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THE TREASURE^{OF} TIBERIUS!

The Boys of St. Frank's in an exciting long complete treasure-hunt and mystery story.
New Series No. 60. OUT ON WEDNESDAY June 25th, 1927.



Breathlessly Nipper and Co. entered the low, vaulted chamber. They could see a number of aged, mouldering chests around the walls, and in the centre stood a massive, sombre-looking stone coffin. Standing there, in awed silence, they realised that they were within the tomb of Petronius Tiberius!

The Living Tomb!Treasure—Thieves—and Thrills!

THE TREASURE OF TIBERIUS!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

The St. Frank's treasure-hunters have a thoroughly exciting time in this week's long complete yarn of school-life, fun and adventure.

CHAPTER 1.

Startling News!

"PASS the marmalade, Archie, old son," sang out Reggie Pitt.

"Absolutely!" said Archie Glen-thorne. "Dear old sugar-knob, have the lot! Alf, laddie, kindly shove the old marm. across the festive board to Reggie!"

"Who's pinched the salt?" asked Hand-forth.

"It's under your nose, ass!" grinned Church.

"By George, so it is!"

Breakfast was in progress at Holt's Farm, and the sun was streaming into the quaint, old-fashioned kitchen, where the farm hands were gathered round the loaded table.

They were rather unusual farm hands, consisting mainly of junior schoolboys from St. Frank's. Joe Catchpole, the foreman, was there, and so was Tom Belcher—but these were the only adults.

Lady Honoria Dexter had started the affair. She happened to be the Headmaster's sister, and that explained much. Her husband, too, was one of the school governors. And as Lady Honoria was a very forceful woman, she naturally had her own way.

She had come to St. Frank's with all sorts of ideas for reform, and she was particularly keen on the open-air life. On the farm the boys were having plenty of open-air—and plenty of hard work, too. They were all bronzed and bubbling with robust health.

"Well, another day is well on the go," said Nipper cheerfully. "More haymaking on the programme, my sons. And what about weeding the end field? Half-a-dozen of us will have to get busy with hoes this morning. Isn't that right, Joe?"

Joe Catchpole grinned.

"Ay, young gent, the end field needs weedin'," he agreed. "But I doubt me if ye'll be able to do it. Like as not ye'll take up the young roots, along o' the weeds."

"Don't you believe it," said Reggie Pitt.

"We've learnt such a lot about farming during this last week or so that we're getting expert."

"You ain't done so bad, young gents, an' that's a fact," said Joe, with enthusiasm. "This 'ere farm ain't never seen such work. But it won't be long afore ye'll be lookin' round for somethin' to do. The farm don't need so much labour."

Nipper chuckled.

"Don't you worry about that, Joe," he said. "This is only a temporary game. I expect we shall soon be back at St. Frank's—and you'll be glad to see the last of us, I'll bet."

"That I shan't!" declared Joe firmly, as he rose from the table. "Well, I shall have to be goin'."

He and Tom Belcher went off to their work, and the boys were left to themselves. They were in no particular hurry to get out into the hot sunshine of the summer's day. It was very cool and refreshing in the kitchen, with the breeze blowing through the open windows.

"Well, nobody can say we're having a dull time of it," remarked Handforth, as he cracked his third egg. "What with Sir Lucian and his Roman relics, and fighting gangs of ruffians, we've had a good deal of excitement."

"Yes, and Sir Lucian is as mysterious as ever," remarked Fullwood. "Remember how he shut up like a clam when we asked him about the old stone chest?"

"The one he found in the ancient aqueduct?" asked Nipper.

"Yes."

"He doesn't like to take us into his confidence," continued Nipper. "I don't know why—"

"You are quite right, young man," said Sir Lucian Dexter, as he appeared in the doorway. "Until now I have been strongly averse to taking you into my confidence. But I have changed my mind."

Everybody looked round at the thin, bony figure of the archaeologist. Sir Lucian had entered unobserved. And, somehow, he wasn't looking so sinister and forbidding as usual. There was a twinkle in his eye—a twinkle of mingled excitement and amusement.

He advanced towards the table, and stood at the head of it.

"Don't disturb yourselves, my boys," he said. "Go ahead with your breakfast. I can talk to you just as well. This is a good opportunity, for the men have gone. And I want this for your ears alone."

They looked at him expectantly.

There was something completely different about him. His decision to take them into his confidence had evidently produced this remarkable change. He seemed like an old man who had been relieved of a load.

"I think the time has come for me to be quite frank with you boys," he went on. "Indeed, I want to invite your help. I am beginning to feel that this task is rather too much for me."

"We'll do all we can, sir," said Nipper.

"Hear, hear!"

"Oh, rather! Absolutely correct-o!"

"When Lady Honoria and myself came to St. Frank's in the first place, I desired to keep my activities absolutely secret," said Sir Lucian. "Indeed, my wife worked hand in glove with me. She instituted the open-air camp for the especial purpose of distracting you boys—so that I could go ahead undisturbed. But our calculations were wrong, and we were unable to side-track you successfully."

"My hat!" said Handforth. "Then it's been a plot?"

"Hardly a plot," smiled Sir Lucian. "You see, the facts are quite simple. For many years I have made a close study of Early British History. I have been particularly interested in the Roman occupation of Britain. And from various ancient records I have elicited the probable fact that this immediate district is the site of an important Roman settlement."

"I think that's been proved, sir," said Nipper. "We have already found an aqueduct, and other remains of Roman buildings and structures."

"Precisely," said Sir Lucian. "Once a determined investigation is made, I am convinced that this very farm holds the secret of the celebrated Petronius Tiberius, a powerful Roman governor. This, I believe, is the site of his actual burial-place."

"But you haven't located it yet, sir?"

"No," said Sir Lucian. "But I have hopes—high hopes. Now, according to the records I have searched, I believe that Petronius Tiberius was buried with a vast hoard of treasure—"

"My goodness!"

"Treasure!" roared Handforth excitedly. "I knew it all along!"

"It may not be a treasure of the sort you imagine," added Sir Lucian hastily. "But such relics will be very valuable indeed—and, if discovered, they will realise a fortune. And I may as well tell you that my one ambition is to be the discoverer. There are other archaeologists on the track, and it has been necessary for me to work in secret. Hence my apparently mysterious movements of late."

"We suspected something of the sort, sir," said Nipper. "Wouldn't it have been better to tell us all this weeks ago?"

"It would," said Sir Lucian frankly. "I admit it. I confess that I was most obstinate and unreasonable. My movements have only occasioned suspicion, and I feel that the time has come for me to be quite open with you all."

His candid confession was so disarming that the juniors forgave him at once.

"So that is the exact position," he continued. "I want to find this tomb—the burial-place of a celebrated Roman governor. I feel that I cannot pursue my investigations any longer alone. After what has recently happened, such a proceeding would be folly."

This was true enough.

The St. Frank's fellows themselves had discovered the aqueduct, and they knew very

well that Sir Lucian was working by night in the hope of locating a definite object. It was far better for him to be frank, and to enlist their help.

"You may remember that I lost a valuable paper some weeks ago," continued Sir Lucian. "I believe one of you boys discovered it."

"I've got it, sir," smiled Nipper.

"Not that it matters," continued Sir Lucian, with a nod. "I have abandoned that particular line of inquiry. A few days ago I located a quaint old stone chest in an underground chamber."

"Yes, and you tried to make us believe that it had been empty, sir," objected Handforth. "I'll bet it was full of treasure!"

But the old gentleman shook his head.

"No, that chest was disappointing," he replied. "Certainly, there were some relics in it—breast-plates and metal objects of various kinds—but nothing of any paramount value. I am still searching for the real treasure—the tomb of Tiberius."



CHAPTER 2.

Sir Lucian's Offer.

THE kitchen was agog with excitement.

Not many of the fellows were actually surprised.

They had suspected the truth for some days, but it was good to know that they had been on the right track. And they were relieved, too, to definitely learn that Sir Lucian Dexter was engaged in a purely honest pursuit.

"We have made many fine discoveries—my men and I," continued Sir Lucian, after a short pause. "For example, there is an underground chamber in one of the meadows—at that place where a charabanc met with an accident—and there I found an interesting number of Roman coins."

"I found some, too, sir," put in Handforth. "But you tried to make us believe that you had lost them. You offered five pounds reward for their return."

Sir Lucian looked somewhat guilty.

"That was wrong of me," he said quietly. "I tried to put you off the scent, and I believe I failed. But we have done with secrecy now, and I hope you will not think too hardly of me. Now, to get down to real business. I want you to help me."

"How, sir?"

"Just say the word, Sir Lucian, and we'll rally round!"

"What ho! Like dashed birds, sir!"

"How shall we start, sir?"

Eager questions were flung at Sir Lucian.

