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Adventure!

FLOOD-BOUND AT ST. FRANK'S

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ST. FRANK'S ADRIFT!

A Powerful Yarn of School Life—packed with Fun & Thrills!

New Series No. 46.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY!

March 19th, 1927.



As the Removites faced round, they saw the grim figure of Miss Broome standing on the window sill. "You—
—you hopeless chumps!" hooted one of the juniors, catching sight of Buster Boots & Co. outside. "We
don't want her here!"

FIGHTING THE FLOODS !**MAROONED ON A ROOF !**

ST. FRANK'S ADrift !

**By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS**

The Boys of St. Frank's make a desperate effort to escape from the flooded school ! This week's vivid long complete yarn is full of real thrills.

CHAPTER 1.**FLOOD-BOUND !**

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH, of the Ancient House at St. Frank's, stirred in his sleep and lunged out with his left, ramming his foot sideways at the same moment. Church, who was in the same bed, not only received a fearful crash on his right ear, but Handforth's knee caught him fairly and squarely in the pit of the stomach.

Church was sound asleep, but this sort of thing was calculated to awaken the heaviest sluggard. Church gasped with pain and sat up dazedly. It was only a single bed, and the unfortunate Church was hovering on the extreme side, while his bed-fellow sprawled luxuriously in the centre, emitting strange and weird noises from a large and wide-open mouth.

But this was not the total sum of Walter Church's discomforts. He was shivering with intense cold, for the March dawn was chilly in the extreme. There were plenty of blankets on the bed, but Handforth had them entirely to himself.

"My only hat!" muttered Church, blinking.

He shivered again. It was only just dawn, and the dim light which came through the dormitory window was just sufficient for him to distinguish the luxurious, care-free attitude of his bed companion.

"You—you greedy rotter!" said Church indignantly. "Gimme some of those bedclothes, blow you! And keep your silly fists to yourself! My stars—never again! Three times in one night is a bit too thick!"

It was sad, but true. For the third time, Church had started out of a fitful sleep to find himself stripped of all covering. Once, indeed, Handforth had actually biffed him out on to the floor.

He dragged at the bedclothes, gave them a tremendous heave, and snuggled down. Handforth stirred again, opened his eyes, and sat up, in a dazed condition.

"Look out!" he muttered thickly. "Hold tight, you chaps! We'll never get round this curve—— Eh? Hallo! What the—— By George! I thought I was in my Austin Seven, and all the brakes had failed!"

Relieved to find that he was only in bed, he turned round to go to sleep once more. Then he started violently, suddenly aware that there was something in the bed beside him. He stared at it in amazement.

"What the dickens—Great Scott! Church!" he ejaculated, aghast. "In my bed—taking up all the giddy room! Well, of all the nerve! Clear out of it, you barging ass!"

He gave the hapless Church a terrific heave, and for the second time that night Church struck the floor with a crash. He had just been dozing off again, too, and he sat up with a gasp of agony.

"You—you dangerous maniac!" he panted.

"Keep out of my bed, then!" said Handforth sternly.

"You fathead!" howled Church. "It's my bed!"

"What?"

"It's my bed!" hooted Church. "Twice you've chucked me out, and I haven't had a piece of blanket as big as a postage-stamp all night! I'm blue with cold, and I'm all over bruises! I'd rather sleep with a rhinoceros!"

Handforth glared.

"Are you calling me a rhinoceros?" he asked thickly.

"No, I'm not!" snapped Church.

"That's just as well for you——"

"I've no grudge against a rhinoceros!" said Church. "I don't see why I should insult it!"

Handforth was too heavy with sleep to notice the slur, but he saw that he was, indeed, occupying Church's bed. A glance round the little dormitory convinced him of this startling fact.

"Here, what are you doing?" he demanded abruptly.

"I'm taking one of these blankets!" said Church bitterly. "I'm going outside into the passage, or into a cupboard! I'm not going to risk my life by getting into this bed again! It's worse than——"

"By George, I've just remembered!" interrupted Handforth. "Those West House chaps have piled on to us, haven't they? Two in a bed, eh?"

"Not in every case," said Church sourly. "I've been on the floor half the night!"

"Sorry, old son," said Handforth contritely. "Come on in! Tons of room! We've been sleeping together, haven't we?"

"That's all you know!" retorted Church, with a gloomy grimace. "You've been sleeping like a sloth, but I've spent the night shivering, picking myself up from the floor, and rubbing my bruises. I'd rather go to sleep inside a steam washing-machine!"

A low moaning sound came from one of the other beds, and the two juniors started. Church went across and made investigations. Apparently he was not the only sufferer this night. McClure, the third member of the famous Study D trio, was in difficulties. Fatty Little, of the West House, who shared his bed, was the only one in view. Rolling over in his sleep, Fatty had completely obliterated his companion, and McClure was slowly and painfully being suffocated.

"Hi, you fat porpoise!" gasped Church.

He grabbed at Fatty, and gave him a tremendous heave. McClure came to light,

and managed to wriggle free of the dead weight. He sat up like one in a trance.

"This two-in-a-bed business is a bit thick!" said Church bleakly. "It's all for the sake of those Moor View girls—but they'll never know what sufferings we've had on their account!"

Two figures stirred in the next bed. Reggie Pitt, the popular Junior skipper of the West House, sat up. Jack Grey sat up, too.

"I don't want to grumble," said Pitt, "but does this sort of thing go on every night in this dormitory? Can't you fatheads confine your earthquakes to Study D?"

"It's this two-in-a-bed stunt!" groaned Church.

"What's the matter with it?" asked Reggie. "Jack and I have slept like tops. Jolly decent of you fellows to make room for us in here, but we'd appreciate it more if you simmered down a bit!"

Handforth was staring at the window.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed. "It's dawn, you chaps! Daylight, by George! Let's see how the flood's getting on!"

He leapt out of bed and dashed to the window.



CHAPTER 2.

NO GRUB!

EGGIE PITT joined Handforth at the window, and they both gazed out.

For perhaps half a minute they stood looking, without making any comment. Then they looked at one another, and their expressions were eloquent.

"Ye gods and little fishes!" said Pitt softly.

"Great guns!" ejaculated Handforth.

They looked out of the window again.

"Worse than ever!" said Reggie.

"And it's raining again," remarked Handforth drearily.

"Pouring!"

"Cats and dogs!"

Their expressions were dismayed. Certainly there was nothing in that dawn to give them the slightest cheer. The light was weak and pallid, with a chill, unfriendly look about the sky which made them shiver. Rain was descending in steady, relentless torrents.

The other juniors joined the pair at the window. They all stood there, feeling unutterably depressed.

"Wind's gone down, anyhow," said Jack Grey hopefully. "Perhaps it's a good sign."

"What do we care about the wind?" growled Handforth. "It was blowing a gale last night, and I shouldn't care if it was blowing a gale now. Who objects to a healthy, invigorating breeze? It's this beastly rain that gives me the pip!"

"And look at the flood!" said Church. "It's higher than ever!"

"Yes, it's risen about a foot," agreed Pitt.

"My sons, I think we'd better get back to

bed, and forget our troubles. If we stay at this window-much longer, we shall get the blues."

"I rather thought we had them!" growled Jack. "What the dickens are we going to do? The flood's higher, and it's running as dangerously as ever. There's even a strong current in the Square. Look at it swirling round against the walls of the West House!"

The view from the dormitory window was normally a pleasant one. One could see the picturesque West Square, with the stately archway to the left, with the imposing grey mass of West Tower rising above. Towards the open side of the Square, the view generally embraced the green paddock, with a distant view of the moorland beyond.

But at present there was nothing to be seen but water.

Murky, swirling, scummy water. It reached a height of eight or ten feet, and all the lower windows of the West House—the windows of the Junior studies—had vanished. The entire lower floors of St. Frank's were submerged beneath the great flood. Even West Arch had disappeared, and the school wall, the paddock, and the moor were conspicuous by their absence. The flood stretched everywhere—grim, menacing, and ugly.

Down in the Square the water was surging in, and forming a sort of eddying whirlpool. All sorts of flotsam and jetsam floated there—tree branches, planks, hen-coops, and scum. The whole scene was calculated to depress and dispirit the sunniest temperament.

There had been stirring events over-night.

The flood had hit St. Frank's dramatically, overwhelmingly. The great reservoir on Pine Tree Hill, a mile or two beyond Edgemore, had proved incapable of withstanding the unaccustomed strain, and its south wall had burst asunder, sending countless millions of gallons of water hurtling into the valley.

It was Friday, and rain had been pouring down almost continuously all the week. The River Stowe had burst its banks, and had added to the general disaster. St. Frank's had been engulfed in the avalanche of water, and not a fellow had been able to escape. The entire school was seeking refuge in the upper stories.

Then, after the electric light had failed, signals had been seen from the neighbouring Moor View School. Quite a few of the St. Frank's fellows had sisters there, to say nothing of girl chums, such as Irene Manners, Doris Berkeley, and Mary Summers. A life-line had been carried across, and all the girls had been successfully brought over to safety, including two mistresses.

All these young ladies were now in full possession of the West House. The boys had evacuated this cheerfully, for at such a time as this one could not be selfish. And it was only right, after all, that the girls should have the House to themselves. The Ancient House, consequently, was not only overcrowded, but packed.

Every bed-room contained twice its usual number of sleepers, and for the most part

the fellows were pleased. For all the school radiators had failed, and the rooms were chilly. Two in a bed made for warmth—except in such isolated cases as that of Handforth.

"I can't go to sleep again after this," said Handforth firmly.

"Thank goodness!" murmured Church.

"Eh?"

"I think I'll turn in for an hour," said Church, with a sigh of happiness.

Handforth started dressing.

"You always were a sleepy ass in the mornings," he said scornfully. "We've had a bit of inconvenience during the night, but we ought to rise above such trifles. I'm fresh enough, aren't I?"

Church saw no reason to answer. Handforth's remarks were so utterly absurd that they needed no comment. He apparently overlooked the fact that while he had every reason to be fresh, Church had every reason to be weary. So Church luxuriously tucked the blankets round him and snuggled down.

"At last!" he murmured joyously.

The flood didn't interest him in the least; the fate of St. Frank's was an airy trifle. He had the bed to himself, and he meant to make the most of it.

The other juniors were dressing. Under ordinary circumstances, it would require something like an earthquake to get them out of bed in the grey dawn of a March morning. But the present conditions were so exceptional that their minds were active. Once freed from sleep, their only desire was to get up and to be moving. For the coming daylight might mean rescue. Being marooned was not all that it was made out to be.

Handforth opened the door and glanced out.

"We're the first up, anyway," he commented, with satisfaction.

In this he was wrong. A pattering of feet sounded, and something came whizzing round the end of the corridor like a young cyclone. It leapt at Handforth with a joyous cry, and greeted him with exuberant delight.

"Steady on, you frisky young ass!" gasped Handforth.

The early riser was an exceedingly active spaniel—or, to be more exact, a part-spaniel. Boz's antecedents were obscure, but Dick Hamilton, who owned him, thought none the less of him on this account.

He barked from sheer happiness—with, perhaps, a tinge of hope that something in the nature of food might be forthcoming. Boz was a healthy dog, and he had awakened that morning with an appetite that surprised him. In desperation, he had even sampled somebody's cap, a piece of wood, and a newspaper. But he really wanted something more in the meat line.

"He doesn't look as if he had been half-drowned last night, does he?" remarked Reggie Pitt as he bent down. "Good old Bozzy! It's no good you sniffing, old son—I haven't got so much as a crumb for you. Poor little beggar! I expect he's hungry."

McClure held his middle.

"There are a few other little beggars who are hungry, too!" he complained. "Do you realise that we haven't eaten anything since mid-day yesterday?"

Pitt nodded, and turned to the prancing dog.

"Boz, old son, you'd better go away and hide!" he advised. "Before the day's out, you'll be in grave danger!"

"I believe he's in danger now!" said Jack Grey. "Look at the way Fatty Little's eyeing him! There's no mistaking that homicidal glare!"

Fatty Little started.

"You ass!" he said indignantly. "I may be peckish, but I haven't got to the stage when I could eat dog! Clear off, you bunch of electricity! Leave my bags alone!"

Boz was still frisking about, supremely happy to find company. He had been shut upstairs in an attic, but had somehow managed to get free, and had wandered about the house on a search for food during the last half-hour. He was glad enough to find somebody awake—for this, he deemed, was an excellent sign. Breakfast could not be long delayed now.

In an excess of spirits, he leapt upon the nearest bed, found something pink on the pillow, and proceeded to lick it. The unhappy Church gave a moan, and turned over. A splodgy paw flopped over his mouth, and Boz, much surprised to find this new form of amusement, proceeded to bark vigorously into Church's ear.

Church flung the bedclothes aside, and wearily sat up.

"What's the use?" he asked dismally.



CHAPTER 3.

MAROONED BY THE FLOOD.

HANDFORTH strode down the corridor purposefully.

Although it was only just half-past five, the leader of Study D was bent upon

shaking the entire House into activity. And just at present it was more than an entire house, since it contained the normal occupants of two Houses. All the West House fellows were here, having given up their own domain for the benefit of the Moor View girls.

Everybody had retired well before eleven o'clock, and Handforth considered that six hours' sleep was ample. So his stride was purposeful as he went down the corridor.

A scamper sounded, and the next second something nipped round the corner, leapt at Handforth in very much the same style as Boz, and hopped nimbly upon his shoulder. Then it proceeded to chatter gaily into Handforth's ear.

"My hat!" ejaculated Handforth. "Nothing but animals about! The place is turned into a giddy zoo!"

Marmaduke the monkey grinned with pleasure and grabbed Handforth's ear. Then

he gave a squeal of sheer joy, and leapt to the floor in a bound. But he was on Handforth's shoulder again in a flash. This was Marmaduke's way of showing his pleasure.

"All right, old son—all right!" growled Handforth. "I'll have a word with Willy about this. He ought to have locked you up!"

Marmaduke was one of Willy Handforth's particular pets, and he, with the others, had been rescued from the flood in the nick of time. Although Marmaduke reserved most of his love for his young master, he had quite a soft spot for Edward Oswald.

"Cheese it, Marmy!" said Handforth firmly. "That's enough, my lad! If you don't behave yourself, I'll tan you!"

Marmaduke chattered with scornful disbelief. Handforth would cheerfully punch a fellow on the nose or black his eye, but he had never been known to lift a finger against Marmaduke, or any other dumb animal. He rather regarded Marmaduke with severe disapproval, but this was more or less of a pose.

"Help! I can't go round the dormitories with you pulling tufts of hair out of my head!" said Handforth indignantly. "Come on, my lad! You're coming with me to young Willy!"

He stalked off towards the Third Form dormitory. At St. Frank's the Remove fellows were lucky enough to have comfortable little bed-rooms to themselves—three in each on the average. But the Third was equally divided between the four Houses, and each section had its own dormitory.

Handforth entered, and came to a halt. He had forgotten, for the moment, that all the West House fags were guests here. But he was forcibly reminded of the fact. The Third Form dormitory was in an extraordinary state of disorder.

There is a reason for everything, and there was a reason for this. Upon retiring, the Ancient House fags had thought it rather a good scheme to make their West House rivals thoroughly welcome by starting a pillow-fight. And the West House fags, nothing loth, had continued it. Opportunities like this were rare. There wasn't a master in the school—nor even a prefect—and a pillow-fight which could be battled out to the bitter end without interruption was a novelty.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Handforth blankly.

The dormitory was smothered with feathers. The beds were in every place but the right one, and the fags themselves sleeping in weird and wonderful attitudes. Chubby Heath, for example, was hunched up at the top of one bed, using Juicy Lemon's feet as a pillow. At the bottom of the bed Dicky Jones was entangled in an inextricable condition with Tommy Hobbs. The bedclothes were loosely distributed over the entire human mass.

Other beds were in a similar condition. One, indeed, was a casualty, having broken down, and the mattress was on the floor next

to it, littered with fags. But, as everybody seemed perfectly content and happy, there was not much reason for Handforth's dismay. It pleased the fags to disport themselves in this eccentric fashion, so why should Handforth worry?

"Hi!" he roared. "You mad young fat-heads! Have you been trying to wreck the place? Get up, the whole bunch of you!"

A stir came from one of the beds, and Willy gently disengaged somebody's knee from the side of his face. He sat up, and this action caused another fag to topple off the bed backwards. He hit the floor with a crash, rolled over, and slept on as though nothing had happened.

"Oh, it's you!" said Willy, as if that explained everything.

"What do you mean—me?" demanded his major.

"I knew there was a disturbing influence in the dormy," retorted Willy. "I was just dreaming about dragons, and other rummy reptiles. Now I can understand. Well, what's the idea?"

"Time to get up!" said Handforth curtly.

"Whose orders?"

"Mine!"

"Oh, that's different," said Willy. "I didn't know you'd stepped into the head-master's shoes, and taken control of the school. My mistake, of course. Silly of me not to think of such an obvious thing."

"Are you trying to be sarcastic?" demanded his major darkly.

"My dear old Ted!" protested Willy, shocked.

But the conversation at this point was interrupted by the spirited behaviour of Marmaduke. He was whisking round Willy in circles, walking over the other fags with supreme nonchalance. Willy's face became thoughtful as he watched the monkey's antics, and he frowned.

"Poor old Marmy!" he muttered. "Your usual morning exercise, eh? You think breakfast is coming, don't you? Afraid you'll have to wait, my lad. I haven't even got a pea-nut for you!"

"It'll be time to think about these animals after we've found some food for ourselves," said Handforth sternly.

"You can't kid me, Ted," replied Willy. "If you had a cake in your pocket at this very minute, you'd give it to old Marmy, so don't be an ass. What's the time?"

"Nearly six."

"All right, I'll dress," said Willy. "No use trying to get these others chaps out, they'd only cause a riot. And, while they sleep, they don't know they're hungry, so the longer they stop where they are, the better."

His major started.

"By George! That's not a bad idea!" he admitted. "I was just going to wake all the Remove chaps up—"

"Then don't!" advised Willy. "Worst thing you could do!"

Handforth realised this now, after having

received the tip from his minor. For, awake, everybody would be clamouring for food. As Willy had shrewdly stated, sleep left them in ignorance of this condition.

Edward Oswald walked out into the corridor again, and came face to face with Dick Hamilton and William Napoleon Browne. Handforth looked at them indignantly.

"Morning, Handy," said Dick, nodding.

"You ass, Nipper!" snorted Handforth.

"Eh? What have I done?"

"What do you mean by getting up?" demanded Handforth. "I was going to let everybody sleep—sleep as long as possible—"

"We're awfully sorry for disobeying orders, old man, but we didn't know," said Nipper politely. "Reggie Pitt must have been misinformed. He told me a minute ago that you were engaged on a shaking-up mission."

"That's what he told me, anyhow," said Pitt, as he joined them.

"I've changed my mind," replied Handforth. "It's better to let everybody sleep, or there'll be a riot. There's no grub, and if all the chaps are let loose, there'll be a danger of cannibalism."

"A somewhat pessimistic view, but undoubtedly justified," said Browne, with a wise nod of his head. "We must realise, brothers, that we are up against it. It is not too much to say that we are besieged by an implacable foe, and that the aforementioned foe is bringing up reinforcements hourly."

And Browne turned, and gazed sombrely through a window at the rising flood, and at the pelting rain.



CHAPTER 4.

WHERE ARE THE MASTERS?

HERE was much truth in the Fifth Form captain's remarks.

St. Frank's was very much like a besieged fortress, and the enemy was crowding round its walls, making any escape impossible. The little group moved to one of the front windows of the Ancient House, and stared out across the Triangle.

There was a wider view from here. It was less confined than the vista across the Square. One could see across Big Side, and the meadows, and even Bellton could be glimpsed, nestling further towards the right. But not now.

It was a scene of utter desolation that the boys gazed upon.

No matter how high their spirits, they felt hopelessly depressed as they turned their gaze upon this scene. Over at the spot where the playing fields usually terminated the flood was angry and tumultuous. This was the course of the River Stowe, where the flood current was swift and aggressive.

The effects of this flow were felt at the school itself, for the water was swirling past

the Houses, eddying round, and continuing along its course with a relentlessness which struck a chill in the hearts of the watchers.

