" fumed Miss Broome. "I am scandalised!"

"Well, you needn't be," snapped Nipper, who was thoroughly exasperated. "What else can you expect the girls to wear? Their own clothing is all soaked, and there's no means of drying it. At a time like this, Miss Broome, we've got to waive the usual conventions, and be free and easy. And as for your taking command of the school, I rather think the school will object——"

"I have suffered enough from your impudence, boy!" interrupted Miss Broome hotly. "Go at once! All of you! Go! As for you girls, get into your rooms, and I will come to you presently. I am ashamed of you—I am amazed at your effrontery."

Irene & Co. gave the juniors a selection of rather hopeless looks, and retired. Those looks had been expressive. The girls knew what Miss Broome was—and the boys were beginning to have an inkling, too! They made their way across to the Ancient House with a total lack of that joyous contentment which

they had experienced prior to Miss Broome's arrival.

"We won't put up with her!" snorted Handforth.

"You needn't get so excited, my lad," said Nipper gruffly. "Miss Broome won't have much chance to exercise her funny little tricks. To-morrow we shall probably have the masters back."

Handforth drew a deep breath.

"By George, yes," he said. "We're worrying over nothing!"

But the leader of Study D was quite wrong. This particular episode was over, and all the fellows were justified in believing that the morrow would bring relief and escape from this watery prison.

The morrow was destined to bring quite a lot—but not what the school expected!

THE END.

(Don't miss the amazing developments in next Wednesday's rousing story of the flooded school. "ST. FRANK'S ADRIFT!" is packed with fun and thrills. Make sure of your copy by asking your newsagent to reserve the NELSON LEE LIBRARY for you each week.)





BETWEEN OURSELVES

Mr. Edwy Searles Brooks
chats with his readers.



NOTE. If any reader writes to me, I shall be pleased to comment upon such remarks as are likely to interest the majority. All letters should be addressed to EDWY SEARLES BROOKS, c/o The Editor, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Every letter will have my personal attention, and all will be acknowledged in these columns. Letters of very special merit will be distinguished by a star, thus *, against the sender's name. Communications which indicate writer's age are naturally easier for me to answer.

E. S. B.

QUITE a number of letters to acknowledge this week, so I think I'll start on them at once, or I shall find the page filled before I know where I am. There's one letter that I want to quote in full, so I am afraid some of you will get very short answers—or perhaps none at all. You certainly won't if I keep wandering on like this, filling up lines with nothing.

* * *

Margaret B. (Stafford), W. Hayes (Nottingham), Harold Brewis (Liverpool), "Two Tynesiders" (Newcastle), George Burgess (Selsey), Albert Turner (Romford), H. D. (Reddish), M. A.* (Bradford), D. Cramp (Leicester), Alex. H. Gallie (Dumfries), "Alf 'Uggins" (S.E.1), "Vinpato" (Cork), W. D. Magee (Strabane), F. Burry (W.11), Aida (Sheffield), Florence Young (Liverpool), A. C. Shepherd (Forest Hill), Hubert Kelk (Workop), Norman Hartley (Preston), J. J. Hoser-Cook* (Poplar), S.F.L. No. 636 (Northay), Julius N. Harris** (Merthyr Tydfil), G. Wilkinson (Gt. Yarmouth), Roy Norman (Surbiton), L. Dunitz (E.1), W. J. Turness (Edmonton), J. Marlow, C. H. Tibby, O. Pearson, Gordon Hickford and A. E. Bradshaw (London, E.C.) Thomas G. Mercer* (Liverpool), Charles Malcolm* (Dunfermline), R. E. Denyser* (Lowestoft).

* * *

I am afraid the majority will disagree with you, H. D. You want the Old Paper to appear every week with the same cover design, with no sketch or drawing whatsoever. I think you would get rather tired of it after a few weeks.