"Well, in the first place, I do not want you to be too eager," he said smilingly. "I want you to keep this matter a secret—just between ourselves. Do you understand? It might be awkward if the whole district learned of our search. We should soon be inundated with archaeologists from every part of the country!"

"That's true enough, sir," said Nipper, with a nod. "You can trust us to be cautious. I suppose you want us to help in this search?"

"Exactly," nodded Sir Lucian. "While you are ostensibly going about your farm duties, I want you to keep your eyes open—and I want you to report to me if you find anything that savours of antiquarian brickwork. If possible, you may even dig for this treasure—and use other methods in your efforts to locate the actual tomb."

Handforth was looking excited.

"By George, this is the stuff!" he said keenly. "A regular search for treasure, you chaps! Are we game?"

"Rather!" chorussed the others.

"Let me explain this treasure," said Sir Lucian quickly. "It may not be of much value from your point of view. You must not expect to find bags of gold, or boxes of precious stones. I use the word treasure in the broad sense. The mustiest of relics, so far as appearances go, may prove of tremendous value."

"We understand that, sir," said Nipper. "Whatever we find, we'll bring it to you—even if it's only an old bit of twisted iron, or a piece of bent bronze."

"Splendid!" beamed Sir Lucian. "Splendid! That is exactly what I want. A wretched scrap of metal may seem worthless to you, but it might possibly prove to be a relic of fabulous value. Carry on like that, and we shall do famously."

"We'll do our best, sir."

"Rather!"

"And I should like to add that I will reward you handsomely for every scrap of Roman remains you find on my property," continued Sir Lucian. "I must point out that every atom of this stuff is mine, although it may be of national value. Possibly, it will be regarded as treasure trove if discovered, and that means that the authorities will step in and seize the majority of it. So you see the importance of bringing everything to me, no matter how small. But I am so interested in this research that I will pay liberally for your services. You see, I want you to feel that you are working with an object."

Sir Lucian had got the right idea. He had gained the full enthusiasm of his audience. If they were to receive a reward for everything they found, they would certainly lose no opportunities. It would be a hunt for treasure in a new kind of way.

The farm was, indeed, Sir Lucian's freehold property, and none of the boys would have any right to what they found. It was generous of Sir Lucian to provide the spur.

"So now you can go ahead," he smiled.

"Go about your duties as usual, of course, but—always keep your eyes open. If you come across anything of a likely nature, investigate at once, and then report to me. I shall be pursuing my own investigations as well. But if we are all working, there is a distinct chance that we shall win. Any relics are acceptable, but I shall regard it as the triumph of my life if I can only discover the tomb of Petronius Tiberius. As you know, I am a wealthy man, and the pecuniary aspect

has no appeal to me whatever. It is the honour of a great discovery that I am after."

"We understand that, sir," smiled Nipper. "And if we can help you to win that honour, we're at your service. There's quite a chance that Handforth will claim the honour for himself, but you'll have to risk that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am prepared to take the risk," chuckled Sir Lucian.

"You silly ass!" roared Handforth aggressively.

"Really, my boy——"

"Sorry, sir—I wasn't talking to you!" said Handforth, turning red. "I called Nipper a silly ass. If I do discover the tomb of Tig-gelinis Caractacus, or whatever his dotty name is, I shall jolly well claim the honour."

"Exactly!" grinned Nipper. "That's what I said."

"Well, shan't I deserve it?" roared Handforth.

"No, you won't, you chump!" said Church. "We're only working for Sir Lucian, and he'll be the discoverer. You might just as well say that Columbus didn't discover America because some of his crew spotted land from the crow's nest first!"

Sir Lucian retired amid the general laughter, and the fellows were left to themselves.

"No, Handy, it won't do," said Nipper. "Church is right. If any of us discover the tomb, we shall have to tell Sir Lucian about it, and let him claim the renown. We'll claim the cash reward. And you can bet it'll be a tidy sum, my lads! If he's going to give us cash for every old bit of bent iron we find, what will he give if we discover that tomb?"

"By George! He'll probably whack out a thousand quid!" said Handforth extravagantly.

"What rot!" scoffed Pitt. "He'll be so pleased that he'll give us half his fortune! What are you going to do with it, Handy?"

"With what?"

"The wealth that Sir Lucian will hand you."

"I don't know yet," replied Handforth, falling into the trap. "I shall get a new car, of course. My Austin Seven isn't big enough. I think I'll buy an Armstrong Siddeley——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Everybody yelled with mirth.

"What the dickens are you cackling at?" demanded Handforth.

"At you, old man!" grinned McClure. "Counting your chickens before they're hatched. It's quite likely that I shall discover that tomb—and then you won't get any reward at all."

"Oh, shan't I?" snorted Handforth. "You belong to Study D, don't you?"

"Yes, unfortunately," said Mac, with a sigh.

"What do you mean—unfortunately?"

"Oh, nothing—the others'll understand," said McClure.

"If any member of Study D makes a discovery, the credit goes to the whole study," said Handforth, laying down the law. "That's

a settled policy. And now we'll get out, and start the treasure-hunt."

"I think we ought to make some sort of programme," said Nipper. "There'll be all sorts of comments if we're seen rotting about all over the place, like a lot of human ferrets. I'm particularly anxious about you, Handy."

"Why are you anxious about me?"

"Because you'll probably give the game away," said Nipper. "Don't forget what Sir Lucian said. This thing has got to be kept secret. You're a careless chap, and——"

"Rats!" interrupted Handforth coldly. "I can keep a secret as well as anybody. We're out for treasure, and we've got to keep quiet about it."

Nipper sighed.

"Listen to him!" he said. "He talks about keeping quiet—and he's yelling at the top of his voice!"

"All right! Leave him to us," said Church confidently. "The more you tell him to keep quiet, the louder he gets. But we know his little ways, and we'll deal with him effectively."

"Trust us!" said McClure, nodding.

Handforth looked at his chums indignantly.

"Are you talking about me?" he asked, in a thick voice.

"Of course we are!" grinned Church. "For the moment we overlooked that you were listening, but it doesn't make any difference, old man. We'll take care of you. We've always regarded ourselves as your keepers!"

"My keepers!" hooted Handforth. "What do you think I am—a lunatic?"

But Church and McClure were too diplomatic to say.



CHAPTER 3.

The Plotters!

NYTHIN' doin' across your way, Ginger?"

The voice—a coarse and hoarse one, came cautiously through the branches of the tall and lofty chestnut-tree. There was no sign of any human being, but an answer was soon forthcoming.

"Can't see a blessed thing!" said the unknown voice.

"You're in the wrong position—that's what's the matter with you, Ginger," said the other. "You'd best come up 'ere a bit. I ain't got a match, an' I want to light a fag."

A foxy face appeared among the branches, and the figure of Ginger Welch wormed its way up to one of the higher branches. And there, squarely settled on an ample crook, sat Bill Dawson.

"Think it's safe to smoke?" said Ginger.

"Safe be blowed!" growled Bill. "'Course it's safe! We ain't convicts, are we?"

"No, but we're trespassin' on this 'ero farm," said Ginger uneasily. "An' them kids won't treat us none too gently if they cops

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(Further particulars on page 31.)

BEGINNING NEXT WEDNESDAY!

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us, Bill. I ain't forgot the way they chucked us in that duck-pond!"

"Cheery bloke, ain't you?" said Bill sourly.

The two men were silent for a short spell. From this lofty perch one could see across Holt's Farm to the neighbouring fields and meadows, and at different points there were small parties of schoolboys in view, and the activities of these parties had been intriguing Bill Dawson for an hour or two.

"There's treasure, Ginger," said Bill, at length. "These boys have been diggin' all the mornin'. There's somethin' rummy about the whole affair. An' it'll pay us to 'ang around, you mark my words. There's nothin' to be afraid of."

"Treasure!" said Ginger dubiously. "What kind?"

"It don't matter what kind as long as it's valuable."

"I don't know so much about that," said Ginger. "It won't be no good to us if it's on'y a lot of old remains. I've 'eard as they're lookin' for Roman stuff. An' what's the good o' that to us? We couldn't get rid of it, no matter 'ow valuable it was."

The bigger man shook his head.

"There's always a way," he replied. "Once we've got the stuff, you can leave the rest to me. What the thunder are you growlin' at, anyway? Ain't I payin' for your food?"

"I ain't sayin' you ain't!" protested Ginger.

"Yes, an' ain't I payin' for your beer?" asked Bill Dawson. "An' what about Sid White an' 'Erb Carey? Broke—both of 'em! I'm the only one with money, so it's up to you fellows to stand by me. You'll be blamed glad arterwards, when we've got the stuff."

Ginger was silent.

Over in a neighbouring tree, Sid and 'Erb were keeping their eyes on another part of the farm. These four men had been watching for a day or two—watching and plotting and waiting.

They were the men who had attempted to rob Sir Lucian Dexter on an earlier occasion, and they had been hurled into the duck-pond by the St. Frank's juniors and warned off the farm.