And the rain was hissing down from a leaden sky.

In the distance all was hazy, but the school-boys could see as much as they wanted—and more. Hedges and fences had vanished, familiar gateways and walls were hidden. Here and there a treetop struggled bravely to keep its head above the flood. The big old barn near the playing fields was half submerged, but fought gamely against the ceaseless pull of the water.

Bellton Wood, in the distance, looked grotesque, rather like a bulging mass of vegetation floating on the water. None of the tree-trunks could be seen, just the tops, a tangled collection of straining branches and twigs. And as for Bellton itself, the village appeared to be no more.

"By jingo," muttered Reggie Pitt, "it's worse than we ever dreamed!"

"It's—it's terrible!" said McClure, who had joined them.

They had all been prepared for a grim spectacle. They had anticipated a bleak vista of, flooded meadows and fields. But this scene, viewed in the dull light of early morning, awed them.

There was something deadening about it. Not a sign of anything living—not a boat, or a curl of smoke in any direction. It was just a vast expanse of desolate waste. The water was murky and ugly, and as the boys looked, things were floating down. All sorts of things. Some of them were pitiful.

Tattered tree branches, broken gates, hurdles, hen-coops—all things of that kind, floating by in a dismal procession, and all carried down by the current. Now and again came the dead body of a fowl. Sometimes a sheep or a pig. It was a doleful picture.

The fellows found themselves watching fascinatedly. Nobody voiced the dread in his mind, but they were all wondering if they would see something even more tragic than these unfortunate dead animals. It was incredible that such a flood as this could have swept down without serious loss of human life. And the boys were almost afraid to remain at the window.

They had all hoped that this morning would bring fine weather. Last night they had been so optimistic. Help would come, surely, with the daylight. But, as they looked out upon that desolation, they wondered from whence any help could arrive. The whole Stowe valley was a lake—a vast, hopeless waste.

"It's serious," said Nipper quietly.

"But—but don't you think they'll come soon?" asked Grey.

"Come? Whom?"

"Why, the Head! Mr. Lee! Mr. Stokes

"We don't even know if the masters and prefects are safe," interrupted Nipper. "They left St. Frank's before the flood, to help at the reservoir, I believe. And since

then we haven't seen or heard anything of them."

"You don't think they're—drowned?" muttered Church.

"Of course not," said Reggie Pitt gruffly.

"No, I don't think that," replied Nipper.

"I think they must have been able to get away before the actual deluge came. They're probably miles away, though, sheltering somewhere. It's quite likely they're just as helpless as we are, taking refuge in the upper floor of some house. So how can we expect them to come here with help?"

"My only hat!" muttered Handforth, as the realisation of the true position became clearer and clearer. "Then it means that nobody will come for us? We shan't get away?"

"We don't know what it means, we can only wait," replied Nipper. "But just think for a minute, you fellows. Think hard, and you'll appreciate the terrible difficulties. This flood only hit the valley last night, and everything's upside down. I expect Bannington is flooded, too, and there must be awful distress in every direction. People need boats to move about on a flood like this—and big, powerful boats, too. Where are they?"

"The boats?" said Pitt. "Yes, where are they? I expect every boathouse along the river was swept away and demolished during the first ten minutes. So we can't expect a rescue party along. The flood's worse than we believed, and that makes our position pretty uncomfortable."

"Without question, brothers, the position is murky," said William Napoleon Browne. "There are no masters to guide us, there is no food to fill us, but let us be thankful that we are all alive and well. There are compensations in even the blackest hours."



CHAPTER 5.

FATTY'S HOARD.

HANDFORTH moved restlessly.

"But something's got to be done!" he protested, his active spirit rebelling at the prospect. "We can't just sit here twiddling our thumbs, and waiting for something to happen. We've got to get busy. If there's nobody coming to rescue us, we've got to rescue ourselves!"

"It sounds all right, but we're up against a few snags, old man," replied Nipper gently. "Don't forget we're a pretty large company, the entire school—"

"With all the Moor View girls thrown in as makeweight," said Reggie Pitt.

"Exactly!" agreed Dick. "We can't just float a couple of tables, and get away on the flood. It's no good doing anything silly like that. We're up against an ugly problem, and it needs careful thought."

"There's Miss Broome, too," growled



Crash! The boat struck against a half-submerged tree-trunk, and the three masters were flung overboard. Nelson Lee shouted suddenly: "Look out for the Head! He can't swim!"

Handforth. "Last night she talked about taking control. We're not going to stand it. We're not going to be ordered about by a woman!"

"Never mind Miss Broome now," said Nipper, glancing round. "All the fellows seem to be getting up, judging by the noise. Hunger is a more effective prod than any rising bell!"

It was true enough.

With the coming of full daylight, the school was awakening into vivid activity. And the greatest problem of all, just now, was connected with food. There was no danger here.

St. Frank's was sturdily built, and there was no fear of the walls being undermined by the surging waters. Those grey stones were capable of withstanding a much heavier onslaught than this, and even the gloomiest pessimists had no fear that the flood would rise beyond the level of the dormitories.

But nothing could alter the fact that all the lower rooms were submerged. The kitchens, the store-rooms, the larders and the pantries. These were the apartments which interested the school at the moment. But every scrap of food at St. Frank's was under water.

Ordinarily, the school could have lasted out for at least a week on its reserves, for each House was provided with goodly stocks. But this was no ordinary siege.

The foodstuffs had been placed beyond reach in the first five minutes. Not only placed beyond reach, but rendered uncatable,

too. The water had penetrated everywhere, and the school, sheltering on the upper floors, knew that there were no food stores up there.

There was one cold, hard fact. Not a single person in that great establishment had had a bite since the previous mid-day meal. The deluge had swept down just before tea, and since then everybody had been too busy with rescuing the girls, and facing a hundred and one other little problems, to think much about food.

But now, after a sleep, St. Frank's arose ravenous.

None of the boys were unwell, and their healthy appetites were all the more acute because they knew that no breakfast was available. And, as far as they could see, there wasn't the slightest prospect of getting any.

As Handforth had said, something must be done.

In the general room—one of the larger upstairs apartments which had been mutually looked upon as a common-room—an ever-increasing crowd surged in, all discussing the same subject.

"You're supposed to be the leader, Hamilton, and we want to know what you're going to do," said Hubbard. "How about breakfast?"

"Yes," chorused the crowd. "How about it?"

"You needn't think I'm a magician, capable of conjuring eggs and bacon out of my sleeves!" retorted Nipper impatiently.

"And I might as well tell you that I'm just as hungry as you are. But, when there's no food, the best thing is to forget it."

"You ass! How can we forget it?"

"Well, you can try——"

"Can't we make signals?" asked Owen major.

"We could. But who's going to see 'em?"

"Oh, rats!" said Handforth. "The masters know how we're placed, and they'll arrive during the morning with some food supplies. They're bound to. They can't leave the school stranded like this!"

A number of fellows agreed with this optimistic view.

"Let's hope you're right," said Nipper cautiously. "But you mustn't be too certain. We've got to face facts, and they're not very pretty."

Browne, among the seniors, was using very much the same tone. Both he and Nipper knew that action was very essential. It didn't matter much what was done so long as the fellows were kept busy. Anything to take their minds off their hunger. The Ancient House contained double its normal complement, and they were all packed upstairs. The place was like an overcrowded tube station. And, as everybody was talking at once, and all on the same subject, the need for a settled policy was urgent.

The same kind of trouble was taking place on the other side of the Triangle, in the Modern House and the East House. The Fourth-Formers there were inclined to get out of hand, but Nipper knew that he could do nothing. The Remove was quite enough for him to deal with. Buster Boots and Timothy Armstrong, the leaders of the two sections of the Fourth, would have to deal with their own problems. The seniors, being more dignified, were less inclined to get excited.

In the Ancient House general room Fatty Little was frantic.

His excitement was rather painful. And then somebody discovered that he wasn't raving about food at all. His worries seemed to be taking a different form, and his eyes were gleaming with feverishness.

"Why can't somebody fix up a bridge, or something, across the Square?" he was demanding. "I don't want to stay here, in the Ancient House. I won't stay! I'm a West House chap, and I want to get back there!"

"You fat ass, the girls are there!"

"I can't help that!" roared Fatty desperately. "Great pancakes! I've got to get back to the West House, I tell you!"

Handforth regarded him coldly.

"Fatty, I'm surprised at you!" he said, in a grim voice.

"Eh?"

"In fact, I'm shocked," said Handforth.

"You—you funny fathead——"

"Don't you realise that the West House is forbidden to us now?" went on Handforth.

"Why, I don't suppose the girls are even up yet. What do you want to go over there for?"

"Blow the girls! I've got to go!"

"It's a new thing for Fatty to crave the society of young ladies!" said Reggie Pitt thoughtfully.

"I don't crave the society of young ladies!" howled Fatty. "Bother the girls! D'you think I care about girls? I want to go over to the West House because—because——"

"Because what?" asked Handforth grimly.

"Well, because I do!" said Fatty Little, with a feeble gasp. "It's—it's my House, anyhow, and I never did like the Ancient House. If I can't get across soon I shall die!"

"Well, that'll be a relief, anyhow!"

"You—you callous rotters!" roared Fatty, his eyes gleaming with a new outburst of feverish anxiety. "I don't believe you care whether I die or not! Here am I, starving to death, and——"

"You babbling lunatic!" snorted Handforth. "There's no more food over there than there is here!"

Fatty gulped.

"All—all the same, I want to go," he breathed thickly. "I—I suppose it's something we can't explain. I'm homesick. I don't like this House—I want to get back into familiar surroundings. The food doesn't matter," he added indifferently. "I've got past hunger now—it's deeper than that."

"Ah, I think I understand," said Reggie Pitt gently. "The poor chap feels that he's sinking fast, and he wants to breathe his last on his native heath. Poor old Fatty! He's being taken from us!"

Fatty Little snorted.

"I can last out as long as you chaps!" he retorted indignantly. "But not if I stay here! If you keep me in the Ancient House I shall pine away and die! I can only stand this awful strain if you get me back in the West House!"

"It's no good, Fatty, old man—you've given yourself away properly," said Nipper, pushing forward and grasping the fat boy by the shoulder. "So you can only last out if we get you back to the West House, eh? In other words, you've got a food hoard over there!"



CHAPTER 6.

FOOD!

FATTY LITTLE seemed to shrivel up like a pricked bladder.

"Food hoard?" he bleated feverishly.

"Yes, my lad. Where is it?"

"I—I don't know what you mean—— Or, rather, what rot!" gasped Fatty, trying to recover himself. "Good gravy! How can I have a food hoard? Isn't my study all flooded?"

Nieodemus Trotwood, who shared Study L in the West House with Fatty Little, pushed his way forward.

"Leave him to me," he said calmly. "I'm practised in dealing with this walking pantry. There's no food hoard in the study—and never has been. Fatty's too careful for that. He's generally keen on taking his stuff upstairs, and hiding it in his box."

"Let's fetch his box!" yelled a dozen voices.

"It won't be much good, even if we get it," said Nick. "He may have half a cake in there, and a few pastries, perhaps—"

"A cake!" gurgled Church, rolling his eyes. "Oh, my hat! A cake! I could eat dog biscuits this morning, let alone cake!"

"There's nothing in my box!" roared Fatty defiantly. "At least, no food! Can't you believe me?"

Nick Trotwood nodded.

"That's good!" he said. "This hoard isn't in Fatty's box. He may be a greedy glutton, but he isn't a liar. Choke it up, Fatty! The stuff isn't in your box—so where is it?"

"Nowhere!" retorted Fatty defiantly.

"Now, my lad!" said Nick, frowning.

"I—I mean—" Fatty paused, and his face was pale with alarm. "It's not your business!" he went on. "Even if I have got a bit of food stored away, it's mine!"

"Then you admit it?" shouted the crowd.

Fatty could see that subterfuge was useless.

"Of course I admit it!" he yelled. "Didn't I buy the food myself? But what's the good of sharing it out? You'd only get a mouthful each, at the most, and there's enough to last me all day! You're not going to see me die from starvation, just for the sake of a mouthful each, are you?"

Nipper took charge again.

"There's something in that argument, you fellows," he said. "In a way, Fatty's right. A mouthful would only whet your appetites, and make you hungry for more. Better have none at all than that."

"There you are!" shouted Fatty triumphantly.

"But it's awful, you know!" said Singleton. "We've got to go about starving, and we know that this porpoise is stuffing himself to his heart's content! Human flesh and blood can stand a certain amount—but not that!"

"Not likely!"

"We're going to share!"

"Rather! Even if it's only a mouthful each!"

"Hear, hear!"

Archie Glenthorne hove in sight.

"Odds, storms and upheavals!" he ejaculated. "Laddies, laddies! I mean to say, what's all the frightful din about? Good gad, the Glenthorne ears are positively deafened!"

"You clear off, Archie!" said Handforth curtly. "We're trying to make Fatty Little tell us where he's hidden his food hoard."

Archie reeled.

"Food what?" he murmured. "The jolly old rolls and butter! Toast, marmalade, and so forth."

"Shut up, you silly chump!"

"Do you know, laddies, I could just do with a cup of tea," continued Archie. "A slight draught of the priceless brew, what? I mean to say, I'd give a dashed fiver for just one sip of the good old stuff."

He suddenly started, and gazed at Fatty Little.

"Which, dash it, reminds me," he went on, a gleam of intelligence appearing behind his eyeglass. "Yes, the good old plates of memory are beginning to stir like the dickens. Little, old companion, didn't you borrow a fiver off me yesterday, at dinner-time?"

Fatty Little gulped.

"I—I believe I did!" he said, speaking with difficulty.

"Significant!" said Pitt.

"Absolute proof of hoarding!" declared Nick, nodding.

"But wait a minute, old comrades!" went on Archie. "That, dash it, is not the full chapter. Fatty, dear old sportsman, didn't you come to me again, and borrow another dashed fiver?"

"Well, you see—"

"And then, good gad, didn't you wake me up out of a sleep, and part me from a good old tenner?" proceeded Archie: "I seem to remember resisting somewhat sturdily, but the tissues were slightly weak, and I seem to have an idea that you wangled the job."

Nipper's eyes gleamed.

"Do you mean that Fatty borrowed twenty quid off you, Archie?" he asked sharply.

"Absolutely!"

"Does he always borrow like this?" asked Dick, turning to Trotwood.

"It's a new vice!" replied Trotwood. "I've known him borrow half a crown now and again, or even five bob. But twenty quid—Archie, sure you haven't been dreaming?"

"Good gad, no," replied the Genial Ass of the Remove. "I can't remember the exact trend of the good old arguments, but there seemed to be some sort of kind of idea on the subject of fodder."

"Fodder!" yelled the crowd.

"It's—it's all rot!" gasped Fatty Little.

"I—I mean, it's a private matter between Archie and me!"

"Absolutely not!" denied Archie Glenthorne stoutly. "Why, you frightful fright, you mentioned some bright and juicy scheme for laying in a stock of food upstairs—as a kind of emergency ration, in case the flood whizzed down out of the offing. A business deal, dash it. I financed it in a thoughtless moment—"

"That's about enough for me," said Nipper keenly. "We've got the facts. Fatty Little's food hoard isn't just a seed cake, or a bag of buns—but twenty solid pounds' worth of good food. He must have spent hours, buying it, and packing it away. For twenty pounds, a respectable pile of grub can be laid in!"

"Grab him!"

"Knock his head against the wall until he tells us where it is!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Twenty quids' worth, by jingo!"

Nipper pushed the hungry, excited fellows back.

"Give the chap air!" he shouted. "Now, Fatty, out with it! You can't be greedy enough to keep all that stuff for yourself——"

"I'm not greedy!" hooted Fatty. "I'm just far-seeing! All you fellows laughed at Handforth when he gave a warning about the flood. But I didn't! I took precautions, and because I knew all the food downstairs would be ruined. So I laid in a stock—and it's mine!"

"Bought with Archie's money!" shouted Owen major.

"That doesn't matter—I owe it to him," declared Fatty. "If you pinch that grub, it won't make a single meal! And if the whole school collars it, there won't be two mouthfuls each! Twenty quids' worth of grub doesn't go far among three or four hundred!"

"Exactly," said Nipper calmly. "I'm quite aware of that, my lad. But twenty pounds' worth of grub will make several very nice meals for a modest thirty-five."

"Thirty-five!" said De Valerie eagerly. "By Jove, are we going to draw lots, then? That's the only fair way——"

"We're not going to draw lots, and we're not going to touch a morsel of that food," interrupted Nipper firmly. "It's over in the West House—and it'll stay over in the West House."

Handforth's eyes gleamed.

"You—you mean——"

"Exactly," said Nipper, nodding. "Ladies first!"



CHAPTER 7.

THINGS BEGIN TO MOVE.

FOR about ten seconds there was a stupefied silence.

"Ladies first?" stammered Fatty Little, who was the first to speak. "Oh, great bloaters! You—you don't mean that all my grub is going to be handed over to those girls? I took an awful trouble to hide it away in the back attic——"

"Thanks for the information, anyhow," said Nipper. "So it's in the back attic? All right, I'll pass the word over to Irene & Co."

He looked round at the sea of crestfallen faces.

"Satisfied?" he asked. "Anybody got any grumbles to make?"

"Let's hear 'em!" said Handforth threateningly.

But De Valerie shook his head.

"We're whacked!" he said, holding his middle somewhat painfully. "The girls come first, of course—that's obvious. If there's only

enough food for a limited number, they're the ones to have it."

"Hear, hear!"

"The girls are our guests, anyway," said Pitt. "And to think we were over in the West House last night—with all that food practically rubbing our elbows! No wonder Fatty looked so stupefied at bed-time; he must have started on it!"

"By George, yes!" said Handforth. "Any more complaints from you, you tub of butter, and you'll get pulped! We fellows haven't eaten since midday yesterday—and you had a terrific gorge last night!"

"I—I need more than you do!" complained Fatty, his voice dreary with hopelessness. "I—I say, as it's my grub, I think I ought to be allowed to have a bit of breakfast——"

"Rats!" retorted Nipper. "That food is confiscated—and I'm quite sure that Archie will consider his twenty quid well spent."

"Oh, rather!" said Archie stoutly. "Every time, old lad! Absolutely! For the good old girls, what? Kindly assure the dear old souls that it's a dashed honour."

Nipper himself carried the good news across. One of the school hose-pipes had been fixed up across West Square, and it was stretched tautly across the flood. Fatty had been unwilling to risk this form of transit, but Nipper swung himself hand over hand with ease, and scrambled through the window into the West House.

"Anybody up yet?" he called softly.

"Cheers!" sang out a girlish voice. "Isn't that Dick?"

Mary Summers, Irene Manners, and two or three other girls emerged from one of the rooms, and Nipper grinned. They were all dressed in borrowed plumes—Eton suits which they had found in the wardrobes. Their own clothing was still wet, after the previous night's adventure, and there was no means of drying it. The girls looked comic in Nipper's eyes.

"You needn't laugh," said Mary, her eyes twinkling. "You ought to be sorry for us. How can we look our best in these dreadful things?"

"You've caught us at our very worst!" said Doris.

"Well, I'm not grumbling," said Nipper, with a chuckle. "If this is your worst, there's nothing to fear. I've just come over to talk about breakfast."

"That's nothing," said Irene. "We've been talking about it for an hour."

"Why torture us?" asked Mary. "Dick, I'm surprised at you! You know there isn't an atom of food in the whole place!"

"It's just plain cruelty," declared Winnie Pitt, with a toss of her curls. "I think we ought to take hold of him, and give him a real ragging."

"That's a good idea," agreed Violet Watson promptly. "Come on, girls! Let's seize the miscreant and——"

"Hi! Cheese it!" gasped Nipper, in alarm. They fell upon him with one accord, and

against such numbers he had no chance. He wasn't even allowed to explain. And in the middle of it, a firm step sounded, and then a shrill voice rang out.

"Stop this unseemly conduct at once!" it rasped.

The girls fell back, alarmed, and Nipper sat up. Miss Broome, the senior mistress of the Moor View School, came along. She was an angular lady, with a beak-like nose, and a determined jaw.

