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FUN!

THE FRESH AIR FIENDS ON A FARM!

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FARMERS ALL!

A grand long complete story, featuring the famous Boys of St. Frank's

New Series No. 59.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

June 18th, 1927.



Just as Handy took a flying leap over the wall, Church hung open the gate of the sty. The leader of Study D landed on the back of one of the largest porkers, as they charged madly towards the feeding troughs!

Handy and The Mystery Chest!—The Remove Treasure-Hunters!**FARMERS ALL!**

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

*A rousing long complete fun and adventure yarn,
featuring the Boys of St. Frank's in a new role.*

CHAPTER 1.

A Watery Awakening!

JOE CATCHPOLE removed a clay pipe from between his teeth, and grinned.

"I reckon this'll be it, 'Tom,'" he remarked, with a jerk of his thumb.

"Reckon so," agreed Tom Belcher briefly.

The two farm labourers were gazing at a rope which dangled down the ivy from one of the upper windows. It was dawn at Holt's Farm, and through a break in the trees the stately pile of St. Frank's could be seen in the distance.

It was a clear morning, with every prospect of heat later on. It was just one of those summer mornings which make life worth living. The sun was peeping up over the top of Bellton Wood, and the old farmhouse was quiet and still, save for the two labourers under the wall.

Not so in the farmyard, however.

From this quarter came a varied mass of sounds. Horses were neighing, cocks were

crowing vigorously, and pigs were rendering their morning song. In short, all the livestock was clamouring for breakfast.

"Better give it a pull," said Tom Belcher.

"That's what Master Handforth asked me to do, anyway," said Joe. "There's no tellin' what these 'ere boys will be up to. But I ain't sayin' as they're not as sporty a set as ever I see."

"No pride about 'em," agreed Tom.

"The way they worked yesterday was a treat," said Joe Catchpole, with enthusiasm. "They wasn't hexpert, as you might say, but they done their best, 'Tom. Workin' on a farm ain't so easy as you might think."

"Reckon it ain't!" said Tom, nodding.

Joe Catchpole had worked on the farm practically all his life, and he had been Mr. Jeremiah Holt's foreman. But the property no longer belonged to Mr. Holt. It had been purchased, lock, stock and barrel, by Sir Lucian Dexter, the distinguished archæologist. Incidentally, Sir Lucian was brother-in-

law to the Headmaster of St. Frank's, and a Governor of the school.

Not that Joe Catchpole and Tom Belcher minded the new partnership. In point of fact, they were mightily pleased, for Sir Lucian had retained all the old farm hands—five in number—at a considerable increase in salary. Old Holt had been niggardly and mean, but Sir Lucian was just the opposite.

Perhaps Lady Honoria, his wife, had something to do with it, for she was in full charge of the operations. In fact, the forceful Lady Honoria had commandeered the farm as a branch of her Open Air Society, and a number of St. Frank's juniors were installed as farm workers. It was Lady Honoria's latest stunt, and this was her experimental farm. Before long, she declared, the Open Air Society would have farms all over the country, operated by enthusiastic amateurs.

At first Joe Catchpole and his men had been dubious. They had conservative ideas, and regarded these changes with a wary eye. But, after all, it was none of their business as long as they were paid, and it certainly made a change. These were lively times at Holt's Farm.

"One long pull, Master Handforth says," declared Joe, as he seized the rope. "Then, when the bell rings, wait. If there ain't no result, pull agin."

"That's what he says," agreed Tom stoutly.

It was quite a simple arrangement, and it was one of Edward Oswald Handforth's great ideas. On the previous morning there had been some delay among the juniors in turning out, and Handforth—who regarded himself as the Chief of Staff—declared that there should be no further blunders.

So he had fixed up a bell over his bed, with a rope attached to it. And Joe Catchpole had promised to leave his cottage half an hour earlier than usual, so that he could rouse the amateur farm boys in full time.

"All right—here goes," said Joe, with a grin.

He gave the rope a long and steady pull.

"That's rum!" said Tom, staring upwards.

"What's rum?" asked Joe Catchpole.

"That didn't sound like no bell," replied Tom, scratching an angle of his rugged chin.

"More like a splash of water."

"I'll try agin," said Joe.

He pulled the rope much harder. In fact, he gave it a tremendous heave. And this time there was no mere splash of water, but the sound of a miniature deluge. These echoes came floating out through the open window. And they were followed by a series of unearthly gurgles which rivalled the uncouth gruntings from across the farmyard.

"E's awake!" said Tom, with satisfaction.

"Somethin's awake, anyhow," remarked Joe dubiously.

"And there warn't no bell," said Tom.

"Rum, I calls it."

"Looks like somethin's gone wrong," observed Joe, with concern.

Curiously enough, Handforth had the same impression.

The celebrated leader of Study D was sitting up in bed, blowing like a small whale. He was drenched. Cold water trickled out of his hair, and ran down his face. He was sitting in a soggy pool among the bedclothes.

"What's up with you, Handy?" came a grumbling voice from one of the other beds.

"Can't you let a chap sleep?"

Handforth gave a wild bellow.

"Who—who's done this?" he hooted thickly.

"Eh? Done what?"

Church and McClure sat up in their own beds. Nipper was sitting up, too, and so were Tommy Watson and Sir Montie Tregellis-West. There were six Remove fellows in this particular room, and they were using the camp beds which had been salvaged from the remains of the recent Fresh Air camp—the camp which had been demolished by a thunderstorm.

"You're wet, Handy," said Nipper, with conviction.

"Wet!" roared Handforth. "I'm drenched!"

A voice came in through the open window.

"You awake, young gents?" it inquired.

"Joe Catchpole!" said Church. "He promised to come—"

"By George!" breathed Handforth hoarsely.

He leapt off the soaking bed, and rushed to the window. Down below Joe Catchpole and Tom Belcher were staring up with cheerful faces.

"Five o'clock, Master Handforth," said Joe brightly.

"You—you— What's the idea of half-drowning me?" demanded Handforth fiercely. "I told you to ring a bell—not swamp me!"

"Bust me!" ejaculated Joe, staring. "I didn't pour no water over ye, young gent. You told me to pull the rope, and so I pulls it. I reckon some o' them young friends o' yours have been havin' a game."

Handforth started.

"Willy!" he said tensely.

He turned away from the window, and stared at the beam over his head. He beheld an upturned bucket, neatly fixed on a swivel, with the rope attached to it. A few drops of water were still dripping down.

"You're a wonderful chap for ideas, Handy," said Nipper, who was dressing. "We thought the bell was a good stunt, but you've beaten your own record. There's nothing so effective as cold water."

"A brainy scheme!" said Church, nodding.

"Best thing Handy has done this term," added Tommy Watson.

"Handy's a dark horse," declared McClure. "The artful bounder didn't say anything to us last night. He kept it to himself."

Handforth seemed to swallow something.

"You—you silly idiots!" he yelled. "I didn't fix up that water bucket. When I went to sleep there was a bell up there. My idea was for Joe to ring a bell."

"You must have forgotten," said Nipper, shaking his head.

"Rot!" snapped Handforth. "If you think I could forget a thing like that, Richard Hamilton, you're dotty! I tell you, I fixed a bell! I'm not idiot enough to drench myself with cold water, am I?"

"I don't know," said Nipper.

"What do you mean—you don't know?"

"My dear chap——"

"If you're trying to imply that I'm idiot enough——"

"Chuck it, Ted!" interrupted a voice from the doorway. "I thought I'd come along and see how the patent worked."

Handforth swung round, and found his minor in the room. Willy, of the Third, was fully dressed, and he was looking happy.

"Jolly good!" he went on. "A huge success, eh? All right, Ted—you needn't thank me."

"Needn't thank you?" repeated Handforth ominously.

"Not at all," smiled Willy. "That's all right, old man. Only too pleased!"



CHAPTER 2.

Commencing the Day's Work.

HANDFORTH clenched his fists helplessly.

"Did you fix up that bucket?" he asked.

"Of course I did!" said

Willy, with a grin.

"You—you——"

"I came in after you were asleep, and put it up in no time," went on Willy cheerily.

"I knew you'd be pleased, Ted."

"Pleased!" howled Handforth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That bell wasn't much good," continued Willy, shaking his head. "When you're asleep, Ted, you make so much noise with your snoring that any ordinary bell is useless. So what's the good of it? But there's nothing to beat a good old sousing with cold water. I'm always ready to oblige anybody with a little service like that."

"Oblige anybody?" repeated Handforth dazedly.

"I shall look upon this as my good deed for the day," nodded his minor. "It's made me feel happy. I can start the morning's work with a contented mind. I can tell everybody that I've started the day well—— Whoa! Look out!"

Squelch!

Handforth's soaked pillow, whirling across the room, struck the door post harmlessly. It was futile to imagine that Willy could be caught like that.

"There's gratitude for you!" he said sadly. "I'm surprised at you, Ted! I go to all that trouble, and——"

Somehow, Willy thought that it would be advisable to steal away. Handforth was rushing at him in such a determined manner that

he felt a strong desire for the open air. Willy was in a peaceful mood that morning.

By the time his major got into the tortuous old corridor, there was no sign of Willy. The faint echo of scudding footsteps came round an angle, but there was no other sign. Handforth turned back.

"All right!" he muttered hoarsely. "Wait until I'm dressed—wait until I catch the young beggar! I'll teach him to play tricks like that."

To his disgust, the other juniors offered no sympathy. They seemed to regard the whole affair as a joke. And that, of course, was outrageous. The Handforth dignity had been upset.

"Take my advice, Handy, and leave your minor alone," said Church. "He's too tricky for you. If you try to catch him, you won't do any farmwork. Besides, what have you got to kick about? You needn't wash now!"

But Handforth refused to look at the matter from this simple standpoint. True, his spirits had recovered from the time he had dressed, but he was determined to make his minor suffer, sooner or later.

The morning was enough to restore the worst of tempers.

Outside, the sun was shining, the birds were singing, and the summer air was filled with the early hum of busy insects. The faintest of faint breezes wafted across the meadows, redolent with the varied perfumes of the countryside.

"Work!" sang out Reggie Pitt, as he came across from the stackyard, with a pitchfork across his shoulder. "Hallo, you chaps! Who's going to help with feeding the pigs this morning? Come along, Handy—it'll just suit you!"

Handforth frowned.

"Why should feeding the pigs suit me?" he asked suspiciously.

"Pigs are very brainy articles," declared Reggie. "They don't like strangers in their sties. You see, Handy, they'll never notice you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why shouldn't they notice me?" asked Handforth.

"My dear chap, what an unnecessary question!" replied Pitt. "But we won't press the point. Old Joe is mixing the swill now, and two or three of us are wanted to carry the stuff to the troughs."

"Oh, are they?" said Handforth. "Well, I'm going to water the horses!"

"Just as you like," said Reggie. "But why should the horses need watering? Do you want to make them grow?"

"Fathead!" said Handforth tartly.

Church and McClure went off to help with the pigs' breakfast, and Handforth went towards the stables. There were plenty of stables at Holt's Farm, despite the fact that some of them had recently been burnt down.

Jerry Dodd, the Australian junior, was just emerging with a pony, and he was looking hot and flushed.

"Just been grooming Bud," he said breathlessly.

"You look it," agreed Handforth. "Well, I'm going to water all the horses, my son. I see you haven't watered Bud yet."

"Yes, I have," said Jerry.

"Rats! He's not wet!"

"Wet!" said Jerry, staring.

Then he grinned, and a pitying expression came into his eyes.

"My poor, deluded old cobber!" he said sadly. "What do you suppose it means when you say that you're going to water the horses?"

"Wash them, of course," said Handforth promptly.

"You hopeless ass!" said Jerry. "Watering horses means taking them down for a drink! Why, even Bud is looking at you with a pitying eye!"

Handforth turned red.

"Never mind what watering the horses means!" he blustered. "Where are they? Where are the horses?"

"Out—long ago!" said the Australian junior. "Tom Belcher took them down to the stream, and by this time they're being hitched to the ploughs and tumbrils, I expect. You're late, Handy!"

Edward Oswald frowned.

"I distinctly told Joe Catchpole that I was going to look after the horses!" he said sternly. "What's the good of me giving orders? Look here, if you'll lend me Bud for five minutes I'll go round and find out what's happening. I'll give Joe a piece of my mind."

Jerry turned to his pony.

"Bud, old man, Handy wants to ride you," he said, talking confidentially into Bud's ear. "What do you say about it, old cobber?"

Bud gave a shrill whinny, and vigorously shook his head.

"He doesn't want you, Handy," said Jerry.

"If you think you can spook me with that trick stuff, you're wrong!" said Handforth tartly. "That pony would have shaken his head just the same if you had asked him what the time was!"

"Oh, would he?" replied Dodd indignantly. "Bud knows pretty well everything that's said to him, and there's no trickery about it. Say, Bud, if you let Handy ride on your back will you keep him there?"

Bud gave another shake of his head.

"That means you'll toss him off?" asked Jerry.

The pony nodded, and stamped his forefeet.

"You see?" asked Jerry, with a grin.

Handforth was not deceived by this display. He knew that Bud was a very clever little pony, but Jerry had taught him all sorts of tricks, and such questions as he had asked went according to a formula.

"So your giddy pony will chuck me off?" he said. "All right, my lad! I'll bet you my Sunday topper that I can ride him for as long as I please. I don't claim to be an expert horseman, but any ass can ride a pony!"

"Go ahead, then," said Jerry Dodd obligingly.

Bud was already saddled, and Handforth prepared to mount. But he didn't quite like the way Bud looked round. He didn't like the steady, up-and-down inspection to which Bud subjected him. There was something uncannily intelligent in that action.

"All right, Bud," said Jerry. "Do your stuff!"

"You dry up!" snapped Handforth suspiciously. "You've trained this giddy pony in such a way that he knows the sound of your voice. For all I know, 'stuff' might mean something violent."

The Australian boy chuckled.

"Honest Injun, it doesn't," he replied. "I'm leaving you entirely to Bud, and you can do as you please. But I shall trouble you for your Sunday topper later on—not that it'll be much good to me."

Handforth laughed scornfully, and leapt upon Bud's back.

Several juniors, in various parts of the farmyard, paused in their occupations to watch. Church and McClure, for example, were just outside the pigsty, pouring pailfuls of swill into an enormous trough. The pigs, near by, were wildly excited, having already received the odour.

Fullwood and Russell came to the barn door, forsaking, for the moment, their task of cutting chaff. Nipper and Tommy Watson forgot their turnip-slicing machine, and watched, too.

"Huh!" said Handforth triumphantly. "Who can't ride a pony?"

Bud was significantly docile. He obeyed Handforth's every command, and the leader of Study D took a great delight in trotting him round in circles, just to show the complete nature of his mastery.

"Aren't you going to find Joe Catchpole?" asked Jerry.

"By George, yes," said Handforth, as though he had just remembered it. "Gee-up, Buddy, my lad! So-long, you chaps—see you later!"

"Sooner or later!" grinned Jerry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

For Bud was not acting quite so placidly now. Handforth wanted to gallop off towards the wide gateway which led into the meadows. But Bud, at the last moment, swerved and tore round the farmyard again. And he now gave a very excellent imitation of a bucking broncho.

"Whoa!" howled Handforth. "Steady, blow you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Coax him!" advised Jerry. "He's all right!"

Handforth had no time for coaxing. He clung on for his life, and roared into Bud's ear. The pony suddenly decided to take a swift run; and he raced across the farmyard, heading straight for the pigsty.

"Look out!" roared Handforth wildly.

But Bud tore straight on. Then, at the last moment, he pulled up hard on his

haunches, and Handforth shot out of the saddle like a stone from a catapult.

He described an arc through the air, and landed in the midst of the pigs.



CHAPTER 3.

Handy Among the Porkers!

H, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That was a smart bit of work!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The unfortunate Handforth sat up dizzily. A couple of small pigs were running over his legs, and another one rubbed against his back, and squealed in his ear as it passed. Still more were racing round him in circles.

"Where—where am I?" he gasped breathlessly.

"That's all right, old man," said Fullwood, in a soothing voice. "You're quite at home there!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bud, that was good work!" said Jerry, as the pony trotted back to him and came to a standstill. "I didn't expect you to perform such a neat job of it, but you're always giving me surprises."

"I think he gave Handy a surprise, too," remarked Brent, grinning.

"Absolutely!" said Archie Glenthorne, screwing his monocle into his eye, and inspecting the pigsty with a kind of awe. "I mean to say, good gad! With all due respects to your dashed pony, old lad, wasn't that scheme a trifle murky? Wasn't it somewhat mottled and blue at the edges?"

"It was Handy's own fault," said Brent. "He claimed that he could ride the pony, and Bud had his reputation to keep up. Handy isn't hurt."

"Oh, but I mean—pigs!" said Archie.

He shuddered slightly and moved off. The elegant junior was somewhat fastidious. Not that he was shirking any of the farm duties. In fact, he was entering into the spirit of this scheme as much as anybody.

"Where—where's that Australian chap?" demanded Handforth, as he slowly rose to his feet. "I'm going to slosh him! I'm going to make him so ugly that he'll have a fit every time he gets in front of a mirror! I'll make his face look like a pound of steak!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's no laughing matter!" hooted Handforth.

"Hallo!" said Reggie Pitt, coming up. "Somebody told me that Handforth's among the pigs! Where is he?"

Pitt looked into the sty, and inspected all the pigs and Handforth with an impartial eye. The other juniors looked on, grinning.

"I can't spot him!" said Pitt solemnly.

"You fathead, you're looking at me!" roared Handforth.

"By jingo, yes!" said Reggie, pointing. "That's Handy! I can recognise him by his cap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth fairly danced.

"Are you suggesting that you can't tell the difference between me and these pigs?" he thundered. "You—you insulting rotter! I'll make your face look like——"

"Not *my* face!" said Pitt. "You're reserving that for Jerry."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"All ready for breakfast!" said Church crisply. "Open the sties, you chaps! The trough's full!"

"Good egg!" said McClure, swinging open the gate.

Unfortunately, Handforth chose the very moment to leap over the wall of the sty in order to get his hands on Reggie Pitt. And the pigs, who had lost no time in rushing out trough-wards, swirled by in a grunting flood.

Handforth, who had taken a flying leap over the wall, landed on the back of one of the largest porkers, and found himself carried along like a piece of wreckage on the tide.

"Hi!" he howled. "What the——"

Splash!

There was only one obvious fate in store for Handforth. Those pigs were making for the trough, and Handforth was floundering on their backs. He rolled off, slithered forward, and plunged head first into the pigswill. Nobody could say that this was one of his happiest mornings.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors could not be blamed for yelling with laughter. From their point of view the affair was singularly comic. Handforth was the only fellow who didn't see the joke.

He sat up in the trough with a gulping, gurgling sound. He was smothered in potato peelings, scraps of cabbages, turnip peelings, and so forth. A halo of steam was all round him, and from every side came the noisy gulps of the breakfasters.

The pigs were going ahead with their meal as though Handforth didn't exist. One of them, in fact, was having a go at Handforth's left boot, and he suddenly realised that he was in considerable danger.

He struggled to his feet, and floundered out.

"You—you cackling idiots!" he shouted fiercely. "You callous rotters! I might have been eaten!"

"Quite likely!" agreed Pitt. "You couldn't expect the pigs to notice any difference. They thought you were one of the tit-bits!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where's Church?" demanded Handforth, looking round. "Where's McClure? They're the chaps who opened that gate—they did it on purpose. They knew I was just coming out, and they wanted to trick me! By George! I'll smash their faces until——"

"He's got that on the brain this morning!" said Fullwood. "By the time he's finished, we shall all have to wear masks!"

Handforth rushed away to get himself cleaned. As a preliminary, he dived into the running stream, and washed away most of the swill. Then he went indoors, and changed his clothing.

By the time he came out he was himself again so far as appearances went, but he was inwardly burning with a fierce desire for battle. He particularly wanted to find Church and McClure.

"Where are they?" he said, as he swept out into the farmyard. "Where's Church? Where's McClure?"

"We're not far off," said Church, as he came to the doorway of the loft. "Mac, here's Handy. He wants us for something."

"Tell him to come up!" came McClure's voice.

Handforth didn't wait. He hurried into the barn, and climbed the ladder which led to the hayloft. Before he reached the top, he observed that Church and McClure were both waiting at the top.

"Half a tick," said Church. "What do you want us for?"

"I'm going to smash the pair of you!" retorted Handforth promptly.

Church turned.

"He's going to smash the pair of us, Mac," he said calmly. "Shall we let him come up?"

"Under the cires, no!" replied McClure.

And there was a very warlike air about Handforth's chums as they stood waiting at the top of the ladder. In fact, Handforth paused, astonished by this attitude.

"By George!" he breathed. "Are you going to resist me?"

"What do you expect?" demanded Church. "Do you think we'll lie down, and let you walk over us? We've done nothing, you fathead!"