* * *

Now for that letter that I mentioned in the first paragraph—the one I mean to quote in full. I don't think it really deserves it, but I have been challenged by five readers, and I, at least, think it will be interesting to most of you. So here goes. This is the letter, word for word:

"Dear Mr. Brooks,

"We feel it is our duty to remonstrate at the type of tales you are writing in the

NELSON LEE. The majority of your stories are, in our opinion, ridiculous. For instance, the 'Eldorado,' 'Dr. Karnak,' 'Moat Hollow'; also the China tales. Then, to crown them all, you introduce a fantastic yarn of Northestria! Surely you do not imagine that your readers are in the puerile stage of life? Another thing, Mr. Brooks, the stories (series) are too long. Week in, week out, on they drag. Please let's have some short, complete, healthy, sporting tales.

"We do not wish to appear impertinent, but your fantastic fairy tales must stop if you are to keep us as readers of your book. We have been reading for nearly seven years your weekly, and should be sorry to finish reading it now. You must admit yourself that your latest series are the limit in silliness. We must have some drastic alteration in the yarns, something definite in reply to this just criticism. We challenge you to reproduce certain parts of this letter in your weekly chat, replying fully to our criticism.

"Hoping you carefully read, and take note of what we say,

"We are, yours truly,

"J. MARLOW, C. H. TIBBY, O. PEARSON,
GORDON HICKFORD, A. E. BRADSHAW.

"P.S.—We do most sincerely hope and trust that Captain Starkey, that redoubtable prison-breaker, is still in gaol, and has not escaped again."

Well, there you are—I've quoted the whole letter, you five. In reply to your criticism, I will only point out that, peculiarly enough, the very series you have selected for condemnation were among the most popular that I have written, and that I should soon lose my job altogether if I confined my writings to matter-of-fact everyday happenings.

A Land of Giants!***Thrills Beneath the Ocean!***

THE BURIED WORLD!

By LIONEL DAY



**START RIGHT AWAY ON THIS STIRRING INSTALMENT OF OUR
WONDERFUL NEW ADVENTURE SERIAL!**

WHIRLED INTO SPACE!

Jim Maitland lives in a small shop in Stagmore. A mysterious man named Stanislaus Cripps owes money to the shop, and Jim determines to collect it. He climbs over the wall of Widgery Dene—Cripps' estate—and drops down into the grounds. There he finds an amazing machine which is something between a submarine and an airship. Mr. Cripps is on board, and Jim asks him for the money. The man refuses to pay, and before Jim realises it he finds the machine is in the air! The machine travels half over the world, then dives into the ocean. It reaches the bottom, and then an astounding thing happens. For it does not rest on the bed

of the ocean, but continues going downwards! Mr. Cripps explains this by the theory that there must be some kind of leak in the ocean bed and that they are being sucked downwards towards the centre of the earth. There is not much time for speculation. The machine is drawn by a swift current down a long, dim cavern and it is now floating on the surface of what is an underground river. Mr. Cripps stops the machine and they go up on deck. Suddenly Jim touches his companion's arm. Four gigantic figures are coming towards them from the shore!

(Now read this week's exciting chapters.)

The Cavern of Terror.

ALL Jim's instincts urged him to rush to the companionway and take refuge in the pilot house; but a very paralysis of terror seemed to seize upon him. He wanted to cry out, but his tongue stuck to the roof of his mouth. Never in the wildest nightmare had his senses pictured a scene so utterly terrifying.

The setting was bad enough—that awe-inspiring cavern—so vast that its roof was lost in obscurity—the strange blue atmosphere—the dark murk of

oily water on which the Flying Submarine floated—but those four gigantic figures that were approaching them, the water rippling phosphorescently about their enormous limbs, was a very climax of horror. If only he could get away—if only he could take his shrinking body into the pilot house. Every nerve and muscle cried out for him to hide, but he could not move.

"Boy, a remarkable illustration of what I may call symmetrical hypertrophy."

Stanislaus Cripps' voice boomed in his ear. What he meant, Jim hadn't the slightest idea.

With an effort of will he managed to turn his eyes away from those horrifying figures which confronted him. Stanislaus Cripps was leaning against the rail in an attitude of studious calm. Of terror or uneasiness he did not display a sign. His whole attitude was that of a scientist inspecting, in circumstances of perfect security, some very interesting specimens.