"I am ashamed of you!" she said sternly. "Do you want those wretched boys to hear you screaming and shouting in this fashion?"

Evidently Nipper had escaped her notice.

"I have already warned you to be careful," she went on, in a grim voice. "On no account must you show yourselves at any windows."

"But, Miss Broome—" began Doris.

"Silence!" demanded Miss Broome. "How dare you interrupt me?"

"I only wanted to say—"

"Miss Bond shall learn of your conduct when I make my report!" said the senior mistress, in an outraged voice. "Have you no sense of propriety? In those clothes, you must not dare to show yourselves— Good heavens! What—what—"

Nipper was just getting to his feet, and Miss Broome screamed.

"It's all right," said Nipper gruffly. "I only came across—"

"Were these girls actually holding you down on the floor?" asked the mistress, in horror. "I have never heard of such—"

"Oh, it was nothing," said Nipper. "Only a little rag."

"A—a what?"

"Only a rag—a joke," said Nipper. "I think you're a bit too formal, Miss Broome, if you don't mind my saying so."

"I do mind!" she rapped out. "What is more, I will not submit to this impertinence! Go! At once!"

"But, just a minute—"

"How dare you enter this House in this way?" continued Miss Broome angrily. "I am amazed that you should have such effrontery! I am praying that the rescue parties will soon be here, so that we can all get away."

"I came over to speak about breakfast," said Nipper quietly. "I wanted to tell the girls—"

"You had no right to come, and I forbid you to remain another minute!" broke in Miss Broome. "Be silent! Not another word! Go, before I lose my temper!"

Nipper, thoroughly incensed, turned to the indignant-looking girls. They were acutely conscious of Miss Broome's boorish behaviour. They had all been given shelter under the kindly roof of St. Frank's, and all their mistress could do was to be abusive. It was doubly flagrant because she and all the girls had been rescued from a very perilous position by these very same boys.

"All right, girls, I'll go," said Nipper, studiously ignoring Miss Broome. "If you

had given me a chance first, I should have told you that a stock of food is to be found in the back attic—up the narrow stairs, and then through the end door on the other side of the landing."

"A stock of food," echoed the girls eagerly.

"Really, I—" Miss Broome paused. "Is this true, young man?" she added sharply. "I hope you are—"

"It's perfectly true, Miss Broome, and I hope there'll be enough to provide you all with a good meal," said Nipper curtly.

He went back towards the window, and Mary ran after him.

"But what about you boys?" she cried.

"There's not enough for all of us, so there'd be no sense in dividing it up," replied Nipper. "There's only about thirty-five of you girls—and there are hundreds of us. So just go ahead."

He nodded, and swung out on to the line again. The girls watched him as he went across. Then, with indignation still burning in their eyes, they turned to Miss Broome. But that lady, feeling that she had made herself look rather ridiculous, had discreetly vanished.



CHAPTER 8.

A PLAN OF CAMPAIGN.

HE old fright!"

"Great Scott, what a nerve!"

"Like her cheek!"

There were many warm comments as Nipper described his recent adventure with Miss Broome. The general room was packed, and the crowds overflowed into the passages, and on to the landing. Indeed, there was hardly a square inch of room that wasn't occupied.

"There's no need to make a fuss about it," said Nipper quietly. "Miss Broome's all right under ordinary circumstances, I expect—but she's one of those people who can't keep their heads in an emergency. We shall just have to stick her, that's all."

"Last night she was talking about taking control of the school," snorted Handforth. "Are you suggesting that we should stick that?"

"We shan't have to; she's safely out of the way in the West House," replied Nipper patiently. "Besides, last night, when she suddenly heard that there were no masters, she probably felt alarmed. She's responsible for all those girls, and she got into a bit of a panic when she heard that there was nobody here in authority. But she needn't worry."

"Supposing she insists upon coming over here?" asked Pitt.

"We shan't let her come—that's all," replied Nipper. "There's only that rope, and she's not likely to swing across that. So we can go ahead just as if she didn't exist."

"That's a comforting thought, anyhow," nodded Handforth. "I hope the girls enjoy their brekker—"

"Don't talk about it," said Church plaintively.

"We've got to talk about it," insisted Handforth. "There's no food in the school, and unless we do something, we shall all starve."

Nipper tried to quell the growing excitement.

"Listen to me, you chaps," he said. "There's no fear of starving—although we may get pretty hungry—"

"I suppose we're gorged with food now?" asked Fullwood.

"If we don't get any hungrier than we are now, we shan't come to much harm," retorted Nipper. "Frankly, I don't think there's much hope from outside. We can't rely upon any help."

"But won't the masters come?" asked Gulliver in dismay.

"They might—but that's a different thing," replied Nipper. "If they come at all, they'll arrive in a small boat, or a motor-boat, or something. They can't bring cartloads of food with them, can they? So we can go ahead just as though the masters didn't exist. We've got to face one fact—and it's staring us in the eye. We'll have to fend for ourselves."

"But what the dickens can we do?"

"That's what we've got to decide," replied Nipper. "We're utterly isolated here, Bellton's under water, and we can take it for granted that Bannington is fighting desperately to relieve its own distress."

"What about Caistowe?" asked Watson.

"We can rule Caistowe out—"

"Why?"

"Because nobody could possibly get here from Caistowe," said Nipper. "The river flows in that direction, and enters the sea there. There'll be rapids below the weir. I expect the locks are completely demolished. We can't expect any help from Caistowe or anywhere else. Our only hope is to get away from the school altogether, and make for Bannington. Once there, we shall probably be able to get trains—"

"We'll get something to eat first," declared Bell.

"This is all rot," interrupted Handforth. "How are we going to get to Bannington? Swim there? It's one thing to talk about leaving the school, and it's another thing—By George! Why shouldn't we—"

"Build a raft!" asked Nipper.

"You rotter!" roared Handforth. "That's my idea! It was on the very tip of my tongue—"

"Well, you needn't get excited: lots of us thought about a raft," put in Reggie Pitt. "Come on, Nipper, let's have your expert views. A raft; that's the general idea, isn't it?"

"Carried unanimously," said Trotwood.

"Then we'll discuss ways and means," said Nipper briskly.

And while they were discussing these momentous matters, Boots & Co., of the Modern House, were bent upon paying a call. Curiously enough, they had made a raft of their own.

It was only a ramshackle affair, of tables and other pieces of furniture, but it was quite strong enough to carry Buster Boots, Bob Christine, Len Clapson and Billy Nation. Everybody in the Modern House was intensely hungry, and these ambassadors were coming across to inquire if there was any possibility of food.

The clumsy raft had just been manoeuvred across the Triangle, and Miss Broome, gazing out from one of the front windows of the West House, watched the raft with interest. A good many of the girls were watching, too, and Boots & Co. were filled with curiosity. They had heard rumours about Irene & Co., but they wanted full details.

"One moment, boys!"

Miss Broome was leaning out of the window, and the flood was not more than four feet below her. The rain had stopped now, and there were signs of a clearance. The clouds were broken up, and the morning was getting considerably brighter. A cheerier feeling was spreading through the school.

"Good-morning, Miss Broome!" said Boots, raising his cap.

"I wish to enter the Ancient House, and that raft of yours appears to be fairly sound," said Miss Broome. "Can I trust you boys to take me to one of the Ancient House windows in safety?"

"Yes, rather!" sang out Bob Christine. "Heave-ho! Swing her round, you chaps! Easy now, easy!"

The raft was brought under the window, and Miss Broome, who was an agile lady, had no difficulty in lowering herself the short distance. The raft rocked ominously, but still kept afloat.

The watching girls would have tried to warn Buster Boots and his chums, but they had no opportunity. They couldn't very well tell the boys not to take the mistress in her very hearing.

The Fourth Formers acted in pure ignorance. Being isolated on the other side of the Triangle, they had no exact knowledge of the night's happenings, and they certainly did not guess that the Removites would rather have had a tiger in the Ancient House than Miss Broome. And they had thought themselves so safe, too!

And here Boots and his chums not only aided and abetted Miss Broome's scheme, but they encouraged her. They thought it quite a good idea that she should have a look round the school in this way. Had they known the actual truth, they would have sent her adrift on the flood, rather than assist her in this warlike enterprise!



CHAPTER 9.

GETTING EXCITING!

"Y jingo, that's the idea!"

"A tremendous raft—a great thing that'll accommodate fifty or sixty of us!"

"Hear, hear!"

"My hat, won't it be fun!"

"This isn't intended as fun," declared Nipper. "There'll be a lot of hard work, you chaps—thundering hard work, too. We want to get the raft finished in good time——"

"Easy!" said Handforth. "It's only just about seven, and we ought to get it done in a couple of hours——"

"If that raft is floated by two o'clock this afternoon, we shall have done wonders," interrupted Nipper grimly. "And even at that we shall all have to work, and that

means organisation with a crowd like this. My plan is to build this raft on the roof. We must have a solid base to work on, and there's no room indoors, even if we could get it out after we'd finished it. The roof's the only place."

"How can we lower it?" asked Watson.

"We've got plenty of cable, and there are plenty of hands," replied Nipper. "We'll build the raft on the roof, and——"

"Indeed!"

Miss Broome stood in the nearby window, and behind her Boots & Co. hovered, thoroughly pleased with themselves. They were only too glad to pay this unexpected call on their rivals of the Remove.

Everybody swung round and stared.

"Great pip!" gasped Handforth. "She's in!"

"Oh, my goodness!"

"She must have got across that hose-pipe!"

"So I find you planning some wild, fantastic scheme!" said Miss Broome acidly. "I am very glad I came over—very glad! I half suspected that you boys would be getting out of hand."

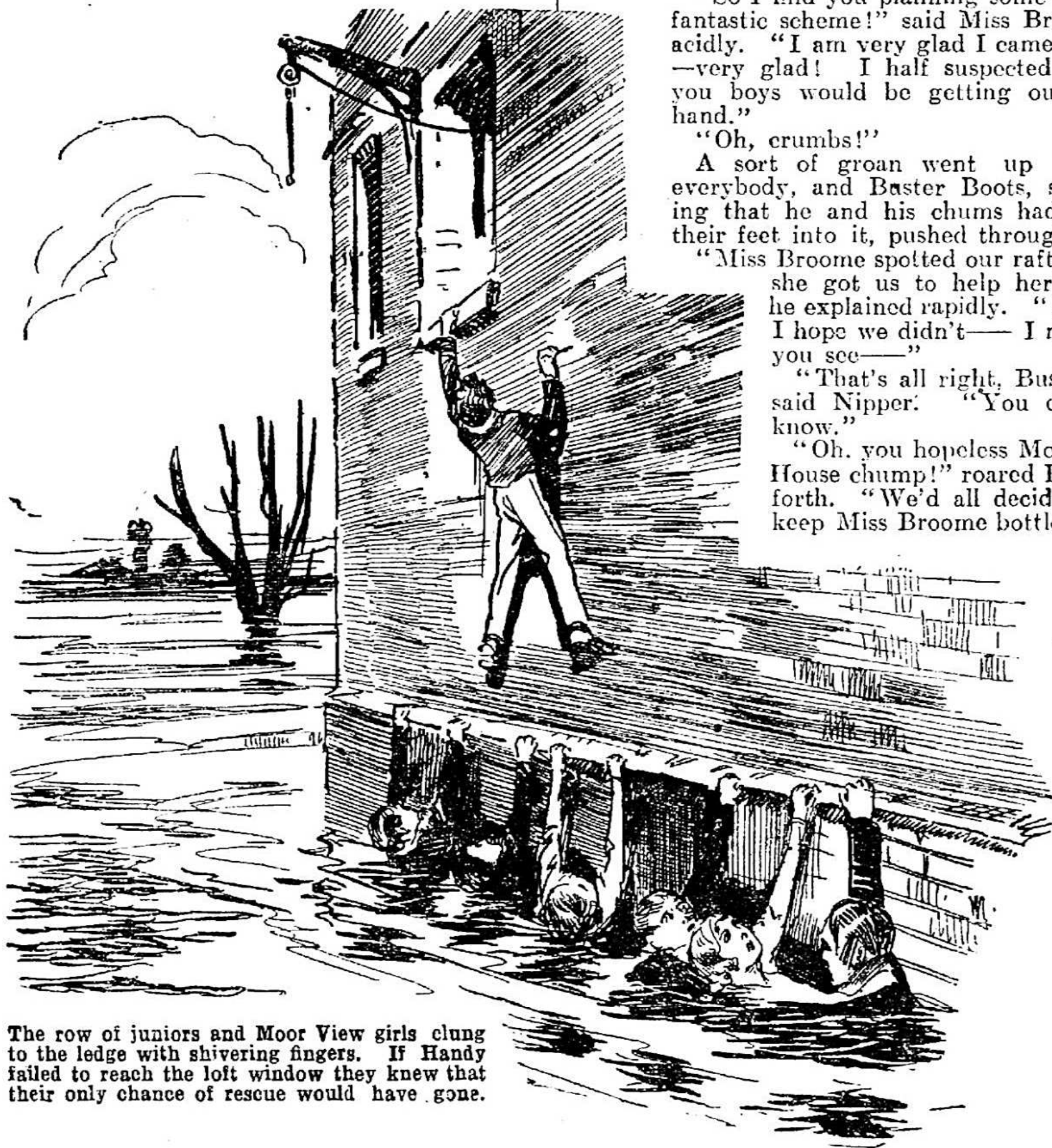
"Oh, crumbs!"

A sort of groan went up from everybody, and Buster Boots, scenting that he and his chums had put their feet into it, pushed through.

"Miss Broome spotted our raft, and she got us to help her in," he explained rapidly. "I say, I hope we didn't—I mean, you see——"

"That's all right, Buster," said Nipper. "You didn't know."

"Oh, you hopeless Modern House chump!" roared Handforth. "We'd all decided to keep Miss Broome bottled up



The row of juniors and Moor View girls clung to the ledge with shivering fingers. If Handy failed to reach the loft window they knew that their only chance of rescue would have gone.

in the West House! We don't want her over here, interfering and ordering us about——"

"Boy!" screamed Miss Broome.

"Eh?" gasped Handforth. "Oh, corks! I'd forgotten——"

"How dare you speak of me in this insulting fashion?" asked the lady shrilly. "Good heavens! I can see that I was justified in assuming control of this school! I have come here to put a stop to any nonsense that is being hatched."

"There's no nonsense being hatched, Miss Broome," said Nipper, with dangerous calmness. "We're in a nasty pickle here—as you ought to know. There's not much chance of help from outside, and so unless we make a raft, and get the fellows out of the flood zone, it'll mean another night here. And we must have food."

"I forbid any ridiculous escapades——"

"This one isn't ridiculous—it's necessary," replied Nipper. "Once we've got this raft ready, we can escape in batches."

"Oh!" said Miss Broome sourly. "And how do you propose to make this wonderful vessel? Where are your materials?"

"Under the circumstances, we shall be justified in using doors and even furniture," replied Nipper. "We can tear up the attic floors, and there's plenty of other wood of a similar kind——"

"Are you proposing to wreck the school in order to make this preposterous raft?" asked Miss Broome, aghast.

"The damage we do won't be noticed—compared to the damage that the flood's done," retorted Nipper. "And it's necessary, too——"

"I absolutely forbid it!" shouted Miss Broome. "In the absence of your masters I prohibit this insane project! Understand, the whole thing must be abandoned. I won't countenance it for a single moment!"

There was a very restive movement among the smouldering juniors.

"Look here, Miss Broome, I don't want to offend you, but I think I am speaking for the school when I say that we resent your assumption of authority," said Nipper quietly.

"Hear, hear!" went up a unanimous chorus.

"This—this is outrageous!" panted Miss Broome.

"Please let me finish," went on Nipper. "You are a lady, and we can't very well take you by force, and put you back into the West House. But we ask you to go—at once. We've decided on this raft, Miss Broome, and we're going to make it. I think it'll be a lot better if you get back to your girls, and confine your authority to them."

The mistress turned pale with wrath.

"Boy, are you daring to employ this unparalleled impertinence to my very face?" she asked breathlessly. "You will dare to defy me?"

"We don't want to defy you at all, and we don't want to be impertinent," said Nipper, keeping his temper with difficulty.

"But this is a boys' school, and we don't recognise mistresses. The flood is rising, and we've got to act at once. Shall we go ahead with your permission, or shall we be forced to have unpleasantness?"

Miss Broome evidently preferred the unpleasantness. She was one of those persons who cannot see a sensible point of view when it is indicated to her. She flew into a violent temper, and forbade any move towards making the big raft. Even when it was pointed out to her that she and the girls would be the first to go, it made no difference. She was obstinate. She had made up her mind to control the school, and she evidently meant to carry on.

Naturally, there was trouble.

In spite of her orders, the Remove fellows hurried off in all directions, searching for likely material for the raft. Only the cheapest type of doors were to be used, and there could be no real harm in pulling up the attic floors. In such an emergency as this, the step was justified.

Buster Boots was very concerned.

"I say, I'd no idea I was letting you chaps in for this bombshell!" he said, with a wry face. "I'd have sunk that giddy raft of mine before bringing her here, if I'd known!"

"That's all right, old son," said Reggie Pitt. "Accidents will happen, you know, during the best regulated floods. Miss Broome is out for trouble, and I think she'll find some. No petticoat rule for St. Frank's!"

"By glory!" said Boots. "Not likely! How are you chaps getting on here—about food, I mean!"

"*The Least Said, The Soonest Mended,*" murmured Billy Nation.

"You're about right," grinned Reggie. "We're starving, by inches; haven't eaten a bite since yesterday dinner-time!"

"Same over in our place," groaned Bob Christine. "But, look here, I shouldn't put up with that woman's rot, if I were you! If we were you chaps, we'd jolly soon bottle her up!"

"It's easy to talk!" growled Jack Grey.

"*Every Man Can Rule A Shrew Save He That Hath Her,*" murmured Billy Nation with a chuckle, voicing one of his inevitable proverbs.

"You're welcome to her, if you want her," said Reggie Pitt. "Hear her sweet voice now?" he added, as a shrill outcry arose above the shouts of the juniors. "Ordering 'em about, I suppose."

"*A Woman's Counsel Is Sometimes Good,*" said Billy.

"Sometimes—but not always!" snapped Boots. "It's a jolly good idea to build this raft, so we can all get away, and she wants to squash it. It's like her nerve to barge in, interfering. I expect she's all right in her own sphere, but all women seem to be the same."

Billy Nation nodded.

"*All Women Are Good,*" he declared

stoutly. "Good For Something Or Good For Nothing."

"I think Miss Broome comes within the latter class!" grinned Reggie Pitt. "By what we've seen of her so far, she was apparently born into this world to cause ructions."

Jack Grey cocked an ear.

"She's causing 'em!" he remarked briefly.



CHAPTER 10.

NO NEWS!

R. STAFFORD turned from the window with an impatient gesture.

"Mr. Lee, I can stand this suspense no longer!"

he declared huskily. "Something must be done. I tell you that something *must* be done! One way or another, we've got to get to St. Frank's!"

Nelson Lee nodded.

"I am just as anxious as you are, doctor," he replied. "My own mission has been fruitless, but perhaps Mr. Stokes will be more lucky. It seems that a boat is not to be obtained for any money."

"But the school!" protested the Head. "Do you realise, sir, that we know absolutely nothing of what is taking place at the school? Nearly twenty-four hours, and we have been able to do nothing!"

"No, hardly twenty-four hours," Nelson Lee denied. "It is only just nine o'clock, and the whole day is before us. We could not have done anything sooner, even if we had had a boat. The darkness and the storm prohibited any such trip during the night."

The two men were standing in a small, comfortable room on the second floor of the Grapes Hotel, in Bannington. From the window, one could see right down the High Street of this thriving country town, and at the present moment the traffic was nil.

And for a very excellent reason. Bannington High Street was no longer a street but a canal. The floods were here, too. And the town needed no reminding of the fact.

From one end of Bannington to the other, the water was in evidence. True, it was only really deep at the lower part of the town—the "tough" quarter, near the river—but it was here that the acute distress was most pronounced, owing to the congestion of the population.

But the business quarter, the residential sections—all were flooded. In the High Street the water was four feet deep, and the shopkeepers were woefully telling one another that they were ruined. Further away, on the hill, where the Grammar School was situated, all was well. But many sections of the road between Bannington and Helmford were impassable.