At first the men had gone, vowing never to return. They had had enough; they were quite satisfied. They had, indeed, taken lodgings in Bannington, and had intended working their way towards London by degrees.

But Bill Dawson was obsessed by greed.

By chance he had heard that Sir Lucian was searching for treasure, and on the top of this he had the evidence of his own eyes, supported by the evidence of his own wits. Obviously there was something of a very unusual nature going on at Holt's Farm.

What did it matter if it was Roman treasure, or any other sort of treasure? If it

was valuable enough for Sir Lucian to search for, it was good enough for Bill Dawson.

And although he had left St. Frank's for good a day or two ago, he had been drawn back. And he had such influence over his companions that he had induced them to accompany him. They hadn't liked it at first, and they didn't like it now; but Bill was the man with the money, and they clung to him.

They were eager for treasure, too, but they were mortally afraid of running foul of those determined schoolboys again. They didn't want a second ducking in the pond.

But Bill was cautious.

In the daytime he led his men with care, and they spent most of the time in the trees or behind hedges watching—always watching. And at the first sign of any important discovery they would pounce.

This morning they were more convinced than ever.

Parties of boys had been observed in different parts of the farm, digging and doing other queer things. Hedges were searched, and anybody with half an eye could see that a hunt was on.

"It won't be long now, Ginger," said Bill as he passed his companion a packet of cigarettes. "Want a fag? If you ask me, the scent is gettin' 'ot. They'll soon find the stuff now."

"Thanks!" said Ginger as he helped himself. "You mean they'll find the treasure, an' we'll step in an' 'ook it?"

"That's the idea," agreed Bill, nodding.

Ginger looked thoughtful as he placed his companion's packet of cigarettes in a crook of the tree and struck a match. He was beginning to get inwardly excited, too. There is always something fascinating in the thought of treasure.

"Lummy, if it only comes true!" muttered Ginger breathlessly. "We can skip to London, an' I dessay my share will be enough to buy that little fried-fish shop in the Old Kent Road."

"Hambishus, ain't you?" sneered Bill Dawson.

"I've allus 'ankered arter a fried-fish shop," said Ginger ruminatingly. "A tidy little business, Bill, so long as it's run right."

"You don't want to do nothin' foolish like that," said Bill contemptuously. "If I can get 'old o' some cash, I'll start a book. You'd best come in with me, Ginger. You're good at figures, ain't you?"

"Crikey, I wouldn't be no bookmaker," said Ginger. "Me for the old fried-fish shop, Bill. You can't talk me—'Ullo! What the— Bust my whiskers! What d'ye call this 'ere thing, Bill?"

"What thing?"

"Why, there's a hanimal sittin' on a branch just below—underneath you," said Ginger, peering down.

"Garn!" said Bill Dawson, with scorn. "Your iggerance is awful, Ginger! Don't you know a squirrel when you see one? Squirrels are the only animals that climb trees. It won't 'urt you!"

Ginger looked aggrieved.

"Think I don't know what a squirrel looks like?" he snapped. "An' this ain't no squirrel, neither. Lummy, I b'lieve it's a monkey! I'm blamed if it ain't, too! A monkey, Bill!"

"You're mad!" said Bill Dawson. "Monkeys don't live in Sussex!"

He twisted round, and then his cigarette dropped out of his mouth in surprise. With a deft twitch of his little hand, the monkey caught the lighted cigarette, then chattered gleefully.



CHAPTER 4.

The Bull Butts In!

MARMADUKE was enjoying himself.

Ginger Welch had been quite correct. The animal was a monkey. In short,

Marmaduke—Willy Handforth's special pet. He was being taken out for an airing, and he was seizing full advantage of his opportunities. Climbing trees was Marmaduke's chief delight.

Down below, the cheery young leader of the Third Form was strolling along, accompanied by Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon, his faithful chums. They were taking things rather easily at the moment. The morning had been spent in hard work, and now, before going on a big search for the tomb of Petronius Tiberius, they were having a stroll.

"Marmy's gone," said Chubby, looking round.

"He's all right," said Willy confidently. "He'll never dare to stray away while I'm within whistling distance."

"He hasn't strayed before, has he?" asked Juicy, with a grin.

"Only when you chaps have been looking after him," retorted Willy. "Or, rather, when you've been pretending to look after him."

"He's not so good as you believe," said Chubby. "You'll look pretty sick if he's missing, won't you?"

Willy glanced round, and nodded towards some high chestnuts.

"I'll bet he's up one of those trees," he said. "Let's squat down here for a bit, and wait. In fact, we'll dodge behind these bushes, and watch the young beggar when he misses us."

In the meantime, Bill Dawson was staring in astonishment at that branch immediately below him.

"Well, I'm blowed!" he ejaculated.

"It's a monkey, ain't it?" asked Ginger.

"Yes, o' course."

"What did I tell you?" asked Ginger. "As if I couldn't tell the difference between a squirrel an' a monkey!" he added indignantly. "An' me with a uncle what keeps a hanimal shop!"

"Lummy, but I can't un'erstand it!" said Bill. "The bloomin' little imp must 'ave

escaped from a organ-grinder, I s'pose. Look at 'im! I'm blowed if 'e ain't tryin' to smoke my fag!"

Marmaduke, who was a great imitator, had been watching the two men for some little time, although they had been unaware of the fact. And now he took Bill's cigarette and took a puff at it.

The next second he spun round in a circle, choking and gasping. He dropped off the branch, hung for a second by his tail, and then skimmed down into the green foliage. They heard his chattering for a moment above the incessant rustling of the leaves, and then came silence.

"'E got your fag, anyway," grinned Ginger. "Pity we didn't grab 'im," he added regretfully. "Come to think of it, we might 'ave sold 'im for a quid or two."

"Yes, I can see you grabbin' a lively imp like 'im!" said Bill.

Marmaduke had reached the ground by this time, and he looked up and down for a moment, at a loss. Then his sharp eyes detected the faintest of faint movements from a bush farther along the hedge, and he skipped towards it.

"Lost, is he?" said Willy, as the little monkey dodged into view. "Good old Marmy! You knew where—— My hat! Where the dickens did you get that cigarette?" he added in astonishment.

"It's alight, too!" said Juicy, staring.

In order to thoroughly prove that the cigarette was alight, Marmaduke put it to his lips and took a puff. But he didn't take another. Willy grabbed it, and shook his finger.

"None of that, Marmy!" he said sternly. "Smoking's a rotten habit! If I catch you at it again, I'll tan you, my lad!"

Marmaduke chattered gaily.

"A Gold Flake," said Willy, examining the printing on the cigarette. "My sons, there's a mystery here. Marmaduke climbs up a chestnut-tree and comes down with a lighted Gold Flake. It's the first time I knew Gold Flakes grew on chestnut-trees."

He turned to Marmaduke.

"Where did you get this?" he asked, holding up the extinguished cigarette.

Marmaduke evidently understood, for he turned towards the tree, excited and eager. Then, before Willy could stop him, he streaked off, and was shooting up the trunk once more.

He reached that upper branch with incredible speed, and made a grab at Bill Dawson's packet of cigarettes, which still reposed in the crook.

"Blamed if 'e ain't 'ere agin!" said Ginger, as he caught a glimpse of the monkey. "Quick, Bill! 'E's pinched your fags!"

Bill Dawson gave a roar.

"Stop 'im!" he shouted. "It's a full packet o' twenty, except fer two. We shan't 'ave a smoke left, an' we daren't leave these 'ere trees while the boys are dodgin' about."

"You'd best go arter that monkey, then," said Ginger. "You might as well ask me to stop an express train."

Down below, Willy and his chums were looking at one another rather strangely. They could see nothing through that tangle of foliage. Neither could the men see those three boys. But the Third Formers had heard those words distinctly—floating down out of the void.

And Marmaduke was capering about with the packet of Gold Flake.

"My sons, did you hear that?" asked Willy softly.

"Of course we did," replied Chubby.

"There's a man up there!"

"Two men!" added Juicy.

Willy looked at them in mock amazement.

"Marvellous!" he said. "How did you guess that? You silly asses; I mean, didn't you recognise the voice? It was Bill Dawson, the leader of those blackguards we booted off the farm the other day."

"What are they doing up this tree?" asked Chubby.

"They're evidently up to no good," replied Willy. "The man said that they daren't come down. That means that they're afraid of being seen. They're after the treasure."

"What shall we do?" asked Juicy. "Shall we rush off and warn——"

"We're not going to do any rushing at all," interrupted Willy. "Don't get excited and don't get the wind up. We'll tell Nipper about it when we see him. It doesn't matter if an hour goes by. Plenty of time. These fellows won't shift. We can chase them out later on. It might be a good thing to leave them entirely alone, and set a watch on the tree. Anyhow, we'd better move off quietly, so that they won't know we've discovered them."