"An interesting discovery, boy! We must know more of this!"

If Jim had only known it, those were the last words he was destined to hear Stanislaus Cripps utter for many weary months. Even as he uttered them, the leading giant thrust out an arm, and a great hand, the span of which was over two feet, closed about Jim and lifted him bodily from the deck. He kicked and struggled, yelling now at the top of his voice, but the effect on his captor was much the same as the wriggings of a rabbit caught by a game-keeper. The giant held him close to his face as if to inspect him. Jim found himself staring into a cavernous mouth surrounded by great blubbery lips—into eyes so abnormally distended that they seemed almost as large as apples; and behind those bulbous lips he saw great yellow fangs, three or four inches in length. Perhaps what was the most terrifying thing of all, was the fact that that vast face was utterly expressionless. And then the giant spoke, and his voice, instead of awaking the echoes of that vast cavern, was little more than a whisper. One word he uttered.

"Kru!"

That was what the word sounded like to Jim, but even had he been in the mood to inquire closely into the language that these giants spoke—which he certainly wasn't—he would have had no opportunity, for the next moment, with an almost disdainful gesture, the giant jerked his huge arm upwards, and, opening his hand at the same moment, sent the boy hurtling through the air like a stone flung from a catapult.

He dropped on his hands and knees in a huge, soft, slimy pile. He felt his hands grip some clammy, fleshy substance, that moved under the impact of his fall. A familiar odour assailed his nostrils. Dazed as he was, he realised in an instant that he had been flung on to the pile of dead flattened fish that those giants had been removing from the waters with their nets. And as that realisation dawned upon him, he acted quickly. Clawing with his hands, he burrowed his way into that vast pile of fish until his figure was completely hidden from view. Then panting, he twisted himself into a sitting posture, and tried to recover his breath.

In that strange hiding place, surrounded by those myriads of dead flattened fish, he was at least able to breathe. For a moment he was safe. Apparently those giants had regarded him as a trifle not worth considering—as just another fish to be added to the common pile. He felt no anger or resentment at their contemptuous disposal of him. He was only too glad to be alive, and, for the moment, safe.

But what had happened to Stanislaus Cripps? Had he dared he would have burrowed out a peep-hole for himself in the hope of discovering the fate of his companion, but for a while he was too frightened even to move. He lay there in the darkness in the terrible stench waiting for something to happen—waiting he knew not for what.

Of the passage of time he knew nothing. Now and again there was a thud above his head, and that jellified mass quivered and shook as more fish were added to the pile. The giants, apparently indifferent to the fate of the two human beings who had invaded their mysterious world, had resumed their occupations. Gradually the weight that was pressing down on Jim became more than he could bear.

As the giant's néts were emptied at regular intervals and the pile of fish accumulated, breathing became more difficult. He couldn't stay there to be suffocated. He began to claw his way upwards, stamping desperately on the cascade of fish that poured about him. Now at last his head pierced the outer surface of the pile. He drew the air into his labouring lungs.

Looking about him he saw that the pile was now some twelve feet high. He turned his eyes in the direction of the water. With a feeling of utter despair he saw that the Flying Submarine had vanished. Perhaps it had been jerked from the water and flung contemptuously on the shore as he had been—as something obviously not eatable, and therefore of no interest to the denizens of that strange world. The Flying Submarine had gone. What hope then was there of escape from this subterranean prison?

And where was Mr. Stanislaus Cripps?

It was curious how the fate of his companion touched him. Such a little while ago he had looked on him simply as the man who had swindled his mother out of money. Now he longed for his companionship. He would have given much to have heard his booming voice and to have seen that red, shaggy beard of his. He was nowhere to be seen. Like that wonderful invention of his, he had vanished.

A Chance of Escape.