The railway service was not entirely suspended. Trains occasionally came and went with difficulty. A section of the line was flooded, but traffic was still possible. And

such gentlemen as Mr. Pagett, Mr. Crowell, Professor Tucker, and Mr. Suncliff, had escaped from the flood area, and were doing relief work among the refugees from the floods. As Dr. Stafford had told them, school work was quite impossible under the present conditions, and they had all volunteered to render what help they could in assisting locally.

Only the Head himself and his four Housemasters, remained in Bannington. Nelson Lee and Barry Stokes were doing everything necessary. Mr. Stockdale, of the Modern House, had caught a chill and was confined to bed, and Mr. Goole, of the East House, had badly strained a tendon while eluding the bursting reservoir. The Head had advised both gentlemen to take a holiday as soon as they could depart. But they were anxious to hear about their boys.

"Is there no way in which we can get to the school?" asked the Head, for the fiftieth time. "It seems so ridiculous, Mr. Lee! To be held here, only a bare three miles from the school! Surely there must be some method?"

"There is only one method—and that is by boat," replied Nelson Lee. "I have done my utmost to secure one, but there are practically none in the town. The few that do exist are employed in rushing supplies to people in distress. Mr. Stokes may be more fortunate than I."

"The telephone system is disgraceful!" said the Head petulantly. "We have 'phones in every House at St. Frank's, and yet we cannot communicate. It is perfectly disgraceful—"

"Oh, come, sir!" protested Lee. "That is scarcely just! After such a gale as last night, to say nothing of that appalling deluge, it would be nothing less than a miracle if the wires were still standing. It is hardly fair to condemn the telephone authorities so forcibly."

Dr. Stafford polished his glasses.

"You are quite right, Mr. Lee—I apologise to them," he said. "Most unreasonable of me! But I am so exceedingly worried that I am inclined to accuse anybody and everybody. Do you really think the boys are safe? Or is it possible that there has been tragedy—"

"No good can come of mere surmising, doctor," interrupted Nelson Lee quietly. "As St. Frank's is slightly lower than Bannington, we can safely assume that the flood is very serious there. But there is no reason to anticipate tragedy. Until we have definite news— Ah, Barry, any luck?"

Mr. Beverley Stokes, of the West House, had just strode in, his young, cheery face alight with satisfaction.

"I've got a boat!" he announced triumphantly.

"You have?" exclaimed the Head. "Splendid! Come, we must depart at once!"

"I'm afraid it's only a ramshackle sort of thing, but it floats," said Mr. Stokes. "I've been wading about up to my waist all over

the place, and I had to pay a pretty decent price for the hire——"

"Never mind that, Mr. Stokes—no price was too high," put in Dr. Stafford. "We will go without another moment's delay."

"Well, anyhow, we shall be able to find out how things are going," said Barry hopefully. "It was a good plan to send the prefects home—they couldn't have done any good here, in all this welter. Thank goodness my wife was away when this infernal thing happened."

"If we had only taken notice of the boy Handforth, the whole school could have been away," said the Head bitterly. "We have yet to demand an explanation from the town engineer. An outrageous case of incompetence, if ever there was one!"

The Head boiled at the very thought, and fumed all the way downstairs until they reached the main hall. The Head would have selected a better room in the hotel, but all the accommodation was engaged.

The boat was drawn up against the steps outside—for the hotel was practically free of the flood. The basements, of course, and the kitchens were washed out.

The boat was a very old one, with bent and twisted rowlocks, and uncertain-looking oars. Still, it was a boat—and the headmaster was not in any mood to be critical.

"Don't you think, doctor, that you will be better advised to remain here?" asked Nelson Lee gently.

"No, Mr. Lee, certainly not," answered the Head. "I am going."

"The flood may be difficult near St. Frank's," urged Lee. "There is even a chance that we shall run into danger."

"I am prepared to face it."

"I do not doubt that, but is it necessary?" asked Lee. "Stokes and I will return as quickly as we can, and we will bring you the fullest information. There is a prospect of more rain coming, and the trip, in any case, will be most unpleasant. There is no need for you to expose yourself to these——"

"Mr. Lee," snapped the Head, "my mind is made up."

And Nelson Lee said no more. He and Barry Stokes had hoped that Dr. Stafford would listen to reason. It would be so much easier for them without the Head's added weight.

The school had been left without masters, without prefects, and it had stood in the very path of the recent deluge. The Head had only one thought—and that was to get to St. Frank's at the greatest possible speed.



CHAPTER 11.

DISASTER!

APPALLING—quite appalling," said the Head sombrely.

After rowing down several back streets—a curious experience—the boat had emerged

clear of the town, passing over people's gardens and over submerged allotments. Straight ahead stretched the Stowe valley—a vast, dismal sheet of water, dotted here and there with half-submerged cottages, haystacks, and trees. It was a grim sight.

"I am glad I decided to come," continued the Head. "Don't you see, Mr. Lee, it is all for the best. I desire to remain at St. Frank's—to stay with my boys until real help can be organised."

"I am thinking that organisation will have to be pretty quick," remarked Mr. Stokes, as he pulled at his oar. "What on earth are the poor beggars doing without food? It's certain they had no time to salvage any when the flood arrived."

"Food is not an important point to-day," said Dr. Stafford anxiously. "None of the boys will come to any harm by fasting. I am thinking of the lives that may be lost. A pity we could take no food with us now—even a little might have been advisable."

But Nelson Lee shook his head.

"To take an adequate supply of food we should need a young liner," he replied. "Let us first ascertain the true position, and then we shall know just where we are. This meat extract will suffice for the moment."

Lee had very thoughtfully secured a full case of meat extract—highly concentrated stuff in jars. There were six dozen jars in that case, and although it impeded the boat's speed somewhat, and took up some room, this was only a small point. There would be plenty to provide many grateful cups of beverage to the entire school.

They proceeded slowly, and before long they began to discover that the task of getting to St. Frank's was not so easy. Lee, at least, had feared something of the kind. The main current of the Stowe was perilously near to St. Frank's. And, indeed, the only way of reaching the school was to go across this flow, since St. Frank's lay on the other side of the river. It was this passage which Lee had feared from the start.

There was no way round, of course. Lower down the river, the conditions were far worse, although up the river the floods were comparatively mild. But this would mean a detour of twelve or fifteen miles, and the whole day would be occupied in the attempt. Lee decided that the only chance was to go ahead.

And, without doubt, they would have won through had not Fate intervened.

The Head was growing more and more animated as the journey progressed—particularly when the high towers of St. Frank's were sighted in the distance. The Head's eyes glowed with relief as he pointed them out—almost as though he had expected to find the school razed to the ground.

"It cannot be far now," he exclaimed tensely. "A mile, Mr. Lee? Or more, do you think?"

"Nearly two, I should imagine," replied Nelson Lee. "I have come up the river

"I Got It Through Fighting!"



"Proper black eye, isn't it! Gosh, but you ought to have seen it this morning—talk about a beauty! There was about five different colours in it, includin' yellow an' sky-blue-pink! You see, there was only one copy of the paper left, and another bloke got there the same time as I did—he lashed out at me, and I lashed out at him. I got the black eye—and the front half o' the paper. It was "THE BOYS' REALM" we were after, o' course. My bit had got the yarn about Jack, Sam and Pete in it, and wasn't it good! When I'd read it, I found out where this chap lived, an' we swopped halves. We got real matey after a bit, an' he's going to join my footer club. But the REALM is always worth a black eye—comes out on Wednesdays, you know, and only costs twopence!"

Every
Wednesday

The Boys
REALM
OF SPORT & ADVENTURE

Price
Twopence

slightly, to avoid Bellton. It will be better if we enter the main current above the school, so that the flow will allow us to drop down with it. Then we can shoot into the calm water beyond."

"An excellent plan," declared the Head.

They proceeded, and Barry Stokes and Nelson Lee exchanged understanding glances when the critical moment arrived. They could feel the grim pull of the current, and they were about to cross the actual river, where the water was tumbling down with sinister force.

Dr. Stafford was so intent upon St. Frank's that he did not notice the acuteness of the situation. The boat drove its way into the onrushing turmoil, and Lee and Stokes strained at the oars with all their strength.

And, from the first, they felt their superiority.

There was no question of danger. They were beating the flood—but only by exercising their greatest skill. They strained hard; the old boat creaked, and the rowlocks shook. Another two minutes and they would be across the worst of it. And then a calm row across the playing-fields, and—

Crack!

With a noise like a pistol-shot, Mr. Stokes' rowlock snapped. The Housemaster was flung over backwards into the body of the boat, and his oar flew into the air, and splashed into the flood.

"The oar!" yelled Nelson Lee.

But, of course, it was hopeless. Mr.

Stokes, sprawling on his back, could do nothing. The Head started up, and nearly upset the craft. And by that time the oar was careering down stream, twenty yards away.

"Great Scott!" gasped Barry Stokes. "What on earth—"

"The rowlock broke—and we're done!" shouted Lee urgently. "Doctor, move aside there! Stokes, keep the balance, for heaven's sake. Let me get astern!"

To continue the original course with only one oar was impossible. Lee's thought now was not to reach St. Frank's, but to save them all from destruction. Swiftly, dramatically, this disaster had occurred, and unless drastic action was taken, it might lead to tragedy.

"Good heavens!" muttered the Head. "But—but the school—"

Lee, astern, was attempting to use his oar as a rudder, to steer the boat out of this swift current. They had been caught up in the full rush of the river, and were being sent hurtling down stream at an alarming speed. The Head hardly realised the truth.

"But can't we get to the school?" he asked hoarsely.

"Afraid not!" muttered Barry. "Leave it to Lee."

He did not like to remind the Head of a very obvious fact. If he had stayed at Bannington, as they had desired, this accident would not have happened. For, without his

weight, the strain would not have been so great, and that aged rowlock would have held. But how could Mr. Stokes blame the Head, in any case? His anxiety was so great that it was almost pitiful.

And now, with St. Frank's in sight, they were being whirled away, without having discovered a thing! It was not merely galling, but exasperating beyond all measure. Fate had played them a scurvy trick.

And they were not yet out of the wood.

Lee's skill was considerable, but to control that crazy boat was almost beyond the powers of any man. Down they went, past Bellton, Mr. Stokes realising, with a bit of a shock, that they had gone right over the familiar bridge instead of underneath it. The bridge was clearly under the level of the flood, for practically every house and cottage in Bellton was submerged to the roof. There could be no human life here. It was a village of desolation and destruction.

And then on, along the Stowe's winding course, towards Caistowe. By road, it was three miles to Caistowe, but the river, after the fashion of rivers, took a leisurely course, and covered more like ten or twelve miles, what with its windings and twistings.

In places the flooded Stowe departed from its true course, but the current, in the main, kept to the twists. And the boat was gripped, in spite of Lee's efforts to force it out of the clutches of the torrent.

Barry Stokes' face was tense now, and the Head sat clinging to the seat, a sort of dull look of despair in his eyes. Mr. Stokes knew that the weir lay a mile or two lower down, and beyond that there would be nothing but a rapid.

And yet dry land was so close!

Only a few hundred yards away the ground rose sharply, with trees on the summit. It was the ridge between Bellton and Caistowe, and if only that could be reached—

Crash!

The bottom of the boat struck a half tree-trunk. The boat swung round, throwing all three men over. The next second that frail craft capsized.

"The Head!" shouted Lee. "Careful, Barry! He can't swim!"

When he came up, Barry Stokes was clutching madly to Dr. Stafford. Nelson Lee reached him at almost the same moment. The Head was no swimmer, and but for the presence of his companions he would have sunk like a stone, dragged down by the terrible under-tow.

Even as it was, Nelson Lee and Barry Stokes only just succeeded in winning clear. Fighting madly, they got out of the current, and, to their intense relief, they felt the spongy, boggy grassland beneath their feet. They ploughed ashore, dragging the Head with them.

"Thank Heaven!" muttered Lee. "Doctor, are you all right?"

"I owe you my life," breathed Dr. Stafford, a sorry, pitiful figure. "Mr. Lee, what a fool I was to ignore your advice in Bannington! And now—and now— We have done

nothing, and only by a merciful providence are our lives spared."

Lee was looking round anxiously.

He had no fears for himself or Stokes. The water was icy, and they were chilled, but they were both strong, wiry men, and brisk exercise would ward off any possibility of ill-effects. It was different with the Head. He was already exhausted, and his age alone precluded any brisk exercise. So Lee's anxiety was justified.

This hillside was barren, and a bleaker outlook could not be imagined.

"Come, doctor," said Lee, "take my arm. Lean on me heavily! We must be moving. We must not remain still, or the consequences may be serious."

"I'll help," said Mr. Stokes willingly.

"No, Barry; you hurry off ahead," said Nelson Lee. "Try to find a cottage. We need warmth—fires—dry clothing."

Mr. Stokes understood. Lee was thinking only of the Head.



CHAPTER 12.

THE BUILDING OF THE RAFT.

Just about this very time, eleven o'clock in the forenoon, a fever of activity was in progress on the flat roof of the Ancient

House at St. Frank's.

The great raft was taking shape.

Over three hours had been spent already on the work, but Handforth's optimistic prediction had not come true. The raft was only just commenced, for an immense amount of preparation had been entailed.

Fortunately the rain held off, and the small army of workers had at least the satisfaction of labouring in dry clothing. Only the more prominent juniors were engaged, for, as Billy Nation had aptly remarked, too many cooks were inclined to spoil the broth.

Nipper, Tregellis-West, Watson, Handforth & Co., Fullwood, Goodwin, De Valerie, Reggie Pitt, Jack Grey, and others of their stamp were the labourers. Willy Handforth, naturally, was hard at it. He wasn't likely to be left out of an enterprise of this type.

The rest—the rank and file of the Remove—were downstairs. They weren't allowed on the roof at all, since they would only have been in the way. William Napoleon Browne, much as he would have liked to enter into the spirit of the thing, had deemed it more advisable to remain with the seniors. This raft was purely a junior project; Browne was rather partial to juniors, but he knew when to efface himself.

Miss Broome was being defied.

It was sad, but true. The juniors, in actual fact, were holding a little barring-out. They had shut themselves up on the roof, and had bolted the doors. Again and again Miss Broome had attempted to force her way up the attic stairs, but she had met with defiance.

If Miss Broome had had any sense, she

would have retired from the fight forthwith, and would have got back to the West House. But she remained where she was, making everybody's life a misery.

True, there was some excuse for her prolonged stay.

Buster Boots and the other Fourth-Former had gone back to their own House on the little raft, and thus the only way for Miss Broome to get back to the West House was to swing across that precarious rope. She had got herself into the Ancient House, only to find that everybody defied her. And now she was marooned there.

The Moor View girls were quite content, for they were only too glad to get rid of a mistress they could only regard as an encumbrance. So Miss Broome fumed up and down the corridors and the landings, helpless. Never for an instant had she anticipated a barring-out.

These boys were worse than she had ever dreamed of.

She had always held boys in contempt. She had boasted that she could control them with greater ease than girls. But this little conceit was being rapidly knocked out of her. The St. Frank's Remove, at all events, was a pretty tough handful!

Irene & Co. were watching developments from the roof of the West House, shouting encouragement to the raft builders. And occasionally Miss Broome would look out of the windows, and would gnash her teeth in helpless rage.

The raft was slowly taking shape.

That preparatory work had entailed the wrenching-off of many doors. Dormitories had been stripped of their portals, cupboards had been ransacked of their shelves. In the attics floor-boards had been torn up ruthlessly. And all this mass of material had been carried up to the flat roof.

Fortunately there were tools in plenty. The air quivered and sang to the hum of saws, the rapping of hammers, and the thudding of mallets. Many of the boys were keenly interested in amateur carpentry, and nearly all these fellows had kept their tool-chests in the box-rooms, which, fortunately, were upstairs. So every amateur carpenter was called in. Dick Goodwin, for example, was right in his element.

There was a great shortage, however, of big nails. There were plenty of smaller nails, but for a great raft like this they needed heavy stakes. All manner of objects were utilised. Iron fastenings from windows, portions of bed-room fenders, and even the bars from fire-grates were brought into use. And there was plenty of stout cable to lash the structures together.

The raft, now taking shape, was designed to be about twenty feet long by twelve feet broad, and the ends were shaped like a boat, with bulwarks, in order to prevent the water surging over. There was even a rail all round—a rough, wooden structure to protect the passengers from falling overboard.

By an ingenious arrangement on the cantilever system, many of the long planks were

utilised under the flooring. The base of the raft was composed of doors, for the most part, nailed securely to the floor-boards which had been torn up, the latter being on edge. In this way great strength was obtained, and the cantilever process added enormously to the general stability.

"By George, she's going to be a corker," said Handforth, pausing in his work. "Another half-hour now, and we'll be ready! What's the time? Ten o'clock yet?"

"Just gone twelve," replied Nipper.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Handforth.

"Your half-hour will stretch to two hours before we're completely finished," went on Nipper. "I think I mentioned two o'clock in the first place, didn't I? If we get it finished by then, we'll deserve a banquet."

"Hi, chuck it!" roared a dozen hungry voices.

"It's a bit thick, talking about banquets!" agreed Handforth. "I'm so empty that I can feel myself flapping about in the middle. I'm like one of those giddy jam-puffs—full of air!"

"Hot air!" said Pitt tartly. "Who's talking about grub now?"

But food was the one thought that was uppermost in every mind. They were working feverishly on this raft, because it offered a promise of a square meal in the not-too-distant future.



CHAPTER 13.

AN UNEXPECTED DEVELOPMENT.

EVER, in fact, had St. Frank's been so hungry.

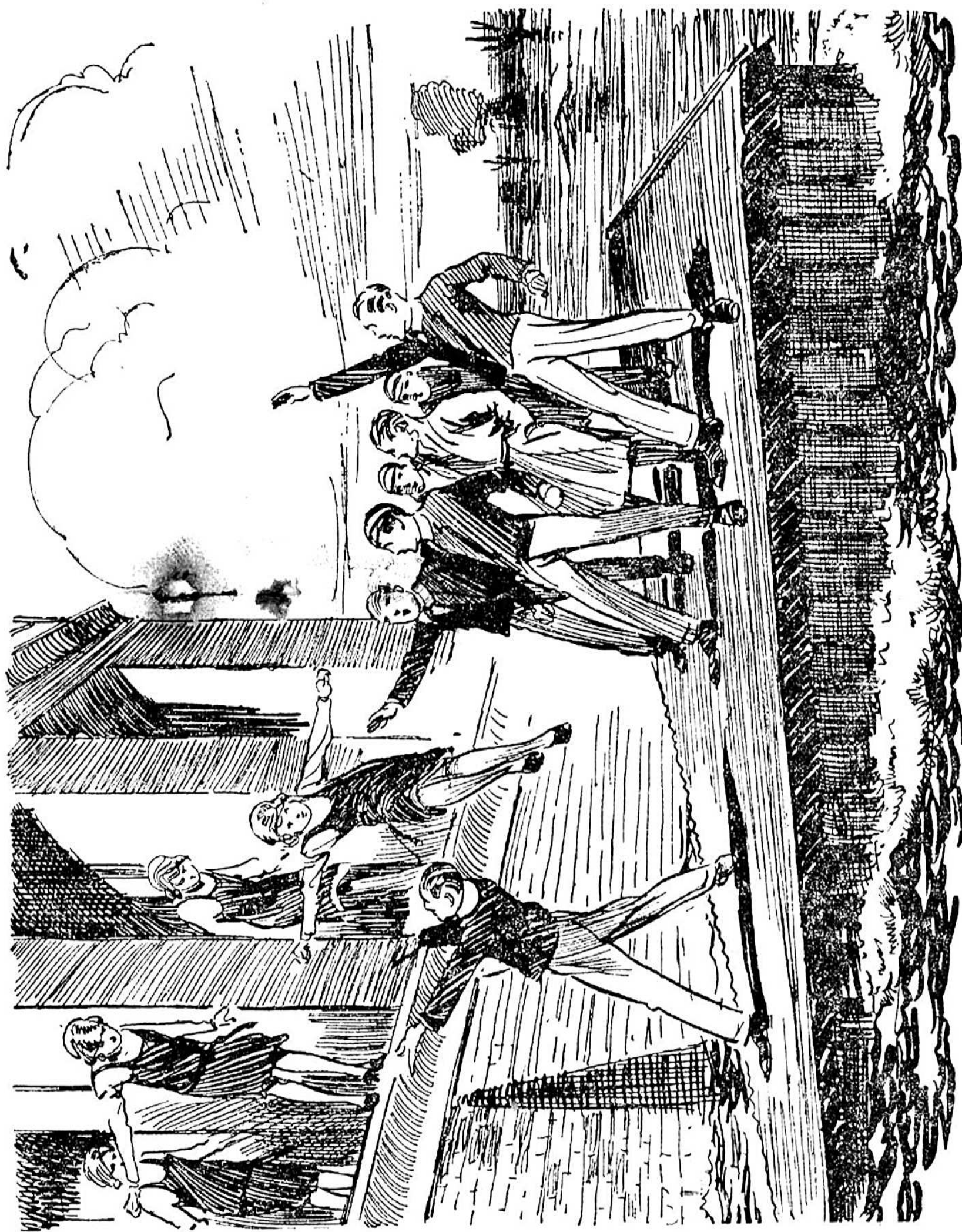
Most of the fellows would have scoffed at the idea of eating raw potatoes or turnips out of the field. But just at present these edible roots would have been regarded as the utmost delicacies. It was twenty-four hours since the school had had a meal, and the school was desperate. It was all the more desperate because there was still no sign of outward help.