"You chucked me into that pigs' trough!" roared Handforth.

"Rats! You fell in!"

"Well, you opened the gate just at the critical moment, didn't you?" argued Edward Oswald. "You can't spoofer me! You made me look ridiculous, and I'm going to make you look damaged!"

Church and McClure sighed.

"Well, he's asking for it, so we'd better give it to him," said Church resignedly. "We're peaceful enough, but he's out for trouble."

"So we shall have to oblige him," said McClure. "Got that bucket of bran-mash ready?"

"Hi!" roared Handforth in alarm. "Don't you chuck any bran-mash over me! I've just changed!"

"Promise us that you'll be reasonable, and we'll let you off," said McClure coolly.

"Let me off?" gasped Handforth.

"As a special concession," said Church.

Handforth nearly choked. But he realised

the hopelessness of his position. One war-like attitude on his part, and his chums would act. They possessed all the strategic advantage of the position.

"All right!" he said thickly.

"You won't start any rot if we let you come up?" asked Church.

"I've said 'all right,' haven't I?"

"That's a promise?" demanded McClure cautiously.

"Yes, blow you!"

Handforth's chums stood back from the top of the ladder.

"Pass, friend!" grinned Church.

Handforth climbed up and glared at the pair. Naturally he could do nothing violent now since he had given his promise. And Handforth's promises were cast iron.

"There's nothing like being peaceful," said McClure agreeably.

Handforth was looking round the loft.

"Where's the bucket of bran-mash?" he asked fiercely.

"Which bucket of bran-mash?"

"Weren't you going to chuck a bucket of bran-mash over me?" asked Handforth.

"You distinctly said——"

"Rats!" grinned McClure. "I only asked Churchy if he had a bucket of bran-mash ready. We can't help it if you jump to conclusions, can we? It's one of your usual habits, old man."

Handforth tried hard to speak, but failed. Too late, he realised that for once his chums had scored.



CHAPTER 4.

The Mysterious Sir Lucian!

BREAKFAST produced complete harmony among the amateur farm workers. Even Handforth was restored to his usual geniality. The misfortunes of the early morning were forgotten.

It was the rule to do two hours' work before breakfast, and this had the effect of generating enormous appetites.

Only a comparatively few juniors were engaged upon this particular stunt. There had been a large number of fellows in the recent Open Air Camp, but most of them had now returned to St. Frank's.

It had been Handforth's idea that the fellows should run the farm, and Lady Honoria Dexter had embraced the scheme with enthusiasm. For it fitted in with her own policy. As president of the Open Air Society, she was ready to boom anything that dealt with the land.

Of course, even Handforth would not have evolved this idea if Farmer Holt had still owned the property. But Sir Lucian Dexter's unexpected acquirement of the farm had made all the difference, particularly as he had decided to sell all the livestock, to dismiss Joe Catchpole and the other labourers, and to let the farm stagnate.



Outside, Joe Catchpole gave the rope a hard tug, little suspecting that, instead of a bell, a pail of water was fixed at the other end. A deluge of water fell over the unfortunate Handforth who, drenched to the skin, sat up in bed bellowing at the top of his voice.

Handforth didn't see the sense of it. And now, instead of the farm being left to run wild, there was more labour available than ever. Lady Honoria was so keen that she already had visions of the Open Air Society starting these amateur farms all over the country.

But, if the truth must be told, Nipper & Co.'s interest in Holt's Farm was not entirely due to a love for farming.

There was a mystery attached to it.

In the first place, Sir Lucian's activity was strange. He was about the last man in the world to display interest in work of this kind. In fact, he had only bought the farm because he wished to pursue certain investigations unhindered. His wife's acceptance of Handforth's suggestion had taken him by surprise.

Most of the fellows knew that Sir Lucian was intensely interested in antiquarian subjects, and particularly in Roman relics. It had already been established that Holt's Farm was rich in these ancient remains. Sir Lucian, who had made a life study of the subject, was convinced that an extensive Roman settlement had once stood on this site. And he spent all his time pottering about, excavating here and digging there.

Nipper had an idea that this was not merely a general survey. Sir Lucian was

looking for something definite, something tangible. And there were certain features of the affair which appealed to Nipper's instincts. From the very first the strange old archaeologist had been mysterious.

The boys had been on the farm for two or three days now, but nothing had happened. Sir Lucian had remained inactive. And there had been such a lot to do, from early morning until nightfall, that the juniors had had no time to pursue any investigations. When evening came, they were generally tired out with hard work.

But they revelled in the freedom of this healthy life. As they all said, it was a lot better than stewing in the class-rooms. But they felt that it couldn't go on for long.

Dr. Stafford strongly disapproved of the entire scheme, but Lady Honoria was his sister, and she was such a forceful woman that the Head wisely let her have her own way. His one hope was that she would soon grow tired of her youthful prodigies, and that she would transfer her abundant energy to a distant sphere.

And yet she had the right idea.

There was no doubt about it, this small party of St. Frank's juniors had gained tremendously by their adoption of the open-air life. They were bubbling with health,

they were bronzed, and never before had they been so generally fit.

A week or two of this sort of thing would do them far more good than harm, and there was not much fear of them getting seriously in arrears with their school work. So their Housemasters were not worrying; neither were their Form-masters. It was only the Head who had grave misgivings. And he, it must be confessed, was mostly concerned over his sister. He never knew what she was going to do next.

"Hay-making this morning," said Nipper as the fellows went out into the farmyard after breakfast. "Haymaking in the long meadow. I think old Joe's out there already, and we've all got to help."

Handforth didn't seem very enthusiastic.

"There's not much fun in hay-making," he objected. "I thought about doing a bit of ploughing."

"Then let it rest at that," said Reggie Pitt.

"Rest at what?"

"Thinking about it," said Reggie. "My dear old chap, ploughing is an expert art. You need years of experience. But hay-making is a job we can all do."

"And it's pretty hard work, too," said Nipper. "Come on, everybody! Get your rakes and forks, and——"

"You fellows can go, but I'm keen on ploughing," interrupted Handforth stubbornly. "In fact, I've arranged it with Joe Catchpole. He's got the plough all ready."

"You hopeless chump!" said Nipper. "Joe's doing the ploughing. He wouldn't leave you in charge of his horses for a pension! Come along with us, and help with the hay."

But Handforth refused. And Church and McClure stayed behind with him, to see that he didn't get into trouble. At times Handforth's chums wondered if the game was worth the candle. He was a good chap, but he was very trying.

"Why the dickens should we stop?" muttered Church. "Let's leave him to his own silly devices."

"Can't do that," breathed McClure.

"Why not?"

"Because it's better to keep him out of trouble than to fish him out after he's got into it," said Mac. "Prevention's better than cure. He's a sore trial, but we've all got our crosses to bear."

Handforth looked at them suspiciously.

"What are you chaps muttering about?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing!" said Church.

"You were talking about me!"

"Well, what if we were?"

"Just now you said you were muttering about nothing!" said Handforth.

"Yes, that's right," nodded Mac.

"Do you call me nothing?" roared Edward Oswald.

"Of course, if you want to get up an argument, we'll oblige," said Church. "In fact, all the better. It'll keep you away from

that ploughing job. Let's have a real discussion——"

"Rats!" growled Handforth. "Where's Joe Catchpole? The first thing we do is to find Joe Catchpole."

Church grinned.

"He forgot to mention which field he would be on," he said. "That was pretty careless of him, when you come to think of it. This farm property extends for two or three miles in every direction, and there are scores of fields. It'll take us all the morning to search them all."

"Better go hay-making in the long meadow," said McClure.

However, it was quite useless. Handforth had made up his mind, and nothing would shift him. So they started on a search for Joe Catchpole and his plough.

Not that this search came to anything.

The chums of Study D had not progressed far before something happened to sidetrack Handforth completely—much to the satisfaction of his chums. They were emerging from a clump of trees when they beheld Sir Lucian Dexter in the middle distance. And Sir Lucian was certainly behaving in a most extraordinary fashion for a dignified professor of archaeology.

He was, in fact, down on his hands and knees in a little hollow of ground, scrabbling at the ground like a dog after a rabbit. Stones were being heaved in his rear, and now and again he paused in these operations to poke his head into the hole he had made.

"Mad!" said Handforth, staring. "I've suspected it for weeks. The poor old chap is clean off his rocker!"

"Thinks he's a dog!" said Church sadly.

"Don't you believe it," declared Mac. "Sir Lucian is sane enough. He's searching for something——"

"Treasure!" interrupted Handforth.

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Church. "Are you going to start that song again?"

"Didn't I find some old Roman coins?" asked Handforth.

"Yes, and took five pounds reward from Sir Lucian for them," replied Mac. "You thought they were part of a treasure, but Sir Lucian had only dropped them."

Handforth frowned.

"I'm not so sure about that," he said thoughtfully. "I believe that was only a dodge. There's something rummy about this old bird. Don't you remember how startled he was when he heard that we were going to stay on the farm? He doesn't want us here."

"Everybody knows that."

"Why should he be so scared of us?" asked Handforth. "If you ask me, there's something suspicious about it all. Something fishy. Sir Lucian isn't so innocent as he looks."

Church sighed.

"You're probably right!" he admitted. "I expect he's a coiner. I expect he made those old Roman doubloons, or whatever they are, in a dark, underground cellar."

Handforth detected the heavy sarcasm.

"That reminds me!" he said coldly. "We haven't properly explored that old tunnel yet. Let's go now. It's a jolly good opportunity. The other fellows are haymaking, and they won't miss us. And it's a job that we want to do entirely on our own."

"Is it?" asked McClure. "Well, you know best. In fact, it's a brain-wave, Handy. We'll get busy at once."

Church and McClure were only too glad that Handforth had abandoned his ploughing intentions. Exploring a mysterious old tunnel promised to be much more interesting.



CHAPTER 5.

The Ancient Tunnel.

IN minutes later Handforth & Co were standing in one of the upstairs rooms of the old farmhouse. And immediately in front of them

was a jagged, uneven hole in one of the walls. Ancient stairs led downwards into the black, mysterious depths.

This secret stairway had been found quite by accident.

The farm had been struck by lightning, and the shock had been so severe that the end of the building had heaved as though an earthquake had struck it. At the same time, an adjoining range of stables had caught fire. But for the timely activity of the St. Frank's fellows, the whole property would have been burned to the ground.

"I'll go first," said Handforth eagerly.

"Hold on—"

"It's no good arguing," interrupted Handforth. "I tell you I'm going first!"

"If you weren't such a hopelessly unpractical ass, Handy, you'd be more successful in life," said Church tartly. "If you want to know the truth, we ought to wait until Nipper can be in this affair. It's a shabby dodge to explore the tunnel while we're supposed to be at farm work."

Handforth started.

"Shabby?" he repeated, pained.

Anything that savoured of shabbiness was foreign to Handforth's nature. He wasn't the kind of fellow to do anything at all rotten. And Church's words had given him food for thought. But his conscience was soon clear.

"Rot!" he said, at length. "I discovered this tunnel in the first place, so nobody can grumble if I explore it. That's settled. Now, what's that you were saying about me being impracticable?"

"I didn't say that!"

"Yes, you did!"

"I said you were unpractical."

"What's the difference?"

"There's a lot of difference, but it doesn't matter," said Church. "We won't argue. Of all the unpractical fatheads, you take the bun!"

"Look here—"

"You start leading the way into this old tunnel as though it were provided with electric

lights!" went on Church. "You haven't got a torch, or a candle, and I'll bet you haven't even got a box of matches on you!"

Handforth started.

"Now I come to think of it, I haven't!" he admitted.

"And you were going into that tunnel?"

"Well, yes."

"How were you going to see?" asked Church. "Do you think you're a cat, or a lynx?"

"Don't you call me a lynx!" said Handforth coldly. "Lynxes are those beastly things that smell!"

"He's as ignorant as he's unpractical!" put in McClure. "You're thinking of a skunk, old man."

"Are you calling me a skunk?" roared Handforth.

"Oh, help!" groaned Mac. "Doesn't he love to argue? Are we going to explore this tunnel, or not? If so, we want candles—one each, at least. And it wouldn't be a bad idea to take a spade, or a shovel. The tunnel is blocked further along. Don't you remember how we were stopped the other night, when we wanted to explore?"

"We don't want candles," said Handforth. "They're nasty, messy things. They drop grease all over your clothes. We'd better get some electric torches."

"You silly ass!" shouted Church, exasperated. "Do you think there's a stock of electric torches in a farmhouse? There are heaps of candles downstairs, though."

"All right—get candles," said Handforth. "Have your own way!"

"Candles are the best in any case," said McClure, after Church had gone. "If there's any foul air, the bare flame will give us a warning. I don't suppose we shall discover much, Handy. We shan't be able to get by that obstruction."

"We'll have a shot at it, anyway," said Handforth.

Church soon came with a supply of candles. He brought a spade, too, and within a few minutes the three explorers went down those forbidding stairs.

Handforth led the way, and after penetrating for some distance, they arrived on level ground. The tunnel stretched away mysteriously beyond the range of the candle. It was very cool here—a welcome coolness, after the heat of the summer's morning.

And although the juniors had no expectancy of any dramatic discovery, they were, nevertheless, thrilled. There was something mystic about this queer old underground tunnel—which had probably been forgotten by mankind for many, many centuries.

"Here we are!" said Handforth, at length, as he came to a halt. "H'm! It's a bit of a facer, I'll admit. There doesn't seem much prospect of getting past this!"

They examined the obstruction closely. The tunnel was dry—unexpectedly dry—and in a fairly good state of preservation. At this point, however, the roof had fallen in, and the mass of masonry and brickwork seemed to fill the entire space.

Church bent down with his candle, and suddenly uttered an exclamation.

"Hallo!" he said quickly. Look at this!"

Handforth and McClure bent down eagerly.

"Look at which?" asked Handforth.

"My candle!"

"Your candle!" said Handforth. "What the dickens do we want to look at your candle for, you ass?"

"Look at the way it's flickering!"

"Well, what about it?" asked Handforth.

"You dense chump!" snapped Church.

"There's a draught coming through these crevices! That explains why the air's so pure here. There's an outlet further beyond—or there wouldn't be a draught."

"By George!" said Edward Oswald keenly.

"That's it! This tunnel must lead out somewhere—probably into a distant part of the farm!"

"Yes, but we can't get past," said McClure.

"We'll have a jolly good try!" declared Handforth firmly. "Stand back, you chaps, I'll lug at one of these chunks of stonework!"

"Go easy!" warned Mac. "You might cause another collapse, and we shall all be buried alive! You're a reckless beggar, Handy, and we're not going to let you do just as you like!"

Handforth stared.

"You're not going to let me?" he repeated ominously.

"That's what I said!"

"It strikes me you chaps are getting a bit too independent lately!" said Handforth, with a glare.

"When it comes to the safety of our lives we need to be independent!" retorted Mac.

"We've got to look after the safety of your life, too, you impetuous jossler. If it wasn't for us, you'd go and kill yourself."

Handforth grunted, and turned to the old stonework.

"Well, anyhow, stand away!" he said gruffly.

His chums watched anxiously while he pulled at the obstruction. It was quite likely that any dislodgment of that debris would cause a further collapse. But, as it happened, the moving of a single slab of stone led to a welcome discovery.

In spite of his chums' warning, Handforth was very reckless. He pulled as though no danger existed. He did not seem to realise that the roof might fall in on the top of him. A large portion of stone came away, and Handforth went over backwards—for it had moved unexpectedly freely.

"Look out!" yelled Church, backing away.

"You asses!" gasped Handforth. "Why didn't you hold me?"

He sat up indignantly, and then stared. A cavity met his gaze—low down among the old stonework. It was quite a big cavity, disclosed by that slab of stone.

"Hallo!" said Handforth tensely. "There's a whacking great hole here—big enough for Fatty Little to get through! Where's my

candle? This way! You chaps follow me!"

He plunged in on his hands and knees.

"Hi! Come back, you rash idiot!" shouted Church. "You might dislodge some loose stuff——"

"Oh, what's the use?" interrupted McClure. "He's in now!"

They made no attempt to follow their leader, but stood in a state of considerable apprehension, listening to his grunts and gaspings as he wormed his way into the mysterious depths.

No other fellow but Handforth, probably, would have committed such an unbelievable act of imprudence. Without in the least realising it, he was actually taking his life in his hands.

And, naturally, he came to no harm.

If he had taken excessive precautions, he might have met his death. It is generally the case with such dare-devils.

"I've got the wind up!" said Church hoarsely.

"So have I!" muttered Mac. "Listen!"

Faintly, they could hear distant movements. At any moment they were expecting to hear a rumbling crash of stonework, and a mortal cry of agony. Neither came.

"Handy!" shouted Church at last.

There was no reply.

"Where the dickens has he got to?" went on Church apprehensively. "He's probably fallen down a hole, or something. My only hat! Why the dickens didn't we stop him? Handy!"

They listened intently, but all sounds had ceased.



CHAPTER 6.

The Roman Aqueduct.

HURCH and McClure need not have worried.

Handforth was quite safe, and he was under the mistaken impression that his chums were following close behind all the time.

Worming his way through that confined space, he grew more and more excited as he found nothing to bar his progress. He had covered about twenty feet when he noticed the cavity broadening and deepening. He was almost able to stand up again.

"We've practically got past the obstruction now!" he said breathlessly. "Yes, by George! Here's the tunnel again!"

He stood up in triumph, holding his candle in such a way that the grease poured in a succession of drips down his shirt. The tunnel was whole again on this side, and the black void of it beckoned him on.

"Who said we couldn't get through?" he asked, with a sniff. "If I took any notice of you chaps, we shouldn't have got anywhere!"

He prepared to continue the exploration.

"I don't wonder you're silent!" he went on. "You've got nothing to say, eh? Still,

there's no reason why you should keep those candles to yourselves! We want all the light we can get."

He turned impatiently, and then gave a violent start.

"Hallo!" he ejaculated. "What the—Hi! You chaps! Where the dickens are you?"

Only the echo of his own voice came to him.

"Well, I'm blessed!" he gasped. "They're not here!"

He bent down, and stared into the blackness.

"Hi, you chaps!" he roared. "Where are you?"

"Are you safe, Handy?" came a relieved voice.

"Of course I'm safe, you blithering idiots!" thundered Handforth. "I thought you were just behind me! I've been talking to myself all the time! Why didn't you come?"

"We wanted to see what happened to you first!" came McClure's voice.

"Well, I'm through!" replied Handforth tartly.

He waited until his chums joined him.

"Funks!" he said disparagingly, when they appeared.

They stood up, flushed by their exertions, and red with indignation.

"You rotter!" said Church fiercely. "We're not funks!"

"Then why didn't you come?"

"Because we're not such mad hatters as you are—that's why."

"I'm not a hatter!" said Handforth coldly. "And if you call me mad—"

"It was sheer madness to crawl through like that, without even testing anything," said Church. "Mac and I stayed behind in case anything happened to you—so that we could pull you out, or go for help if the brickwork fell in. Where should we have been if all three of us had got trapped?"

Handforth was bound to see the strength of Church's argument.

"Well, perhaps you're right," he admitted grudgingly. "Under the circumstances you're not funks. All the same, you're a pair of over-cautious cuckoos!"

"It's better to be over-cautious than to shove your head into a noose," said McClure. "Well, so we're through, eh? Shall we go on, and explore the rest of the place?"

Handforth's answer was to stride off, and his chums followed. But they had not progressed many yards before the tunnel ended. It joined up at right angles with a much wider and loftier structure. It was curious in shape, and the stones of which it was composed were odd and uneven, and it seemed even more antiquarian than the smaller tunnel.

One end was blank, but the other led off once more into the mysteries of the gloom. Handforth was all in favour of pressing on,

but Church was staring at the walls with curious concentration.

"By Jupiter, this must have been constructed a few years ago!" he said. "It's ages old! I'll bet the Romans built it!"

"Yes, it's one of those things they used for carrying water," said McClure. "I've seen pictures of 'em."

"You mean a viaduct," said Handforth.

"No, I don't!"

"Well, that's what they called them," said Handforth firmly. "Viaducts are old-fashioned water-channels—"

"You silly ass!" interrupted Church. "What about Holborn Viaduct? Is that a water-channel?"

Handforth wasn't at all done.

"That's nothing," he said. "Lots of these old names persist, although they're out of date. I expect there was water there at one time. In any case, water flows underneath it!"

"Where?" asked Church.

"I've been on the bridge, so I know—"

"You ass!" grinned Church. "That bridge along Holborn Viaduct runs over Farringdon Street. And Farringdon Street was never a river, so far as I remember. The word you want is aqueduct."

"Well, what's the difference?" asked Handforth indignantly. "Of course it's aqueduct. I meant that at first. My hat! Did you know it all the time?"

"Yes."