NOW that his eyes were getting accustomed to that strange blue atmosphere, he found he was able to focus objects at a much greater distance. About half a mile away he saw a group of giants seated cross-legged on the ground in a circle, and he was able to take in some more details of their appearance. Save for a loin-cloth they were destitute of clothing, and their whole appearance suggested a certain strange primitiveness.

Into that circle there presently strode another giant, distinguished by the whiteness of his hair and by a kind of cloak that he wore over his bare shoulder. At the appearance of this figure the other giants rose and made gestures of respect. Evidently the possessor of the cloak was a giant of some position—a man having authority, for the others sunk back on their haunches, while he stood there gesticulating and speaking in that curiously soft voice, which seemed so incongruous when coming from such enormous beings.

What they were talking about, Jim hadn't the slightest idea nor had he the slightest interest. The great fact that concerned him was that they were occupied. Now clearly was the moment to escape. Working his way out of his hiding place he slid down that slippery pile on the side furthest away from the giants' conference. With his heart in his mouth, he began to run at the top of his speed—heedless of where he went, anxious only to put as great a distance between himself and those monstrous beings, as quickly as he could.

The shore, he discovered, was littered with huge boulders, which he was glad to use as cover. He sped from one to the other, always with the terror in his heart that he might be pursued. Once from the shadows ahead of him a giant emerged, and Jim crouched down behind a rock. One of those great feet missed him by the fraction of an inch. He glimpsed five toes that were as long as his hand, and then that terror had passed.

He crawled on. Now he had gained the base of that towering cliff which he had seen from the deck of the Flying Submarine. In the distance when he had first viewed it, it had had a greenish appearance, but now as he stood quite

WHAT A SCREAM!

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close to it, he saw that it was a dull yellow. He crept along it, with no definite plan in his mind, but hoping strangely that he might find some means of climbing it.

Perhaps in his dazed thoughts there was the wild hope of escaping to the upper air—perhaps instinct taking the place of reason urged him to attempt the impossible climb of six miles to the earth's surface. But presently, as he realised that he was not being pursued—that the giants had forgotten his very existence—a more reasoned plan formed itself in his mind. If only he could climb some forty feet up out of the reach of the denizens of this strange world, he might find some cave in which he could hide.

He concentrated all his thoughts on this plan, but the wall of cliff seemed unclimbable. He pressed on, mile after mile, in his vain search for some foothold on that precipitous slope. Once on his left he saw what looked like a series of enormous cairns, which on inspection he discovered to be houses roughly made of boulders, in which the giants lived. Outside one of them a fire was burning, and over the fire was a huge vessel in which, obviously, food was being prepared. The leaping flames illuminated the great expressionless face of the giant in attendance, and at the sight of him Jim dropped on all fours and crawled for nearly half a mile before he felt himself safe.

He fought desperately against the faintness, weariness and desire for sleep that assailed him. He must find some hiding place first where he would be safe from these terrible creatures before he rested. For two hours longer, his footsteps dragging more heavily each moment, he continued his search of the cliff. He had almost given up hope—he was moving indeed in a kind of stupor, his limbs acting automatically—when the great wall of rock at his side turned inwards abruptly. He felt his way round the corner. The next instant he had dropped flat on the ground.

There, seated on a rock, looking like some vast statue, was one of the giants. His great hands were resting on his knees, and his head was

lolling forward on his chest as if he slept. Jim hardly dared to breathe. He must beat a retreat. Even as he was nerving himself to crawl backwards, a strange thing happened.

From the blue haze above a small figure leapt. So softly did it land on its bare feet, that it made no sound. Lying there Jim watched it fascinated, strangely comforted by the sight of someone of his own stature in that world of giants. Moving with the lithe grace of an acrobat, the man approached the slumbering giant. Now Jim realised what he was after. By the side of the giant was a vessel of yellow metal in which there was food. Noiselessly the man approached this. Now he had seized the vessel and lifted it from the ground. Even as he did so the giant seemed to wake, and one of his great hands snatched at the man, catching him about the waist. Jim glimpsed the man's tortured face as he was lifted in the giant's grip, and he heard a cry that was obviously a very human, pathetic appeal for help.