Somebody had reported seeing a small boat in the far distance during the morning, and Nipper had knocked off work to go and look. But he had seen nothing of it. The boat, he learned, had been swept down by the river. So Nipper went back to his task, little imagining that that boat had contained his beloved guv'nor and the headmaster and Mr. Stokes.

Not another human presence had been reported. Two fellows were constantly on the look-out, but there was no indication of succour.

In the West House, the girls had just completed a second meal. It had been rather a frugal meal, and the last of Fatty Little's stock had vanished.

"I feel terribly mean about this food," Irene was saying. "It seems such an unfair thing that we should eat it all."



The floating roof, caught in an eddy, scraped along the wall of the West House. "Come on—jump!" cried Handy and, encouraged by his shout, Winnie Pitt leaped downwards to the unstable craft.

"The boys wouldn't have touched any, so it's no good talking," said Doris. "After all, Dick was right. It gave us a few bites, but if it had been distributed between everybody, they wouldn't have even noticed it."

"Those fellows who are working ought to have had the food," declared Irene. "Oh, I wonder if they'll really be able to get us away from here?"

"Of course they will," said Winnie. "If it wasn't for the food question, I'm not sure that I'd want to go. It's been such fun! But we must eat, mustn't we?"

"Let's go and see how they're getting on," said Doris briskly.

The raft was nearing completion. And the amateur shipbuilders were justly proud of their achievement. The raft was a very business-like-looking construction, light, but exceedingly rigid. At intervals, there were enormous rowlocks along the sides, and half-a-dozen of the best planks had been fashioned into clumsy oars. Each oar was to be manned by two juniors, and Nipper was hopeful that the raft would be controllable, even in the worst of the current.

Somebody had noticed a number of empty oil-drums floating about in the Square, having drifted there from the power-house, at the corner of the paddock. They were quickly salvaged by half-a-dozen volunteers and brought up. These, lashed underneath the flooring of the raft, would add enormously to its buoyancy. A couple of barrels had been rescued, too, and these were utilised in the same way.

"She's a wonder!" said Reggie Pitt as he jumped up and down to test the strength. "It's like being on the deck of a ship."

There was something of that effect, for the surrounding rail was stout, and afforded full protection. There were stays at intervals, and the rail was sturdy and rigid.

"How many d'you think we'll be able to carry at once?" asked Tommy Watson.

"A couple of dozen, at least," replied Nipper. "I mean, a couple of dozen in addition to the crew."

"We'll take the girls first, eh?" asked Handforth.

"We'll take them to Bannington, and then come back for the other batches," replied Nipper. "Naturally, we shan't come back empty. We'll bring as much food as we can grab. It may be to-morrow before we can get the last load away, but we'll do the job."

"We'll launch her directly into the 'Triangle, eh?" said Pitt.

"Yes, rather! Then we can cut straight across the playing fields, and take a direct course for Bannington," added Nipper. "Handy, you'd better take a crowd of chaps, and get down to the windows. We'll lower the raft from here, and you'll steady her as she comes down."

"Right-ho!" said Handforth. "Going to launch her now?"

"In about five minutes."

"Good egg!"

There was so much excitement that the general hunger was momentarily forgotten.



The floating roof, caught in an eddy, scraped Handy and, encouraged by his shout

Crowds of fellows were watching from the Modern House and the East House, across the Triangle. There was a big audience, and the launching of this rough craft was an anxious event.

Handforth hurried down the attic stairs, with Church, McClure, and a number of others after him. At the bottom they ran into Miss Broome. She barred the way, and her eye was steely.

"Oh! So you've condescended to end this ridiculous farce!" she snapped. "I am amazed——"

"Sorry, Miss Broome, but we can't stop!" interrupted Handforth gruffly.

"I command you to stop!"

"We're just going down to help with the launching," said Edward Oswald. "We've got to get to the windows, Miss Broome, so if you'll kindly——"

"I have told you repeatedly that I forbid this absurd nonsense——"

"Oh, my hat!" said Handforth, exasperated. "We're doing this for your sake.



the West House. "Come on—jump!" cried
Handforth downwards to the unstable craft.

Miss Broome, as much as anybody else's. Can't you see that it's the only chance we've got to escape? What's the idea of objecting to everything we do, and grumbling——"

"I hold myself responsible for the safety of you boys, and I will not allow this foolhardy expedition," declared Miss Broome. "You will go to your deaths, and it is my duty to bring you to your senses. Understand, not one of my girls shall set foot on that raft! At least, I have full authority with them!" she added bitterly.

"Not now, Miss Broome!" replied Handforth calmly. "They're in the West House, and you're here. We're going to take them without your permission, and if you're sensible you'll say nothing about it."

He pushed on, and the others followed.

At three of the dormitory windows, Handforth and his colleagues leaned out, armed with long poles of wood. These were to steer the raft clear of the windows, and to help with the launching, as the massive thing was lowered by means of rope from above.

But just then, curiously enough, a diversion occurred.

"My hat!" said Church, pointing. "Look what's coming!"

Round the angle of the Ancient House a massive object had come into sight.

It was a cumbersome thing which bumped against the Ancient House wall, rolled sluggishly round, and then came scraping along the stonework, right beneath the window where Handforth and Church were standing.

"It's a shed!" said Handforth.

"We're not blind!" remarked Church. "Of course it's a shed."

It was a wooden structure, and it had probably floated on the flood for miles. When standing on its original site, it had been a big shed of the lean-to type, with a wide expanse of corrugated iron roof. Handforth stared at it fascinatedly.

"By George!" he ejaculated. "It's double as big as our raft!"

This was true enough, and, what was more, the shed was floating buoyantly and airily, and the pitch of the roof was so slight that it was almost flat on the water and projecting about three feet above the surface. It looked substantial and enticing.

And Handforth, always a fellow of impulse, acted on the spur of the moment.

"I say!" he yelled. "Come on, you chaps! No need to wait for the raft now! Let's jump on this while we've got the chance, and get away for help!"

He commenced climbing out, and Church and McClure dragged at him.

"Stop, Handy!" gasped Church. "Perhaps it's not safe——"

"Rats!" roared Handforth. "It's better than our raft! Come on! Who's with me for some grub?"

With a single bound, he heaved himself out of the window, and landed with a metallic thud on the roof of the shed.



CHAPTER 14.

ADRIFT ON THE FLOOD.

IMPULSIVE as Handforth's action had been, it was no less impulsive than the behaviour of many others.

Edward Oswald had set an example, and others followed before they could realise what they were doing.

Food!

That was the keynote of their eagerness. There was a chance to get away, to get out of the flood zone, and obtain a hearty meal, and perhaps bring help back.

Church and McClure followed their leader as a matter of course, not because they believed in this madness, but because they couldn't see Handforth going off like this on his own.

"Stop that!" shouted Nipper from the roof. "Come back, you idiots! There's no sense in taking a chance on that crazy thing when

we've got this raft! Come back, before it's too late!"

But Nipper's sensible warning was drowned in the general shouting from the windows below. Hubbard, Owen major, Duncan, Gulliver, and Doyle all jumped down on the impulse of the moment, and others might have followed them but for the fact that the shed sheered off and got out of reach.

"Hurrah!" roared Handforth excitedly. "We're floating all right!"

The raft was caught in an eddy, and it scraped along the wall of the West House. At the open windows, just above, were many of the Moor View girls, and they, too, were caught in the fever of the moment. But it is doubtful if they would have acted, but for Handforth's encouragement.

"Come on!" he panted. "Plenty of room! Buck up—before we get past!"

There was no time for hesitation, unfortunately. For a single moment of careful thought would have made all the difference. Winnie Pitt and Violet Watson jumped, and landed on the roof of the shed.

"No!" cried Doris. "It's too risky!"

"Oh, come back!" pleaded Irene, rushing to one of the windows.

But two other girls had already jumped, and by this time the shed was past the end of the building, and was feeling the effects of the full current. It swung off across the Triangle.

"Oh, the idiots—the hopeless idiots!" muttered Nipper helplessly.

Many fears were in his mind. Their raft was controllable—and thoroughly stable, too. But this shed was an unknown quantity. At any moment it might topple over. A little too much weight on one side, and the whole unstable thing would capsize. In any case, there was no means of controlling it, or deciding its direction.

And worse was yet to follow.

The shed was crossing the Triangle now, and heading straight for the East House, caught in another backwash. It was floating bravely, and two or three of the juniors were dancing about on the roof in their excitement, and even running to and fro. It seemed to make no difference to the shed's steady progress, and Nipper felt slightly reassured.

Then the worst feature of the incident took place. The shed butted against the end of the East House, where crowds of Fourth-Formers were leaning out of the windows.

It was all over in a moment.

Armstrong and Griffith were the first to leap, and they were so madly excited that they didn't wait for the floating shed to get directly underneath. They jumped for it, and, more by chance than anything else, cleared the gap.

And then, to Nipper's horror, a crowd of other juniors followed—like sheep. Freeman, Steele, Clifton, Marriott, Kemp, Turner—they all crashed down on to the corrugated iron as the shed reeled drunkenly against the wall. Nipper expected to see the whole thing turn turtle.

But, by some miracle, it didn't. It sagged ominously, hopelessly overcrowded, and gave a sort of lurching heave. Then, almost awash, it drifted off across the meadows.

Even Handforth was brought to his senses.

"Hi, look out!" he shouted. "There's too many of you on here! Who told you East House idiots to—"

"We've got as much right here as you have!" gasped Armstrong. "We want to escape, don't we?"

"By George!" said Handforth, in a dull voice.

Too late, he realised the folly of the whole undertaking. It was just one of those steps which are sometimes taken in the insanity of a moment, and which cannot afterwards be rectified. The improvised raft was a hundred yards from the school now, and moving more swiftly every moment.

"Oh, we shouldn't have come!" breathed Winnie, clutching at Violet's arm. "Why did we jump, Vi?"

"It was Handy's fault!" said Church accusingly. "We tried to drag him back, but—Whoa! Here we go! Look out, everybody! We're capsizing!"

The shed, moving sluggishly, had apparently fouled something under the surface, and it veered drunkenly round, only to be caught by a swifter current. It still maintained its equilibrium, however, and its human freight saw, with startled realisation, that the thing was being swept irresistibly into the full surge of the flooded river.

Some were standing, some huddled down, and a few were kneeling. So far, nobody had got wet. The shed had managed to keep itself intact, although it seemed in danger of collapse at any second. The corrugated iron roof was already sagging, and more than one ominous crack had been heard.

At the school crowds were watching, sick with apprehension and fear. They expected to see the shed founder every moment, and to hurl those reckless spirits into the treacherous current.

But still the shed drifted on, turning this way and that way, and moving with ever-increasing swiftness.

"We've done it now!" ejaculated Hubbard, frightened. "We're adrift on the flood! Oh, my hat! Can't we do something? Can't we escape before it's too late?"

"It's no good. We've got to stick where we are," ejaculated Armstrong. "If we try to swim for it, we shall be drowned! Look! We're heading straight for the thick of it! Oh, my goodness!"

"We shall be carried right down the river!"

"We shan't!" muttered one of the others. "We'll be flung off this thing in another

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minute or two, and then it'll be the end of us! Oh, what fools we were to come!"

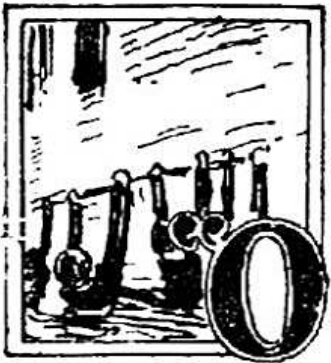
Handforth's face was haggard.

"It's my fault!" he said, a wave of remorse sweeping over him. "I started it all! I must have been mad—absolutely crazy! And now we're helpless, and can't do a thing!"

"Don't, Ted!" murmured Winnie. "You're no more to blame than we are! We needn't have come!"

"I am—I am!" panted Handforth wretchedly. "Didn't I shout to you all? Oh, what can we do to stop this rotten thing?"

Nothing, for the shed was already in the full swirl of the current, and was being swept relentlessly down the swollen river, rocking, swaying, and threatening to plunge under at any moment.



CHAPTER 15.

THE WATER-MILL.

"H, how long?" murmured Winnie Pitt fearfully.

She was a plucky enough girl, but the acute nature of this threatened disaster

appalled her. She was amazed at herself, too—staggered that she could have taken such an impulsive jump.

For Winnie was almost as cool-headed as her capable brother, and it was so unlike her to act on impulse. She could only conclude that her better sense had deserted her for a fatal moment.

The other girls were equally apprehensive. They clung together, reeling this way and that as the shed rocked from side to side. Many of the weaker fellows were shouting with terror.

Without doubt, the East House juniors had made the situation trebly bad by adding themselves to the load. But who could blame them? They had only followed the example of the others.

And it was all so unnecessary, too, seeing that the juniors had just completed their wonderful raft. Handforth felt that the blame was entirely his, and his feelings were as bitter as gall.

"Keep away from the edges!" he shouted desperately.

"Yes, and crouch down!" added Church. "For Heaven's sake don't move, anybody! We're going somewhere, but— Why, look! It's Bellton, isn't it?"

They were swept along at breakneck speed, and they recognised the village as they skirted past it. The raft had seemed to hesitate, too, at the point where the bridge should have been.

It shivered and staggered.

"We hit the bridge!" gasped Handforth. "My goodness! That proves how high the flood is—the bridge is right under! And look at the village— Look out! That was a near thing!"

Caught by an unexpected eddy, the shed swung round dizzily, and turned a complete circle. The motion seemed to send it drift-

ing out of the main current, and it veered off at a tangent. And now it was heading for the brick wall of a water-mill which arose forlornly out of the flood.

The helpless voyagers watched, fascinated.

They could do nothing. They couldn't lift a finger to help themselves. But this was better, perhaps, than continuing their head-long career down the river. They knew the water-mill well. It was just on the outskirts of Bellton, down a little lane which led also to Holt's Farm. It was a picturesque spot in the summer-time, with the old water-wheel lazily churning over to the gentle flow of the stream.

But now the place was stark and deserted. The water-wheel was submerged, and only the brickwork of a wall surrounding the mill itself projected above the surface.

The shed was rushing diagonally towards this wall, and nothing could possibly avert a violent collision.

"Oh!" breathed Winnie. "It's all over now!"

"Jump!" yelled Handforth.

He made a grab at one of the girls, intending to make a fight for his life. But he was too late to jump. The shed went hurtling at terrific speed against that wall.

Cra-a-sh!

It was a long, grinding, shrieking collision. The corrugated iron buckled up, and the shed heaved up like something alive. By merciful good fortune, everybody was flung straight into the water during the first instant, and that treacherous corrugated iron inflicted no hurts.

The shed turned completely over, fell to pieces, and the whole surface of the water was littered with debris. The disintegration was startling in its completeness.

The air was filled with shouts and gasps. But Handforth, who held himself to blame for the whole affair, had recovered his coolness by now, and he was yelling at the top of his voice.

"The ledge!" he kept shouting. "Make for the ledge!"

He looked round wildly. Fellows were swimming all round him, and then he saw the four girls, all close together, and striking out as strongly as any of the fellows.

The current here was slow—fairly easy, in fact. It was a sort of backwater, caused, no doubt, by the wall of the mill. The full current was rushing by ten or fifteen yards away. Perilously near! A few rash strokes, and any one of those unfortunates would be swept off—swept to almost certain death.

"The ledge!" shouted Handforth again. "It's the only chance!"

His quick eye had noted a six-inch ledge, which ran along the face of the mill, only a foot above the surface of the water. It would provide excellent hand-hold, if they could only reach it. Handforth had noticed something else, too, for the acuteness of the peril had sharpened his wits astonishingly.

His advice had been heard, and everybody was trying to swim to that ledge. Even with-

out Handforth's shouting, the juniors would have adopted this course, since it was the only possible chance of safety.

"Come on, Winnie! Grab hold of me!" gasped Handforth as he swam up to the girls.

"No, we're all right!" replied Winnie breathlessly. "There are two boys over there—they're in difficulties! Oh, quick!"

"By George!" gurgled Handforth.

Winnie had not exaggerated. Two of the Fourth-Formers had given up all attempts to swim, and were being sent drifting away.

"Rescue, Remove!" called Handforth.

Three or four of them went after the unfortunates, while the rest clung to the ledge. One or two weaklings were in difficulties, but they were all helped, and at last every member of the shipwrecked company was accounted for. All of them held to that ledge, in a long, shivering row.

It was a rather dramatic spectacle. The situation seemed to be fraught with as much danger as ever. For they could not hang on to that ledge for long. Their fingers were already becoming numbed with the cold, and their bodies were chilled through and through.

"Hang on!" panted Handforth. "I've got an idea! I think I can climb up the wall, and then I'll soon have you all safe!"

Hardly anybody knew what he was getting at, but for once Handforth was talking

with real common-sense. Not far above them a kind of crane projected. It was built into the wall, immediately over the door of a loft, and this door, Handforth saw, was open. The crane, of course, was used for hauling sacks of corn up and down, probably to and from barges, moored in the river beneath.

And if only Handforth could reach that loft and operate the crane, he knew that he would soon have everybody in safety.

But that climb was a difficult, touch-and-go proposition.

The acute nature of the peril only served to make Handforth grip the firmer, and although his fingers were stiff with cold, he made no blunder. Foot by foot he climbed.

He found every niche in the ancient brickwork, and although the actual distance was not great, it seemed to him that he would never get his hands upon the worn wooden threshold of the doorway.

If he fell, he would come to no injury, but it would mean disastrous delay. Those below were watching in an agony of doubt, clinging there, with the flood waters swirling about them.

At last Handforth's fingers clutched at the threshold, just as his foot slipped off a projection of the brickwork. For an instant it seemed that he was about to fall, but with a gasp and a wild, desperate effort, he held on.

A heave, and he pulled himself to safety.

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CHAPTER 16.

THE RESCUE.

NIPPER'S face was grey with apprehension.

"Oh, the idiots—the hopeless, reckless blunders!" he exclaimed tragically. "They've gone! They've been swept down!"

"It was Handforth's fault!" panted Tommy Watson.

"It's no good blaming Handforth. He thought he was acting for the best, I suppose," replied Nipper. "It all happened so quickly, nobody had any time to think. And now they've gone—hurled down the river on the full crest of the flood!"

"Aren't we going to do something?" asked Reggie Pitt sharply.

Nipper turned to him.

"We'll launch this raft," he replied. "We can't waste time over it now. We'll just dump it in and take a chance. Then we'll rush off in pursuit."

"Hurrah!"

"Let's launch the raft!"

A wave of excitement swept over everybody.

"Don't cheer!" shouted Nipper. "There's nothing to be enthusiastic about. There's not one chance in twenty that we shall be able to do anything!"