The fags slipped away, broke through a gap in the adjoining hedge, and found themselves in one of the paddocks.

"Good old Marmy!" said Willy approvingly. "You located those rotters, didn't you? All right, my lad—we'll do the rest."

He paused and gazed across the paddock.

"What's the matter with old Bartholomew?" he went on.

"Bartholomew?" repeated Chubby.

"The bull!" grinned Willy.

"I didn't know he was named Bartholomew," said Juicy Lemon.

"He wasn't until four seconds ago," said Willy. "I've just christened him. Isn't that my major over there on the other side? Let's go across and tell him about these men."

"What about the giddy bull?" asked Chubby uneasily. "I don't quite like the look of him. He's frisking about too much. And old Joe Catchpole told us to keep clear of him."

"Rats!" said Willy. "He won't touch us."

They started across the paddock, Chubby and Juicy pretending to be indifferent. Where their leader went they naturally followed; it wasn't likely they were going to show the white feather.

The bull became aware of their approach after a moment or two, and he eyed them somewhat balefully. He was a huge bull, and one of which Joe Catchpole had expressly

told them to be wary. True, his horns were not particularly big, but he looked dangerous enough, nevertheless.

"Hadn't we better hurry?" suggested Juicy.

"The more we hurry, the more Bartholomew will get excited," said Willy. "If we take it easily he won't bother us. There's no need to be afraid of a bull. They're perfectly harmless if you only treat them right."

Willy had an uncanny way with him where animals were concerned. And he hadn't the slightest fear of the bull. Even when the aggressive-looking animal moved towards them, he did not hurry his pace.

Marmaduke was expressing great interest in the bull, however. He wasn't accustomed to meeting gentry of this sort, and he went up to make a closer inspection.

And Bartholomew concentrated his attention on Marmaduke.

Evidently, the little monkey was not impressed. He ran round in circles, and then took a flying leap on to Bartholomew's back. And the bull, with a fierce bellow, lumbered round, swishing his tail furiously.

The next second Marmaduke was on the ground, dancing about in front of the bull's lowered head. He was chattering excitedly, and he evidently had no fear.

"Hi, Marmy!" called Willy. "That's about enough! Come on! You've inspected him sufficiently!"

Marmaduke obeyed, but he was reluctant. And by this time the three fags had reached the gate on the other side of the paddock, and were climbing over it.

"You reckless young asses!" said Fullwood, as they dropped to the ground. "Haven't you got more sense than to come across a meadow with a bull in it?"

"Oh, Bartholomew is harmless enough," said Willy. "Seen Nipper anywhere? Or my major?"

"Handy was here a minute ago, and I think you'll find Nipper in the barn," said Fullwood. "But you'd better not let me catch you in this meadow again, or I'll——"

"Rats!" said Willy calmly.

He walked on, and Ralph Leslie Fullwood glared.

"Reckless young imp!" he muttered. "Here, Handy!" he added, as the chums of Study D came into sight round the pig-sties. "Do you know what your minor was doing just now?"

Handforth came up.

"Something silly, I'll bet!" he replied. "Sorry, Fully, can't stop now. We're off on a search——"

"Your minor came across this meadow as bold as brass," interrupted Fullwood wrathfully.

Handforth stared at the paddock.

"Well, why shouldn't he?" he asked.

"What about that bull?"

"Nothing to be afraid of in a bull, is there?" asked Edward Oswald, staring. "Are you kicking up all this fuss because my minor walked past that giddy bull?"

"I'm not kicking up a fuss!" growled Full-

wood. "My hat! You're just as bad as he is! I believe you'd go up to the bull and stroke his nose for two pins!"

"I'll do it for nothing!" retorted Handforth lightly. "Great corks! And you thought I should be wild with my minor!"

Fullwood looked at Edward Oswald aghast.

"You—you reckless ass!" he ejaculated. "You're not going into this meadow, are you? You're not going to approach that bull?"

"I wasn't going to, but I will now," said Handforth, with a display of his characteristic folly.

"But that bull's aggressive!"

"It's a what?"

"Aggressive!" snapped Fullwood. "Don't try to be funny now, you fathead! Joe Catchpole warned us against him. He advised us not to go near. For goodness' sake be sensible, Handy!"

"Yes, be sensible!" repeated Church and McClure.

In their anxiety they were rash, or they would never have echoed Fullwood's words like that. For it made Handforth more determined than ever.

"As it happens, that bull has got to come in," he said. "Tom Belcher was talking about him this morning. He's got to be put in one of the sheds, and taken to market tomorrow, to be sold."

"Who, Tom Belcher?" asked Church.

"No, the bull, you chump!" retorted Handforth. "And I might as well bring him in now, and save any trouble later. I'll just do it to show you that these brutes only need a little coaxing, and they'll eat out of your hand."

And Handforth leapt over the gate, and strode off towards Bartholomew.



CHAPTER 5.

Handy Takes the Toss!

ARTHLOMEW glowered.

Either he didn't like the look of Handforth, or he was in a particularly irritable frame of mind. But he stood quite still, and he swished his tail aggressively.

Perhaps he had been unduly tormented by the flies. Perhaps some insect had stung him. Quite possibly he was suffering from some local internal pain. Who can tell? At all events, he was in a much more evil temper than usual, and there seemed nothing to account for it.

It was just irony that Handforth should choose this particular hour to try his skill against a dangerous bull. It was a very foolhardy undertaking. There was no necessity whatever for Handforth to prove his courage. Everybody knew that he was bold enough. It was simply an example of his natural ram-headedness.

"Come back, Handy!" shouted Church anxiously.



Handforth's one chance of escaping from the infuriated bull rested with Marmaduke the monkey who, springing on to the animal's back, clutched at its lowered head, striving to distract its attention.

"Rot!" called Handforth. "I'm going to bring this bull in!"

"But he'll go for you!"

"Not after I've fixed him with my eye," said Handforth coolly.

"Your eye!" gasped Fullwood.

"All animals are fascinated by the human eye!" said Handforth. "I've often wanted to put it to the test, and here's a chance. Everybody says this bull is dangerous, and I'll quell him with the power of my eye!"

"And supposing you don't quell him?" asked Fullwood angrily. "Supposing he refuses to be quelled? Where shall we put your remains? You'd better give your instructions now!"

"You silly ass!"

"Do you want flowers, or not?" asked Church.

"Flowers?" shouted Handforth. "When?"

"In about three days' time," said Church.

"What the dickens—"

"At your funeral, old man," explained Church. "Mac and I will have to go into mourning for a day or two, I suppose—"

"You funny cuckoos!" said Handforth tartly. "You needn't think you can stop me by that sort of rot! I'm going to subdue this bull by staring straight into his eye, and then he'll follow me to the shed as meekly as a lamb. You'd better have that gate open, ready."

He turned, and strode further into the paddock.

And Church and McClure, after a glance at Fullwood, prepared to leap forward, and drag their leader back by force. But just then Willy came up, and he caused a brief delay.

"What's my major doing out there?" he asked sharply.

"He's showing us the power of the human eye over savage animals," said Fullwood, with scorn. "We tried to stop him, but you know what an obstinate chump he is."

"He's always asking for trouble," growled Willy. "Here, Marmy—quick! Go it, old man! Have a shot at Bartholomew! Keep him off!"

For once Marmaduke did not immediately understand. He thought that Willy was inciting him to dash up a neighbouring sapling, after a pigeon which had alighted there. He was off like a shot, although, needless to say, the pigeon thought it unnecessary to wait.

In the meantime, Handforth was testing the power of the human eye.

Nobody thought that he was really in danger, but they were anxious. And they were prepared to dash up, and haul him back by force. But they hesitated. That sort of thing might prove fatal. Perhaps the bull would become enraged by very reason of their combined rush. So it was better to wait for a few moments, and see how things went.

It cannot be truthfully said that Handforth's experiment was a success. And yet his glare was famous. Perhaps it did not possess the exact influence that bulls fear. Quite possibly Handforth ruined the effect by making queer sucking noises with his mouth. It was his idea of coaxing the savage brute, but the bull didn't seem to like it a bit.

He swished his tail harder than ever.

Then he gave a fierce, infuriated bellow, and took a couple of steps forward, lowering his head at the same moment.

"Now, then!" said Handforth sternly.

This had little or no effect. The bull advanced with a very angry and determined air.

Handforth backed away, and he continued to stare straight into Bartholomew's eye.

At least, that was his endeavour.

But he couldn't quite fix Bartholomew's eye. The trouble was, he didn't know whether the bull was looking at him, or at something else. Bartholomew's eyes were too far round the side of his head for a really successful expedition of this mesmeric feat.

"You needn't think you can spoof me by that pawing and snorting!" said Handforth grimly. "Come on, blow you! Follow me! And don't let's have any nonsense about it!"