In a moment Jim forgot all his terror. In his pocket was an ordinary penknife. It was the only weapon he possessed. Taking it out he opened the blade, jumping to his feet as he did so. Then rushing forward, even as the giant was bending down to batter out his captive's brains on the rocky ground, he drove the blade of the knife into the back of that great hand. There was a squeal of pain. As Jim stabbed again desperately, the giant opened his hand and his victim dropped to the ground.

Instantly the man made a dash towards the face of the cliff. Following at his heels, Jim saw him scramble up a slope of some ten feet and then dive like a rabbit into a hole. He heard thundering footsteps behind him, and, ducking instinctively, he saw a huge hand make a scooping clutch at the air above his head. The giant, awakened from his surprise, was pursuing him. He flung himself at the slope of rock, and with the hopeless feeling that there was no escape—that he must be caught—he began to clamber upward. In another moment he must be picked like a snail from a wall and crushed to pieces.

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He could almost feel that vast hand descending upon him.

And at that moment, from somewhere just above him, a stream of flame seemed to leap from the living rock. He heard a cry behind him, and the next instant he was seized from above and pulled to the top of that rocky slope. A mist gathered before his eyes; a feeling of weakness swept over him, and in another moment oblivion closed down upon his dazed brain.

The Little People.

HE awoke with a cry of terror to find himself lying on some bed, so soft and warm and comfortable, that for a moment he thought he must be back in the Flying Submarine. He sat up, becoming aware as he did so of a coal fire that was burning close at hand, its smoke ascending upwards as if influenced by the draught of a chimney. By its light he saw that he was in some sort of apartment, the smooth rocky walls of which were covered with curious paintings. So much he saw before he became aware of the presence of two other human beings.

One he recognised instantly as the man he had rescued from the giant. The other was a girl about his own age, tall and slim with long dark hair and a face that, though strangely white, was very beautiful. She smiled at him as he stared at her, and then with a glance at the man by her side ran to him, and dropping on her knees, seized his hand and pressed it to her forehead. Before Jim could recover from his surprise, the man approached, grinning in a friendly way.

Whoever these little people were—though they were made in the same proportions as himself, and the man, at any rate, was several inches

taller, he instinctively thought of them as the "Little People" in comparison with the giants—they were obviously friendly disposed towards him. He grinned back. The man, whom he saw now was well advanced in life, began to jabber in some language that was incomprehensible to Jim.

"Awfully sorry old chap, but I don't understand a word," he exclaimed presently when the man paused.

The man was clearly taken aback. He turned to the girl, and for a while they talked excitedly to one another. Then the girl disappeared for a moment, to return carrying in her hand a slab of slate. Seating herself by Jim's side she said something in that curious language, pointing at the same time to the slate. Having by this means focused his attention, she began to trace figures on the slate with amazing quickness.

Jim watched her astonished. By her swiftly moving fingers a whole series of scenes were portrayed. There was a very rough drawing of the giant, who was cleverly suggested in a state of sleep. The next picture showed the man creeping out. Bit by bit the whole adventure was portrayed. Finally Jim himself—he knew the picture was intended to represent himself because the girl drew a very impossible caricature of the boots he was wearing—was shown clambering up the rock and the man was again portrayed with a curious bellows arrangement in his hand, from the spout of which some liquid was pouring.

Having completed this series of drawings, she handed the slate to Jim, looking at him expectantly. Jim had always had a talent for drawing which he had often used to amuse his comrades at school. Realising that she wished him to follow her example, he now tried to turn his skill to some practical account. Very laboriously he drew the outline of the Flying

Submarine, indicating Stanislaus Cripps and himself standing on the deck. Next he showed the Flying Submarine in the air and finally floating on the water. Then his task became almost impossible. How to depict that wild rush from the bottom of the ocean bed into this buried world, puzzled him. He drew the Flying Submarine nose downwards. Glancing up a little hopelessly at the girl, he saw that her eyes were shining with excitement. She turned her head and said something as if to call the man's attention to this very inadequate drawing.