"And you let us jaw on about Holborn Viaduct like that?" roared Handforth. "If we weren't in a hurry to explore this place, Walter Church, I'd punch you in the eye! Both eyes, in fact!"

"How could I do any exploring with my eyes bunged up?" asked Church.

Fortunately, Handforth was so keen on the exploration that he dismissed the argument. And there was no doubt that this place really was a forgotten Roman aqueduct. From an archæologist's point of view, the discovery was one of extraordinary value.

The chums of Study D walked along cautiously, little realising that they were, perhaps, the first human beings to tread those stones for a thousand years. This aspect of the adventure did not strike them. They were keen to find an outlet—to discover from whence came the air current.

They soon came upon another check.

The tunnel ended abruptly, piles of stones and earth barring the way. But through this heap came a few chinks of light—subdued light, it is true, but nevertheless welcome.

"Daylight!" said Handforth excitedly. "We've got to the exit! Hold this candle, Mac! We'll soon get through!"

He pulled at the stones, and many of them came away. There was a sudden rush, and the juniors leapt back. They were half-choked with dust. But with it came a flood of light—so powerful that their candles were dwindled into insignificance.

They flung the candles down, and pushed their way through the exit. Just beyond, a

dense mass of brambles and weeds barred the way. But after pushing these down, they found themselves in a little rocky gap just behind a spinney. They climbed up to the higher ground.

Holt's Farm was surprisingly close—for it seemed to them that they had travelled a great deal further. They could even see the haymakers in the long meadow, and the air seemed strangely hot after their sojourn underground.

"Who'd have thought it?" said Church, as he stood looking down into the gap. "You see, the level is a lot lower there—well below ground level, in fact. That's why the aqueduct comes out into the open air. Well, it's good to be in the sunlight again."

"Rather!" said McClure.

But Handforth was looking disappointed.

"The whole thing's a fraud!" he said, with disgust. "I thought we were going to discover something—and we've simply come out into the open. All this time wasted!"

"What did you expect to find, then?" grinned Mac. "Treasure chests, and pieces of eight, or smugglers' hoards? I'm satisfied, anyway. We've had a ripping adventure."

But Handforth refused to be content.

"I'm going back!" he declared. "There may have been an opening that we missed. I noticed a kind of cavity in the wall some way down, but I didn't stop to explore it."

"Oh, leave it for a bit," said Church. "Let's go and join the others. They'll wonder what's become of us."

Handforth was about to reply, but at that moment Sir Lucian Dexter hove in sight round a clump of bushes near by. He gave the three boys an unfriendly look, but had the grace to nod.

Handforth acted on a sudden impulse.

"I say, Sir Lucian," he called, running up, "there's something here that you might be interested in!"

"Indeed," said Sir Lucian Dexter coldly, "I think not! I am not interested in your ridiculous farm work. I think you know quite well that I am opposed to the whole preposterous nonsense."

Sir Lucian was a bony, sinister-looking man—but it was hardly fair, perhaps, to judge him by appearances alone.

"It's nothing to do with farm work, sir," said Handforth. "We've found a viaduct!"

"A which?"

"I mean an aqueduct," said Handforth hastily.

"An aqueduct!" ejaculated Sir Lucian, his face suddenly flushing, and his eyes glittering with excitement. "Impossible! I cannot believe that——"

"All right, sir—come and have a look!" said Handforth. "It's an old Roman aqueduct, and there's a tunnel from it that leads right into the farmhouse. We've just come along it."

"Bless my soul!" muttered Sir Lucian tensely. "Is such a thing possible? Good gracious! Where—where is this aqueduct?"

He was far more excited than the boys had been, and as soon as they led him into the long-forgotten entrance he shouted aloud with triumph. One glance was sufficient to assure him that Handforth had been right.

"This is it!" he shouted. "This is the aqueduct! At last—at last!"



CHAPTER 7.

Teddy Long Asks For It!

HANDFORTH & CO. exchanged curious glances.

"Why, have you been looking for this aqueduct, sir?" asked Handforth, in wonder. "We only found it by accident——"

"Boys, boys," broke in Sir Lucian, "this is an amazing discovery of yours! It is of incalculable value. Good heavens! I might even say that it is a discovery of the greatest possible importance. The most valuable Roman disclosure for over a century."

The old fellow's excitement was such that he was positively agitated. His eyes were blazing, and his hands shook as he took out his spectacles, and examined the wall. He ran up and down like a demented creature, muttering to himself, and giving occasional chortles of joy.

Handforth was about to plunge into the aqueduct again when voices sounded in the rear, and Nipper and Reggie Pitt appeared.

"Oh, here you are!" said Nipper. "I thought you were going ploughing, Handy?"

"I was, but I changed my mind," said Handforth. "I went exploring."

"I might have known it," growled Nipper. "Thought you'd steal a march on us, eh? I suppose this is the other end of that tunnel we found?"

"The tunnel I found," corrected Handforth. "Besides, it's not a tunnel, it's an aqueduct. I just told Sir Lucian about it, and he's gone off his rocker. Look at him—absolutely loony!"

They drew Handforth out into the open.

"Let him get on with it," said Nipper, with a grin. "It probably amuses him, and it isn't of much interest to us. He's crazy about Roman discoveries, and this will keep him quiet for days. How did you get past the obstruction?"

Handforth & Co. described their adventures.

"You fellows were born lucky!" said Nipper. "It's marvellous how you take these chances, and escape scot-free."

"Thanks, Handy, for saving us a lot of trouble," said Pitt. "There's no need for us to explore now. Come along and get to the farmhouse——"

"Rats!" interrupted Handforth. "I'm going to do some more exploring."

"That's just one of your little delusions, old man," said Reggie. "It's your turn to help with preparing dinner. You're not



'Hallo!' said Handforth tensely. "There's a whacking great hole here!" Recklessly he plunged on his hands and knees and began to wriggle his way through the cavity in the ancient Roman wall. "Come back, you idiot!" shouted Church.

going to shirk your duties, I suppose? It was all arranged last night, wasn't it?"

"By George, so it was!" said Handforth, with regret. "All right, I'll come. But I'm going to do some exploring here later on."

"Not until the day's work is over," said Nipper firmly. "We've all got to do our share, and we're not going to have you running off again. Come on, we'll escort you to the house, and we shan't let you out of our sight until you've made a good start on the work."

So Handforth had to go, and for the time being the aqueduct was left entirely in possession of Sir Lucian.

Before long, the chums of Study D were busily peeling potatoes, and superintending the cooking in general. The fellows had taken on the task of providing food for themselves. In camp, every junior had been compelled to cook his own individual food, but that rule was not rigidly adhered to here. There was really no need for it.

Handforth became so engrossed in his culinary efforts that he forgot the aqueduct altogether—until Church happened to mention that they had better leave it entirely to Sir Lucian.

"Not likely!" said Handforth. "I haven't finished yet."

At the moment they were in the old scullery of the farmhouse, near the open win-

dows. They were all peeling potatoes, and confining their attentions to their work.

Now, it happened that one or two visitors were trickling to the farm. Morning lessons were over at St. Frank's, and quite a few juniors came along to see how the amateur land-workers were getting along. Others came in the hope of picking up a tit-bit or two.

Teddy Long was one of the latter. He knew that the fellows prepared their own food, and it struck him as a bright idea to obtain two dinners that way. The sneak of the Remove was not generally a glutton, but when there was a chance of getting food for nothing he did not like to neglect it.

So he was one of the first to come prowling round the farmhouse.

And it was really pure chance which brought him near the scullery window just as Handforth & Co. were discussing the old aqueduct.

Any other junior but Teddy would have walked up in an ordinary, respectable way. But Long was naturally a spy. He couldn't help it. Thus he approached that open window cautiously, meaning to peep in and see who was about.

As he came near he heard the familiar tones of the leader of Study D.

"There's something rummy about Sir Lucian's behaviour," he was saying. "Why

should he go so dotty over the mere discovery of an aqueduct?"

"Because he's an archæologist," came Church's reply.

"That's not a sufficient reason, you ass!"

"Yes, it is," said Church. "These old scientific chaps have been known to jump a couple of feet into the air at the sight of a single brick. It doesn't give us any thrill, Handy, but they're different. They live for discoveries of this kind. They're milestones in their lives!"

"We're not talking about milestones," said Handforth coldly. "It's my opinion that Sir Lucian is after something more tangible. In fact, treasure."

"You've got treasure on the brain."

"All right—you'll see!" said Handforth confidently. "There's a treasure buried on Holt's Farm somewhere, and Sir Lucian is after it. I'm after it, too. What's more, I mean to find it! Treasure, my sons—that's the game! We'll be rich!"

A sudden shout came from outside.

"What are you hanging about there for, young Long?" demanded the voice of Fullwood. "Who told you to come here?"

"But mind you," went on Handforth, "not a word to anybody! We'll keep this to ourselves. We'll——"

But Long was unable to hear any more, for Fullwood's approach was ill-timed for him. His cunning brain got to work. He didn't want Fullwood to think that he had been eavesdropping. Neither did he want Handforth to know it, for Handforth had a drastic way with eavesdroppers.

Teddy walked up to Fullwood with assumed carelessness.

"I only came down to see how you fellows were getting on," he said, trying to force himself to speak in an ordinary voice. "No harm in that, is there?"

"Lots of harm," said Fullwood gruffly.

"Other fellows come here——"

"I'm not talking about other fellows—I'm talking about you," said Fullwood. "Pardon me for being blunt, Teddy, but we don't want you here. I'll bet you've only come cadging, anyway. Nosing round for some of our dinner, eh? Well, you can clear off!"

"You won't make me clear off!" roared Long.

"By Jove! Won't I?" said Fullwood wrathfully.

He did. One step towards Teddy Long was enough. The sneak of the Remove scuttled away, only too glad of the opportunity of retreating. On the other side of the farmyard he came to a halt, flushed and excited.

"Treasure!" he breathed exultantly.

This was a choice tit-bit of information indeed!

The trouble was it wasn't information at all, though Long looked upon it as such. It was only a piece of imaginative supposition on Handforth's part

But such a piece of gossip was altogether too good to be kept secret. And Teddy Long, who could never keep anything secret, was simply bubbling over with the importance of it.

"Treasure, eh?" he repeated. "I'd better not say a word about it to anybody, but now I know why these chaps are so keen on farming. Yes, I'll keep this to myself."

Such thoughts were idle, for even while Teddy was forming them he knew in his heart that he would blurt out the startling "truth" to the first group of fellows he met.

But not these fellows. No, he must get off the farm as quickly as possible, or Handforth would be on his track. Handforth would guess at once that he had been eavesdropping, and he didn't want to risk the wrath of the mighty Edward Oswald.

So he climbed over a gate, and went off through an inner yard towards a hedge which arose on the other side. Just beyond that was a field, and a footpath to the main road.

But Teddy had taken an unknown risk when he entered this enclosure. He found himself walking amidst a number of turkeys. They didn't worry him in the least. He was quite contemptuous of turkeys. After all, they were no better than chickens. And who was afraid of a chicken?"

Then Teddy came to a sudden halt.

There was an extraordinarily large turkey coming towards him. And somehow it didn't look very friendly. To tell the truth, it was a gobbler—a turkey-cock. To be exact, the lord of the particular enclosure, and a lord, moreover, who strongly resented the intrusion of any invader. Gentlemen turkeys have a strong inclination this way.

"My hat!" ejaculated Teddy, with sudden alarm.

He liked the look of that great bird less and less. True to its name, it was making weird, gobbling sounds—angry sounds. And it was advancing upon the invader with a purposeful intent.

"Clear off!" roared Teddy, waving his arms. "Get back, you beggar! Hi! What the——"

He backed away, thoroughly scared. He was not renowned for his pluck in the Remove. He was probably the greatest funk in the Lower School, and an angry turkey-cock is sufficient to arouse alarm in a fellow of quite ordinary courage. Teddy was simply terrified.

And he made the grave mistake of attacking the bird. His only wise policy would have been to retreat, and to leave Mr. Gobbler in complete possession of his kingdom.

But in his fear Long bent down and picked up some stones. He hurled them at the gobbler, and shouted threats at the same time. This, surely, would drive the beastly thing away.

But it didn't. The gobbler came on with greater fury than ever. Long was asking for trouble, and it certainly seemed that he was going to receive it.



CHAPTER 8.

Teddy Long Gets It!

"H, my goodness!"

Teddy Long turned on his heel and bolted. If he had kept his wits about him, he would have run for the gate by which he had entered the enclosure. But he ran in the opposite direction, towards the hedge, his idea being to burst through and to seek safety beyond.

"Help!" he screamed wildly.

And behind him ran that huge gobbler, in full chase. There was something ludicrous in the spectacle of this boy fleeing from a mere bird. But Long's danger was real enough.

He had incited the gobbler to attack him in earnest, and it had accepted the challenge. A bantam cock can be vicious enough at times, but there is something peculiarly aggressive about a great gobbler when it is aroused. It is, indeed, a dangerous bird.

Even now Teddy's terror was superficial. He didn't really think that he was in any actual danger. He was only frightened by the very novelty of the turkey's attack. Besides, he knew that he could outstrip the bird, and he would soon be out of the enclosure.

Then came the shock.

With turkeys flying from his path, he reached that hedge, only to discover that it was strongly protected by heavy wire netting. There was no escape that way!

And close behind came the gobbler, making its own furious cries, and trebly incensed now because Teddy had disturbed his subjects. The whole yard was in a flutter of excitement and indignation.

"Help!" shrieked Long, again. "Help—help!"

He turned, dodging, and raced round in circles in his panic.

Snap—snap!

He heard the ominous sound of the gobbler's snapping beak, and he sobbed, with dire fear. His screams became more anguished. And, naturally enough, he attracted the attention of some of the schoolboy farmworkers.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Fullwood, as he stared in the direction of the uproar. "Look at young Long being chased by that turkey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

One or two of the other juniors looked on, roaring with laughter.

"Odds dash it!" ejaculated Archie Glen-thorne. "I mean to say, it's all very well to burst into the good old cackle, laddies, but it's not such a dashed happy predic. That frightful bird is an absolute fright. Why, it even had a go at me this morning!"

"There's nothing to be afraid of in a turkey," said Brent, grinning.

"I'm not so sure about that," said Fullwood. "That beggar looks pretty war-like, and I think we ought to go and drive him off. Long seems to have lost his head."

"But he can't come to any harm," protested Brent.

"Can't he?" said Fullwood. "A gobbler like that can give an awful snap with his beak. Come on!"

"Help! Help!" came Teddy's wild appeals.

At that moment Nipper came into view, and he, too, took a serious view of the matter. He ran up with the others.

"This way, Long, you idiot!" he shouted urgently. "Don't keep running round in circles! Dodge, you ass—dodge! If he gets in a peck, you'll lose an inch of skin!"

Teddy Long was exhausted by aimless running, confused to a point of dizziness. Which-ever way he turned, that terrible gobbler was just behind him—wings flapping, beak ready. And then, at the crucial moment, Long stumbled over a loose stone, and fell head-long.

The next second the gobbler was upon him.

A perfect scream arose from Teddy. Over the gate leapt the rescuers, and they drove the angry bird away by the very force of their rush. Teddy Long was lying prostrate, gasping and moaning.

"Grab him—quick!" panted Nipper. "Carry him out—he's too scared to walk. I'll keep this beggar off!"

Fortunately, he was carrying a pitch-fork, and with the handle of this he held the bird away, for it was intent upon attacking him, too. The other fellows grabbed the unhappy Teddy, and swiftly carried him out of the enclosure.

A minute later the gobbler was triumphant—undoubted winner of the battle. With ruffled feathers he strutted about, lord of all he surveyed again.

"By Jove, I didn't know they could be so beastly vicious," said Fullwood breathlessly. "I shall be careful of that yard in future!"

"Come on, Long!" said Brent. "Pull yourself together! You're safe enough now. No need to spook."

But Long only groaned as he writhed on the ground.

"The chap's nearly fainting with terror," said Nipper. "Hallo! Look at this, too! I thought that bird had got him! Run and get some water, Tommy, there's a good chap."

Tommy Watson stared.

"But he isn't hurt, is he?" he asked.

"Jove, though, isn't he?" said Fullwood, with concern. "Look here! He's bleeding badly! Lend a hand, you fellows!"

They pulled down Teddy Long's left sock, and revealed an ugly gash—a deep wound which was bleeding profusely. It bore strong testimony to the gobbler's strength of beak.

"I suppose this ought to be cauterised," said Nipper grimly. "We'll wash the place, put a temporary bandage round it, and then rush him up to the school sanny."

"I'd no idea it was so serious," said Brent, aghast.

"It's not particularly serious—but it's a nasty gash, all the same," said Nipper. "He'll have to go to the sanny. Where's that water? Isn't Tommy coming back yet?"

Watson soon arrived, and Handforth & Co. came out with him, to discover what all the commotion was about.

"What's this?" said Handforth. "Young Long bitten by a turkey? What rot! Turkeys can't bite!"

"What do you call this, then?" said Fullwood.

"Well I'm jiggered!" said Handforth, staring.

"They may not bite, but they've got pretty hefty beaks," said Nipper, as he prepared to bathe the wound. "This is a nasty gash. Turkey's aren't particularly clean, either, and I expect Dr. Brett will cauterise the place without delay. We've got to rush Long to the school."

"Phew! Carry him, you mean?" asked Watson, glancing at the sun. "That'll be a warm job, won't it?"

But after Teddy Long's ankle had been bathed and bandaged, he was lifted on to a wheelbarrow. It was certainly one method of conveying him to the sanatorium.

And Nipper's decision was undoubtedly wise.

Teddy, of course, made the very most of it. He had recovered from his terror, but he saw no reason to make light of his injury. The wound was throbbing, it is true, and was generally painful. But Teddy kept up a long succession of groans and moans. Every time the wheelbarrow jerked, he gasped with exaggerated agony.

Nipper and Watson and one or two others were conveying him, and long before they got to the school they were fed up with their patient.

"I shall have to have my leg off," groaned Teddy. "That'll be the end of it! Blood poisoning! I shall have compensation from Sir Lucian, too! He oughtn't to keep his rotten turkeys in a dangerous place like that."

"If you'd talk less, we should all be pleased," said Nipper gruffly. "It was entirely your own fault. You shouldn't have gone into that enclosure. The turkeys are isolated from the rest of the farm property, and if people will walk into danger, they can't grumble when they get hurt. So dry up!"

"You wouldn't care if I died!" sobbed Teddy.

"Don't be a young ass!" retorted Nipper. "You'll be out and about again by to-morrow, if not sooner."

"No, I shan't!" whimpered Teddy. "Even if I don't have my leg off, I shall have to stay in the sanny for a week or more. I shan't be able to put my foot to the ground for ages. I'm a cripple!"

"Tell that to the doctor," said Watson. "I know your dodge, my lad! You'll try to have an easy time in the sanny, won't you? No lessons, eh? You've backed the wrong horse

if you think Dr. Brett will be taken in by that rot!"

Teddy Long adopted the policy, however, of doing his best. Even if the doctor wasn't deceived, there was no harm in trying. A week in the sanny, with plenty of good food, and nice books to read, would suit Teddy down to the ground.

Dr. Brett was very brief, however, after he had examined the wound.

"It's all right, young 'uns," he said, turning to Nipper & Co. "It's a good thing you brought him up here. I'll see after him."

"Is it serious, doctor?" moaned Teddy.

"My dear kid, it's only a scratch," said the doctor.

"A scratch!" howled Teddy indignantly. "I'm badly injured!"

"So badly that you'll be walking about by to-morrow," nodded Dr. Brett, with a grin. "You may limp for a day or two, but you'll soon forget all about it. Don't worry."

But Teddy did worry. He worried because his dream of a week in the sanny was obviously doomed to fizzle out.



CHAPTER 9.

Somewhat Exaggerated!

R. BRETT turned away from the bed, and nodded to the nurse.

"I don't think you'll have much trouble with him, nurse," he said. "He doesn't really need to be in bed, but I suppose we'd better humour him. You needn't give him any special attention."

"All right, doctor," said the nurse.

Dr. Brett was rather contemptuous of Teddy's cowardly behaviour. Any of the other fellows would have made light of the injury. They would have insisted upon walking about as usual, after a bandage had been applied. But Long was obviously so scared that it was better to keep him in the sanatorium for a day.

Nipper and his chums had gone back to the farm, satisfied. They had no fear that Long would suffer any ill-consequences—and perhaps, after this, he would be more careful when he came down.

Teddy himself was feeling disgruntled.

He had been hoping that he would be able to fool the school doctor into keeping him in the sanny for a week. But this was obviously not to be. However, there was the consolation of knowing that he had escaped afternoon lessons—

Then Teddy got a shock. He suddenly remembered that it was a half-holiday, and he would have had the afternoon to himself, in any case. He was more disgusted than ever, and thought about getting up, and going out. What was the use of fooling about like this?