Handforth moved off majestically, and the bull obediently followed. But Handforth didn't quite like the way in which he did it. Bartholomew's idea of following was all wrong. He had his head down, he was bel- lowing ferociously, and anybody might have thought that he was about to charge.

And anybody might have thought right— because he was.

Even Handforth knew it.

"Hi!" he gasped, in sudden alarm. "Great Scott! The beastly thing is coming for me!"

Handforth's nerve was colossal, and, al- though he was several kinds of an ass, he wasn't exactly insane. Something told him that his only policy was to dodge first, and to run afterwards.

He did both.

He was pained beyond measure to give this display in front of an audience, but he had a dreadful recollection of Church's offer to send flowers to his funeral.

So Handforth bolted as hard as he could run. Taking everything altogether, he con- cluded that it would be wiser to try his ex- periment on Bartholomew some other day.

But Handforth made a grave mistake.

Instead of running towards the gate, he shot off in the opposite direction—right across the meadow.

"Hi!" roared Church, in dire alarm. "This way, Handy! He'll overtake you if you— Oh, my goodness!"

It was too late to do anything to save him, and if he only acted with a little common- sense, he would be able to get out of the paddock with ease. The bull was infuriated, and it was determined to convert Handforth into mincemeat, but there was still time for him to swing round, and get to the safety zone beyond the gate.

But Handforth suffered a revulsion of feeling.

He grew hot with shame. After he had boasted of quelling this brute with his bare eye, he was fleeing like a frightened rabbit! And the thought so startled him that he pulled up short, and turned in his tracks.

"By George!" he gasped. "I'm not going to be scared!"

The bull came for him like a living avalanche.

And the power of the human eye was quite useless here, since Bartholomew was charging blindly. Handforth only had to step aside, and he would be comparatively safe.

"Oh, corks!" he muttered.

He stepped aside, but, unhappily, his foot

caught in a little tuft of grass, and he swayed back again.

Crash!

The thing was over. Handforth rose in the air like a tossed ball, and descended with a thud into the very centre of a large heap of hay. In that respect he was lucky, for he had come down head first, and the hay had broken his fall considerably.

"He's been tossed!" shouted Church wildly.

"Quick!" roared McClure. "He'll be gored!"

And there was no doubt that the situation was intensely dramatic. Even as it was, Handforth was probably injured badly, for he had been tossed with tremendous violence.

And he had not risen!

He was floundering in the hay, dazed and hurt. And the bull, close by, prepared for another charge. He was now maddened to such an extent that he was like a wild creature. Seldom had the onlookers seen a bull in such a fury.

"It's all up with him!" shouted Church in anguish. "We can't get there in time! It's impossible!"

"We'll never do it!" muttered McClure. "Oh, poor old Handy!"

To make matters worse, Handforth was beginning to struggle to his feet, and his very movements were attracting the bull's attention. For a moment, he stood pawing, and then he rushed.

It was a deadly, horrible rush.

Bartholomew meant business this time. Handforth was already on the ground, and he was too dazed to dodge, or run. The bull was going to gore him!

It was dreadful. One or two of the juniors closed their eyes in horror. Bartholomew's horns were short, but at close quarters, with his head down, they would tear the unfor- tunate Handforth to death. They would lacerate him and gore him and—

Then, suddenly, there was a change.

The bull checked, reared up, and swung aside. He whirled round in a maddened circle, leaving Handforth alone.

And Willy turned to the others with a little sigh of relief.

"It's all right—he's safe now!" he said. "Marmy's done the trick!"



CHAPTER 6.

Bartholomew Meets His Match.

ARMADUKE was, indeed, the cause of Handforth's salvation.

The monkey was so small that hardly anybody had noticed him. There had suddenly been a streak of something across the grass, and nobody but Willy had seen it. Whether Marmaduke knew of Handforth's peril is open to doubt, but it certainly seemed like it. His intervention had come in the nick of time.

Marmaduke's method was effective.

He gave one spring, and clutched at the bull's lowered head. And there he clung, confusing Bartholomew to such an extent that his original intentions were entirely abandoned.

He spun round, bellowing madly, with Marmaduke clinging to his ear with one hand, and to a tuft of his hair by the other. And Handforth, seeing this, limped off.

The great Edward Oswald was subdued.

He had had the scare of his life, and he decided that he had better get out of the meadow while he was safe. Church and McClure and two or three other fellows ran up and helped him through the gateway.

"Oh, my goodness!" he groaned. "I thought it was all up that time! I'm half-killed! I believe my left leg's broken, and I can feel about ten ribs grinding together. I'm all smashed up! Still, it's better than being killed—and I thought I was finished that time!"

"Lay him down!" said Nipper swiftly. "Put him on this hay, and we'll feel for the broken bones. Somebody had better go and fetch the doctor. You buzz off, Tommy—"

"I don't want any doctor!" interrupted Handforth. "And you're not going to lay me down, either."

"But your left leg's broken!" urged Church.

"And all your ribs, old man," said McClure.

"I don't mind that," said Handforth huskily. "I'm only too thankful to be alive! When that bull came for me I thought I was a goner! It was your monkey, Willy, that did it!"

"Good old Marmy!" said Willy, nodding.

In spite of Handforth's protests, he was forced to the ground, and all his limbs were felt. Astonishingly enough, he was practically unharmed. There were certainly no bones broken, and he only seemed to be suffering from a bruise or two.

"Must be made of india-rubber!" said Nipper, shaking his head. "I never knew such a chap. He gets tossed by a bull, and he's still whole!"

Handforth glared.

"You sound disappointed!" he said tartly.

"Not a bit," grinned Nipper. "But I'm jolly surprised. I hope that'll teach you a lesson, Handy. The power of the human eye isn't so powerful as you seem to imagine."

"Not where savage bulls are concerned, anyhow," said Reggie Pitt.

Handforth grunted.

"Something went wrong," he said stiffly. "I don't know what it was, but the bull didn't take any notice of me. I think he must be blind! That's why my gaze didn't have any effect!"

"He's hopeless!" said Church. "He still thinks there's something in that piffle! And for two pins he'd go after the bull again! What's the good of trying to teach him anything?"

"By Jove, look at the bull now!" interrupted Tommy Watson.

They had been so occupied with Hand-

forth that they had given no further attention to Bartholomew. The monkey was more than his match. Having achieved his original object, Marmaduke was now indulging in a little amusement of his own.

He was running round Bartholomew in circles, and making occasional leaps on to his back. Once or twice he grabbed at Bartholomew's tail, and pulled it. And all his movements were like flashes of lightning in speed. The clumsy, cumbersome bull was at a hopeless disadvantage.

"Better call your monkey off, Willy," said Nipper. "It won't do any good to infuriate the bull. He'll only run amok, or something. We can't be too careful."

Willy whistled shrilly. He had been about to give the signal in any case.

Marmaduke heard, and stopped his antics. Then, with commendable obedience, he ran across the paddock towards his young master, indulging in a sort of crab-like skip, with an occasional hop to give variety.

Bartholomew saw him, and went mad with rage. There was something terrifying in the bull's charge. With a terrific bellow, he put his head down and galloped with all his strength. He went blindly, utterly reckless as to what happened to him. He was far too infuriated to know where he was going, or to care.

"Look out!" shouted Fullwood. "He *has* run amok!"

"He's going for that hedge!"

"By Jove, yes!"

Bartholomew was charging straight at the thick hedge at the end of the paddock. Just beyond it was a piece of waste land, a kind of disused triangle, choked with elderberry bushes, and blackberry brambles and endless other vegetation. Further beyond was the stack-yard.

"He'll go clean through—and then career through the stack-yard!" shouted Nipper. "He can get out of there, too! He'll tear across country, and—"

Nipper paused, holding his breath.

The bull had just reached the hedge, and he went charging through it like an army tank. There was a tremendous crashing, accompanied by a wild bellow. And then, almost uncannily, there was a complete silence. There came no thunder of heavy feet from beyond.

"He's down!" yelled Fullwood.

"Good!" shouted Nipper. "That'll cool him off a bit. But we'd better be careful—don't rush too close, you chaps!"

It was obvious that the bull had met with unexpected disaster. He had gone through the hedge, and had then fallen over. This, alone, would be sufficient to reduce him to subjection.

As a matter of fact, Bartholomew had received the shock of his life.

First of all, the hedge had surprised him, but this was nothing compared to that which followed. For instead of finding solid ground beyond, he plunged down, through a tangle of dead and rotten undergrowth, to the bottom of a deep and unsuspected ditch.

In fact, it was so deep that it was almost a gully. And Bartholomew was the first one to discover this ditch. Even Joe Catchpole had known nothing of its existence, and he had worked on the farm for years.

Nobody had ever investigated that tangle of elderberry and bramble. And yet they concealed this deep ditch. For decades it had probably remained hidden, and Bartholomew now sprawled at the bottom of the ditch on his back.