"Well, you're easily pleased," Jim remarked to himself with a grin.

In the next picture he tried to draw the Flying Submarine floating on the water surrounded by the dead fish and the four giants wading out from the shore. No sooner had he finished that picture, than the girl snatched the slate from him, and, pushing it into the man's hand, began to talk excitedly. The man pointed to the first picture and then looked inquiringly at Jim. That look clearly meant: Where do you come from? Jim raised his hand and pointed upwards. The man put his finger on the very clumsy representation of the Flying Submarine and then looked all about him. His pantomime indicated as clearly as if he had spoken that he was inquiring where that mysterious vessel had disappeared to. Jim replied by wiping out the last representation of the Flying Submarine from the slate, and then giving a despairing shrug of his shoulders.

All this pictorial communication took some time, and Jim became suddenly conscious that he was tremendously hungry. The last thing he had eaten, he remembered, had been that breakfast he had shared with Stanislaus Cripps on the deck of the Flying Submarine just previous to their tragic descent beneath the waves. He pointed to his mouth. The man and the girl nodded understandingly, and making signs for him to wait hurried out of the chamber.

Left alone Jim had more leisure to examine his surroundings. By the light of the brightly burning coal fire—the smoke of which was carried through an aperture in the roof—he inspected the curious paintings on the walls. One picture particularly held his attention.

It portrayed a huge idol at the feet of which was a big flat rock. Round this rock were gathered a number of giants. On the rock itself stood a very good representation of the white haired giant he had seen only a few hours ago addressing his comrades. In the picture this giant was painted holding one of the Little People by his hair with one hand, while with the other he pressed some instrument to his throat. It was clearly some sacrificial rite that was being performed. The gigantic priest was looking upwards, and from somewhere up above, a yellow streak descended in a slant to the feet of the statue.

He was interrupted in his study of these mural paintings by the girl's return. She carried in her hand a big shining yellow vessel from which came a very pleasant odour. Placing this on the floor, she indicated with a smile that he was to eat. Squatting down, the boy fell to with avidity. The girl watched him gravely until he had finished and then made signs to him to follow her.

Passing out of the doorway, which was cut from solid rock, he found himself in a long tunnel lighted at intervals with rudely constructed lamps. Out of this tunnel spread a net-work of other tunnels. Presently, after covering some two hundred yards, Jim saw that their further progress was barred by a doorway, over which there hung a curtain made of some shining material that glistened like silk. The girl drew this aside and motioned him to pass in.

The next moment Jim found himself in a huge circular vault. Round the walls were tiers and tiers of seats carved out of the rock and rising one above the other. These seats, he saw, were crowded with the Little People. Conscious that they were all staring at him, he hesitated on the threshold somewhat abashed. At that moment the man whom he had rescued from the giant appeared from somewhere, and taking his arm, led him into the centre of this strange stadium. Arrived there, he turned with a grave dignity to the audience and began to address them with ever-growing vehemence. What he was saying was, of course, unknown to Jim, but when presently the man produced from somewhere about his person the penknife Jim had used on the giant's hand, he gathered that he was describing how he had been rescued.

Finally he paused, and then pointing at Jim with dramatic effect, shouted something at the top of his voice. Whatever it was, it seemed to electrify the audience, for they sprang to their feet waving their arms and uttering guttural cries. The man bowed, and then turning to Jim pulled up the sleeve of his coat, partly baring his right arm. With a glance of encouragement, as if to indicate that the action was a friendly one, he drew a long flint knife and made a gash in his own arm until the blood ran. Then he performed a similar operation on Jim's arm, which the boy had the good sense to bear without protest. This done, he let the blood from his own arm drip on to the blood oozing from Jim's skin. As he did so, the whole of the audience started some strange weird chant.

(Things are happening with a vengeance, and next Wednesday's stunning long instalment of this great serial is packed with amazing events and thrills. Order your copy of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY in advance!)

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ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE APPLICATION FORM No. 67.

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, and Membership Badge.
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.

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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

Apply Early.