But when he moved his feet, he changed his mind. It was hurting him rather badly, and he thereupon resolved to protest with

every atom of his breath if he was dismissed from the sanny before the end of the following day. At least, he ought to have one day's freedom from lessons, as compensation for all this pain.

And it would be just as well to start at once.

"Oh!" he groaned. "Oh! Nurse, please get me some water! I'm feeling faint and weak!"

Unfortunately, the nurse had gone off duty. She was the senior nurse, and her relief had not yet come into the ward. Teddy grunted, and looked round.

It was a private ward, with only two beds in it, the other being unoccupied. But it was only partitioned off from the other wards by wooden screens which by no means reached to the ceiling. So he was able to hear the uncouth voices of the occupants of the next ward. They were rough voices—uncultured and uneducated.

"Well, I'm blessed!" murmured Teddy in wonder.

And then he remembered. Of course, they were those four men who had been injured in the charabanc accident, on Bank Holiday, while the school had been away.

Teddy had heard all about the affair. A party of questionable racegoers, bound for the Bannington racecourse, had been stranded in Bellton Lane, owing to the breakdown of their motor-coach. In a semi-intoxicated condition, they had attacked Nipper & Co.'s camp, and when the charabanc had been repaired, they had sent it careering across one of Farmer Holt's meadows.

Then had followed the accident, and several of the men had been badly injured. That accident, incidentally, had been the original cause of Sir Lucian buying Holt's Farm, for the crash had disclosed some long-forgotten Roman relics—actually, the entrance to the aqueduct Handy & Co. had just explored.

Most of the men had gone off at once, but a few had been so badly cut and generally injured that they had been taken to the nearest hospital—which happened to be the school sanatorium.

Four of them still remained. And to-day, as it chanced, was their last day at the school. They were to be discharged that very afternoon, and Dr. Brett would be heartily glad to get rid of them. Sceldom had he dealt with such rough and ungracious patients.

"Well, if you ask me, Bill, it's a darned-good thing we're going," came a low voice over the partition. "I'm sick of this 'ere place. Too classy for me."

"Same 'ere, Ginger," replied the voice of Bill Dawson, the burly leader of the four. "Ow many times 'ave we asked for a bottle of beer?"

"Undreds!" said one of the others.

"Lummy, you're right, 'Erb," put in Ginger. "'Undreds of times—an' we've never 'ad a drop. Might as well be in prison. They won't even allow us a pack of cards.

An' as for that doctor, I'd like to punch 'is 'ead!"

"Ah, but that young nurse ain't so bad," came Bill's voice, with a chuckle in it. "A nice bit of goods, she is! I'd like to see 'er agin afore I go."

"I don't s'pose you'll have a chance," said Ginger. "The doctor ain't allowed 'er in this ward since Sid tried to kiss 'er last week. I ain't fergiven Sid, neither."

Teddy Long listened with indifferent interest. He was full of his own troubles, and he didn't particularly care what happened to those men in the other ward. And just then, as it happened, the under-nurse looked in.

"All right?" she asked cheerily.

Teddy groaned.

"I'm feeling faint, nurse," he said feebly. "Water, please!"

The nurse came to his bedside, and looked at him with a straight, frank eye. Dr. Brett had given her the tip, and she knew what to expect. And as Teddy looked at her he partially recovered.

"Good-afternoon, Miss Dora!" he said, with a smirk.

Until that moment he had forgotten that Dora Manners was the under-nurse, and she looked particularly attractive in her neat uniform.

She was cousin to Irene Manners, of the Moor View school, and she had only been at St. Frank's for about a week, having joined the sanatorium staff at the beginning of the new term.

Teddy regarded her with approval. He never had an opportunity of speaking to her until now. As a matter of fact, Dora would never have deigned to look at him outside the sanny, but Teddy deluded himself that he had a "way" with him. When he was discharged, he would be able to boast of his conquest of Dora!

"You—you needn't trouble about the water now, Miss Dora," he said with another ogle. "I was feeling faint, but since looking at you, I've got better."

"That's splendid," said Dora, with a mild astonishment that this ugly-looking little wretch should dare to pay her compliments. "But I think you had better call me nurse, if you don't mind."

"I'd rather call you Miss Dora!" said Teddy softly.

"It's against the rules," replied the girl coldly.

Long didn't notice that a silence had come from that other ward. Bill Dawson and his companions had heard Dora's voice, and were listening. They were wondering if they would be able to catch sight of her again before they left.

"Oh, we don't want to bother with rules," said Teddy, with a sweet smile. "I say, there's a secret I want to tell you."

Teddy fondly believed that that smile of his had been sweet—but it was quite the opposite. Dora busied herself with clearing

up one or two little odds and ends on the other side of the ward.

"There's a treasure on Holt's Farm!" said Teddy Long eagerly.

The girl turned round. If Teddy had meant to enchain her attention, he had certainly succeeded. She looked at him wonderingly.

"What do you mean—a treasure?" she asked.

"I thought I'd surprise you," said Teddy. "You won't let on, will you? But old Sir Lucian isn't so dotty as you might think."

"You mustn't speak in that disrespectful way about one of the school governors," said Dora. "Besides, he's the headmaster's brother-in-law. I shan't listen to you if you talk like that."

"Oh, but everybody's been saying he's dotty," protested Long. "But everybody was mistaken," he added, in a confidential tone. "I know the truth about it. He's hunting for treasure."

"I think you'd better go to sleep," said Dora. "You're only talking rubbish, and —"

"I tell you it's the truth!" interrupted Long. "Don't you believe me? Of course, I wouldn't tell anybody else. I know I can trust you, Miss Dora—and I'm letting you into this secret as a special favour."

She laughed.

"How kind of you!" she said lightly.

And Teddy was fool enough to believe that she had spoken seriously.

"Yes, as a special favour," he added, with emphasis. "Old Sir Lucian is searching for a Roman treasure. Handforth knows all about it."

"Handforth?" smiled Dora. "That's just like him!"

"He means to find this treasure himself, if he can," said Teddy. "They're exploring now—and everybody knows that Sir Lucian has been making all sorts of excavations. In fact, they've found parts of the treasure already. They've unearthed bags of gold."

"Don't be so silly," said Dora.

She correctly guessed that Teddy was drawing upon his imagination.

"You don't believe me, eh?" said the fatuous junior. "All right, you wait till it comes out! Smugglers used to be in this part of the country—and Sir Lucian is after their treasure. He's already found a great chest of Spanish gold, and he's after a lot more of it. I've just come from the farm, and I heard everything."

"They must be very careless at the farm," said Dora, with a twinkle in her dark eyes. "Thanks so much for telling me all about it. I'm ever so gratified."

She went out of the ward, and Teddy did not even suspect that she had resorted to gentle sarcasm. And on the other side of the partition four pairs of ears had taken everything in—and four pairs of eyes were exchanging meaning glances.



CHAPTER 10.

The Wanglers.

WILLIAM NAPOLEON BROWNE glanced at his watch.

"Sad to relate, Brother Horace, I must soon be going," he said regretfully. "I hate to tear myself away from your charming company, and you, no doubt, will be desolated at my going—but an appointment, when all is said and done, is an appointment."

"Oh, that's all right," said Stevens carelessly.

The chums of the Fifth were in their study in the Ancient House. Dinner was well over, and it was a free afternoon. There happened to be no important cricket match, so Browne was not required. As one of the leading lights of the First Eleven he could never be spared from a big match, but he was gratified to know that the afternoon was cricket-less. And this, in itself, was strange—for Browne was an enthusiast. Cricket was a sort of religion with him.

"As it happens, I've got an appointment, too," said Stevens. "Which way are you going, old man?"

Browne looked at his study mate cautiously.

"Oh, along the road," he replied, with a vague wave of his hand. "Unhappily, my direction lies in the opposite direction to yours, Brother Horace."

"That's what I thought," said Stevens suspiciously. "You're not going to Bannington, by any chance?"

"Are you going to Bannington?" asked Browne.

"No."

"Then it is quite possible that I shall meander along that road," said Browne complacently. "And you will go to Caistowe, brother?"

"Perhaps," said Stevens.

A silence fell.

This sort of indecisive conversation was quite foreign to these staunch friends. They were both polite—too polite. The way they avoided asking any direct questions was significant. As a rule, they were as one, each enjoying the other's society.

But this afternoon, for some reason, they were patently anxious to get out of one another's track. For some days there had been this vague estrangement between them. And yet it could scarcely be called an estrangement. For during school hours, or during those times when it was forbidden to go out of bounds, they were as chummy as ever.

"Well, I must be going," remarked Stevens, after a hasty glance at his watch. "By Jove, it's half-past-two!"

"Upon my crown, so it is!" ejaculated Browne. "Be good enough to excuse me, Brother Horace. I must fly. For once the Browne dignity must be thrown to the winds. I trust we shall meet later."

He hurried out, and Stevens had the satisfaction of seeing him stride, with long footsteps, across the Triangle to the gates, a vision in white flannels and striped blazer.

Stevens, himself, turned eagerly towards Big Arch.

"I wonder if he's really going?" he murmured. "If so, it's too good to be true!"

Out in the lane, Browne was communing with himself.

"Somehow, I fear that Brother Horace is descending to subterfuge," he murmured sadly. "It grieves me to detect such baseness in my closest chum. I am hurt to the quick."

Browne apparently missed the point that he, too, had resorted to subterfuge. All day he had tried to make Stevens believe that he had an important appointment with somebody miles away. And all day he had felt that Stevens refused to swallow it.

In just the same way, Stevens had had his own doubts. He had them still, even after Browne had disappeared out of the gates. And without losing a moment he hurried through Big Arch, and strode recklessly across Inner Court as though that ground were free, instead of being out of bounds.

And at the same time Browne was shooting along the private drive at the side of the school, en route for the same destination as Stevens. It was really a case of two minds with but a single thought.

And all because this happened to be Dora Manners' off-duty hour!

Browne and Stevens knew her times to the minute. They had learned them by heart. She went on for an hour at mid-day, to relieve the senior nurse. But at two-thirty she was free. Free for the whole afternoon. And to-day was a half-holiday!

Browne was anxious to take her for a drive in his car, and Stevens was just as keen on suggesting a row down the river. But neither of them had mentioned these plans to one another—or, if it came to that, to Dora, either. Hence the anxiety to reach the sanatorium at the minute she came off duty.

Ever since Dora had arrived, William Napoleon Browne and Horace Stevens had changed. They were not so foolish as to be in love with her, but they were certainly happy in her company. They had fallen under her spell. And a sort of jealousy had arisen between them, making them somewhat uneasy, for they were really the best of friends.

Stevens reached the side doorway of the sanatorium in a breathless condition, but he was triumphant. At least, he was triumphant until Browne came round the angle of the building with his long strides. They stared at one another aggressively for a moment.

Then the genial Browne grinned.

"So this, Brother Horace, is the appointed place?" he asked benevolently. "Alas, I feared as much!"

"Well, you were just as bad!" growled Stevens awkwardly. "You meant to come here all the time, didn't you?"

"Assuredly," said Browne. "Let us call a truce, brother. Let us dispense with this futile camouflage, and come out into the open."

"We seem to be in it, don't we?"

"I take it that you are bent upon escorting the fair Sister Dora out for the afternoon?" continued Browne. "It so happens that I am here on a similar mission. And I think I am correct in stating that we have no acute desire for one another's company?"

"Not this afternoon, anyway," agreed Stevens.

"Precisely," nodded Browne. "There is great and profound truth in the old adage that while two may be company, three are an infernal nuisance each to the other. In blunt words, I want to take Dora for a motor ride, and you are, doubtless, bent upon rambling through the woods with her."

"I thought of taking her down the river," said Stevens defiantly.

"An excellent suggestion," sighed Browne. "In fact, so excellent that I am fraught with grave misgivings. For we must leave it to Sister Dora to choose. On the other hand, there is an alternative. We could toss for the privilege of Sister Dora's company."

Stevens looked at his chum coldly.

"Toss for her?" he repeated, red with indignation.

"Kindly be good enough to kick me," said Browne penitently. "It was a slip, brother. I apologise. Under no circumstances could we descend so low. No, there is only one course. Sister Dora must decide herself. We will leave it entirely to her—and the forlorn one must bear his burden without flinching. Let that be a bargain."

"I'm game," said Stevens, nodding.

They were both relieved.

"I am glad this has happened," went on Browne. "Let us end this foolish and pointless friction. Let us be open. We are both charmed by Sister Dora's society, and there can be no doubt that she is not entirely indifferent to ours. Why she should find solace in your company, Brother Horace, is one of those mysteries which will remain for ever in shadow. But the feminine sex is ever fickle."

"You silly ass!" said Stevens indignantly. "Why the dickens does she look at you, if it comes to that? What are you, anyway? A lanky, ugly, long-winded jackass."

Browne winced.

"I am accustomed to these chidings by instalments, Brother Horace, but it hurts me to hear them in one complete edition. I fear you have been unduly harsh with me. I may be ugly, but it is news, indeed, to learn that I am long-winded!"

Stevens grinned.

"You ass, you're the most long-winded beggar under the sun," he said. "I didn't mean all that just now, and we'll keep careful. If we start slanging one another, we shall probably have a scrap. And what do you suppose Dora would say if she came out and found us scrapping on the doorstep?"

"The picture is too poignant for my vivid imagination," replied Browne with a slight shiver. "No, we must remain friends, brother. Let us endeavour to hob-nob as of yore. Jealousy is a fearsome dragon. In other words, at all costs I must steer clear of



Before Bill Dawson and his scoundrelly men could make a move, Nipper came uncharging in, followed closely by Handforth and the other juniors. The fight was brief. Exhausted by their efforts to shift the heavy lid from the stone chest, Bill and the other ruffians were soon beaten.

the green-eyed monster. By that I trust you will not imagine that I am referring to you," he added gracefully. "For you are neither green-eyed nor monstrous, Brother Horace. I will refrain from paining you by giving a recital of your true description."



CHAPTER 11.

Hot Work.

DORA MANNERS came along the sanatorium corridor with a springy step. She was now dressed in summery white, and looked even prettier than before. She had no set plans for the afternoon, but rather thought about taking a stroll to the River House School to see her cousin.

At the back of her mind she had a vague inkling that a couple of escorts would be awaiting her. But Dora was a sensible girl, and she took nothing for granted.

The sanatorium was really a wing of the headmaster's house; but it was self-contained, nevertheless, and she naturally made towards the usual exit. And as she turned a bend in the corridor, she came face to face with Bill Dawson and his three companions.

"Well met, missie," said Bill, with a grin. "We thought it was you, so we waited."

Dora came to a halt, and eyed the four men steadily.

"Please let me pass," she said, in a quiet voice, noting that they barred the way. "I thought you had gone, or I should have asked Dr. Brett to escort me out."

This was pointed enough, but the men only laughed.

They should have gone some little time earlier, but they had deliberately waited. Dora had avoided them for days—not of her own accord, but upon Dr. Brett's advice. And the rascals were intent upon having a bit of "sport" before finally taking their departure.

One would have thought that they would have been grateful for the care and attention which had been bestowed upon them by the school authorities. But they were not the type of men to be grateful for anything. The school had been under no obligation to shelter them, or to treat them in any way. They had found sanctuary in the sanatorium by reason of their injuries.

"Just a minute, missie," said Bill Dawson pleasantly. "We couldn't go without saying good-bye. We talked it over, an' came to the conclusion that we'd never smile agin if we went off without seein' another o' your smiles."

"That's it!" said Ginger Welch, with a grin.

"The fact is, we'd like a kiss," went on Bill coarsely. "What's more, we mean to 'ave one. See?" he added with a leer. "We'd 'ad enough of your 'igh an' mighty ways, my gal!"



Before Bill Dawson and his scoundrelly men Handforth and the other juniors. The fight the stone chest. Bill

He reached forward to seize her, and Dora was just too late to avoid his grip. But she brought her hand round, and caught him a stinging slap on the face.

"Let me go!" she panted angrily.

"No fear!" snapped Bill. "Arter that I'll make you pay!"

"Oh, you ruffian!" cried Dora hotly.

Her tone was filled with fury, and in her indignation she had allowed her voice to rise. In fact, it carried well, and Browne and Stevens, at the outer door, not only heard, but they distinguished the words.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Stevens.

"Brother, I rather fancy an investigation is necessary," said Browne swiftly. "Come! This is no time for hesitation!"

His long legs took him indoors at high speed, and he and Stevens swept round the angle of the passage, just in time to see Dora struggling desperately with the burly Bill.

"Now, then," Bill was saying. "Got yer?"

"Your mistake, Brother Bill!" said Browne.

Two strides carried him to the rascal's side, and he caught Bill by the shoulder, swung



Nipper came charging in, followed closely by d by their efforts to shift the heavy lid from is were soon beaten.

him round, and his right went driving upwards with terrific force on Bill's jaw.

Thud!

Browne's knuckles jarred against the man's chin with a nasty crash, and Bill reeled away. At the same instant, Stevens found it necessary to punch George Welch in the left eye—Ginger being in the act of kicking Browne on the shins.

Precisely what happened immediately afterwards was confused.

Dora, breathless with indignation, and intensely relieved at this sudden rescue, managed to break away. She had been saved from that humiliating position, but she was concerned for the safety of Browne and Stevens. The two seniors were hopelessly outnumbered, and these men were obviously intent upon fighting.

True, they had only just come out of hospital, and they were not as strong as they might have been. But they were far too strong for these two senior schoolboys.

Browne and Stevens were both expert boxers—but this qualification was a handicap

rather than a help. For they naturally fought cleanly, whereas Bill and his companions used their feet as impartially as they used their fists.

Dora very sensibly hurried from the scene—not because she was frightened, but because she felt that Dr. Brett's presence would be helpful. The young doctor was a useful man with his fists, too.

But much can happen in a little time. And while Dora was fetching Dr. Brett, Browne and Stevens were now having the time of their lives. The one thought which sustained them and made them happy was that they were suffering in the service of Dora.

The battle was tremendous.

"You young fools!" snarled Bill, as he lashed out with a heavy foot. "Think you'll kick us out, eh?"

"We leave the kicking to you, Brother Bill," replied Browne, as he got in a neat body punch. "Ah! That was rather a nasty knock, but no matter. Let me repay it with interest."

As Browne struck, Bill's boot caught him on the shin, and his agony was supreme. In fact, he almost collapsed. And then, before he could fully recover himself, one of the other ruffians jabbed a vicious elbow into his side. He spun round, gasping.

"I'll learn ye!" snarled Bill Dawson.

He landed another kick—this time on Browne's ankle. And at the same second Stevens went down, fighting desperately, but beaten by foul play. Even as he lay stretched on the floor, he was viciously kicked.

To fight such men in a fair manner was out of the question. And as Browne and Stevens could not bring themselves to return their opponents' dirty tactics, they naturally went under.

"Crikey!" panted Ginger. "We'd best quit, mates!"

"Just what I was thinking!" said Sid, with a scared look over his shoulder. "There'll be trouble if we ain't quick. We'd best 'op it afore that blamed doctor comes."

"Yus!" gasped one of the others. "Come on, Bill!"

The four men hurriedly beat an exit.

They went out through the outer doorway, and in less than a minute they had vanished across Inner Court. In the meantime, Browne and Stevens were sitting up in a dazed, feeble condition.

"The curs!" gasped Stevens. "The kicking, dirty rotters!"

"Let us be thankful, brother," murmured Browne happily.

"Thankful?" mumbled Stevens.

"We have suffered for Dora," explained Browne. "Unhappily, the fight was too short. I was hoping for more serious injuries, but no matter. We are sufficiently crooked to warrant our immediate admittance to the sanny."

Stevens slowly smiled.

"With Dora to look after us!" he whispered.

"Precisely!" said Browne contentedly.

They were too dizzy to stand up. There was no pretence about it. And they certainly had the appearance of human wreckage.

Browne was bleeding from the left corner of his mouth, and he had a vague idea that two of his teeth were missing—but this latter proved to be a misconception. His right eye was puffy and ominously discoloured, his nose was beginning to assume a bulbous enlargement. And the spotless white of his flannels was ominously stained near the ankles with red; his shins were badly hacked.

Stevens had fared no better.

He was as great a wreck as his companion. And, although they were both in great pain, they smiled through their bruises, for they realised that there would be compensations.

Naturally they would now be admitted into the sanatorium. And what could be better than that? With luck they might be able to remain for a couple of days. And Dora was on duty for quite a few hours during every day. So far as Browne and Stevens were concerned, the world was bright.

When Dora came back her worst fears were realised.

She had only been gone a bare three minutes. She had succeeded in getting hold of Dr. Brett very quickly, having located him in the laboratory. And he, naturally, had been outraged to hear Dora's story.

"The infernal rogues!" said the doctor. "I'll have them arrested for this! I was half afraid of the hounds! I thought they had gone."

"Never mind!" cried Dora. "Come quickly!"