He was gasping and snorting, but he was firmly wedged, and every trace of fury had been knocked out of him.

"Well, I'm blessed!" said Nipper, as he arrived at the gap in the hedge and stared down. "No wonder he didn't gallop on! He's down here, ten feet below the surface!"

"Jammed, too!" said Pitt. "How the dickens are we going to get him out? He can't be left there—he'll never get free of his own accord. Somebody had better go and fetch Joe Catchpole."

But Joe didn't need fetching. He was hurrying up at the moment, and when he arrived he removed his battered hat and scratched his head.

"This 'ere's a nice go, young gents," he said, at last. "I don't know what we're goin' to do with 'im, I'm sure. Proper fixed, 'e is. Ran wild, didn't he?"

"Yes, he got excited because Handy went in the paddock," said Tommy Watson.

Joe shook his head.

"Ah, I warned ye against this bull," he said. "I told ye what to expect, my lads. It's a good thing nobody ain't 'urt. As for the bull, we'll 'ave to haul 'im out with ropes."

"Where did you get that idea—nobody hurt?" asked Handforth coldly. "I'm one mass of bruises from head to foot!"

"Well, I ain't sayin' as ye didn't ask for it, Master 'Andforth," said Joe Catchpole, with some asperity. "This is what comes of takin' no 'eed to warnin's."

Handforth looked rather sheepish.

"I believe that bull's blind!" he said defiantly. "If I had had a proper chance to fix him with my eye——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, you can cackle!" roared Handforth. "Why, I've read of people who have quelled lions and tigers in the jungle by the human eye!"

"It all depends upon the eye!" said Pitt, shaking his head.

Nobody took much notice of Edward Oswald Handforth at the moment. They were all interested in the salving of Bartholomew. It was by no means an easy task.

Jerry Dodd, the Australian junior, came in useful. He was exceedingly clever with the rope, and he soon had the bull lassoed. Ropes were fixed to each leg—for the unfortunate creature was wedged at the bottom of the ditch, upside down. Other ropes were secured round his neck, and at a given signal, everybody hauled.

And after a great deal of trouble, the bull

was brought out. He had no fight left in him now. He was like a runaway horse that had been allowed to have his gallop out. And he submitted meekly to being led away into one of the sheds.

"Well, that's that!" said Nipper, after the door had been closed. "And now it's practically tea-time, isn't it? I suppose we'd better be getting indoors——"

"Just a minute, Nipper," said Willy confidentially.

His tone was unusually earnest, and Nipper looked at him curiously.

"What is it, my son?" he asked.

"There's something I want to tell you," said Willy. "I was going to let you know before, but what with Ted asking for an early funeral, and all the rest of it I haven't had a chance."

"It seems important," smiled Nipper.

"It is important," said Willy briefly.



CHAPTER 7.

The Discovery in the Ditch.

E

DWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH came along, and he was now looking quite himself again.

"Thank goodness, all that business is over," he said. "Where's that monkey of yours, Willy?"

"I've put him away," said Willy. "At least, I've told him to keep in one of the sheds. I dare say he could get out if he wanted to, but he's obedient. You see, I've trained him well."

"By George, you have!" agreed Handforth fervently. "I'll never grumble at old Marmy again! I've chipped you at times for keeping the little beggar, but he's my firm pal from now on. Marmy's a good 'un! He saved my life, and I shan't forget it!"

"That's all right, Ted," said Willy cheerfully. "Lots of people accuse Marmy of wicked things, but he's worth his weight in gold. Now and again he gets a bit high-spirited, but that's all in his favour."

"He's true-blue!" said Handforth warmly. "He saved my life!"

"That's true enough," agreed Nipper. "We had an awful shock, Handy, when we saw the bull charging at you."

"What about the shock I had?" asked Handforth. "I was a bit dizzy, I'll admit, but I thought it was all U.P. As I told you before, Willy, that monkey is my pal for ever!"

"Well, what's that you were going to say?" asked Nipper, looking at the Third Former. "What's this important disclosure?"

"You remember those men we chucked into the duck-pond some days ago?" asked Willy. "Bill Dawson and his crowd?"

"What about them?" asked Nipper. "They'll never come into this neighbourhood again—unless they're in search of trouble."

"They're here," said Willy.

"What!"

"Fact!" said Willy. "Two of them, anyhow, and I expect that means the four. I thought I'd better tell you."

"How do you know?" asked Nipper sharply.

Willy explained.

"By George!" exclaimed Handforth, at length. "That monkey of yours seems to be a jolly useful animal, my lad!"

"Yes, it was Marmy's doing again," nodded Willy. "We shouldn't have known anything about those men but for Marmy. There isn't much he misses, I can give you my word."

"We'll go to that tree at once," said Nipper grimly. "Round up some of the chaps, Handy, and tell them to be ready for trouble. We'll force those men down, and this time we'll rope them up, and hand them over to the police. Sir Lucian will charge them quickly enough."

Within five minutes, eight or nine juniors were ready, and they hurried off under Willy's direction. But when they reached that shady chestnut tree the birds had flown. Bill Dawson and Ginger Welch had gone elsewhere.

Nipper and Pitt climbed the tree, and found plenty of evidence to substantiate Willy's story. But the men were no longer there.

"It's a pity," said Nipper, when he came down again. "It's no good searching for them, either—we might be on the job half the night. But we shall have to keep our eyes open."

"They're after that treasure," growled Handforth. "By the way, has anybody made any discoveries yet?"

"Nothing worth mentioning," said Nipper. "I think a few stones have come to light—a part of an old Roman wall—but nothing of big importance."

They went back towards the farmhouse in twos and threes, discussing the various events of the afternoon. Most of them were rather disappointed at the non-results of the day.

They had started with great enthusiasm in the morning, and most of them had had the idea that the valuable tomb would be located before nightfall. But this idea had long since been abandoned. The task was not so easy as that.

Most of the investigations had come to nothing. There had been a great deal of hard work, and nothing to show for it. And now it was tea-time. But nobody was despondent. The cool of the evening provided the best hours for work, and all were eager to carry on.

"I don't like those men knocking about here," said Nipper, as he and his chums of Study C walked towards the farmhouse. "I thought we'd got rid of the rotters. They'll cause trouble sooner or later."

"They daren't make another attack, surely?" asked Tommy Watson.

"It's not that," said Nipper. "There's something unpleasant in the idea of those blackguards hanging round the place. Perhaps they're watching us even now. I'm not altogether surprised, though—because the

prospect of treasure is enough to tempt any scallywag."

"By the way, dear old boys," said Tregellis-West. "I suppose you haven't seen my fountain-pen knockin' about anywhere?"

"You haven't lost it, have you?" asked Nipper.

"I'm afraid I have," said Sir Montie apologetically. "It's a frightful nuisance, but the thing must have dropped out of my shirt pocket while I was helpin' with that beastly bull."

"Then there's not much chance of finding it," said Nipper. "That ditch is soaked with dead twigs and every other kind of rubbish. It'll be worse than looking for a needle in a haystack. Still, we'll have a search as we go by."

"Sorry to bother you, old boys," said Sir Montie.

They were close to the paddock now, and they went in, and approached that gap in the hedge. The other fellows had all gone indoors, for tea. Nipper & Co. had the scene to themselves.

"No sign of it here," said Nipper as he stood on the edge of the ditch, searching about. "Half a minute. I'll drop down, and have a look along the bottom of the gully."

He lowered himself, and scouted round for a bit. But he instinctively felt that it was a forlorn quest. Montie's fountain-pen had gone for ever, without question.

"This is a rummy old place," he said, after a while. "By Jove, these brambles and bushes must have been growing here for generations. It's like a cave!"

"Let's have a look," said Tommy Watson.

Both he and Sir Montie dropped down, and they were surprised at the extensive nature of that gully. It stretched off to right and left, and the densely packed thickets of bramble grew right across the gap, like an arbour. Moving along the ditch, they were in a sort of natural tunnel, and so thick was the vegetation overhead that the light became gloomy and subdued.

"I say, this seems a likely field for investigation," remarked Nipper keenly. "Look at the stones here! I believe there's the remains of a wall beyond all this kelter."

"A Roman wall!" said Watson.

"There's no need to jump to conclusions, old man," smiled Nipper. "Still, it would be rather rummy if we hit upon something by accident, wouldn't it? We should have to thank Bartholomew."

"I rather fancy Marmaduke would be entitled to the real credit," said Sir Montie. "He chased the bull, didn't he? But we don't seem to be findin' my fountain-pen, do we?"

Nipper chuckled.

"I'd forgotten all about it, old son," he grinned. "Never mind. We'll go along here to the end, and then we'll turn back. I'm rather curious to see how much farther this ditch extends. It was so effectively hidden that we never knew anything about it."