There is certain to be a tremendous rush on the Silver Medals as soon as the news gets round. I advise all readers who are entitled to them to make early application and so avoid any delay. Those who are still working for them should take this opportunity of roping in new members—none could fail to be impressed by the stunning new series of St. Frank's yarns which has just started in the Old Paper.

A Jolly Tribute.

"It is a dinkum badge." That is the verdict of R. Stephens, P.O. Stores, Woodville Road, Old Guildford, N.S.W. Much obliged to this correspondent for his cheery note.

But So It Is!

L. Hammond, of Barnsley, says he cannot understand how Mr. Brooks "manages to write a complete tale every week, especially considering the length of each one." I am sure Mr. Brooks will appreciate this tribute. Some achievements do leave us wondering, but the explanation is generally found in the single word, "grit."

Not Likely!

"I do hope that you will not be disgusted when you learn that I am a girl," writes a Luton reader. Far from it! This correspondent's letter showed a wide range of interests, including stamp collecting and photography. The writer wants to travel, but is doubtful whether this ambition can be realised because of duties at home. It is the same with myriads of us, so we just go voyaging on the s.s. Imagination, or book a seat in the Flying Thoughtman. And, after all, duty, even if it keeps one pinned to a desk or a work-table, is no bad thing.

Another Lost Badge.

As in duty bound I am sending a new badge to an Ilford member whose badge has just gone! But we don't want badges to be lost. Anyway, I am sure that a new reader will be forthcoming for the second replacement badge. But where do missing articles get? Perhaps they all join up in some undiscovered country where lost property of all sorts foregather and has a good time. You never know, you know!

Ask the Farmer.

Several members have written asking about their camping out. Campers-out must get permission before they pitch their tents. This is seldom refused. A farmer is usually perfectly willing to allow holiday-makers to stay for a night or two on his land, but he does expect the place to be left as it was found. No litter should be left about.

A Film Expert.

A. J. Anderson, 55, Elfrida Crescent, Bellingham, S.E.6, has made the study of the cinema his hobby. He is intensely interested in all that concerns the pictures. It is a first-rate thing to specialise in this way. It may lead to far more than a hobby.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.

V. Landau, 300, Harrow Road, Paddington, W.2, would be glad to hear from readers who are interested in stamps and railways and who understand French. All letters answered.

Sydney Smith, Penfold Lane, Scartho, nr. Grimsby, Lincs, wishes to correspond with readers in Canada.

W. R. Allsopp, Windmill Hotel, Stafford Street, Dudley, Worcs, wishes to hear from members in his district. He also wishes to obtain back numbers of the N.L.L. before No. 137, and especially No. 266.

Keith Ditterich, 177, St. John Street, Launceston, Tasmania, Australia, wishes to correspond with stamp collectors in any part of the British Empire and the United States.

Miss M. Howe, Hill View, Denbigh Road, Luton, Beds, wishes to correspond with readers. Interested in travel and sports. Overseas readers specially asked.

G. Buist, Comely Bank, Ponderlaw Street, Arbroath, N.B., wishes to correspond with readers who are interested in electrical work and electrical science.

John D. Cope, 30, Main Street, Stapenhill, Burton-on-Trent, Staffs, wishes to correspond with readers, especially those within a radius of fifteen miles of Burton.

John Shichell, 65, Bond Street, Stirchley, Birmingham, wishes to hear from readers in his district who will help form a club.

E. Sturgeon, 18, Claremont Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, wishes to correspond with readers about football and railways.

H. W. M. Eames, 37, Onslow Road, Rochester, Kent, wishes to correspond with readers interested in photography with a view to exchange prints.

HOW TO GET YOUR SILVER MEDAL.

All holders of BRONZE MEDALS who have qualified for SILVER MEDALS (see instructions on Application Form opposite) and wish to exchange their medals for the higher award, should send their bronze medals, accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope to the Chief Officer, the St. Frank's League, c/o the NELSON LEE LIBRARY, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4. The SILVER MEDALS will then be sent to them.

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