And when they arrived at the scene of action the villains of the piece had gone. Browne and Stevens were strewn on the floor. Their remains were an untidy litter in the corridor.

"Oh!" panted Dora, horrified.

"Good gracious!" muttered Dr. Brett, rushing forward.

He stood over the fallen pair, aghast.

"Browne!" he exclaimed. "Upon my word, Browne, you've had a nasty time of it! You, too, Stevens!"

Browne opened his eyes and smiled.

"Pardon me, Brother Brett, but it is necessary to correct this impression of yours," he said benevolently. "Brother Horace and myself are content. We have gone under, it is true, but the portals of happiness are now open to us."

"The portals of happiness?" repeated the doctor, staring.

"We are eligible for the sanny," explained Browne, with a contented glance at Dora.



CHAPTER 12.

A Rapid Recovery.

ORA MANNERS flushed slightly. It only took her about a tenth of a second to realise what Browne was getting at.

"Oh, that's ridiculous," she said quickly. "It's dreadful that you should be so injured! We must have those men arrested at once!"

"I'll telephone to the police," snapped Dr. Brett.

"Let them go!" said Browne. "Have they not served us well?"

"We're happy enough," said Stevens, with a twisted sort of grin. "We don't bear them any malice, do we, Browne, old man?"

"We are greatly in their debt," declared Browne firmly.

"What on earth——" began the doctor.

"Oh, they're too absurd!" said Dora, in confusion.

Dr. Brett looked at her keenly.

"Oh-ho!" he murmured, with a whimsical smile. "I'm beginning to see a glimpse of daylight." He chuckled. "Well, perhaps we'll let the brutes go. We don't want any unpleasant publicity, do we? It wouldn't be particularly nice for you, would it, Miss Dora?"

"I'm not thinking about that at all," said Dora. "Please let us attend to these poor chaps' hurts."

"A sound and solid suggestion," approved Browne. "There is only one thing I insist upon, and that is that you, Miss Dora, shall render first-aid. Brother Brett can confine himself solely to Brother Stevens. I willingly forgo the——"

"You silly ass!" said Stevens indignantly.

"I think I had better attend to the pair of them," said Dr. Brett, with a glance at Dora. "You are off duty, in any case, Miss Dora."

For a moment Browne and Stevens were horrified.

"Certainly not!" said the girl indignantly. "They fought those men for my sake, and I couldn't be so callous as that. We must make them comfortable at once. Do you think you can get up, Browne?"

"With your assistance, anything is possible," replied Browne promptly.

Stevens watched in agony as Dora helped Browne to rise. But later, when they were both being tended by the young nurse, Stevens lost his jealousy. Dora was quite impartial.

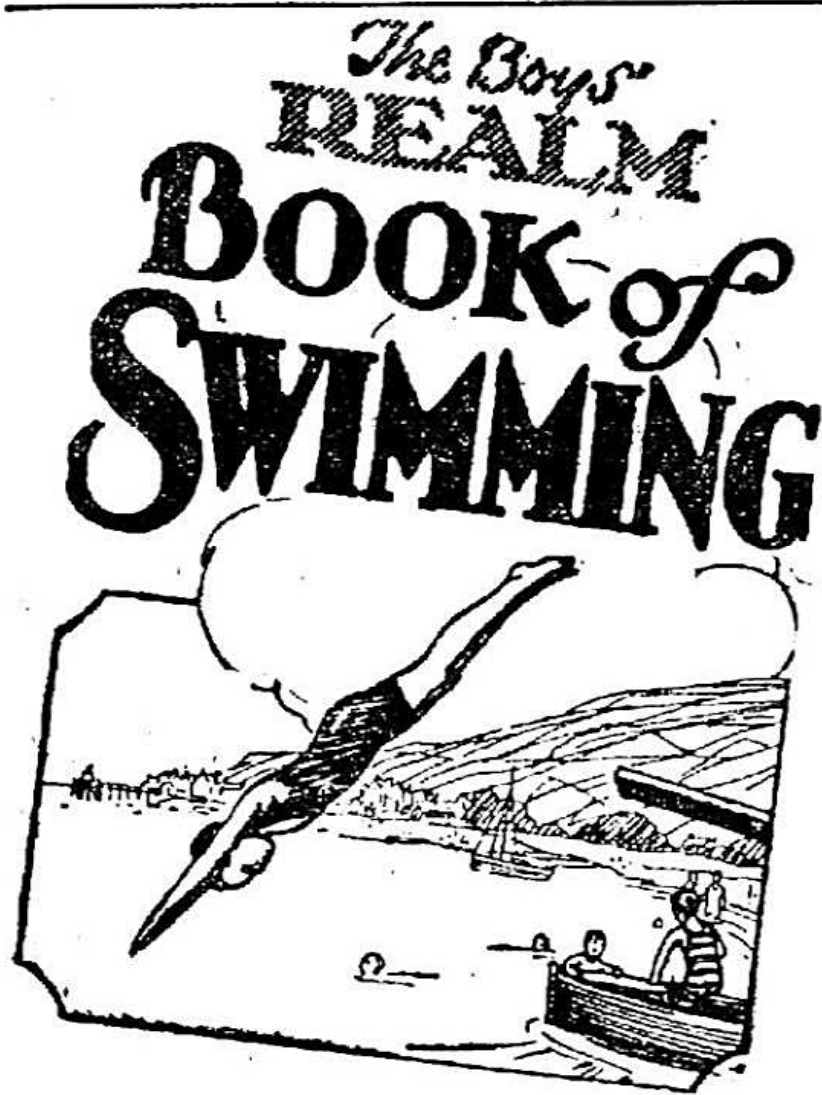
The injuries, on the whole, proved to be superficial.

Both the sufferers had black eyes, and they had both received nasty kicks. But the application of soothing ointments, and the hovering presence of Dora, brought comfort to them. They were content for the afternoon.

Judging by their feeble voices, they were in a very bad way, but Dora was not deceived for a moment. She knew exactly

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why they were feeble, and she could not help feeling complimented. Moreover, she was very grateful. They had suffered these injuries in her defence. Without a thought for their own safety, they had battled against hopeless odds.

At the same time, the situation was too farcical to persist.

Dora realised that at once. And Dr. Brett's humorous glances were somewhat embarrassing, too. He had taken himself off after the patients had been made comfortable, tactfully realising that his presence was not in any way necessary.

Dora remained in the ward, with Browne stretched on one bed and Stevens on the other. They were bandaged and plastered, but quite happy. They were content to remain there.

And then Dora went out for something. They didn't know she had gone until Browne happened to open his eyes. He looked round, and then sat up abruptly.

"What murky scheme is this?" he asked. "Brother Horace, our nurse has deserted us in our hour of need. I desire a drink of water."

"There's plenty on the table," said Stevens.

"True; but when one is weak, one needs a nurse constantly," replied Browne. "Ah, do I not detect tripping footsteps?"

He closed his eyes again, and heard the rustle of a dress as the nurse came in.

"Sister," he murmured, "water, please."

And a moment later a glass was held to his lips. He opened his eyes, and then gave such a start that half the water went down his open shirt-front.

"What transformation is this?" he asked weakly.

Instead of gazing at Dora, he was face to face with the senior nurse.

"You must be quiet," said the nurse softly. "On no account must you disturb yourself. Dora tells me that you are very feeble and weak."

"And so," declared Browne, "I am! I have sustained a dreadful shock to the system!"

"Where's Dora?" asked Stevens blankly.

"She won't be back to-day," said the senior nurse complacently. "She's off duty, and she particularly asked me to make you comfortable. She has gone for a walk towards the river, I believe. Now, you must both try to get some sleep. Dora particularly warned me that you were very ill, and must on no account exert yourselves."

She turned away, and Browne and Stevens exchanged significant glances.

Here was a fine state of affairs! Dora off duty, and this elderly apparition in full charge! And they were both too feeble and weak to get up! Something of a drastic nature was indicated.

Browne sat up and felt himself gingerly.

"Astonishingly enough, Brother Horace, I

am feeling extraordinarily better," he remarked. "My strength is returning by leaps and bounds. I can feel it surging back!"

"That's funny," said Stevens. "I feel stronger, too."

The nurse turned.

"Now, you mustn't be foolish," she said. "Do try to get some sleep! It will do you a world of good."

Browne shook his head.

"I never sleep in the afternoons," he replied firmly. "I feel that a stroll by the river would be greatly beneficial. Why, good sister, should we remain here to bother you?"

"Silly idea!" said Stevens, getting off the bed.

"Quite preposterous!" agreed Browne.

They were both fully dressed, of course, and a moment later they were making for the door. They limped somewhat, but every trace of their recent weakness had gone.

"Doctor Brett particularly warned me to keep you quiet," said the nurse. "You really mustn't behave like this. How do you expect to get well if you disobey orders?"

"We're well already," said Stevens promptly.

The recovery was a record for the sanatorium. Never before had two patients regained their health and strength with such uncanny swiftness. By the time the two Fifth-Formers had reached the Triangle, they were not even limping. They had discarded their bandages, too.

Dora had effected the miracle by her withdrawal. And she was by no means astonished when, a quarter of an hour later, as she was leisurely strolling by the River Stowe, she beheld her late patients floating down stream in a boat.

Browne raised his straw hat, and Stevens sent the craft shooting towards the bank.

"This is singularly curious!" exclaimed Browne, in astonishment. "A most happy meeting, Sister Dora! Who would have thought of seeing you here?"

"Yes, isn't it strange?" asked Dora, with a twinkle in her eyes. "I thought you were both too feeble to move?"

"We made a rapid recovery," said Stevens, grinning.

"Precisely," said Browne. "I rather fancy the face of your respected senior had much to do with it, Sister Dora. In many respects an excellent face, but it produced the most wonderful effect upon us. One look at it was sufficient to send us bounding forth, cured."

Dora laughed.

"I'm afraid you're a pair of frauds," she said severely. "All the same, it was very nice of you to help me like that. I haven't had a chance of thanking you properly——"

"Let us forget the distressing incident," said Browne. "It is my suggestion that you should come for a ride in my faithful Morris-Oxford."

"And I'd like you to come for a row," said Stevens quickly.

"I can't do both, can I?" laughed Dora. "I think you are both too unwell to either

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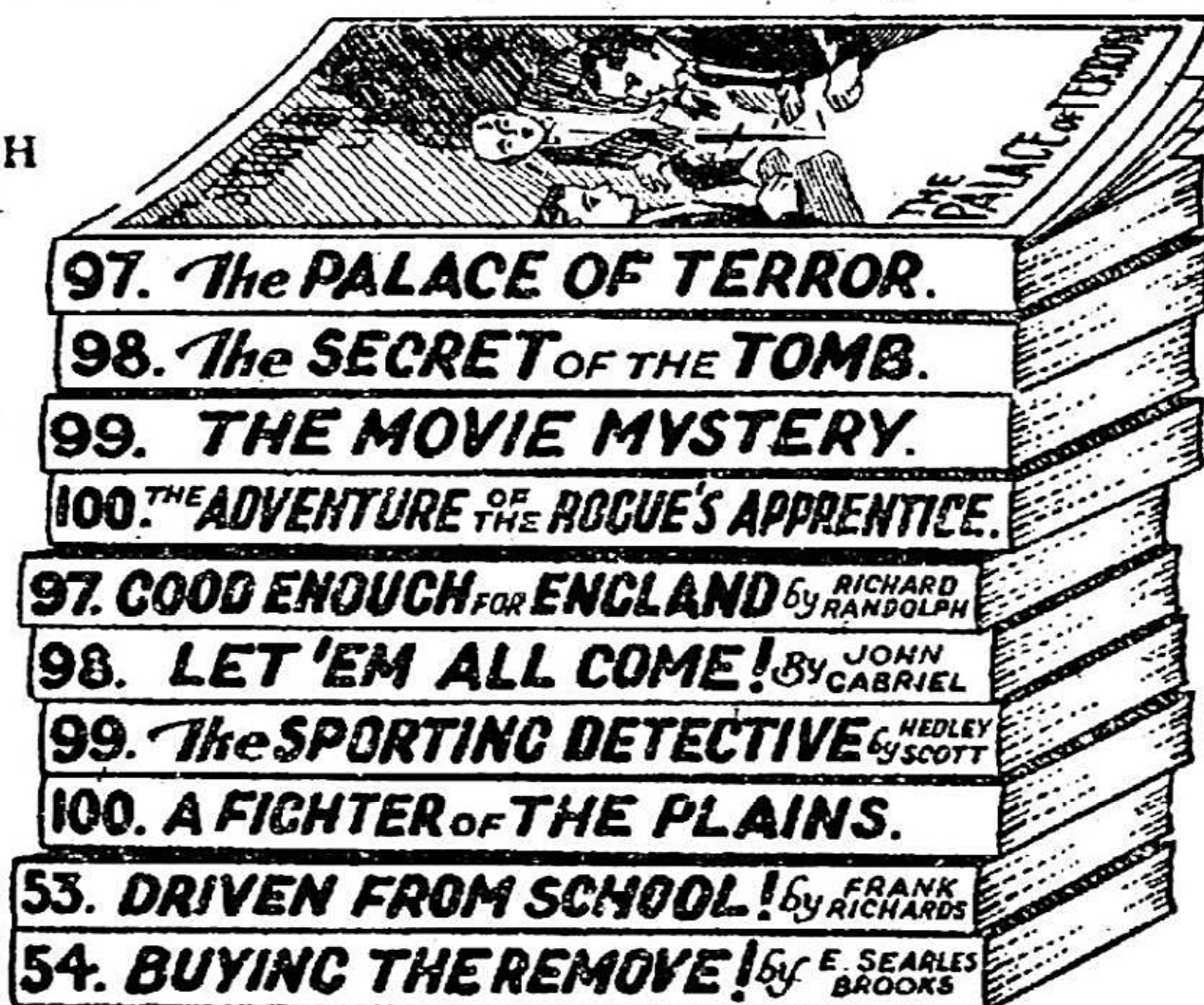
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drive a car or to row a boat. So I suggest that we go back to the school, and I'll entertain you to tea."

And, since there was no disputing the decision of a lady, Browne and Stevens had no alternative but to acquiesce.



CHAPTER 13.

Another Wangle!

BILL DAWSON set his mug down and wiped his mouth.

"Lummy, I needed that!" he said fervently.

"I never knew beer tasted so nice, mates."

Three gurgles from his companions formed the only answer, and a moment later three tankards were set down on the table.

The late patients were sitting at a bench in the tap-room of the White Hart, in Bell-ton. They had a quiet corner to themselves, near the open window, where the evening breezes came wafting through, scent-laden from the garden. Not that Bill Dawson and his companions were susceptible to any perfume other than that of hops and malt.

"I dunno as we ought to 'ang round this blamed village," said Ginger Welch uneasily. "Arter what 'appened up at the school, we'd best clear out, mates."

"I ain't clearin' out yet," retorted Dawson. "We swiped them two young blighters, but the school people ain't likely to do nothin'. They don't want no trouble. We're safe enough. To tell the truth, Ginger, I was thinkin' about askin' for a job at the farm."

"A job?" repeated the other three.

"That's it," nodded Bill.

"Work?" said Ginger, aghast.

"It gives you a turn, don't it?" sneered Bill.

"Don't be a fool!" snapped the foxy-faced Ginger. "But what's the idea of askin' for work on a farm? We ain't farm labourers, are we? Besides, we don't want to stop 'ere. Best thing we can do is to get 'ome."

"You ain't forgot what that kid was sayin', I s'pose?" asked Bill, in a low voice. "You 'eard 'im."

"Mebbe it was only kid's talk," put in Sid dubiously. "Treasure, eh? Sounds a bit thick, don't it, Bill?"

"If I only 'ad the kid to rely on, I'd say it was thick," agreed Dawson. "But we've 'eard lots o' things up in that school 'ospital. An' there's no gettin' away from the fact that this 'ere Sir Lucian 'as bin actin' mighty queer. I b'lieve what the kid says. There's somethin' worth grabbin' on that farm. Any'ow, it's a good idea to 'ave a shot at it."

"But why ask for work?" said Ginger. "That's a bit too thick, Bill."

"We can't do it no other way," replied Bill, with a frown. "If we 'ang about the farm we shall be spotted. But if we gets jobs, we shall 'ave a right there. See? An'

this 'ere Lady Honoria is the big noise at the farm, I understands. An' it oughter be easy to wangle 'er. We've just come out o' the 'ospital, an' we're anxious to regain our 'ealth an' strength on the farm. An' she's balmy on fresh air. I reckon she'll fall for it like a bird."

"What about them youngsters we knocked out?" asked Sid.

"They might spoil things a bit," admitted Dawson. "But they ain't likely to be at the farm—not yet awhile, anyway. We bashed 'em 'bout too much for that. I tell you, it's worth tryin'."

And Bill, who was the leader of the gang, had his way. The others were always ready to follow him.

An hour later Lady Honoria Dexter was somewhat astonished to see four men approaching her as she was walking across the meadows from Holt's Farm to the school. They were not pleasant-looking men. Indeed, she had recognised them as the rascals who had recently been harboured in the sanatorium.

But they were very polite.

Before they met her they raised their caps and paused respectfully. Bill Dawson, with a very humble expression on his face, acted as spokesman.

"Beggin' your pardon, lady, is there any chance of us fellers gettin' work on the farm?" he asked. "We 'ears that you're in charge, like, so we thought we'd ask you."

"That's it, lady!" mumbled the others.

Lady Honoria was even more surprised—but somewhat gratified, too.

"So you want to work on the farm, my good men?" she asked indulgently.

"Yes, lady," said Bill.

"I admire your desire for work, but I am afraid there is no opening," said Lady Honoria. "The regular farm labourers are already being assisted by a number of school-boys, and I do not quite see— And yet, why not?" she murmured. "There is surely plenty of work for all?"

"Just comin' out of the 'ospital, as you might say, we ain't over strong, lady," put in Ginger hastily. "It's light work as we should like most, if you understands me."

Bill gave him a nudge.

"Don't take no notice o' Ginger, lady," he said gruffly. "We don't care what kind of work it is, an' we don't want no pay. Just food and lodgin', that's all, an' we don't mind if we dosses in one o' them barns. In fact, we'd like it better than sleepin' in the 'ouse. Give us a trial, lady, anyhow," he added earnestly. "We'll do our best."

"Really, I—"

"We've 'eard such a lot of this 'ere Open Air Life that we're just bustin' to try it," continued Bill. "We feels that it'll set us up agin. We acted real bad on Bank 'Oliday, and we admits it; but we've 'ad to pay, lady. We've been in 'ospital ever since, and we've 'ad time to think. And the only way for us to get 'ealthy and strong agin is to steer clear o' the pubs, and to live the

Open Air Life on a farm. Give us a chance, mum! Let's 'ave a fair trial."

Lady Honoria was much impressed.

"These men, obviously, were sincere. They were feeling weak after their spell in hospital, and, very sensibly, they felt that light work on the farm would set them up again. She beamed upon the quartette.

"Very well," she said genially. "Very well, my good men. Since you are so eager for this work, I will not disappoint you by being deaf to your request. Come with me, and I will establish you on the farm at once."

"Lummy, that's 'andsome of you lady," said Bill.

"Thanks, mum," chorused the others.

"There is nothing like farm work," continued Lady Honoria, as they walked back towards Holt's Farm. "The work may be strenuous, but it builds the muscles, strengthens the sinews, and does enormous good. There is, indeed, nothing like hard work."

"Hard work!" said Ginger uneasily.

"We reckoned on something light, lady—arter comin' out of 'ospital," put in Sid.

"Light work is not much good," said Lady Honoria. "To-morrow you shall help with the carting of hay—loading the wagons—making stacks. There are many turnips to be dug and carted, and a hundred and one other tasks that will keep you busy."

Bill Dawson found his companions looking at him in a scared sort of way, but he managed to engage Lady Honoria's attention, and she noticed nothing of these signs.

Presently they went into the farmyard, and were soon surrounded by Nipper & Co., Handforth, and the other fellows. The ordinary labourers had gone home, and the fellows were taking their ease in the cool of the evening before turning in.

"Boys, let me introduce you to four more workers," said Lady Honoria, beaming. "They have just come out of hospital, and I have decided to let them recuperate on the farm."

"Pleased to meet you, young gents!" said Bill, nodding.

"I rather think we've met before," replied Nipper curtly.

"By George!" snorted Handforth. "These are those ruffians who tried to wreck our camp, Lady Honoria! They're the men you chased out with a broom! My hat! You're not going to let them spoof you—"

"I am a woman of peace," interrupted Lady Honoria quietly. "These men are regretful of their conduct, and they are anxious to work. It is not for me to turn them aside. It is my policy to let bygones be bygones."

"Yes, but—"

"It's all right, young gents," said Bill gruffly. "We knows we was wrong on that day—but we're sorry. We won't disturb any of you. Just show us where the barn is, and we'll sleep there. We only wants to

work, so's we can get back our 'ealth and strength."