"But aren't we going to the rescue?" yelled De Valerie.

"Yes, but that thing must have capsized before this, and what chance will they have? Our only hope is that we might be able to rescue one or two of them."

"Oh, how awful!"

"Let's go! Let's dash off!"

They were grim fellows who handled the raft now. Ten minutes earlier a cheerful enthusiasm had filled everybody. The raft was made, ready to be launched, and everything had seemed so rosy.

And now—the shadow of tragedy!

"Steady—steady!" shouted Nipper as the operation proceeded. "Don't be too hurried! The whole thing will overturn if you don't look out! Easy over that side! Let her go gently!"

The great raft was being slid down the face of the Ancient House. Crowds of juniors on the roof hauling on the ropes allowed it to drop foot by foot, and at last the edge of the structure touched the flood.

"Steady, now!" shouted Pitt.

He was at one of the windows, directing the operations there. Poles were pushed out, and, with a tremendous heave, the raft was swung outwards.

"Now!" roared Pitt.

Every rope was released at the same instant, and the raft splashed down into the water with a tremendous, heaving crash. It plunged under amidst a mass of foam, and then righted itself, floating serenely.

"Hurrah!"

"She's launched!"

"Come on! There's no time to lose!"

Pitt swarmed down on to the raft, his anxiety as acute as Tommy Watson's, for they had seen their sisters swept away before their very eyes.

Nipper came rushing down from the roof, and he tore along the corridor to the window. Just before he got there he ran into Miss Broome.

"I forbid you to leave the school with the raft——" she began.

"Forbid us!" shouted Nipper harshly. "We're going to the rescue of those other——"

"Did I not warn you?" shrilled Miss Broome. "This madness! I knew from the first what it would end in! And I'm not going to allow a second tragedy, you reckless young——"

But Nipper was in no mood to be delayed by the mistress. He pushed his way past. It was a matter of life and death—when seconds counted!

"Come on, Nipper!"

"All ready! We're waiting!"

Nipper gave one look at the excited juniors on the raft.

"Half of you get off!" he ordered sharply.

"Why, you ass——"

"We only need ten of us at the most," went on Nipper. "How do you suppose we're going to bring those poor chaps back if the raft is crowded at the start? We're travelling down light—so off you come!"

Arguments began as to who should leave.

"You hopeless idiots!" roared Nipper as he dropped from the window. "Are you going to waste time here by jawing and bickering? I don't care who goes, but there's only got to be ten left, including myself!"

Realising the acute nature of the position, most of the fellows caught at the overhanging ropes and hauled themselves back into the house. And the raft pushed off. The lowering ropes had been quickly disentangled and slung from the windows.

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Nipper!"

"Don't come back without 'em, old man!" Cheers rang out from every House, for the entire school was watching. And the Moor View girls were no less anxious. Four of their own number had gone off on that shed, and Irene and her chums were filled with apprehension and fear.

But for this apparent tragedy, Nipper would have revealed much enthusiasm in the behaviour of his raft. As it was, he hardly gave the matter a thought. He wanted to get into the main current, so that they could go sweeping down on the track of that overloaded, swaying shed.

The raft, as a matter of fact, behaved with amazing steadiness.

The fellows had expected her to float well, but her buoyancy was remarkable. And those home-made oars were effective, too. The queer craft went speeding across the meadows, with the oars churning away like some gigantic war canoe.

And even when she got into the full tide of the flood there was no hint of instability. The raft floated gaily, as though happy to be on the water. She was firm and rigid, too, and answered perfectly to the pull of the oars.

"Oh, why didn't they wait?" groaned Watson. "Look how she's going—as smooth as a punt! And there's sis——"

"Keep your pecker up, old man," interrupted Reggie Pitt. "My sister's gone, too—and I'm just telling myself that it's impossible that anything should have happened to her. It's too awful, so I don't think of it."

From the school windows the flood had seemed desolate enough, but here, on its very surface, the tragedy of this great inundation was more stark than ever. There lay the water, in every direction, murky, cold, and cheerless. It was in vain that the rescuers strained their eyes for any sign of the shed, or those who had been borne down the river upon its precarious roof.

They had gone—utterly.



CHAPTER 17.

SOMETHING LIKE A
DISCOVERY!

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH was perspiring from every pore.

Considering that he was wet through, this was a strange condition to be in. But yet not so strange. He had been hauling on the ropes of that crane continuously until his hands were sore, and until he scarcely had any breath left.

One by one the victims were hauled up.

The girls had come first, and now the last of the juniors were being pulled into safety. Church and McClure had waited down there until the end, helping one or two of the weaker fellows, whose powers of endurance had proved insufficient.

But now they were all safely out of the flood.

If the shed had been predestined to wreckage, it could not have shattered itself to fragments at a better spot, for this deserted old mill provided shelter. The loft was roomy, and not far from the door a great mass of empty sacks were lying. There were hundreds of them.

They were ruthlessly seized, and the bottoms were ripped open. They were slipped on like overcoats, completely enveloping those soaked, shivering forms. And the sacks provided the protection and warmth that would probably avert serious consequences.

"Well, we're safe, thank goodness!" muttered Church as he wriggled into one of the sacks. "But what's to be done now?"

"Never mind that," said Handforth, sitting down wearily. "Let's be thankful that we're in the dry and out of the cold air. Oh, my hat! I thought half of you were going

to be drowned at first. About the nearest thing I ever saw!"

"You were wonderful, Ted," said Winnie Pitt enthusiastically.

Handforth grunted.

"I was a wonderful idiot!" he replied gruffly. "I must have been off my rocker to jump on that shed like that! And if I hadn't gone, you others wouldn't have followed."

"Somebody else might have done just the same thing, so you needn't be so bitter with yourself," said Winnie quietly. "I say, what luck to have this place! We shall be all right here, even if nobody comes. And these sacks, too—they're almost as good as blankets!"

Handforth shook his head.

"I'm worried," he said. "We ought to get back to the school, so that we can strip completely, and get into dry things. It won't do us any good sitting here like this. But we can't do anything but wait——"

"I expect they'll come for us on the raft," said McClure.

He looked round the spacious loft. He was feeling better now. The loft was well clear of the flood level, and the floor and every other part of the place was covered with flour. Not a very surprising fact, considering that the place was a mill.

But it was fairly evident that the mill had been in full blast when the deluge had struck it. There was a big stairway at the other end, leading downwards into the main body of the building. McClure strolled over to it, and, looking down, saw the flood waters below, scummy, ugly, and menacing. He turned his attention aside, and looked at the many sacks which were piled against the wall—not empty sacks, but full ones.

And then suddenly McClure gave a violent start, and caught his breath in with a loud gasp.

"What's wrong?" asked Armstrong, looking up.

"Nothing," panted Mac. "I—I was only thinking——"

He broke off, his whole frame quivering. He had forgotten the narrowness of their recent escape. The others were still subdued by it, still huddled there, unwilling to move themselves.

McClure was reaching under his sack and pulling out his pocket-knife. Then he tore open one of those full sacks and gazed at the contents. He plunged his hand in, and withdrew it full of a soft, white powder.

"Flour!" he gasped exultantly.

Then he let out a wild whoop of triumph.

"What the dickens——" began Handforth.

"Flour!" yelled McClure.

"What?"

"Flour! Don't you understand?" panted Mac. "We wanted food, didn't we? Look at these full sacks! There's enough flour here to feed an army!"

"By Jingo!"



The juniors hauled Fatty Little into a sitting position and gazed at him in alarm. "I—I wish I—I hadn't eaten the stuff!" the fat boy gasped.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Flour!"

"Sacks of it!"

It was a stupendous discovery—at least, the juniors thought so, although, after all, one rather expects to find flour in a mill.

Handforth strode over, his face flushing with excitement.

"It's jolly good!" he said. "But, hang it, we can't eat flour! That dry stuff would choke us!"

"Can't we make it into bread, you ass?" shouted Church.

"Bread?"

"Stuff you buy at the baker's!"

"I know what bread is, you idiot!" roared Handforth. "But how the dickens can we make bread? We've got to have ovens and things. Fires, too. We can't bake anything without a fire."

"You're full of difficulties, aren't you?" demanded Armstrong. "We'll soon have some fires going when we get back. And it won't take us long to cook some of this flour! We'll mix it with water, and make pancakes, and fry em' over the fire on tin lids and things. What does it matter how, as long as we get some decent grub to eat?"

"By George, you're right!" said Handforth, his eyes shining. "Look at these sacks, too! There's enough— Hold on! Let's have a look at some of the others!"

Eagerly they commenced examining the rest of the sacks. It wasn't really necessary to open them, for they could tell by the feel. Two sacks had a totally different touch, and

Handforth let out a roar as he opened one of them.

"Wheat!" he shouted. "Can't we boil some of this, and eat it like rice pudding? Wheat swells up lovely when it's boiled, and it's the finest food you can eat!"

"Oh, how topping!" cried Winnie happily. "We don't care much about the quality of the food, do we, at a time like this?"

"Not likely!" said Handforth. "I'd eat nails!"

"Oatmeal!" came a shout from Hubbard.

"What!"

"Oatmeal!" repeated Hubbard, with his mouth full. "Come on, you chaps—it's topping!"

Four full sacks of oatmeal had been found, and in less than a minute everybody was taking it by the handful, and chewing it with gusto. Dry oatmeal was not exactly an ideal luncheon, but at the moment these ravenous juniors regarded it as the most delicious repast they had ever eaten.

Then somebody thought of mixing some water with it, and making a kind of gruel. This was better still. There were all sorts of tins knocking about, but nobody cared for the look of the flood water, so it was decided to wait until they could get back to St. Frank's before putting the gruel idea to the test. The dry oatmeal was quite good enough for the moment—and there was no question whatever that it was thoroughly wholesome and eminently digestible.

"This is a giddy treasure!" said Handforth gleefully. "Now, my sons—what about it

now? Wasn't I right in jumping on that shed? Look what it's led to! We've found the food we want!"

"Yes, rather!" said Church. "Sheer accident, of course——"

"Rats!" denied Handforth. "I'm not saying I knew the stuff was here, but I must have been guided by some lucky star."

His former self-condemnation had vanished. His old spirits had returned, and he was inclined to crow enormously. He claimed the full credit for this food discovery.

"With all this stuff, we can last out for days!" chuckled Handforth. "We can make unleavened bread, by George! They had it in the olden days, so why can't we eat it? Oatmeal cakes and wholemeal porridge! Why, the school will simply go dotty when they hear what we've found!"

"But, first of all," said Winnie Pitt gently, "we've got to get back to the school. We're marooned here——"

"Don't you believe it!" sang out McClure, from the doorway. "Here comes the raft!"



CHAPTER 18.

BRINGING HOME THE SPOILS!

AGER, anxious eyes scanned the muddy, murky water as the raft floated swiftly down the swollen Stowe.

Bellton had been passed, and a long stretch of turbulent water lay ahead. But as far as the eye could reach, there was no sign of any human being.

"It's no good—they've gone," said Reggie Pitt hopelessly. "Poor old Win! I wonder what's happened to her? I can't believe—Oh, it's too horrible! I expect they're still on that shed, being whirled down——"

"It's impossible, old man," put in Nipper. "Why is it?"

"Have you forgotten the weir?"

"The weir!" said Pitt, starting and groaning. "They'd never get through that, would they? And the waters there must be like the rapids of Niagara just now!"

"That's what I'm afraid of," said Nipper. "We can't venture down there in this raft, and if they were all flung out below the weir, there's no hope for them at all. It's a terrible thought!"

"Poor old Vi!" muttered Tommy Watson huskily.

Both he and Reggie Pitt were dulled with the agony of their fears. They refused to believe that the worst could have happened. It was too ghastly to even consider for a moment.

"By Jove!" ejaculated Pitt suddenly. "A human being at last!"

"Where?"

"Up in that mill," said Pitt, pointing, as the raft swung round towards the half-submerged water-mill. "One of the millers, I suppose, got stranded there. He's wearing a sack or something——"

"He's waving!" said Nipper, staring.

"That's just what he would do——"

"It's Church!" roared Nipper abruptly.

"What!"

"Look—and there's Handy now!"

"Great Scott!"

"Then—then they're safe!"

"They're in that mill!"

All the rescuers on the raft were converted into shouting maniacs in a moment. Their thoughts had been too tragic for real expression—and now, in a flash, they were transported into the wildest joy.

"There's Winnie!" said Reggie, his voice rather husky. "And your sister's there, too, Tommy! They're all safe, I believe! That beastly shed must have spilled them all——"

"Look after your oars, you chaps!" sang out Nipper happily. "This current's pretty strong, and unless we're careful, we'll overrun them. Swing her round, and be careful she doesn't ram that wall!"

The raft answered nobly.

Those oars made all the difference, for they enabled the navigators to have full control. The queer craft was forced out of the current and whirled off into the backwaters, and she slid gracefully towards the mill, perfectly controlled.

"Hurrah!" came a cheer from the loft. "We're all safe, Nipper—a bit wet, but chirpy!"

"You bounders!" shouted Nipper, staring up. "We thought you had all got killed. You gave us a terrible scare!"

"They're eating something!" said Jack Grey indignantly.

"Rather!" called down Handforth. "We've found a huge store of food up here—enough flour to make bread for an army corps!"

This was a piece of glorious news, indeed, and after the raft had been moored, Nipper and Pitt were hauled up the rope, and the details were explained to them.

"You're lucky, that's all I can say," commented Nipper, at last. "Just another example of your usual good fortune, Handy. You always seem to drop right on your feet, somehow!"

"Fool's luck!" nodded Pitt.

"Eh?" said Handforth. "What d'you mean—fool's luck?"

"Only an expression, you chump!" grinned Reggie, as he wrapped his coat round his sister. "Life's too short to quarrel. What are we going to do about all this pile of treasure?"

"Take it to St. Frank's, of course," said Handforth promptly.

"Oh! When?"

"Now, you ass!"

"I'd like to point out," said Nipper, "that we built this raft with the idea of keeping it afloat. Why should you have these evil designs to sink it, Handy? I suppose you know that a sack of flour weighs about twenty stone? If we take half a dozen sacks with us this time, we shall load the old raft to danger point—so we'll just take two. In fact, I think we'd better make it one——"

"Why not go the whole hog, and go empty-handed?" asked Handforth tartly.

NEXT WEDNESDAY!

"HANDFORTH'S ARK!"

Of course, Handy would think of something like this.

It's a whacking great Ark—a very realistic affair, and he proposes that the whole school should escape in it.

The Boys of St. Frank's are all getting a bit fed up with the floods, and no proper grub! So Nipper and the rest welcome the idea.

There's a lot of fun when they start building the Ark, and not a few thrills!

You will thoroughly enjoy reading this new story of life in flood-bound St. Frank's. To make quite sure of obtaining next week's issue, ask your newsagent to reserve it for you—ask him to-day!

More exciting chapters from **"THE BURIED WORLD!"**

This yarn of amazing adventure is one of the finest serials that have ever appeared in the Old Paper.



This small reproduction will give you some idea of next week's cover. Don't miss "HANDFORTH'S ARK!"

ORDER IN ADVANCE!

"I would do, only there might be a riot," explained Nipper. "We can come back for two or three loads later on. The most important thing is to get you lot back to the school, so that you can change into dry things."

"I wonder what the miller will say when he finds that we've boned his stock?" asked Reggie Pitt, with a grin.

"He ought to be pleased," replied Nipper. "We'll keep an account of what we take, and the school authorities will naturally settle up the bill. Any food we grab, the school'll pay for—and willingly, too. Let's be thankful we've got something to be going on with."

And almost immediately after that, preparations for the return were made. The faithful raft not only floated well under the weight of its human freight, but when a bag of oatmeal was lowered, it made very little difference. But Nipper refused to take any more sacks. The rest would do afterwards.

"We shall have quite enough struggle, battling up stream, as it is," he said. "As we found this flour and stuff, and as it's getting well into the afternoon, I rather think we'd better change our plans. No

need to go into Bannington for food now. We'd better please Miss Broome's heart by deciding to stick at the school."

"Just what I was thinking," said Reggie Pitt. "I don't suppose the girls will mind—"

"Of course we won't," said Violet promptly. "It's fun."

"By to-morrow, I should think, there'll be an organised plan to take us all away and send us home," continued Nipper thoughtfully. "I don't mind admitting that I'm a bit worried about the gov'nor, but it's no good making any wild guesses. We'll just carry on, and hope for the best."

And they set off for St. Frank's.

After all, it was getting late in the afternoon now, and it would not be very wise to set off with a raft-load of girls. Besides, there was food now, so the immediate problem was solved. True, the food would probably be primitive, but that, in a way, would only add to its attractiveness. And St. Frank's was hungry enough to eat dog biscuits.

The task of pulling the raft up the river was strenuous. They kept out of the current as much as possible, cutting across the flooded

meadows and fields. And so they went back, carrying good news and good food with them.



CHAPTER 19.

PREPARING FOR THE FEAST!

NELSON LEE shook his head rather dubiously as he drew Barry Stokes aside.

"I'm afraid he's in rather a bad way, Barry," he said softly. "The sooner we can get him into Caistowe, the better. He not only needs medical attention, but warmth, and every comfort."

"I believe you're right," said Mr. Stokes concernedly.

They were standing in a little cottage just off the Caistowe road. It was to this temporary haven that they had brought Dr. Malcolm Stafford, an hour or so earlier.

There was only a woman in the place, her husband being away, engaged on his farm work—for up here, in this district, the floods had not penetrated. The good woman had done everything in her power, and the Head was hunched up in front of the roaring fire, wrapped in blankets.

But it was clear that he needed better care than this, for he had a hectic flush on his face, and the chill had affected his health. Nelson Lee could read the signs, and he was uneasy.

"A drenching is no light thing for a man of Dr. Stafford's age," he continued gravely. "The worry and the excitement, too—all these have contributed to his present collapse. How are you feeling, yourself, Barry?"

"Oh, fit," replied Mr. Stokes. "And you?"

"There's nothing wrong with me," replied Nelson Lee. "I'm infernally worried about the school, though—some good news about St. Frank's would buck the Head up enormously."

"Just our confounded luck," growled the Housemaster of the West House. "We saw the school, and couldn't even learn a thing! Do you think there's any chance of making another shot this afternoon?"

"Be reasonable, Barry," grunted Lee. "We had enough trouble to get hold of that first boat, and we're not likely to find one here in this desolate waste. Besides, I'm more worried about the Head. We've got to get him to Caistowe."

Mr. Stokes went off almost at once, saying that he would run practically all the way. Dr. Stafford was really in need of medical attention. He had caught a serious chill, and his mental condition, too, was giving Nelson Lee cause for anxiety. The recent worry had affected the Head greatly.

And while Mr. Stokes was speeding towards Caistowe, the raft was just gliding smoothly over the flooded meadows and across the school wall into the Triangle. Cheers were going up from every House—for the

raft had gone off empty, and had come back loaded.

There was much rejoicing, for most fellows had been pessimistic regarding the fate of that first party. But now the whole position was different. The lost ones were restored, and, what was more, the glorious news of the food discovery had swept through the school like a flame.

Everybody agreed that it would be perfectly preposterous to waste the raft on taking a batch of girls to Bannington when it could be utilised for the purpose of fetching a load of food.

This food was certain, and within easy reach.

There wasn't the slightest guarantee that any food would be available in Bannington. With the town flooded, it stood to reason that the food stocks in all the shops would be ruined. And the town itself was probably consuming all the fresh supplies that had been rushed in.

So it was far safer to stay at St. Frank's, and make do with the flour and the oatmeal. There were no dissentient voices.

"Well, that's settled, then," said Nipper briskly. "We shall only have time for about two journeys, at the most, and then it'll be dark. So it's just as well that we've come to this decision. While we're gone, a crowd of you fellows had better get busy with some fires."

"It's easy to say, but how are we going to do it?" asked De Valerie.

"Get hold of any wood you can—tear up the rest of the attic floors, if necessary," replied Nipper. "We can't have hot food without fires, so almost any measures like that are permissible."

"All right—you buzz off, and leave it to us," put in Fullwood. "We'll find all the tins we can, too. We'll make do with anything, so long as it'll serve to bake a chunk of dough on it. But the fires are the main thing, and we'll get them going."