They pushed on, forcing their way through the tangle of thorny brambles, and plucking

their clothing. And the deeper they penetrated the gloomier it became. The roof of vegetation grew thicker, and the ditch narrower.

"Well, I think we've gone far enough," said Nipper, at last. "There's no way out, except by the way we came. It's impossible to force a passage through this century-old growth."

"There's more brickwork here," said Watson, as he forced his way through a mass of dead branches. "Look at it—a regular wall! I say, I'm not so sure, after all!" he added excitedly. "I believe this is the remains of a Roman wall! We've made a discovery!"

Nipper joined him, and Montie forced his way through, too. They found themselves gazing at a tumbledown wall of curiously uneven stones. And a little bit further along there was a depression—a sort of alcove. But the vegetation was so thick that it was almost impossible to reach the spot. Nipper wormed his way through.

"I say!" he called back. "There's a doorway!"

"Begad! Really, old boy?"

"What do you mean—a doorway?" asked Watson eagerly.

"I can't see properly—it's as black as your hat through here," went on Nipper. "But there's a kind of arch, with a crumbling door at the other end of it. The entrance is half filled up with earth and dead leaves and other rubbish. Jove, it looks promising!"

"Let's get through!" said Watson excitedly.

But Nipper squeezed his way back.

"No, we'll keep this to ourselves," he said calmly. "Don't forget that the reward goes to the ones who discover the treasure. And we don't want everybody's finger in this pie. It may be something, or it may be nothing. But unless we get indoors quickly, we shall be missed."

"A brainy thought, Nipper, boy," said Sir Montie, nodding.

"But what about exploring the place?" asked Watson. "If we don't do it now, somebody else may come along and claim——"

"That's not likely!" interrupted Nipper. "There's hardly any chance of the others spotting this place. We'll get indoors now for tea, and we'll come back here later on—after dark."

CHAPTER 8.

Handy Won't Have It



FIVE minutes later, the chums of Study C had climbed out of the ditch, and were gratified to see that nobody had observed their activities.

"Don't forget—keep calm, and say nothing about this affair," warned Nipper. "I've got an idea that we're on the track of something big here. No harm in hoping, anyhow!"

"You think it might be the tomb of Petrosomebody or other?" breathed Watson.

"I'm not jumping to any conclusions," replied Nipper evenly. "But I never saw Roman brickwork in my life, if that isn't Roman down there! And that arched doorway is significant, too."

They hurried away, and Nipper suddenly grinned.

"Hold on, Montie," he said. "What do you call this?"

He pointed to the grass, slightly to his left, and Tregellis-West gave a chirrup of joy.

"Begad, my fountain-pen!" he said. "Really, Nipper, dear boy, you've got frightfully keen eyesight—you have, really! I wouldn't have lost this pen for worlds. I believe it cost over a fiver."

"You shouldn't carry a pen like that in your shirt," said Nipper sternly.

"You're right, old fellow," said Tregellis-West. "An' after this I'll keep it indoors. I'm afraid I'm fearfully careless nowadays. This open-air life makes a chap forget all about his personal appearance."

"We shall soon be back at St. Frank's, by the look of things," said Nipper. "I'm very hopeful about this exploration after tea."

"After tea?" said Watson. "I thought you said after dark."

"Well, I don't think we'll leave it as late as that," replied Nipper. "It doesn't get dark until half-past ten, and we want to be in bed before then. I expect we shall get an opportunity of slipping off during the evening."

They went into the farmhouse kitchen, and found the others collected round the heavily-laden board. It was a genuine tea, too. New laid eggs, liberal supplies of farm butter, and so forth.

"Where did you chaps get to?" asked Pitt.

"Oh, we stayed behind to look for Montie's fountain-pen," replied Nipper truthfully. "How's tea going on? Any of it left for us?"

They were soon sitting down, and nobody knew anything about their recent discovery. And when tea was over there was a general bustle of activity. The fellows sorted themselves into different groups.

Everybody was bitten by the treasure-hunting fever.

Plans had been made to explore all sorts of spots that evening, and the majority of the hunters were soon off. Handforth was naturally keen, but when he rose from the tea-table he found that he was so stiff that he could hardly walk.

"Oh, crumbs!" he groaned. "I thought so."

"What's the matter, Handy?" asked Church.

"My leg!" said Handforth, screwing up his face. "It's broken!"

"Don't be an ass!"

"I told you it was broken, and I ought to know," said Handforth. "I don't suppose it's anything very serious—one of the smaller bones near the knee-cap."

"What do you think you are—a fish?" asked McClure politely.

"What do you mean?"

The chest was filled to the brim with roughly-shaped, dull, crude coins. Excitedly Nipper picked up a handful of them, and his eyes gleamed with sudden animation. "Ye gods and little fishes!" he exclaimed. "Gold!"



"Well, you talk about the smaller bones as though you had ten in each leg," said Mac. "You've had a strain, Handy—that's all! By jingo! Look at the colour of your knee!" Handforth gazed down at his left knee.

"What's the matter with it?" he asked, in alarm.

"My dear chap, it's black and blue!"

"By George, so it is!" said Handforth, staring.

"You fathead!" grinned Church. "That's dirt!"

"I don't mean that smudge on the knee-cap," said McClure. "Farther round—up the thigh a bit. You won't be able to walk to-night, Handy. You'd better let us rub you with embrocation. Otherwise you'll be a cripple for days."

Handforth shook his head.

"I don't believe in medicines," he said firmly. "Nature has her own remedies, and they're better than all the stuff you can buy. So you can keep your beastly embrocation!"

"If you're going to be obstinate, we'll leave you alone," said Church promptly. "Come on, Mac! Let's see, we're going to explore that high ground at the top of the long spinney, aren't we? I rather fancy it's a likely field for a search."

"Pity Handy isn't coming, but he'll be happier here, in a chair," said McClure. "See you later, Handy! If we discover anything, we'll tell you all about it!"

Handforth looked at his chums stonily.

"What's the idea?" he asked. "It was my plan to explore the long spinney. Do you think you chaps are going without me?"

"My dear old cripple, you can't come a yard," said Church. "Just try and walk—and see how you get on. After being tossed by a bull, you ought to be in hospital, strictly speaking. Besides, you've got to let Nature apply her own remedy. And everybody knows what Nature's remedy is."

"Do they?" said Handforth. "What is it?"

"Rest," said Church. "Complete rest."

"But I don't want to rest!" objected Edward Oswald.

"There's no pleasing you!" growled McClure. "We offer to rub you with embrocation, so that you can come with us, and you refuse, and when it comes to Nature's own remedy, you're still obstinate. Which is it going to be?"

Handforth frowned.

"I suppose I'd better try the embrocation," he said gruffly. "Whew! This leg of mine is as stiff as the dickens! Where's the beastly stuff, anyway? I'll humour you, if you like."

"Thanks awfully!" said Church.

Handforth was really badly bruised. The whole of his left leg was stiff and swollen, and when he tried to walk, he found it a very painful process. His chums set him down near the window, and prepared for massage.

"You can clear off!" said Handforth coldly. "I'll do it myself!"

"All right—here's the bottle!" said Church, with a sniff. "If you don't want us to help, you can jolly well go and eat coke! I've come to the conclusion, Handy, that you're getting more and more pig-headed every day."

His chums strode down the kitchen, and Handforth was left to himself.

"Wait until I'm well!" he roared after them. "You think you can say what you like because I can't chase you, don't you? I'll get my own back sooner or later!"

He seized the bottle, poured the stuff into the hollow of his hand, and rubbed it on his leg. All around him the air was filled with a pungent odour, and he pursed his lips as the stuff began to smart and tingle.

Outside, Church and McClure had halted in the yard.

"After all, I suppose we'd better go back to him," said Church dubiously. "It's a bit thick to leave him on his own now that he's crooked. We must forgive him for being a bit peevish."

"That's right," agreed McClure. "Besides, lunatics always need humouring. Let's go back and help."

They returned to the kitchen, and Handforth glanced round with a frown.

"What the dickens is this beastly stuff, anyhow?" he demanded. "My leg's half skinned! I'm nearly choked, too! It's a pity you couldn't give me some decent embrocation."

Church sniffed the air.

"You fathead!" he gasped. "What the dickens have you been rubbing on yourself? My hat! We can't leave him for two minutes, Mac, without him making blunders."

"Blunders?" said Handforth, with a start.

"That's the sanitary fluid!" said Church, grasping the bottle, and putting it out of Handforth's reach. "That's the stuff we use to disinfect the pigsties!"

"Wha-a-t!" ejaculated Handforth.

"It's highly concentrated, too," went on Church. "A tablespoonful of this stuff makes a pailful. And you've been rubbing it on neat! Your leg will be skinned by to-morrow."

Handforth took a deep breath.