"You see?" smiled Lady Honoria.

It was useless to protest, for the good lady had evidently made up her mind that these men were genuine. Foolishly enough, she was willing to overlook their former conduct.

And soon afterwards she took her departure.

"Well, what do you make of that?" asked Handforth gruffly.

"Just like her, of course," said Nipper, with a grin. "I expect they spoofed her up about the Open Air life, and she succumbed."

"But, good gad!" ejaculated Archie. "We can't absolutely have those chunks of fungus growing round the old farmstead, what? I mean to say, the atmosphere has become somewhat unpurified."

"I vote we kick them off the premises," said Handforth.

"No, we can't do that," said Nipper. "After all, it's Lady Honoria's farm—"

"It isn't," said Handforth. "It's Sir Lucian's."

"Same thing," said Nipper. "By all that I've seen, Lady Honoria wears the trousers—in more senses than one. And it's no good jibbing, Handy. If she wants these men here, there's an end of it."

"They'll burgle the farmhouse in the middle of the night," said Tommy Watson.

"Rats!" said Nipper. "They may be uncouth beggars, but I don't think they're burglars. In any case, we can look after ourselves, can't we? We needn't worry over four men of that sort!"



CHAPTER 14.

Activity by Night I

THE fellows didn't quite like it, but they realised that it was not within their province to question Lady Honoria's decision. They could not take the law into their own hands, and drive these four men away.

"At least, let's give them a chance," said Nipper. "If we catch them at anything shady, we'll drum them off the farm. But there's just a chance they may be sincere—a very slim chance, I'll admit. But let's give them the benefit of the doubt."

And even Handforth, who was a great believer in fair play, saw the wisdom of this decision.

There was no talk of exploring or prowling about that night. Haymaking had proved far more strenuous than the juniors had ever expected, and they were tired out and weary. All they wanted was sleep.

Thus, even before darkness had fully descended over the countryside, most of the fellows were asleep in their beds.



Swiftly the two seniors rushed to the rescue of the struggling Dora. Browne's right struck Bill Dawson with terrific force on the jaw, while Stevens was equally successful against one of the other ruffians.

Handforth had made some tentative suggestions to his chums about exploring that aqueduct again, and they had both felt alarmed. As far as they could see, there was nothing further to explore.

"Why not leave all that to Sir Lucian?" asked Church. "We've seen all we want to see, Handy. Let's get to sleep."

"Hear, hear!" murmured McClure.

They were preparing for bed, and were speaking in low tones on their own side of the room.

"No!" said Handforth firmly. "I'm going to do some more exploring—and you chaps have got to help me. We'll sleep until midnight, and then we'll creep down the tunnel."

Church and McClure brightened up.

"We'll sleep until midnight?" repeated Church.

"Yes."

"Who's going to wake us at midnight?"

"I am!" said Handforth.

"Have you asked Willy to tip a pail of water over you?" inquired Church politely.

"No, you ass!" frowned Handforth. "I've made up my mind to awaken at midnight, and that's enough. You chaps can go peacefully to sleep, and leave the rest to me."

"Fine!" said McClure.

"Good old Handy!" nodded Church.

And they took him at his word, and went peacefully to sleep—leaving the rest to him. Experience had taught them that no reliance could be placed upon determination in a matter of rising. When midnight came he would be snoring soundly, and would continue to snore until morning.

"So, without a worry on their minds, Church and McClure turned in.

By ten p.m. the farm was silent. Everybody within that building was sound asleep. Outside, the darkness of the night was lowering, and when eleven o'clock struck, the summer's night was black. There were clouds in the sky, obscuring the skies, but the air was tranquil, and there was little or no wind.

And just at eleven o'clock a meeting took place near that deep gap where the bramble-barrier concealed the exit of the Roman aqueduct. There were three figures—and one had been waiting for some little time.

The other two came up, carrying various articles.

"Bless my soul!" said the first figure testily. "You are late—both of you. Did I not tell you to be here at ten-forty-five?"

"No, sir," said one of the others. "Eleven o'clock, you said."

"Nonsense, Hardy—nonsense!" snapped Sir Lucian.

"All right, sir."

The two men evidently knew their master, for they did not argue. These were the men, evidently, who had been helping the old archaeologist from the very first in his prowlings and excavations.

"You have brought everything?" asked Sir Lucian keenly.

"Everything you said, sir," replied Hardy.

"Lanterns? Pick-axes? Ropes? Candles?"

"Yes, sir," said the man patiently.

"Very well, then—follow me," said Sir Lucian. "Don't attempt to light any of the lanterns yet. Wait until we are within the aqueduct. I am trusting you not to breathe a word of this discovery to a soul. It is of paramount importance."

The pair solemnly gave their word. They were quite used to it. Sir Lucian was always pledging them to secrecy on the most absurd subjects. He would sometimes find a few odd stones, and swear them to everlasting silence. Privately, they held the opinion that their employer was touched.

Once within the aqueduct, and screened from the outer air, three lanterns were lit. They weren't ordinary lanterns, either—but three hundred candle-power petrol pressure lamps of the latest type. The aqueduct was flooded with dazzling brilliance.

Sir Lucian's companions proved to be two honest-looking fellows, very much like gardeners in appearance. They were, in fact, two out-door men from his own estate; and their presence at St. Frank's was not generally known. They mostly came out at night, to help Sir Lucian in his mysterious investigations.

"We have to thank those boys for this amazing discovery," said Sir Lucian, as he gazed down the aqueduct with loving eyes.

Hardy and his companion regarded the amazing discovery with strange indifference. Apparently, it gave them no kick whatever.

"Yes, sir," said Hardy stolidly.

"I cannot expect you to appreciate the value of this find, of course," went on Sir Lucian. "But I assure you, Hardy—and I assure you, Chapell—that the whole world will ring with our names as soon as I make this affair public. This is one of the genuine Roman aqueducts—built, I believe, in the year 216—or perhaps even earlier. And the state of preservation is marvellous. Positively marvellous. I cannot find words to express my delight. I am grateful, indeed, to those schoolboys. I no longer resent their presence on the farm."

Sir Lucian's men felt slightly relieved. They were rather fed up with their employer's animosity against the schoolboys. It was a change for him to be tolerant towards them.

"Our object, to-night, is to make a thorough examination of this aqueduct," continued Sir Lucian. "Let us begin at once. The task will probably occupy us until breakfast-time."

And so the work began.

Over an hour had elapsed before any im-

portant disclosure was made. And then, with a shout of excitement, Sir Lucian forced back a heavy stone slab. There was a wide crevice just there, and it looked promising. It was. For the stone slab fell away, revealing a narrow tunnel.

"Good gracious!" murmured Sir Lucian. "What is this? I must confess I expect nothing of this description here. A chamber, obviously. Can it be possible that I have mistaken the character of this structure? Surely it can be nothing but an aqueduct?"

His men did not risk any comment.

Sir Lucian led the way through the narrow opening, and they soon found themselves in a low stone chamber. And in the centre of it was a curious object. It looked like a chest—but this, too, was made of stone. It was smothered with the accumulated dust of centuries, and it was very solid.

"A stone chest," breathed Sir Lucian. "This is getting more and more enthralling, Hardy. We must try to remove this lid—this cover."

"Grab hold, Sam," said Hardy.

"Careful—careful!" shouted Sir Lucian. "Good heavens, you mustn't use violence! There is probably a great treasure within this chest—a treasure of old relics. Be gentle, Hardy—be gentle!"

Sir Lucian Dexter was shaking with eagerness and excitement. He helped his men, regardless of the dust and grime which soiled his clothing. He was all agog with anxiety.

"It moved!" he gasped, at last.

And then, just at that moment, something else moved. Four figures came through the narrow stone doorway, and they leapt at the unsuspecting explorers.

"Quick, mates!" shouted Bill Dawson. "Lay 'em out!"

Sir Lucian swung round in amazement.

"What on earth— You—you scoundrels!" he shouted. "Who are you? What do you mean—"

"Those men from the hospital, sir!" interrupted Hardy angrily. "You needn't worry, sir—we'll deal with them!"

But it was not so easy.

Within a second, a desperate struggle was going on, and there seemed no hope of Sir Lucian and his men emerging victorious.



CHAPTER 15.

Handy Wakes Up!

HANDFORTH sat up in bed, lashing out wildly.

"Rescue, Remove!" he bellowed, in a strained, unnatural voice. "Back up!

Take that, you flat-faced River House idiot! We'll teach you to come here with your potty japes!"

Swish—thud!

Handforth's fists, whirling about, struck something solid. At least, one of them did. Church had just sat up to see what all the noise was about, and as the little camp beds

NEXT WEDNESDAY!

"THE TREASURE OF TIBERIUS!"

Roman goblets, coins and jewelled weapons!

Treasure trove filling ancient chests in the tomb of a Roman governor!

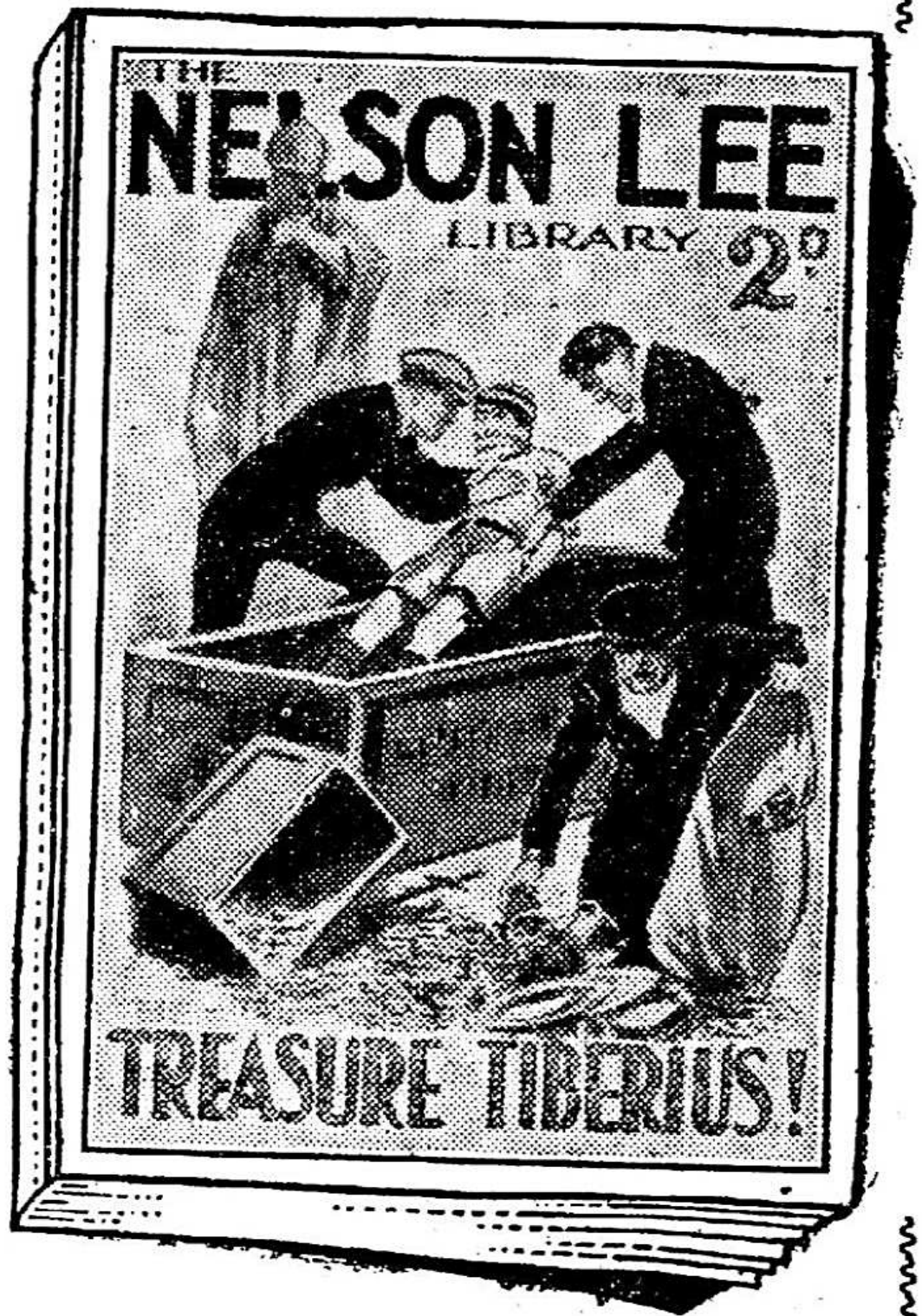
Nipper & Co. get a thrill when they discover this secret horde. They get a still bigger thrill when they find that outsiders are seeking the Roman gold as well.

Next Wednesday's yarn of the Boys of St. Frank's and the Fresh Air Fiends is a fitting concluding yarn to a brilliant series—don't fail to read it.

Next week brings the announcement of a stunning new holiday-adventure series. The Remove is bound for a mystery land—full details in the next issue!

More amazing thrills in "THE BURIED WORLD!"

This great story is nearing its climax, and next Wednesday's instalment is packed with real excitement.



ORDER IN ADVANCE!

were set very close together, his move was disastrous.

He reeled dizzily back, and caught his head a dreadful crack against the wall.

"Oh, corks!" he groaned. "Help! Handy's gone dotty! Quick, you chaps—hold him down!"

Everybody in the room was awake by now, including Handforth himself. Nipper and McClure were by his side, ready to grapple.

"Hallo! What the——" Handforth paused, blinking into the gloom. "Where are they? Where are those River House chaps?"

"In your dreams, you ass!" said Nipper severely. "I told you what would happen if you ate those stodgy dumplings of yours. You've had a nightmare, Handy."

Handforth realised his surroundings.

"Well I'm jiggered!" he muttered. "I thought we were in the common-room, and Brewster and his gang came rushing in to attack us. What's happened to my knuckles? Who's been hitting them?"

"Church!" said McClure. "He smashed your knuckles with his face!"

"It's a pity you can't keep your silly hands to yourself when you're having a dream," said Church bitterly. "I think I'll rig up some wire netting round my bed."

"Well, let's get to sleep again," said Nipper, with a grin. "It's past midnight, and——"

"Past midnight?" interrupted Handforth, with a start. "Rats! It can't be. You've made a mistake!"

Nipper looked at his watch.

"Twenty-past-twelve," he said shortly.

"Ass! You can't see in the dark!"

"Yes, I can—my watch has a luminous dial."

"Then your watch is wrong," said Handforth coldly. "It can't possibly be midnight yet."

"Why can't it?"

"Because I made up my mind to wake up at midnight!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm afraid your mind isn't a reliable alarum, Handy," said Nipper, with a chuckle.

"Either that, or you forgot to set the catch."

"You mean, he didn't wind it up!" said Church. "If it comes to that, how can you wind up nothing?"

Handforth was too startled to appreciate the insult.

"That's jolly rummy!" he said, frowning. "I was determined to wake up at midnight, and it didn't happen. I expect it was that

nightmare. Yes, by George! That's the worst of nightmares—they upset all your plans."

"What was the idea of waking up at midnight, anyhow, dear old boy?" asked Sir Montie Tregellis-West politely. "Don't think I'm inquisitive, but it seems a frightfully strange——"

"I'm going exploring," interrupted Handforth. "Church and McClure are coming with me."

"Church and McClure aren't!" interrupted Church indignantly. "If you want to go exploring, you can——"

"Hallo!" said Nipper sharply. "What was that?"

"Eh? What was that?"

"I thought I heard——"

Nipper broke off, and ran to the window. The others, who had noticed nothing, were astonished. They crowded after him. And it was soon obvious that something was wrong.

A brilliant light was showing like a beacon through the dark night. It was being violently agitated, too, and a voice came floating across the farmyard and neighbouring paddocks.

"Help—help!" came the urgent appeal.

Once more that cry sounded, and then there seemed to be a muffled crash, and the light was blotted out.

"Great Scott!" said Handforth excitedly.

"That nightmare of yours was useful, Handy," said Nipper. "Come on, you chaps—never mind about dressing. Just shove some shoes on, though, or you'll get your feet cut."

"But—but what does it mean?" panted Church.

"How do we know?" snapped Nipper. "There's somebody in trouble, and I think we can guess that Sir Lucian is somewhere in it. Those four men, too."

"Bill Dawson's lot!" roared Handforth. "I knew it!"

And within twenty seconds the juniors were racing off to the rescue. A full dozen of them went, for Pitt, Fullwood, and the occupants of the next bed-room had been gathered in, too.

The night was proving exciting, after all!



CHAPTER 16.

The Mystery of the Stone Chest.

VENTS had moved swiftly down in that ancient stone chamber.

In the middle of the fight, Chapell had seized an opportunity to grab one of the powerful lamps, and to escape through the narrow exit. The man was not afraid, but he had sense enough to realise that there was no hope of winning the battle. And he had remembered the schoolboys—sleeping in the farmhouse—with wide open windows.

It was worth trying.

Before Bill or his associates could guess

at Chapell's intentions, the man had seized the lamp, and had gone. At full speed he ran down the aqueduct, with Bill Dawson in pursuit.

Chapell succeeded in getting into the open. He waved his lantern, and yelled for help with all his might.

"I'll soon settle your hash!" snarled Bill harshly.

"Help!" shouted Chapell wildly. "You'd best be careful, you fool! There'll be trouble——"

Crash!

Bill Dawson's fist caught him in the shoulder, and he spun round. And at the same second Bill's heavy boot hacked him on the shin. The unfortunate Chapell went over, the lantern crashed to the ground, and became instantly extinguished.

Again and again Chapell was kicked as he lay there.

And Bill, who was beginning to worry about his mates, ran blindly into the aqueduct, back towards that queer stone chamber. He could faintly see a gleam of reflected light in the distance, down the tunnel.

When he arrived, the unfortunate Sir Lucian was "laid out," and even Hardy had received so many knocks that there was no further fight in him. They were both sprawling on the floor, and Bill Dawson's men were straining at the lid of the stone chest.

"I've settled that feller outside!" panted Dawson. "What's the matter? Can't you get that blamed lid off?"

"It won't budge!" panted Ginger excitedly. "Lummy, there's treasure 'ere, Bill! I can feel it in me bones! You was right all the time!"

"Eave, blow you!" panted Sid.

Bill Dawson added his own strength to that massive slab of stone. But even this seemed to make little difference at first. Centuries of time had sealed the lid down, but, gradually, the men conquered.

At last, after perspiring minutes of effort—valuable minutes of delay, as it turned out—the great lid slewed sideways.

"Look out!" yelled Bill hoarsely.

Crash!

The mass of stone, weighing many hundredweights, toppled over, and the men only just backed away in time. Then, before they could even look into the great chest, a confusion of sounds came from the aqueduct.

"This way, you chaps!" sounded a loud voice.

"Hurrah!"

"They're still here!"

"Smash 'em!"

Bill Dawson and his men looked at one another with startled expressions of consternation. They were caught—caught like rats in a trap. There was only one chance—to block the entrance to this chamber, so that the schoolboys could not get in.

But they were too late.

Before they could make a move, Nipper came charging through, with Handforth close behind him. And while they grappled with the ruffians, the other juniors piled through in a flood.

The fight was brief.

Bill Dawson and his men were almost exhausted by their efforts to shift that lid, and they had scarcely recovered from their earlier fight. These boys—a full dozen in number—simply swept them off their feet, and had them down in next to no time.

"The duck-pond!" yelled Handforth.

"Hear, hear!"

"Drag them out!"

The juniors had seen more than enough. These scoundrels had attacked Sir Lucian and his men. And it was very obvious they deserved to be handed over to the police, but the juniors felt more inclined to take the law into their own hands. They instinctively felt that Sir Lucian would not welcome any publicity.

A glance had shown Nipper that Sir Lucian was recovering, and another glance told him that the quaint stone chest was inviting an immediate inspection. But these ruffians had to be dealt with first.

One by one, they were hauled through into the aqueduct, and then out into the open air. Chapell had recovered by this time, and he had some satisfaction in seeing these men defeated. He knew that his cries for help had borne fruit.

"Look here, kids, there's no need for you to be so blinkin' energetic," said Bill Dawson hoarsely. "You've whacked us, so now you'd best let us go."

"Shut up!" said Handforth curtly.

"We didn't mean no 'arm, young gents —"

"That's enough!" roared Edward Oswald. "Another word from you, you blackguard, and we'll give you an extra dose of the duck-pond!"

Dawson lost his temper.

"You blamed young brats!" he snarled. "We'll——"

He wasn't allowed to say what he and his companions would do. One of the fellows pushed a clod of earth into his mouth, and held it there. And by this time they had almost reached the duck-pond.

This, as the juniors knew, was in a splendid condition for the job in hand. It was a murky pond, with about three feet of black, sticky mud at the bottom. The water itself was shallow.