Once again the raft set off, and returned within the hour, heavily laden with weighty sacks. And then the raft went from House to House, distributing its supplies. Each House was to look after itself, and do its own food preparing and cooking. The most difficult problem was in the Ancient House, where all the West House boys had to be catered for, too. But nobody minded. The terror of the flood had subsided, and the school was beginning to look upon the whole thing as a good lark.

Hunger was the greatest factor of all, and the prospect of making bread, baking it, and eating it hot, appealed to the fellows enormously.

By the time that the raft had made a second trip, and had been safely moored in the West Square, darkness had begun to descend upon St. Frank's. And while the school was alive with activity from end to end, preparing an evening meal, Dr. Stafford was being conveyed to Caistowe in a taxi. There was no flood in Caistowe, owing to the

ridge of hills which cut it off from the Stowe valley. The river was racing through the town like a mountain torrent, and the bridge had been swept away. But this was the only echo of the flood that Caistowe got.

But enormous damage had been done by the recent hurricane. The promenade was torn up and shattered, hundreds of boats had been lost, and the general damage was great.

By the time Dr. Stafford had been made comfortable in the best hotel, darkness had fallen, and Nelson Lee realised the impossibility of making another attempt to reach St. Frank's that night.

"We shall have to wait until the morning, after all, Barry," he said. "It's a nuisance, but it would be sheer madness to venture on the flood in darkness, particularly after what happened to us to-day."

"Couldn't we get hold of a motor-boat, and fix up a searchlight on her?" suggested Mr. Stokes. "If so, we could risk—"

"I dare say we could get a motor-boat here, but how can we convey it to the flood?" asked Lee. "It's impossible for any craft to get up the river here—it's raging like a rapid! No, we shall have to wait until to-morrow. It's galling, but Nature has beaten us."

"And those poor young beggars marooned at St. Frank's," said Mr. Stokes feelingly. "Goodness knows how they're getting on, without a master, or even a prefect—or without any food."

But they would have been surprised if they could have glanced into St. Frank's at that moment.

Cheery fires were blazing in almost every upper room in almost every House, and crowds of fellows were gathered round them, eagerly watching the cooking preparations. The atmosphere was becoming heavy with an intoxicating odour of baking bread.

The fires were being fed with wood mostly. And the majority of this wood was taken from the attic floorings. But plenty of the supplies had been gathered in by means of the raft—for chicken-coops, broken fencing, and similar scraps of wreckage were constantly floating past the school. Dried in front of the fires, this stuff would make excellent fuel.

All manner of articles were used as cooking utensils—enamel bowls, shovels, tin lids, and everything of that nature that could be commandeered for service.

But who cared how the stuff was cooked, so long as it was made ready? And who cared whether it contained baking-powder or whether it didn't? Plain flour and water mixed, and half-baked into a stodgy pancake, tasted too wonderful for words.

St. Frank's, it must be remembered, had not eaten a morsel of food for over twenty-four hours. From dinner-time one day until six o'clock in the evening of the next! It was scarcely any wonder that the fellows fell upon the indigestible food as though it were the choicest banquet!



CHAPTER 20.

CAUSE AND EFFECT!

NIPPER undressed contentedly.

"Well, considering everything, we've had a pretty good day," he said, in a cheery voice. "We've made a jolly good raft, we've found a supply of food—of sorts—and we're all ready to get busy on the real rescue work to-morrow morning. To-night, I think, we've earned a good sleep."

"But shall we get it?" asked Sir Montie Tregellis-West doubtfully. "Dear old boy, shall we get it? Without wishing to be frightfully pessimistic, I must remark that the interior man is feeling slightly leaden. Begad! I can detect a few rumbles."

Nipper grinned.

"That's only to be expected, Montie," he replied. "We went without food for twenty-four hours, and then we scoffed a lot of half-cooked dough. But it won't do us any harm, so don't worry."

It was nearly ten o'clock now. That evening meal in the Ancient House had occupied four solid hours, for the cooking facilities were primitive. And the hungry juniors had been compelled to feed in batches, as the appalling stuff was made and cooked. At first there had been a lot of argument, but all this had been settled by drawing lots.

And now, at last, the school was settling down for the night.

Nobody viewed the morrow with apprehension.

There would be breakfast, for one thing—a big improvement on the day that had just passed. True, it wouldn't be a sumptuous breakfast, but food, when all was said and done, was food. And after that meal, the raft would get busy, transporting the marooned ones to Bannington.

So there was every reason for general peace of mind. The morrow, it was felt, would witness the end of their troubles. The fellows didn't quite realise what Fate held in store for them!

In Handforth's dormitory, there was a rearrangement. Church refused, point-blank, to share Handforth's bed again. So he took a blanket, and departed for one of the other dormitories where there happened to be an odd mattress. This couch, in Church's opinion, would be sheer luxury compared to the tortures he had suffered the previous night.

So Handforth got into his bed alone.

"Blessed if I can understand what's wrong with the ass!" he remarked, after Church had gone.

"Colly-wobbles, I think," said Pitt.

"Rats!" said Handforth. "He was all right when he went out—"

"I thought you were talking about Fatty," said Reggie. "He's just dropped off into a torpid sort of doze. If he's ill, it'll only

serve him right. Did you see what he was eating?"

"Why, didn't he have the same as us?" asked Handforth.

"He cooked most of it," grinned Jack Grey. "But, by jingo! The fat porpoise was eating one of his pancakes for every two that he handed round! And he didn't seem to care whether they were cooked or not. No wonder he had a glassy look in his eye when he rolled into bed!"

"Oh, bother him!" said Handforth, yawning. "We've had a good day, so now we'll have a good sleep."

They blew the candle out, and settled down for the night. But peace was not to be so easily gained. An hour passed in comparative silence. Comparative is the correct word to use, since various uncouth noises from Handforth's bed scarcely added to the general peace.

But after that, towards midnight, other sounds stole through the room. Low moanings arose. McClure was the first to hear them—for the very excellent reason that they were happening in his ear. He sat up in bed, and found Fatty Little writhing and twisting like a freshly-landed eel.

"Wake up, you fathead!" snorted McClure. "Hi, Fatty! Stop it! How the dickens can I sleep with this commotion going on?"

He shook Fatty Little's shoulder, but there was no result. He heaved and he thumped, but the symptoms continued. Mac yelled until he was hoarse—until he became thoroughly alarmed.

"What's it all about?" asked Reggie Pitt complainingly. "Isn't Handy satisfied with the whole bed to himself?"

"It's not Handy—it's this fat piece of blubber!" gasped McClure. "I think he's dying! I can't wake him up, and——"

He was interrupted by a perfect roar of anguish from the fat contortionist.

"What was that?" gasped Handforth, sitting up. "Who's there? What the—— Oh!" he added, as a light was struck. "What are you chaps doing out of your beds——"

"My only hat!" ejaculated Pitt, with concern. "The chap's absolutely ill! Ye gods and little fishes! Look at his face!"

They hauled Fatty Little into a sitting posture, and they stared at his face in alarm. It had become a sort of sickly yellowish colour, with a tinge of green beneath the eyes. Moans continued to come from his interior, and his eyes were glassy and fixed.

"Wake up!" shouted Pitt.

"I'll wake him!" growled Handforth aggressively.

"Cheese it, old man!" protested Mac. "Fatty's not spoofing. He's ill! He's been trying to kill himself with his own cooking! What the dickens shall we do with him?"

"If he keeps up that noise, we'll dump him out into the flood, and give him a cooler!" threatened Handforth. "By George! He's getting worse! We can't stand this!"

Dick Hamilton came in, having been aroused by the dreadful sounds. Fatty Little was heaved out of bed and shaken again. But he was utterly unconscious—which, perhaps, was all to the good, for it was a moral certainty that he would have been in mortal agony had he been awake.

"On the whole, it's a pity he's unconscious," said Nipper. "When he awakens, he won't know anything about it, so it won't be a lesson to him. We'd better give him a shock. Come, you fellows—let's try something drastic—we've got to think of the poor chap's health!"

The window of the dormitory was flung open, Fatty's legs were grasped by many hands—for such a weight as that needed many hands—and he was lowered head foremost into the flood.

Fatty's head went under, and as he came to the surface he emitted a bellow that sounded promising. A second dip did the trick completely, and when he was hauled in, quite dry except for his head, he was fully awake.

"I'm dying!" were the first coherent words he uttered. "I'm pegging out! Ooooh! There's—there's something inside me——"

"Really?" asked Pitt, in mock surprise.

"Something inside me that keeps——"

But Fatty could proceed no further. Swaying dizzily, uttering horrid moans, he vanished from the dormitory, and the other juniors gazed at one another significantly.

In the meantime, Fatty was leaning out of the passage window. Half an hour later Fatty crawled back to bed. He was a pale, wan ghost of his former self, but as he measured at least four inches less round the waist, the trouble was probably over.

And it was quite safe to assume that when breakfast-time arrived Fatty Little would again walk off with the first prize as the champion scuffer.

THE END.

(Continue this great series of yarns in next week's issue with "HANDFORTH'S ARK!" This latest series is one of the best that Edwy Searles Brooks has ever given us. You can make SURE of next Wednesday's NELSON LEE LIBRARY if you ask your newsagent to reserve it for you!)





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.

PRINCE OSWY* (Margate), Sidney Cohen (Leeds), W. E. Swonnell (Brighton), Douglas Raine (Clayton West), Dennis Lawrence (Bristol), A Loyal Reader (Wallasey), J. O. D'Arcy (Bournemouth), N. Baigent (Lymington), Victor Balham* (Finchley), Charles W. Noble* (Toronto), Eric Gamble (Wisbech), A. J. N. (Gillingham), Leon Rye (Maidstone), Lionel Moxom* (Leeds), Miss Rose Lyttleton* (Poplar), Gordon Alexander Edwin Turnock (Chichester), Audrey Shand** (Subiaco, W. Australia), 206* (Huddersfield), Kenneth Graham (Cardiff), Patrick McSweeney (Paddington), W. E. Wetton* (Sleaford).

Here is the information you want, Leslie, old son. Oh, sorry! I mean, Prince Oswy. I hope your Royal Highness will forgive the liberty of using your other Christian name. The Duke of Somerton's family name is Hubert Arthur Alaric Cavendish; Lord Pippinton's is Clarence Augustus Jerome Marchant; Yorke's Christian name is Roderick, and Johnny and Bertie Onions are John and Albert.

Thanks, 206, for pulling me up. It was a pure mistake. Thanks for your sketches, which are already in my Scrap Book—not my W.P.B.

I am afraid you are one of those unfortunate beings who have no sense of humour, Victor Balham. You don't seem to realise that Handforth's arrogance, and his conceit, and his bluster, are all on the surface. Handy is a very honest fellow just beneath the skin, however. When it comes to anything that really matters, he drops his bluster like a cloak, and reveals himself as one of the best. And he is by no means such a fool as he makes himself out to be. I don't think you have probed very deeply into his character, or you would not refer to him as "a brainless loon."

Thanks for that suggestion of yours, A. J. N. It is quite a good idea, and if I

have a chance I will utilise it. Of course, I get all sorts of wheezes sent to me, but the majority are either wild and woolly, or else weird and wonderful. Yours is top-notch.

I don't think much of your three complaints, Lionel, old chap. Have another go, and see if you can't find something worth pulling me up about. As a matter of fact, I believe you were hard up for something to write about.

Sorry, Miss Rose, but I'm afraid I shan't be able to write a story such as you suggest—that is, confined to the Moor View girls alone. The Old Paper is primarily for recording the adventures of the St. Frank's fellows, and the girls are only, at the best, a sort of secondary interest. A story *all* about the girls would be rather off the mark. Why, I should have hundreds of complaints from those girl-hater chaps (and from girls, too) saying that the N.L.L. ought to be called "Irene's Paper," or "Winnie's Weekly," or something like that.

Several more readers have asked me to send them my photograph. In case any more of you are thinking of making the same request, let me give you a word of warning. You don't know what you are asking for! Still, if you *will* persist, don't blame me if I take you at your word, and send one. But I shall only take this extreme measure, and condemn you to seeing what I really look like, on condition that you disillusion me first. In other words, I'll take the fatal step of sending an autographed photo to every reader who sends me his or hers.

Edwy Searles Brooks

Our Magazine Corner

SHEEP FARMING

An Interesting Article dealing with Station Life in Australia.

The Wheat Lands.

EVERY boy is naturally fascinated by stories of life in the vast continent of Australia. Those far-stretching lands in the West must ever hold the power to thrill all who love adventure.

But it must be remembered that life in Australia is not all thrills. Work has to be done there as much as it has in England.

Melbourne, Sydney, and the other big towns, are not very unlike the big towns at home. For hard work, combining the spice of adventure, we must go to the great open spaces, up-country, in the wheat-lands, and cattle and sheep stations.

Station Life in Australia.

Sometimes wheat and sheep farming are combined, sometimes sheep and cattle form the mixture. But the bigger stations in Australia specialise, as a rule.

This can be better understood when it is explained that twenty thousand sheep is by no means a large flock over there. Imagine it, if you can. A veritable sea of bobbing, dirty fleeces extending as far as the eye can reach, and then, beyond that, more, and still more sheep.

Of course, they are not reared and tended in the same manner as English animals are. There is far less "spoon-feeding" about the business in Australia.

But, all the same, such huge collections of animals need large spaces to roam over, and it is not difficult to understand that some of the big stations devoted to sheep-farming cover an area of a hundred square miles, or more.

Plenty of Hard Work.

Constantly the station has to be patrolled to its farthest corners, providing hard and tiring work for the hands to whom that duty is allotted. Fences have to be examined, and repairs effected where necessary. Barbed wire also has to be mended.

The barbed wire surrounding the station provides a fruitful hunting-ground for the "wool-gatherer," for the sheep frequently come into contact with the sharp spurs, and leave behind a specimen of their fleece.

Though the amount gathered thus during the course of the year may be worth several hundred pounds, it is a very small quantity compared with that which shearing produces.

Shearing is a tremendous task; usually it is performed by experts at the job, who travel from station to station.

The lightning fashion in which they run their motor-driven clippers over the animals is a joy to witness. Big money is earned by skilled men of this sort, who also sort out according to quality and condition the fleeces, and pack them in huge square bales, suitable for transportation.

Preparing Sheep for Market.

Preparing the sheep for market is a task that makes every hour it occupies a crowded one. First, riders have to go out and muster the hordes of stupid animals to the central paddocks.

Sorting out follows. Rams are placed in one paddock, ewes in another, lambs and wethers each find themselves separated according to their ages.

A careful examination of each group follows, and finally a flock is drafted for market. There follows the job of droving, for which dogs and mounted men, varying in numbers according to the size of the flock, are detailed off. Possibly the nearest station is thirty or forty miles distant, and it is the duty of the drovers to get them there and embark them upon, perhaps, a five-hundred-miles journey.

A Long Trip.

The trip to the railway siding is possibly a three-days' journey through the bush, and the drovers will take with them food enough to last them over.

Their beds for nearly a week will be beneath the stars; but the tiring nature of their work ensures as much sleep as they can allow themselves. For they are up and away again well before dawn the next morning.

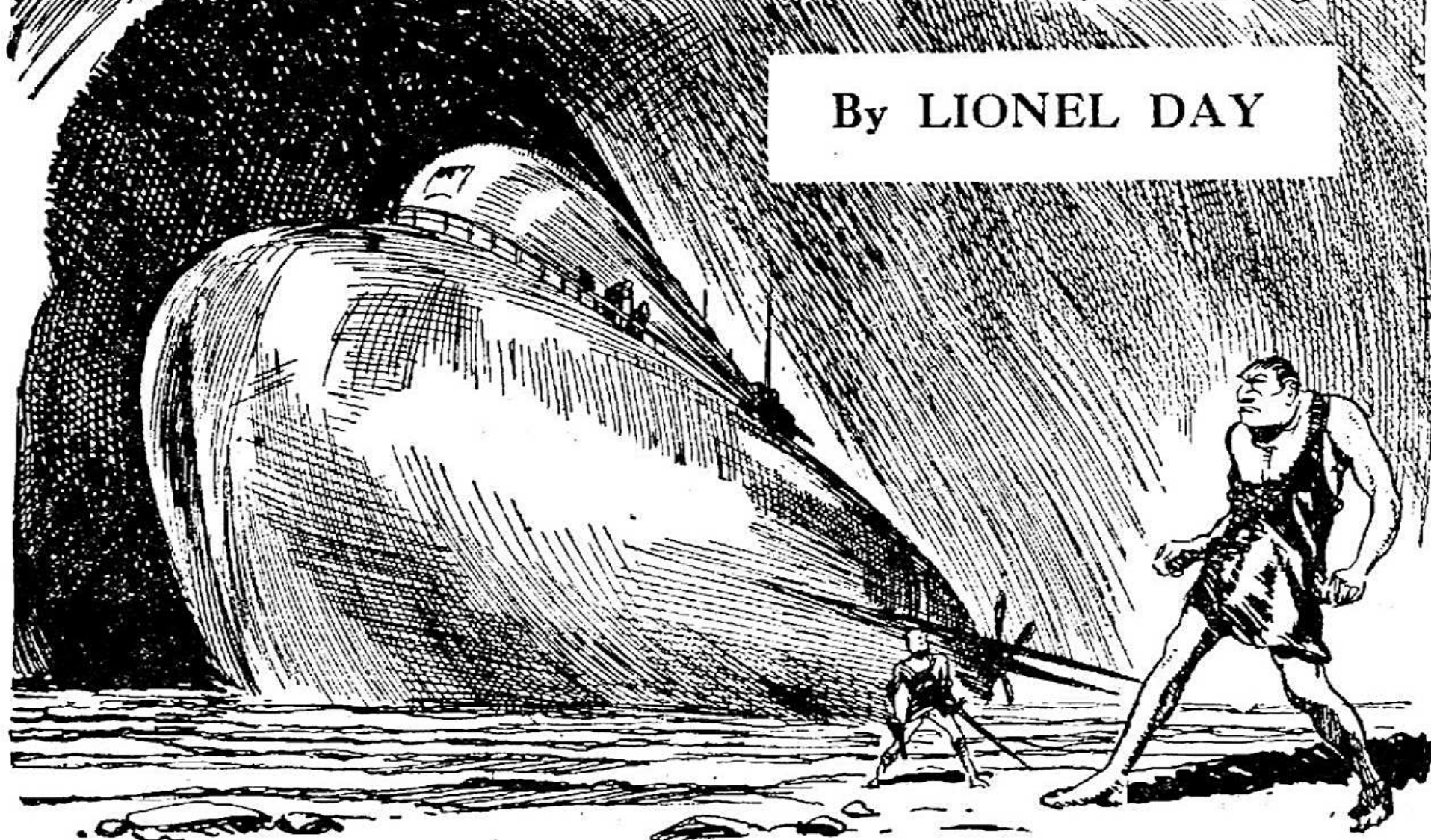
At their journey's end, at last, the drovers pen their charges as a preliminary to "trucking" them. Special inclined platforms leading from the pens facilitate this task, but it is necessarily a long and trying business when dealing with animals which have an inclination to go anywhere but in the trucks.

These are but a few of the many incidents in the life of the Australian station hand, and though they may convey but a slight idea of the work he has to perform, they at least illustrate the variety in his existence. It is real adventure to the fellow who loves the life.

*The Land of the Little People!**Amazing Chapters Below!*

THE BURIED WORLD!

By LIONEL DAY



THIS GREAT NEW ADVENTURE SERIAL GETS MORE AND MORE EXCITING!

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. 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 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. They stop the submarine and go on deck. From the shore come several gigantic figures, and they are captured. Jim escapes. Later he rescues a little man named Masra, who, in return, befriends him. Masra belongs to the Kru people, who are holding a ceremony in a big cave. He takes Jim with him and produces a flint knife. With this he gashes his arm, and then Jim's, while the people gathered round sing a strange chant.

(Now read this week's thrilling chapters.)

The Kru People

JIM had read enough of the habits of primitive races to realise the meaning of this rite. He was being received into blood brotherhood with the Little People. As the result of that lucky impulse, which had made him spring forward to this man's assistance, he had fallen among friends. How good those friends were, he was to learn in the days that followed.