"Run 'em in!" shouted Nipper. "I think we'd better give them a heave at the last moment, and pitch them in head first."

"That's the idea!" said Handforth breathlessly.

And the scheme was carried out to perfection.

Almost simultaneously the four rogues were pitched head first into the murky

depths of the pond. And there they floundered about, struggling helplessly in the awful mud.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, you'd better come out," said Nipper grimly. "We'll give you twenty yards' start, and after that we'll run you off the farm. And if you ever show your faces in this neighbourhood again we'll hand you over to the police."

The order was one which Bill Dawson and his gang obeyed to the letter. They knew that they were escaping lightly. Sir Lucian could easily charge them, and have them sentenced to a stiff term of imprisonment for assault with intent to rob.

So they fled from the farm as fast as their legs would carry them, and the St. Frank's fellows were not satisfied until the four men had passed beyond the boundary line of the farm property.

"I don't think they'll ever trouble us again," said Nipper breathlessly. "They're finished, and I'll bet they'll never come near this district again as long as they live!"

"By George!" said Handforth. "What about Sir Lucian? What about that queer old stone chest? Didn't I tell you there was a treasure? Come on! Let's rush there!"

They made all speed, and when they swarmed into the ancient chamber they found Sir Lucian Dexter in a curiously calm mood. Hardy and the other man were standing by, composed and practically recovered. The stone chest in the middle of the chamber was empty.

"Well, here's a frost!" said Handforth, as he looked in. "Do you mean to say those men had all their trouble for nothing? I thought this chest was full of Roman gold!"

Nipper gave Sir Lucian a curious glance.

"Wasn't there anything in it, sir?" he asked bluntly.

The archaeologist shrugged his shoulders.

"One must always be prepared for these disappointments," he said sadly. "As you see, the chest is empty. It is a pity—a great pity. I thank you greatly, boys, for your splendid help. I am grateful—and so, too, are my men. You have done wonders!"

Obviously, Sir Lucian did not wish to speak of that chest, and he wanted the boys to believe that nothing had been discovered. But his eyes betrayed him. His exterior was calm, but his eyes were alight with inward excitement.

What had been found in that chest, and why had Sir Lucian concealed it?

THE END.

(What is the mystery of the chest? You'll learn the secret of the Roman aqueduct in next Wednesday's rollicking long complete yarn: "THE TREASURE OF TIBER-IUS!")

Our Magazine Corner.**THE ARM OF THE LAW!***An interesting chat about our police force and how it came into being.***The King's Peace.**

The Police Force as we know it to-day is less than a hundred years old. It was in 1829 that Sir Robert Peel—from whom the police get their nicknames of "Bobbies" and "Peelers"—introduced his bill into Parliament.

Previous to that there had been no official body, paid by the Government, to ensure that the laws of the country were observed.

In the reign of King Edgar, nearly one thousand years ago, every man was expected to be his own policeman. Before that king took steps to protect his subjects, they had no assurance of living in peace and security in return for the allegiance they gave the throne.

From Edgar's time onwards, however, England may be said to have enjoyed a general guarantee for public order under the name of "King's Peace." But when the king died there was no "King's Peace" until the next monarch had ascended the throne, and in the meantime thieves and robbers were free to do what they wished without fear of the consequence.

Under King Alfred men were invited to divide themselves into parties of tens called "tythings." If a member of a "tything" committed a crime and could not be found, the other nine were held responsible for his actions, and were thereby turned into policemen until they had discovered the fugitive.

No Pay for Police.

Throughout this period no pay whatever was made for police duty. Each man had simply performed the duty when his turn came round on the roster. Now men who had made fortunes in the cities commenced to pay others to take their turn of police work, but still there was no salaried police force, all payments being unofficial and made by individuals for their own personal convenience.

At a later period Trade Guilds and Livery Companies began to appoint men to look after their own trades, businesses, markets, manufacturers and handicrafts.

The Livery Company punished the fraudulent workmen, corrected the idle apprentice, and also prosecuted the would-be interloper who attempted to infringe upon its rights and privileges.

We had a spell of Military Police in the time of Oliver Cromwell. Contrary to Continental methods, this is the only occasion when the police of this country have been anything but a strictly civil body.

"Charlies."

The police under Charles II consisted of a force of one thousand Bellmen, who came to be known afterwards as "Charlies," in memory of the monarch in whose reign they had been first instituted.

The well-trained Bow Street Runners owe their origin to the efforts of two brothers, in the middle of the eighteenth century. Henry Fielding was a magistrate on the Westminster Bench, and later at Bow Street where he was succeeded by his half-brother Sir John Fielding.

Sir John employed a regularly-paid horse patrol, which was posted for the protection of travellers on one or other of the main roads leading out of London. Though, consisting of only eight men, they, however, were well-mounted and well armed.

The New Police.

In 1805 Sir Richard Ford obtained permission to increase the strength of this force so as to provide patrols for all the main roads to a distance of about twenty miles from Bow Street.

They became familiarly known as Robin Red-breasts on account of the red waistcoat that was a conspicuous part of their uniform. Their energies were principally directed against highwaymen.

By this time Street-Keepers had been employed in London for management of the traffic. They had, however, no general police duties to perform, and were not under the control of the magistrates, nor subject to the police authorities.

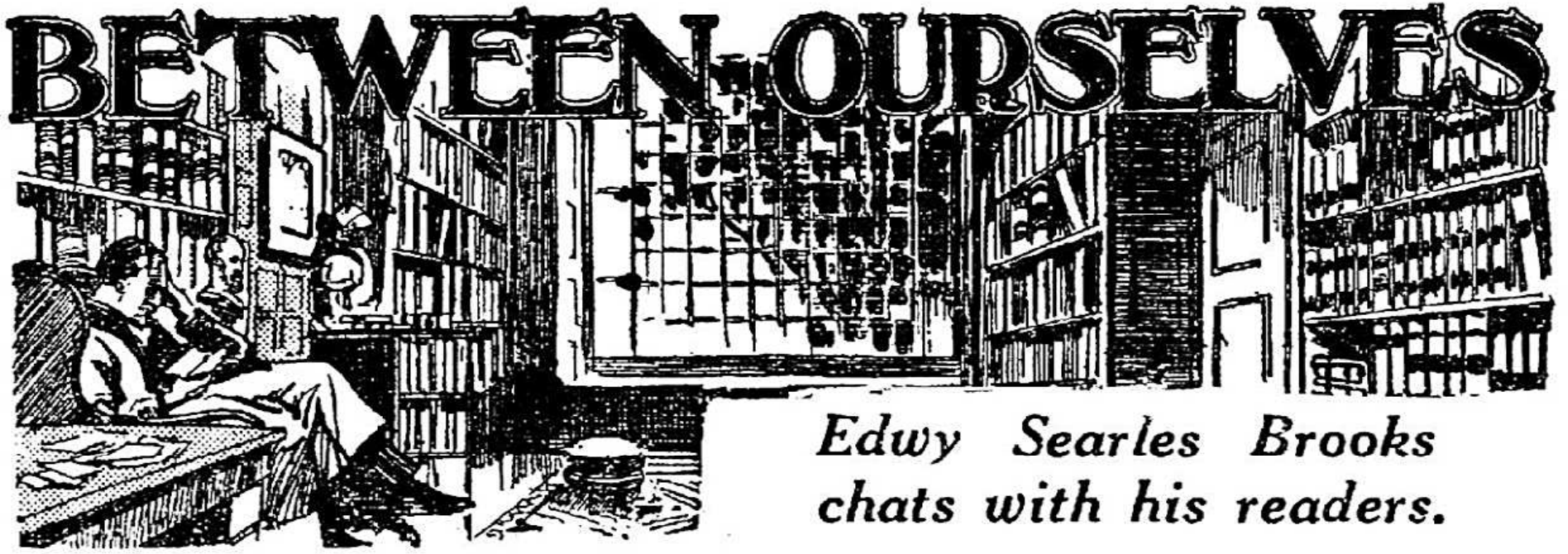
Thames Police had been formed with headquarters at Wapping to protect the ships in the docks.

Thorough Reorganisation.

Hitherto a variety of officers had been employed in their separate capacities of constable, watchman, street-keeper and thief-taker; now all these duties had to be performed by one individual. The Thames Police eventually came under the control of the Metropolitan Police, and the City Police were threatened with amalgamation, but allowed to remain apart upon reorganising on similar lines.

The Detective Force and the Criminal Investigation Department was created in 1878, and at first the Department only consisted of three inspectors and nine sergeants.

Scotland Yard, from the very first, was the headquarters of the "New Police."



*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. Photo exchange offer open indefinitely. Mine for yours—but yours first, please—E.S.B.*

SINCE I published that letter from Marlow & Co. (that letter which said that some of my stories are too imaginative), I have received a perfect flood of letters which rather makes me wonder if Marlow & Co. have any ears left. In other words, those same ears must have been burning pretty considerably during these past weeks, judging by the way in which Marlow & Co. have been discussed up and down the country, in Canada, Australia, South Africa, and in other parts of the world! But here's the point. The writers of these letters challenge me to publish their own particular letters. But I am not taking any. So will all readers please remember that I shan't publish any letter because I am challenged to do so. When you come to think of it, it isn't quite fair to me—is it?

* * *

Well, next week this present Fresh Air series finishes, and after that we begin the Summer Holiday yarns. I don't know if the Editor is giving you any information regarding the Summer Series, but to be on the safe side I am keeping silent. I only hope I shall please the majority of you with these particular stories. I'll only give you a little hint by saying that they are by no means fantastic, but full of excitement—and adventure. Yes, plenty of adventure. And, I believe, just a little mystery.

* * *

John A. Franklin* (Manchester), Tom Treadwell (E.C.2), "Geo." Boucher* (Wood Green), Terence Sullivan* (Sheffield), Milton Cronenberg* (Toronto), Sam H. Yeo (Wallasey), "Handforth II"* (Leicester), Sydney Oldham* (Stockport), Ken Gray (Melbourne), "Dorothy"* (Edinburgh), F. H. Elliff (East Sheen), "V.M."* (Peterborough), "Derf Semloh"* (Cambridge), Ivy Worne* (Ealing), S. H. Robinson (Clapham), N. Milson* (Hull), Ruby C. M. Bond (Bexley

Heath), E. Dainty (Edinburgh), Reginald G. Elliott (Berkhamsted), Wm. A. C. Law** (Addlestone), Smith Thompson (Bradford), Guy Wm. Buck (Christchurch, N.Z.), P. Roche (Melbourne), John Guest (Bolton), S. Green (Sutton, Cambs.), Geo. Rebakis (Bunbury, W. Aus.), Eric Mitcham (Chalk Farm), F. Kohn (W.4), H. V. Richards (South Woodford).

* * *

Yes, "George" Boucher, you can write as often as you like, and I shall never get tired. And—yes, again—always write to me as though I were a chum of yours. There's nothing I like better.

* * *

Thanks for that clipping from "Science & Invention," Milton Cronenberg. Rather rummy, isn't it? That "ship of the desert" is uncannily like the "Conqueror" in my Sahara series, of two or three years ago. H'm! I think I shall have to chuck up story writing, and go in for inventing!

* * *

Thanks, Dorothy, for your very nice little letter—and thanks for your permission to print any portion of it. I'm going to take you at your word, for there is a paragraph that will possibly be useful to other readers. This is it: "I have introduced Nipper & Co. to all my friends and chums, and a good many buy it for themselves now. I started by passing it on to one, who passed it on to the next, and so on. But many of them couldn't wait until it had gone all round, so they bought their own copy." That was very nice of you, Dorothy, and it proved your enthusiasm. I hope many of the other readers will take the hint, and pass their own copies round, in an endeavour to rope in more and more readers.

* * *

Here's a bit from a letter from Derf Semloh, which might be of use to some of

you readers whose parents are opposed to you reading my stories: "Some time ago I was reading the N. L. L. on the tennis courts, when an undergraduate came up, and we got chatting about your yarns. He told me he was an enthusiastic reader. I have been a reader from the very start, and have always found the N. L. L. a very interesting and refreshing book. In fact, I think I may say that I have learned a great deal from it. Your yarns are always clean and healthy, and I consider the themes quite feasible and practical in this wonder age." Well, if undergraduates read my stories—and schoolmasters, too, as I know for a fact—I don't think they can be very harmful. Derf Semloh tells me that this particular undergraduate said a lot of other very, very nice things, too—but I'm afraid there isn't enough space for me to print them here.

* * *

This is an item from Reginald G. Elliott's letter: "I have been going to write to you for quite a long time now—in fact, ever since the new series began. Each time I started to write a letter, I had a feeling that it would hardly be worth reading, so I gave up the idea. But my four chums and I have been getting so enthusiastic about the 'Nelson Lee Library,' that I simply had to write. We have all been curious to see your photo, so I am sending you a snapshot of myself, and we are all waiting in expectation for yours. I have never, in all the school yarns and school books I have read, enjoyed more realistic and more wholesome and healthy school stories than I find in the 'Nelson Lee Library.' And my four chums fully agree. If there is any possibility of you wanting to publish any portion of this letter, you may do so—although I know very well, of course, that there is *no* possibility." Well, there you have it. You see, where I am challenged, I jib—but when a reader takes it for granted that his letter won't be published, I go and print it. Can I hear you saying that I'm a perverse sort of bounder? But there's a point in Reginald G. Elliott's letter that I want to particularly mention. He says he didn't write to me before because he felt that his letter would hardly be worth reading. Of course, lots of you are like that, but you are all wrong. Just sit down, and write to me as you would write to one of your own chums—and I shall be delighted to get your letters. Don't hesitate—don't think that your letter will be put into the waste paper basket, or passed over unread. I want you ALL to write, and to write often.

* * *

I think the next quotation—from a Surrey reader's letter—might be helpful to those whose parents frown upon the Old Paper: "There is quite a small colony of loyal readers here, of both sexes, and all above the age of 21, and we all thoroughly enjoy and admire the St. Frank's yarns. We know they are sometimes far-fetched, but that adds, rather than detracts, to the enjoyment of them. Here's good luck to St. Frank's, and

best wishes and hearty congratulations to all concerned in producing, editing, and printing them."

* * *

John Harold Richmond* (Manchester), Bernard Sollis (Banbury), R. K. Butler (Cowley), "A Girl Admirer of You and Nipper" (No Address), T. E. H. (Douglas, I. of M.), Jack Greaves (Gt. Yarmouth), "Andre" (Birmingham), Derek Cockayne (Ilford), Wm. Fletcher (Stanwick), J. H. Bulmer (Durham), T. Littlejohn (New Bradwell), Reginald Lock (Gunnislake), Edward Schroder (Hamburg), Sinclair R. Dobie (Eastbourne), "A. W. T." (Crystal Palace), Stanley Buxton (Mansfield), R. T. Sinclair (Birmingham), Robt. Wm. Murfit (Soham), Terence Sullivan* (Oxford), Geo. Giddings (Camberwell), Gladys Marjorie Bowen* (Old Hill, Staffs.), Ernest Adambery (Gibraltar), T. E. Hale (Beckenham), Peter Murphy (Liverpool), Walter Ewbank (Ardwick), Robt. Wilson (Canonbury), Gordon Crisp (Brockley).

* * *

Don't forget to send me that photograph, John Harold Richmond. The offer is permanently open, but the sooner the better, you know. When I get your dial I will immediately send you an autographed photo of myself. And this, of course, is an offer that is open to ALL readers, of any age, or any sex.

* * *

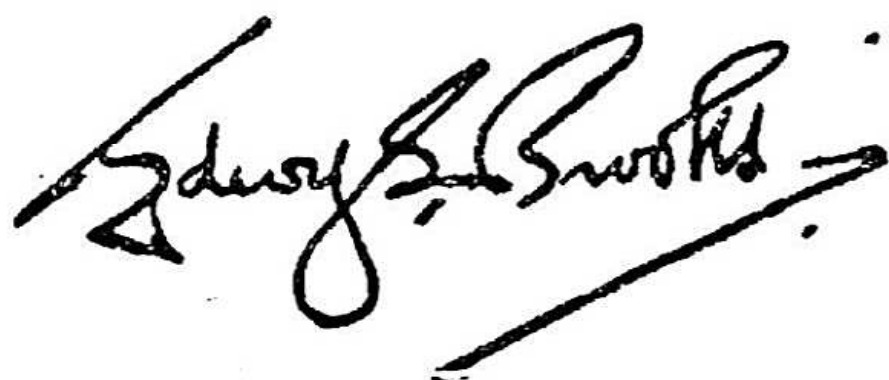
My birthday, Jack Greaves, is on the 11th day of the month, four months after yours. Sorry I didn't reply to your previous letters, particularly as you say they contained questions of importance. But perhaps I thought they weren't important, you know!

* * *

The titles you want, Andre, are—212. "The Prefect's Revenge"; 243 "On His Uppers"; 353, "The Fiends of Fu Chow."

* * *

I say, Derek Cockayne. I hope everybody doesn't share your opinion about my photograph! You say that my hair looks grey! And you add to this by saying that it might not be grey, but only hair-oil! I think I had better state, emphatically, that my hair is devoid of a single grey strand, as far as I know, and I have never used hair-oil in my life. I am quite fair, and perhaps that is why you have got such a wrong impression.



Doomed for Sacrifice! Our Thrilling Adventure Serial!

The BURIED WORLD!

By LIONEL DAY



WHAT HAS ALREADY HAPPENED :

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 into the grounds. There he finds an amazing machine which is something between a submarine and an airship. Mr. Cripps is on board and Jim asks him for the money. The man refuses to pay, and before Jim realises it he finds the machine in the air! It travels half over the world, then dives into the ocean. It reaches the bottom, and then instead of resting on the bed continues going downwards! It is then floating on the surface of an underground river, and Mr. Cripps explains that there must be a sort of leak in the ocean bed and they are being sucked down to the centre of the earth. They stop the machine and come on deck. But as they appear they are captured by several

amazing giants who fall on them from the shore. Jim escapes and later saves the life of a little man called Masra. In return Masra and his daughter Tinta let him live with them. Jim finds himself among a colony of dwarf men who are called the Kru people, who are at enmity with the Giants. Jim, accompanied by Masra and Tinta, rescue Mr. Cripps. To do this Masra has to desert from the Kru people. Tinta and Masra are called traitors, and urged on by a scoundrel named Ka-Ra, are captured by the Kru. Jim and Mr. Cripps rescue them, thereby incurring the hatred of Ka-Ra, who himself turns traitor by going to the Kru's enemies, the Falta, and telling them that if they capture Jim and Cripps they will be able to beat the Kru. First Jim is taken prisoner, then Cripps, Tinta and Masra are also captured.

(Now read on.)

Cripps in a Corner!

KA-RA'S face glowed with a malevolent triumph as he looked mockingly at Stanislaus Cripps.

"Where now, are your boasts, O Hairy One?" he sneered. "But a while ago you were so great that I was mere dirt under your feet. You mocked me before the Kru, you humbled me into the dust. But what are you now? Where is your magic? You are helpless, and my prisoner!"

He leaned forward and struck Stanislaus Cripps on the cheek with his hand. The effect on the prisoner was instantaneous. Never at any time a mild-tempered man, this outrage reduced Cripps almost to an apoplexy of rage.

"You impudent blackguard!" he roared in English. "How dare you insult me!"

Ka-Ra laughed at him, evidently enjoying the sight of his prisoner's red cheeks and passionate eyes.

"Set him down there so that I may speak

to him," he exclaimed in an authoritative tone, pointing to the base of the great pile of boulders. "Catch him so that he does not escape, O Falta!"

Stanislaus Cripps found himself standing on the ground, while the Falta eliminated any chance of his escape by the simple process of seating themselves in a huge circle about him. He stood there, a very minute figure compared to the giant forms by which he was surrounded, and yet, even in that moment of his humiliation, his courage was undimmed, his natural pugnacity unblunted, and he faced his persecutors with fearless, unflinching eyes.

Ka-Ra stepped into the circle with an assumption of great dignity, and, approaching him, stood for a moment staring at him with malevolent eyes. Stanislaus Cripps returned that fixed gaze with a steady, contemptuous glance before which the other's eyes presently fell.

"And what do you think you can do,

Ka-Ra?" Stanislaus Cripps inquired. "I am in your power, you say. You can kill me, but a child can destroy. What glory is there in that?"

"Many things will happen before you die, O Hairy One!" Ka-Ra retorted with a vicious gleam in his eyes.

Stanislaus Cripps sniffed contemptuously.

"You're just the ordinary common, swindling sort of fool. You are so eaten up with vanity that you have sold your people, and betrayed them to their enemies. But what do you think will happen to you yourself? The Falta are but children—stupid, blundering children. Very soon they will grow tired of you. One of them, in a moment of irritation, will pluck you asunder as the tenderers of the Food pluck the mushrooms from the ground!"

He saw Ka-Ra blanch. Evidently the man had never quite blinded himself to the possibility of this unpleasant prospect.

"You forget, O Hairy One, that I am armed now with your magic," Ka-Ra reminded his prisoner. "The Powers of Sleep and Destruction are mine!"

Stanislaus Cripps combed his long red beard with his fingers, a look of infinite scorn in his eyes.

"You don't know how to use them, Ka-Ra. In your hands they can accomplish nothing. Sooner or later the Falta will discover what a cheat you are, and then there will be no more Ka-Ra—Ka-Ra who betrayed his people—Ka-Ra the traitor!"

A spasm of rage shook Ka-Ra. This dialogue was being conducted not at all on the lines he desired. He had intended to impress his giant allies with his might and power by making Stanislaus Cripps look very small and ridiculous. Instead, the boot was very much on the other foot. It was he who was being made small and ridiculous.

"You lie, O Hairy One!" he snarled. "I am already master of your magic. The Lesser Shining One has already fallen before it!"

Ka-Ra had the satisfaction of seeing that his words had at last struck home. The colour died out of Stanislaus Cripps' face. He stood there, staring mutely at Ka-Ra, his lips trembling.

"You infernal brute! If you've killed the boy——"

He choked with passion, and then, as if forgetful of his predicament, he sprang at Ka-Ra. Seizing him, he flung the Kru on the ground.

"The boy was worth fifty of such as you!" he shouted.

There was no knowing what he might have done to Ka-Ra had not a Falta seized him about the waist and jerked him from off his prostrate foe. Even then, in spite of his helplessness, he kicked and struggled and shouted his opinion of Ka-Ra in his big booming voice.

Tinta, who with her father had been standing by Cripps' side, dropped to the ground, and burying her face in her hands sobbed as if her heart were broken.

"O Krim!" she wailed. "O Krim,

whither you have gone I will come soon! Kill me now, O Falta, and let me go!"

The giant who was holding Stanislaus Cripps gave him a little squeeze, which, whatever its intention, only served to increase his captive's intense irritation.

Meanwhile, Ka-Ra, obviously very shaken, had picked himself up. He was spluttering with rage.

"Before you are torn limb from limb, O Hairy One—before you are sacrificed with these others to the god of the Falta whom you insulted—there are things you must tell me. Die you must, but the manner of your death depends upon yourself. I would know the secret of the magic of the Flying Thing. Tell me that, O Hairy One, and your passing shall be painless. Refuse, and you shall know the agonies of death many times before you pass into the Great Shadow!"

From Bad to Worse.

STANISLAUS CRIPPS controlled himself with an effort. Nothing was to be gained by any further show of his intense irascibility. He must match this man's cunning with a cunning more subtle.

"Where is the Flying Thing?" he demanded.

A sneer twisted Ka-Ra's lips.

"Do you think me a fool, O Hairy One? Shall I show you the Flying Thing, that you may call to it and make it do your bidding?"

Stanislaus Cripps grinned.

"Without doubt you are very wise, O Ka-Ra; but all the same, I cannot show you the magic of the Flying Thing unless I can get inside it, and explain to you how it is moved. It is not controlled by my voice. There are things to be done—bars of metal to be moved—before it can spring to life, and do what is required of it."

"You can tell me what must be done," Ka-Ra retorted. "I will bear your words in mind."

"You wouldn't understand. If I were to talk from now until the next coming of the Great Light you wouldn't understand."

But Ka-Ra was clearly unimpressed by that statement.

"Tell me the magic that must be done, O Hairy One! I will remember your words and do what you say."

At that moment Stanislaus Cripps felt the giant who was holding him again squeeze him. As he struggled in protest the Falta, as if to scratch his face, raised the scientist to the level of his eyes. The next moment Stanislaus Cripps found himself staring into the friendly features of Gra.

The discovery was startling in the extreme, but he managed to preserve his customary coolness. It was impossible to grasp the full meaning of the situation, but instinct told him that Gra was his friend and ally—that the giant wanted him to know that he was his friend and ally. He must temporise,

Cripps decided, until he understood the position more fully—until Gra could convey to him some hint as to what course of action he intended to follow.

"You say you have stolen the magic of Sleep and Destruction," said Cripps. "Steal, therefore, you Kru thief, the secret of the magic of the Flying Thing. Even as the magic of Sleep and Destruction are useless in your hands, so will the Flying Thing be."

For a moment Ka-Ra was nonplussed. He was uneasy and uncertain. He turned suspiciously to the Falta about him.

"I bade you seize the instruments of Sleep and Destruction in the Hairy One's belt," he exclaimed. "Where are they?"

Two of the giants stretched out their hands with a gesture that suggested helplessness.

"We took them, O Ka-Ra, even as you ordered, but the magic of the Hairy One snatched them away from us again. We know not where they are."

Ka-Ra started and glanced suspiciously at Stanislaus Cripps. If the Hairy One still possessed these weapons, there was no knowing when he might not use them.

"Hold his arms tightly!" he screamed. Then, as Gra obeyed these instructions, very gently pinning his captive's arms behind his back by the pressure of his thumb and finger, he added: "Lay him on the ground, and drag him out of that metal case."

As if the better to perform this order, Gra laid Stanislaus Cripps on the ground. Then kneeling down so that his huge frame entirely covered him, he began to draw the scientist's arms out of the diving dress.

At the same time one of those great hands closed about Stanislaus Cripps' fingers, and he felt two hard metallic instruments pressed against his palm. He gave one glance, then realised that the faithful giant had somehow recovered the revolver and the cylinder of sleeping gas that had been stolen from him, and had returned them. Just then Ka-Ra's cruel voice began speaking again.

"Stretch him out on the ground, O Falta, and let two of you seize each a leg, and two each an arm. Then pull gently. Perchance when the pain comes upon him he will speak!"

As four giants rose to do the Kru's bidding Stanislaus Cripps bounded to his feet. In his right hand was the revolver—in his left the cylinder of sleeping gas.

"Back!" he boomed. "Back, lest I blast you where you stand!"

He shouted to Tinta and Masra.

"Get behind me!"

The four giants halted abruptly, evidently impressed by the sight of those weapons in his hand. Gra, as if terrified, had broken through the circle, and was standing some distance away. A twittering sound came from the Falta.

"Now, Ka-Ra—now is the time to show that your magic is stronger than his!" they cried.

Ka-Ra, obviously badly scared, plucked the cylinder of sleeping gas from his waist and pointed it towards Stanislaus Cripps—

evidently believing that the weapon would work of itself. Stanislaus Cripps took one step forward.

"Your blood be on your own head, Ka-Ra! You're a murdering rascal, and though I hate this butchering business, there's nothing else for it!"

He pulled the trigger as he spoke, but there was no report. Swiftly he sought for an explanation of this unexpected happening. There had been five cartridges in the chambers. Two he had used to break open the gate that blocked the way from the Cave of the Fires to the Inner Cavern. A third he had used to destroy the Falta in the Hall of the People. What had happened to the other two?

The answer dawned upon Cripps in the fraction of a second. He must have inadvertently wasted the other two cartridges on that memorable day, when, half dead with physical exhaustion, he had blown open the gate between the Cave of the Fires and the Inner Cavern.

"On second thoughts, Ka-Ra, I think it would be a greater punishment for you to let you live," Cripps remarked coolly. As he uttered the words, he touched the button of the cylinder in his left hand, and released a cloud of the sleeping gas.

Instantly Ka-Ra dropped like a stone to the ground. Stanislaus Cripps, keeping well away from the neighbourhood of that recumbent figure for fear lest he might be affected by the sleeping gas, then turned and faced the Falta.

"There is the leader of your choice! There is the man who taught you treachery, O Falta! I would have been your friend. I would have given you peace and order, yet you dared to set a trap for me. Now say, what punishment do you deserve?"

For a moment his words had the desired effect. The Falta, raising their giant forms from the ground as if by one common impulse, stood there staring at him with their huge eyes and slobbering lips. But it was only for a moment that that panic of consternation held them spellbound.

The next instant one of them—he was standing just behind Stanislaus Cripps—reached out an arm furtively, and before even the warning cry left Tinta's lips, had seized him and lifted him from the ground. Before Stanislaus Cripps could touch the button of the cylinder of sleeping gas the instrument had been torn from his grasp with a force that almost dislocated his arm. At the same moment Tinta and Masra were also seized.

With little twittering screams of triumph the Falta closed round their comrade who had taken captive the being whom they looked upon as the master of mighty magic. And in their heedless rush their huge feet trampled into an indistinguishable mass the form of Ka-Ra the traitor!

"To the altar with them!" one of the giants shouted in his high falsetto voice. "Now at last will our offended god have the victim he desired!"

Doomed for Sacrifice!

LIKE a flock of stampeded sheep the giants raced across the floor of the cavern to the spot where once the great idol had stood. The sacrificial stone was still there intact, and forming a circle about it, they laid their victims down.

Stanislaus Cripps sprang to his feet as soon as he was released, and with one hand gripping his red beard, stared round with flaming eyes at the vast forms and horrible faces of the giants. Then, with the first suggestion of hopelessness that he had ever displayed, he turned to his fellow captives.

"This is the end, Tinta, my dear. You and Masra have been good friends and comrades. I'm sorry to have got you into this mess!"

He held out a hand to each of them, Tinta, as she clasped his fingers, bent down and pressed her lips to them.

"Good-bye, O Hairy One! I am glad to go where Krim is waiting for me."

Even as she uttered the words, a shining object came circling above the heads of the giants and fell at Stanislaus Cripps' side. As he saw it, Cripps gave a little shout of triumph, and snatched up the glittering object. It was the revolver that Ka-Ra had stolen from Jim, and which Gra, acting on the boy's orders, had subsequently stolen from the Kru. Risking the rage and anger of his comrades, the faithful giant had flung the weapon on the sacrificial stone.

It was clear that the Falta had no conception of the way in which the tables had been turned against them. They still regarded their victims as being entirely at their mercy. Their eyes had hardly seen the little object that had come flying through the air.

They stood there debating among themselves the exact nature of the death which their victims were to suffer. At last they reached a decision, for after a lot of nodding one of the Falta produced a knife and, urged on by his comrades, stepped on to the sacrificial stone. He made a scooping movement with his hand to collect Stanislaus Cripps as the first and most important victim for the satisfaction of his outraged god. At the same moment Stanislaus Cripps fired.

There was an ear-splitting report, and the giant vanished. But if Stanislaus Cripps had thought to cow the Falta by this terrible example, he was disappointed.

Their sluggish blood had been warmed to fever-heat; their pinpoint brains, inflamed by Ka-Ra's intoxicating words, made them absolutely reckless. With a twittering scream they flung themselves towards the sacrificial stone.

In vain Stanislaus Cripps, standing protectively in front of Tinta and Masra, tried to blast a path through that closing circle of giants. Four times he fired, and so great was the press that each of those powerful oxygen bullets accounted for no less than three of the Falta. But the gaps were closed immediately, and the maddened Falta bore down upon their victims relentlessly.

"It's no use, Tinta!" Cripps gasped. "I haven't another cartridge left!"

With a gesture of despair he flung the now useless weapon at the Falta who was rushing at him. A moment later that mad pandemonium had ceased and the circle of giants had once more closed about the sacrificial stone on which now lay the three victims. Kneeling by Stanislaus Cripps' side was one of the Falta, to whom the duty of acting as High Priest had been delegated by his comrades. In his hands was the sacrificial knife.

At that moment through the vast spaces of the Outer Cavern rose a roar like a landslide. Then followed the thunderous ear-splitting report of hundreds of vast boulders being flung and scattered about the floor of the cavern!

Jim Recovers!

JIM lay bruised and unconscious on one of the floors of the Flying Submarine. How long he lay there he never knew. Then upon the blankness of his mind there began to dawn certain vague pictures—the first glimmerings of returning consciousness.

He was in the Cave of the Fires again. There, standing before him, was the radiant figure of HE. Then presently, by some process that Jim could not understand, HE turned to Stanislaus Cripps, with his long red beard and his suit of new plus fours—for which some anxious tailor was still expecting payment.

"Boy, it's nearly all over!" Cripps seemed to be saying. "What a jest it has been! I thought that I really was the goods—a very important person, boy. And I wasn't anybody really—just a middle-aged man who had discovered, after much patience and study, a few interesting secrets, and was playing about with them."

Jim heard him laugh—a big booming laugh which faded away into the quiet note of his mother's voice.

"Jim, it didn't really matter about that sixteen-and-fivepence-halfpenny. It wasn't worth making all that fuss about. I would sooner have none of my bills paid, if only you hadn't gone from me. You thought it so important that I should be paid—and it didn't really matter, when one thinks of all the things in life that do matter."

Jim could see his mother's face—the wrinkle about her dear eyes; and then that face slid insensibly into the features of Tinta.

"O Krim, I will be with you soon! Dear Krim, it is so easy to slip into the Land of Shadows, and we shall be there together. Have courage, Krim. I am coming soon!"

It was with those words echoing in his dazed brain that Jim opened his eyes. All about him was impenetrable blackness. He put his hand to his head—which was aching horrible—only to discover that it was covered by the headpiece of the diving-dress.

What had happened? Where was he? Was this the place beyond the grave where he had met just a moment before HE and Stanislaus Cripps, his mother, and Tinta?

Jim lay quite still, dully debating that point. Then, as his hands slipped to his side, he heard a metallic click—the sound of his gauntleted hand striking the floor. He wasn't dead, then!

He moved his cramped, bruised and aching limbs. He was alive. That at any rate was certain, and he must do something for his aching head. Very gingerly he put up his arms, and unscrewing the headpiece, let it fall fluttering into the darkness. Ah, that was better!

The next question was to decide where he was. With his hands pressed to his head he tried to remember. Gradually it came back to him. The fight with Ka-Ra in the pilot house. The shock of finding the revolver presented at him butt foremost, and his terror lest the man should pull the trigger. The trick—that of flinging himself down the spiral staircase—by which he had made Ka-Ra believe that the magic weapon had acted.

That was how he had hurt himself, of course. Even that wonderful suit of armour he was wearing had not prevented his being battered about inside like a dried pea in a pod. He was on board the Flying Submarine.

Those facts disentangled, he passed to other matters. He must bathe his head, and there was an abundance of water aboard the Flying Submarine. He rose dizzily to his feet, then groped his way through the darkness along the walls. Presently he found the switch that controlled the electric-light. In another moment he was standing blinking in that glare.

Through the open door of one of the rooms leading out of the corridor he glimpsed a tumbled bath-towel and the edge of the sunken bath on the floor. Stanislaus Cripps, who was incurably untidy, had had a bath that morning when he had been rescued from the sacrificial stone. His old clothes were still lying there.

Jim staggered into the bath-room and turned on the tap. Stripping off his clothes he plunged into the cool water. A few minutes later, with the pain in his head almost gone, he was dressed again.

Where was Ka-Ra, Jim wondered. Perhaps he was still in the pilot-house. Fortunately the bulk of the Flying Submarine was so vast that no sounds from the floor on which he stood could reach the pilot-house.

In his stockinged feet he crept up the spiral stairs, listening at every step. Now his head was on a level with the floor. He paused, holding his breath.

Not a sound reached his ears. He took courage at that discovery, and drawing himself up, stepped into the pilot-house. All was darkness. Perhaps the Falta were still waiting outside, but he must risk that, he felt. He found the switch and turned on the electric-light.

The place was just as he had seen it last, except that the chair—which was the one piece of movable furniture in the room—had somehow fluttered on to the white-topped table on which the shadows of the periscope were projected.

He glanced up the circular aperture that led to the deck. For a moment he thought that someone had replaced the great screw cap in position, for all was darkness beyond; but as he climbed the ladder he found that what he had mistaken for the screw cap was a jagged boulder. He tried to move it with his shoulder, but this was impossible.

He reflected on this discovery as he made his way down the ladder again. Obviously, the Falta, tired of holding the Flying Submarine down, had piled boulders on its deck until they had overcome the vessel's buoyancy. He must free the Flying Submarine from those encumbrances. Now he had got possession of it he must hang on to the vessel.

He was thinking of making his way to the kitchen and cooking himself some food, when the sound of five shots, fired in rapid succession, fell on his ears. He stared, and a look of anxiety crept into his face.

Those shots could only have been fired by Stanislaus Cripps, and knowing his companion's aversion to bloodshed, he could only be using the terrible weapon he had invented as some last desperate resource. Stanislaus

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Cripps must be in danger of his life—nothing else could explain that rapid succession of shots!

* * *

Aid from the Air!

JIM sprung to the switchboard. But even as his hand moved towards the lever that controlled the air reservoirs he hesitated. If he increased the buoyancy of the Flying Submarine so as to free her from the weight of those rocks too suddenly she might rush to disaster.

The vessel, scattering the rocks from its deck, would tear upwards at an incredible speed. He must act cautiously, otherwise the Flying Submarine might strike a portion of the roof.

He began slowly to move the levers that controlled the air reservoirs, his eyes fixed on the dial which registered the height to which the vessel ascended. The hand of the dial never moved. The increased buoyancy of the Flying Submarine had not yet overcome the weight of the boulders which the Falta had piled about her.

The boy moved the control lever still further; still the dial needle never moved. A fear that something had gone wrong with the mechanism of the machine seized him. In desperation he thrust over the lever to its extreme limit.

Instantly there was a roar like the collapse of a felled mill chimney. Jim felt the Flying Submarine bound upwards, and so sudden

and unexpected was that upward lift that he was almost flung from his feet. But he was still holding the lever, and his fingers acting almost automatically, he turned it back to zero point.

For a moment the Flying Submarine hung at a height which the dial registered as 15,000 feet. Then the needle wavered, and the floor beneath him sunk sickeningly as the vessel dropped from that great height to 500 feet in a matter of seconds. At that point he checked her, and the gyrations of the vessel ceased.

Feeling rather sick, Jim turned away from the switchboard and glanced at the white-topped table. The periscope was functioning now, and he had a glimpse of the outer cavern spread below him. Suddenly his heart gave a leap. There, in one corner of the shadowed world outside, was a scene which made the blood turn cold in his veins.

He could see the Falta gathered about the ruins of their great image. There was the sacrificial stone, and on the sacrificial stone lay the figures of Stanislaus Cripps, Tinta, and Masra. One of the giants was holding Stanislaus Cripps down and, gripping his red beard, was menacing him with the glittering blade of a knife.

(Will Jim be in time to try and rescue Stanislaus Cripps and his two companions? You'll know when you read next week's exciting chapters of this thrilling serial. Order your copy of the N.L.L. NOW!)

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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 St., London, E.C.4. Enquiries which need an immediate answer should be accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope.

Riding the Winner.

A Highclere aspirant wants to become a jockey. How is he to manage it? I doubt if it is possible, unless he has been brought up with horses. It means a long apprenticeship in a racing stable, but a smart fellow gets chances of riding horses at exercise. My chum should consult the advertisement columns of the sporting papers.

Poetry.

Best thanks to "Jock of Luton," who has dropped into poetry. Sometimes a fellow comes an awful crack when this happens, for there is a lot of hard ground on which to fall. But Jock is O.K. Look at this:

"Of all the nibs I ever see,
There's none to touch our Handy;
The brightest chap upon the spree,
From Penton Hook to Sandy."

Tennyson II. resides in Beds!

Too Fat!

A dismal wail reaches me from Brighton. The writer says fellows laugh at his girth. He is two stone weightier than others of his age. What is he to do about it? He might give up potatoes, and sugar in his tea, and in addition take to worry. But I should not advise him to harp on his adipose. It does not matter about being decently plump. Fat fellows are good; they run amiable, even if they puff! Caesar liked his intimates to have what our French scholars call "Ombongpong."

"The Musketeers."

William Strachan, 232, Vincent Street, Glasgow, has hit on the above excellent name for his S.F.L. club. This is a very good affair, and only the keenest need apply. Good luck!

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The Application Form for membership of the St. Frank's League appeared in last week's issue. It will be published again next Wednesday. All holders of BRONZE MEDALS who have qualified for SILVER MEDALS and wish to exchange their medals for the higher award, should send their medals, together with 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.

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C. A. Whelan, 123, The Grove, Stratford, London, E., wishes to correspond with readers.

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M. L. Martin, 4, Calvert Street, Swansea, wants Nos. 8, 11, 13, and 14 of the N.L.L.

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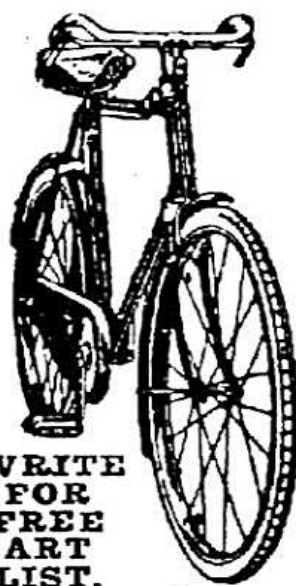
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(Continued on next page.)



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