He was no longer a waif—a lonely wanderer in this nightmare world. He slept snugly—he was

fed well, and after his late terrifying experiences he had what he valued most—a sense of safety and security.

At first his great difficulty was the one of communication, but by means of that clever pictorial writing which the Little People possessed, he began rapidly to pick up the language. As there was no sunrise or sunset to mark the passage of time, he would have been unable to gauge how long he had been with the Little People before he acquired some knowledge of the language, if it had not been for his watch. By keeping a careful record of each twenty-four

hours, he found that he had been there just a month when he had progressed sufficiently to be able to speak in their tongue.

The pretty girl, whom he discovered was the daughter of the man he had rescued, was his very patient instructress. She would draw an object on the slate and then repeat the word for it a dozen times, until he had got it correctly. Gradually his vocabulary increased so that he found himself in a position to exchange ideas. The girl's name was Tinta, and Masra was her father. The Little People were known as the Kru—the very word he had heard used with such contempt by the giant when he had been flung on the pile of fish. The giants were known as the Falta.

For generations untold there had been war between the Kru and the Falta. Tinta, discovering his interest in the history of her people, took him to a vast domed cavernous hall where the records, drawn in mural paintings, were collected. Some of these drawings from their faded colours must have been thousands of years old, Jim reflected.

"We come from up there," Tinta exclaimed, raising her hands above her head. "From somewhere there, there is a bright light. Once the Kru and the Falta were the same, but ages ago they separated, the Falta to the Outer Circle—the Kru to the Inner."

She tapped her head.

"The Kru have heads on their shoulders. The Falta are foolish. Because they grow bigger and bigger, they think they are the lords of this place. But they are not. It was the Kru who built the great drain, so that they could get food from above. It was the Falta who have seized it, and, because they are so big and strong, seek to hold it against us."

Jim realised that he was listening to the solution of the problem that had so puzzled Stanislaus Cripps. Apparently the Kru, generations ago—at a period which they described as "when they left the great light"—had discovered that the water of the ocean above percolated through a fissure in the rock.

How or when they had made the further discovery that those dead flattened fish were squeezed through that fissure, Jim never learned, but having lighted upon the fact, that there was a source of food, the Kru had set themselves with great intelligence to develop it. The details were not quite clear to Jim, but generally he gathered that they had constructed a kind of vast drain-pipe, which communicated with the bed of the ocean and ended in the lake into which the Flying Submarine had been carried.

By some elementary system of valves, they were able to control the flow of this water, thereby securing a plentiful supply of fish whenever they wanted it. At some period the Falta, glorying in their enormously superior strength, had taken possession of this invention and selfishly used it entirely for their own purpose.

"Ever since then there has been war," Tinta explained. "They keep from us the food, which they would never have eaten had it not been for the Kru. They think because they are so tall and strong, that we do not matter. But little by little, they are learning their mistake. There are about a hundred now. Before there were many more."

The fire jet, Jim discovered, was a curious bellows arrangement which projected a stream of liquid fire, manufactured from certain by-products of the vast coal deposits that abounded in Kru land. As Tinta boasted, the Kru had learned to use their heads. The illuminations of the caves were derived from oil extracted from coal, which, of course, also provided them with their heating and their means of cooking food.

The food puzzled Jim for some time, until Tinta took him a long walk one day to a vast

subterranean cavern. As they entered it the boy's eyes were almost dazzled by the strange greenish light that came from the ground. As his sight became accustomed to the light, he saw, stretching before him in the dim distance, what looked like a huge field of mushrooms. They grew as thickly as the blades of grass on a lawn.

"When the Falta take our food the Kru have to think of some other way of living," Tinta exclaimed. "Here is the food we eat. Between the great lights, our food grows anew three hundred and sixty-five times, and we have but to gather it."

She did not use the number "365," but expressed herself by showing all her fingers thirty-six times and then finally adding the five. Jim was struck by a curious coincidence. He inquired what she meant by the words "between the great lights."

"It is a light that comes—a wonderful light such as we do not know down here. We reckon everything by it. When a Kru dies, we say he has seen the great light a hundred times."

Her pretty face of a sudden grew grave.

"The Falta hold a festival on the coming of the great light. You have seen the picture. Any of the Kru they have caught, whom they think worthy, are kept until that moment and then sacrificed to their god."

Jim recalled the picture he had seen in his chamber—the old giant priest standing at the base of some enormous statue, holding a flint knife to the throat of an unfortunate Kru.

"That's curious, Tinta, because where I come from, we measure, what we call time, by dividing it into three hundred and sixty-five days—that is the time it takes the earth to go round the sun."

It took Tinta some time before she could understand this explanation, but once she had grasped it, she made a remark which astonished Jim by its intelligence.

"The records say that we come from up there. Perhaps we have remembered all these ages."

Wonders of the Underworld!

THE feast of the great light was drawing near, she told him, and in order to deprive the Falta of any victims for their sacrificial rights, extra precautions were taken by the Kru people. No one was allowed out of the caves; not even the prospect of killing one of their giant enemies was considered an excuse for disobeying this law. Anyone found guilty of disobeying it was sentenced to death.

On the same day that Tinta took him to the Cave of the Mushrooms, she showed him yet another wonder of their underworld civilisation. Jim had been very puzzled by the plentiful supply of a liquid that looked like milk and tasted like milk. Now taking him to an adjoining cavern—they walked through a cutting in the Forest of Mushrooms—she showed him what at first looked to him like an enormous number of white bubbles lying in the ground. Only on examining them closer, he saw that they moved. Tinta touched one of these strange creatures, and it rose instantly with a sluggish motion.

It had four legs—the back pair were the longer, scarcely three feet in length, the front ones not more than a foot. These creatures had absurdly minute heads and no eyes. It was from them that the milk supply was obtained, but it was not until Tinta explained that these animals were traditionally supposed to have come with them from the Great Light, that some possible explanation dawned upon the boy.

These animals might be cows who, through countless generations, had become adapted physiologically to their environment. In the dark-

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ness in which they lived they had no use for their eyes, and so their eyes had practically disappeared. As they fed upon the fungi supplied by the Kru—much as turnips are fed to cattle in the winter time—they had no use for motion and their legs had gradually decreased in size. The one function that was essential—the supplying of milk—continued.

Another day Tinta showed him to what further use the Kru had turned their inexhaustible supply of fungi. From those that were not edible—some of them grew to the height of an ordinary tree—the fibre was obtained, out of which the Kru women spun a fine silky yarn, which was woven into the material for their clothes.

One day after Jim had been in the Kru land about four months, Tinta told him that the ban, which forbade any of the Little People to pass out of their own territory, was about to be imposed again. Thinking he would be interested, she asked him to come with her.

He found the Kru people assembled, not in the cavern where he had undergone the rite of blood brotherhood, but in a cave which he never remembered to have seen before. Out of this cave there led a tunnel along which it was only possible for an ordinary man to crawl. It led, so Tinta told him, to that very spot where he had been rescued.

"From there you can see the land of the Falta," she explained.

A great curiosity seized upon Jim to view once again that cavernous world where he had suffered so much, and, Tinta, readily falling in with his suggestion, they crawled on their hands and knees along the tunnel. Presently they found themselves kneeling side by side staring out into that strange blue atmosphere. Once more he could see the dark murky waters of the lake on which the Flying Submarine had floated. Once

more he glimpsed the great clumsy stone houses that the Falta giants had erected. Far off, too, he glimpsed some of the Falta themselves moving about like huge statues in the azure gloom.

"They have no sacrifice this time for the Feast of the Great Light," Tinta exclaimed with intense vehemence. "Not one of the Kru people has been seized."

Suddenly she gave a little cry of surprise and pointed with her finger into the blue haze.

"I never remember to have seen anything like that before," she exclaimed.

Following the direction of her gaze, Jim saw a flash of yellow light. It was repeated again and again. Suddenly he rose to his knees, a look of utter astonishment creeping into his face. There was a strange familiarity about those flashes. Dot-dash dot-dot-dash. It was somebody signalling in Morse code. He recognised it instantly, for he had taken a class badge as a scout for signalling. And who in that buried world could be using Morse?

Instantly it dawned upon him and his heart gave a leap. It must be Stanislaus Cripps who was signalling. He fumbled in his coat pocket, and drew out the small electric torch he had brought with him from home. Another moment and he had flashed back the reply that the message was being noted.

"What are you doing?" Tinta exclaimed at his side. "What is that thing that makes the yellow light?"

But he had forgotten Tinta for the moment. He was watching with fixed gaze those dots and dashes that pierced the azure gloom.

"Stanislaus Cripps . . . S.O.S.," came the message in Morse. "Unless you can rescue me at once you will never see me again. I have been sentenced to death by the Falta—they have chosen me as their next sacrifice."

The Message from the Void!

TO Jim the flashes that pierced the azure murk of the Buried World were something more than a mere message transmitted in Morse code. During the months that he had lived with the Kru people, he had begun almost insensibly to adapt himself to that existence. He had come to think that he would have to spend the remainder of his days there, and had tried to make the best of his situation. Those flashes coming so unexpectedly out of the void seemed now to sweep his mind clear of such feelings of resignation.

It was as if he had come into contact once again with the world he knew. He was speaking to Stanislaus Cripps—a man however great his scientific genius, who belonged to the same human race as himself.

"What are you doing? Why don't you answer me?" asked Tinta.

"Tinta, my friend is over there! Those flashes of light that you see—they're made with an instrument similar to this."

He showed her his electric torch which she examined with curiosity.

"By those flashes he has just sent me a message, Tinta. He is held prisoner by the Falta, and he has just been telling me that he is to be sacrificed to their god—I suppose at the feast of the coming of the Great Light."

Tinta looked at him with big, dark sorrowful eyes.

"And you want to go to him and help him, and you can't."

"Can't?" Jim exclaimed. "What on earth do you mean, Tinta? Why, of course, I must. Whatever the risk, I couldn't leave him without making some effort to help him. You see, we're friends."

Even as he uttered those words he had a curious sense of the irony of fate. He was calling Stanislaus Cripps his friend, when in reality the man had intended to swindle his mother.

"But you forget the ban," Tinta exclaimed. "Listen, it has been decreed now."

From the tunnel behind them came the sound of the Kru people chanting in unison.

"The Falta are our enemies. The Falta desire to catch us and sacrifice us at the coming of the Great Light. The Falta god must have no victims. Until the passing of the Great Light no Kru must leave the Inner Cavern. It is decreed. Death to those who disobey!"

The strange chorus paused a moment and then rose again ominously.

"Death. Death. Death."

He felt a cold shudder pass over his body. Here was a complication he had never anticipated. If he attempted to help Stanislaus Cripps, he could never set foot in the world of the Kru again. To do so would be death.

"But I must, Tinta," he gasped. "I can't leave my friend there helpless, at the mercy of the Falta."

Even as he uttered the words those dots and dashes began to reappear.

"S.O.S. S.O.S."

There was something pathetic in that desperate repetition. Before the boy's imagination there rose a picture of Stanislaus Cripps, with his big head and his red, shaggy beard, kept a prisoner by the Falta. He could visualise that great scientific genius being fingered by the giants very much as a farmer examines some fat heifer at a country market.

How Stanislaus Cripps would hate it! How the very consciousness of his own immense superiority to those great brainless creatures would reduce him to a state of almost insane rage! And he was to be sacrificed.

"Tinta, you must tell me. When does the Great Light come?"

The girl held up four fingers.

"So many times as the food is gathered and replenished in the cave of the mushrooms."

That was roughly four periods of twenty-four hours, Jim knew, from the calculations he had made by means of his watch. Only four days, and then Stanislaus Cripps would be seized by that terrible old man with the white hair, who acted as high priest of the Falta, and sacrificed to his god. As that thought passed through his mind, he gently freed himself from Tinta's hold, and holding the torch in his hand began to flash a message back.

"Jim here—will help you if I can."

The answer came back instantly.

"Where is the Flying Submarine?"

"I don't know."

"Boy, you must find it. Search and search without delay."

"I will do my best. If I find it, what do I do?"

"Facing the switchboard in the pilot house, the right-hand lever controls the engine, the left-hand lever the air reservoirs. To rise you move the left-hand one—to move horizontally, press the right-hand one. Got that, boy?"

It was strange, but as he painfully de-coded that message it seemed to him that he could almost hear Stanislaus Cripps' booming voice.

"I will begin search at once," he flashed back.

"There is still four days. Where are you?"

"Cage at base of idol on left-hand side. Don't fail me, boy. You can signal to me how you progress."

The Search for the Submarine.

THOSE flashes vanished abruptly. Jim lay quite still for a moment and then turned to Tinta. His heart was stirred by a bitter feeling of regret. He must say good-bye to this girl whose friendship and companionship had meant so much to him—he must say good-bye to her for ever! In defiance of the Kru decree he was going out into the world of the Falta. To return would be death. He would never see her again. He caught her warm little hand in his.

"Tinta—I've got to leave you—leave you for ever. I go to try and save a friend—and that means I can never come back."

His voice broke a little with the emotion that possessed him.

"Tinta, you've been the dearest friend a boy could ever have. I shall never forget. Good-bye and God bless you."

She caught his arm as he made a movement to slip down out of the cavern and down the sloping rock to the floor of the Outer Cavern.

"If you go—you cannot go alone," she answered.

"But I must go alone. Who is there who would come with me? To leave the Inner Cavern would mean death."

"I will come with you, Krim," she replied simply, using her Kru attempt at his English name of Jim.

The boy stared at her in amazement.

"But, Tinta, that's impossible. You could never come back. And you might be seized by the Falta."

He shuddered at the thought of the terrible fate that might befall the girl.

"Tinta is not afraid," she exclaimed proudly.

"If you go—she goes."

He tried to argue with her, but in vain. Instead of paying any attention to his protests she merely began to make plans for their expedition.

"We must have food, Krim—milk in vessels, and we must get somehow a machine for the liquid flame. And we shall not be alone. There will be Masra my father."

Jim protested that such an idea was ridiculous—that Masra no more than she could be expected to abandon his home for ever on his account. The girl looked at him gravely.

"Did you not give Masra his life, and is he not blood brother with you? I go now to find him, and to get what we require. You will stay here till I return?"

Before he quite knew what he was saying, Jim had given the desired promise. Smiling at him she twisted round and disappeared up the tunnel. Jim, left alone, tried to face the situation by which he was confronted.

He was going to put his life deliberately in jeopardy among the giant Falta. There could be no turning back. There was only one answer he could make in honour to that pathetic appeal that Stanislaus Cripps had flashed across the azure world.

He must try and find the Flying Submarine. It seemed a hopeless proposition even supposing that mighty vessel was still in existence. It was conceivable that the Falta had broken it up—crushed it like one crushes an eggshell. That however was not likely, he told himself, recalling the enormous strength of the mysterious metal of which it was constructed. He took heart at that thought. The Flying Submarine must be somewhere. If only he could find it.

But he had only four days. And what was the area he had to search during that very limited time? If he only knew that, it would make his task easier. He could divide the area of search into four portions, and carry out a systematic exploration.

But how was he to discover the information? It suddenly flashed into his mind that perhaps Stanislaus Cripps knew. For many months now he had been a prisoner in the hands of the Falta, and it was inconceivable that one so intensely curious—who was always seeking knowledge—had not discovered many of the secrets of the Outer

Cavern. He took out his torch again and flashed the preliminary signal. Almost immediately the answer came back.

"Do you know how big the area of the Outer Cavern is?" Jim flashed.

"Roughly, yes, boy. From mathematical calculations I have made, I think that it is an ellipse, with its foci at either end of the lake, with a perimeter of a hundred to a hundred and two miles."

Jim digested that information as best he could. It was characteristic of Stanislaus Cripps that he should have admitted simply an error of two miles in his calculations. Assuming that he was right, then he had four days in which to cover that hundred miles—or twenty-five miles a day. Even as he arrived at this conclusion, he felt someone touch his arm. Looking round he saw Masra by his side.

"Masra—Masra," he gasped. "You mustn't. I have no right to take you away from your people."

Masra touched his arm and regarded him gravely.

"You gave me my life. We were made blood brothers in the Hall of the People. Where you go, I go."

As if to decide the matter he pushed past Jim and slid down the ten feet of sloping rock to the floor of the Outer Cavern. He had burnt his boats. He had defied the Kru decree. To go back now meant death. He raised both his hands above his head. In his right was a long yellow javelin. As Jim watched, he suddenly hurled the weapon at the face of the solid rock!

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ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE APPLICATION FORM No. 68.

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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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.

Silver Badges.

Naturally enough, there is a record list of applications for the new award. I am dealing with a steady stream of letters from members who have established their claim to this very handsome medal. The issue of the Silver Medal constitutes a highly important stage in the development of the St. Frank's League.

Our Colours.

A Bridport reader wants to know what are the colours of the League. These are White, Red and Blue.

A Glasgow Club.

There is good reason why the League should have a club in Glasgow. John Sorrel, 17, Dobbies Loan, Townhead, Glasgow, says: "I am determined to see a club in Glasgow as soon as possible." He can speedily have his ambition fulfilled, for he has a set of sterling chums, and once they get together the thing is done. I congratulate the member on the badge he made for himself until the League Badge came along.

A St. Frank's League Cycling Club.

David J. Warren, 3, Finsbury Avenue, Loughborough, Leicestershire, would like to see a club on the above lines. It is a good notion. A cheery club of keen jiggerites helps a lot in the way of successful jaunts.

A Grammarian.

A Birmingham pal asks me a puzzler about the word "snigger." As it is a verb, should it not be conjugated like this: I snig, he snigs, etc., with snug as a participle? I think not. The better way is not to snig at all. It's a bad word for a shocking bad habit.

Hints On Camping.

A South Australian chum says he has a holiday in May, and he would like some hints about cycling and camping. Well, camping in his country is a vastly different and a much freer business than here. A camper in Australia can go practically everywhere without asking permission. I can see my correspondent having a wonderful holiday in the wilds

Charles Biggs, 20, Pascoe Crescent, Essendon, Melbourne, Victoria, **Australia**, wishes to hear from readers in England interested in cricket and football.

P. J. Roche, 14, Mary Street, Coburg, Melbourne, Victoria, **Australia**, wishes to correspond with readers in Dublin interested in swimming, tennis, running, jumping and sport generally. Also with readers in England.

J. D. Hosking, 328, 6th Street, Maraisburg, Transvaal, **South Africa**, wishes to hear from a reader on a Canadian ranch.

Edmund Armitage, Jellico Avenue, Tuakau, Auckland, **New Zealand**, wishes to obtain a copy of the story of the St. Frank's boys' trip to the moon, called "In Trackless Space!"

Alexander Henderson, Airdrie, 25, Castle Street, The Avenue, **Southampton**, wishes to correspond with members in his district and to form a club. Also wishes to hear from any reader who has the "Schoolboy Actor" series to sell.

Sinclair R. Dobie, 22, Grand Parade, **Eastbourne**, wishes to hear from members in Eastbourne.

Ernest Rimell, 133, Devonshire Road, Chiswick, **London, W.4**, wishes to correspond with readers overseas interested in sport; all letters answered.

E. Simpson, bk. 145, Wright Road, Saltley, **Birmingham**, wishes to hear from readers in his district; also from a member in South Africa. All letters answered.

Rex Allcock, 17, Lois Avenue, Lenton, **Nottingham**, wishes to correspond with a reader who is keen on cartooning and caricaturing.

Norman Williams, 7, Woodberry Down, Finsbury Park, **London, N.4**, wants members for his club.

J. Roddam, Woodfield Road, Pitsea, **Essex**, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere about railways.

Philip H. Bloom, 60, Carton Vale, Maida Vale, **London, N.W.6**, wishes to correspond with readers overseas interested in boxing, cricket, rowing, and swimming.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.

V. Denton, 43, Middle Street, **Southampton**, wishes to hear from Leagueites in his neighbourhood so as to form a club.

Clifford Noblett, Marton House, 23, Frenchwood Avenue, Preston, **Lancs**, wishes to correspond with readers.

A Gulph, 9, McNicol Place, Geelong West, Victoria, **Australia**, wishes to hear from members in Geelong.

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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