"I thought it smarted!" he said thickly. "This is what comes of relying on you chaps! You try to poison me—"

"Rats!" said Church. "If you had acted sensibly I would have rubbed the embrocation on. Are you blind, or what? The bottle's only half an inch off your elbow!"

Handforth looked round, and his eyes opened wider.

"Which bottle—this?" he asked, in astonishment.

"Yes, of course."

Handforth picked it up, and read the label—"Worcestershire Sauce." Then he looked at his chums.

"Is this embrocation?" he asked, in an ominous voice.

"You jolly well know it is!" replied Church crossly.

"How should I know?" roared Handforth. "It says 'Worcestershire Sauce' on the label, and I'm not such an ass as to rub myself with Worcestershire Sauce! Who's the silly idiot who put the stuff in this bottle?"

"He's in this kitchen, anyway," said McClure, grinning.

"Oh, then it was you?" snapped Handforth, looking at Church.

"When a chap has got a memory like a sieve, he ought to be careful what he says," retorted Church. "You put that embrocation in the sauce bottle, after you'd broken the proper one. Don't you remember we told you that there was some of the sauce left in it?"

Handforth started.

"By George, you're right!" he said, with a sickly look on his face. "My only hat! Now I know why my dinner tasted so funny!"



CHAPTER 9.

The Tomb of Petronius Tiberius!

CHURCH and McClure yelled.

"Did you put some of that stuff on your steak?" gurgled Church.

"Of course I did!" snapped Handforth. "I thought it was sauce! No wonder the steak seemed like camphor! I asked some of the chaps what was wrong with it, and they said theirs tasted all right."

"They hadn't used the Worcestershire Sauce," said McClure with a grin. "With all due respect, Handy, old man, I've got to remark that you're a scream. What the dickens you'd do without us looking after you, I tremble to think!"

Handforth was quite subdued.

"Perhaps you're right!" he admitted sombrely. "The fact is, I've no time to think of little things. My mind's always so full of the big ones. I leave petty details to you chaps, and I'm all at sea when you desert me. Where's that embrocation?"

"Here you are, old man," said Mac gently.

And within five minutes the chums of Study D were in complete harmony again. Church and McClure always felt tender towards their leader when he knuckled under to them. It is to be suspected that they liked him better when he was his own, aggressive, ram-headed self.

But there was not to be much exploring for them just yet. It was very essential that Handforth should have an hour or two of rest. And at last he realised that this was imperative.

In the meantime, Nipper and his chums were awaiting their opportunity to steal down into that concealed ditch.

There were one or two groups of fellows near at hand, and for almost an hour the chums of Study C were compelled to wait. They filled in the time by pretending to explore other spots. But at last, when the evening was fairly advanced, their opportunity came.

Nobody was within sight, and they lost no time in dropping down silently into the ditch.

"I wouldn't have believed it," said Nipper, with a grin. "All that time, and we've only just had our chance."

"Still, we've done it, old boy," said Sir Montie complacently. "We're so close to the house, you know—that's the trouble. What about candles? Have you brought some?"

"I had a pocketful when we came out, but they feel like a single blob of wax now," said Nipper, as he gingerly took the softened candles from his pocket. "They're not so bad, though. I think we shall be able to manage."

They penetrated the ditch until they reached that spot where the arched doorway existed. It was almost pitch dark here, and it was necessary to light the candles. There was very little risk of the lights being seen from above.

Ordinarily, Nipper would not have been so secretive, but Sir Lucian's offer had made him cautious. He did not want everybody to stampede here, and then discover that the find was a frost. It was far better to make certain in private.

"First of all, we've got to clear all this rubbish away," said Nipper. "It's been accumulating for ages. But I'm getting excited, you fellows, if you want to know the truth."

"You don't look very excited," said Watson, grinning.

"But, my dear chap, have a look at this," went on Nipper, holding his candle high in the archway. "Look at this door! I'll bet that hasn't been opened for an epoch! One kick ought to knock it down. It's made of oak, I believe, but even oak will go rotten in time."

The door was half-choked by an extraordinary mass of stones and earth, and dried and rotting vegetation. There was half an hour's work before they could even attempt to force the door.

And while they were busily at work like this, greedy eyes were watching the ditch.

Bill Dawson was on the alert.

He and Ginger Welch, in fact, had been rather more cute than Nipper had given them credit for. Before tea, these two men had followed Nipper & Co. on the other side of the paddock hedge, and the men had seen the juniors drop down into that gully—and had wondered why they had stayed there so long. And they had been suspicious.

They knew that these boys were hunting for treasure, and every little incident became significant. And while the fellows had been at tea, Bill Dawson and Ginger had cautiously climbed a neighbouring tree. This method

of spying was the best they could adopt. And it was certainly proving to be very effective.

For, after a long wait, they had seen Nipper & Co. go down into that ditch again.

"There's something down there, Ginger," declared Bill, with conviction. "I reckon we're on the right track this time."

"We can't be sure, mate."

"Nothin's sure in this world," growled Bill. "Didn't you notice the way them kids 'ung about for nearly an hour, waitin' to go down that ditch so that nobody could see 'em? I ain't blind, even if you are."

"It looks funny, I'll admit," said Ginger, with a nod. "But I tell you straight, Bill, I don't like bein' so near the 'ouse. If we're spotted we shall be in the soup, proper."

"We ain't bin spotted yet, an' if you'll rely on me, we shan't be," replied Bill. "What about Sid an' 'Erb? They're still 'andy, ain't they?"

"I believe they're 'angin' about in one o' them old sheds, further along," said Ginger. "Lots o' these sheds ain't never used. But what d'you figger on doin'?"

Bill Dawson looked at his watch.

"If those kids don't come outer that ditch within the next 'arf hour, we're goin' down," he replied grimly. "It'll be dark enough by then. An' it's a good chance, too. Nobody else knows they went down, so they won't be missed if we knocks 'em out for an hour or two. You'll 'ave to go along an' fetch Sid an' Erb, so that we can do the thing proper!"

There was every indication that some excitement was brewing.

And Nipper and his chums, getting the rubbish away from that aged doorway, had no suspicion that the enemy was so close at hand—and so watchful.

"That ought to do it now," said Nipper at last. "Phew! I'm warm! This has been hard work, you chaps. I say, what a frost if we find nothing behind this blessed door!"

"Never mind, old boy," said Sir Montie urbanely. "It's all in the day's work."

The three juniors were in a shocking condition—smothered in dust and grime, perspiring from every pore and aching in every limb after their exertions. It would indeed be cruel if they found nothing to reward such effort.

"Hold the candle, Tommy," said Nipper keenly. "I'm going to put my shoulder to this door, and see what happens. I can get at it now, thank goodness!" He grinned. "How much do you bet there's nothing behind here but a shallow cavity, filled with earth?"

"Don't suggest such horrors!" said Watson gruffly.

They were all in the archway now. It was deep and low, and they were obliged to crouch. Nipper set his shoulder to that aged door and heaved.

And yet, although it was so rotten, so eaten away by age, it stubbornly resisted. Again and again Nipper put forth his strength, and then, with a sudden crackling

and crumbling, the old door literally fell to pieces.

It did not crash inwards, but dropped in fragments, and one of the fragments hit Nipper's left foot, crippling him for a moment. But he almost forgot the pain when the candle light revealed a deep, mysterious cavity beyond. Walls, too—with an arched roof. It was totally different to the other places that had been found on Holt's Farm. In every respect, it was like the entrance to a tomb!

"Don't jump to conclusions!" muttered Nipper tensely. "We've discovered nothing yet, my sons. But, by Jove, I'm beginning to hope! What would Sir Lucian say if he were here now?"

"He wouldn't be in a fit condition to say anythin'," smiled Montie. "Begad, I think he'd be faintin' with excitement!"

They walked forward cautiously, and found that the black cavity was only a kind of lobby. After three or four paces they came upon another great door, and this one was closed, too, and in a much better state of preservation. It was provided with iron bolts—now rusty with age.

"My only hat!" breathed Watson.

"Somehow, I don't quite like the look of this," said Nipper, with a frown. "There's no mistake about the stonework. It's of Roman origin, sure enough. But these doors are comparatively new."

"New?" repeated Watson, staring.

"Well, not more than four or five hundred years old."

"Is that what you call new, you ass?"

"Yes, compared to Roman times," said Nipper, nodding. "I can only conclude that somebody in the thirteenth or fourteenth century took it into his head to preserve the old place. That's why it's in such a good condition now. It's really impossible to tell."

"What does it matter about that?" asked Watson impatiently. "Let's get this door open!"

They gave it their full attention, and were gratified to find that it succumbed readily to their onslaught. Within ten minutes it was open, and as it swung back a damp, earthy odour came out.

"Ugh!" shivered Watson. "It smells like a grave!"

"I'm hoping that's what it is!" said Nipper. "The air smells a bit stagnant, but I think it'll be safe enough to venture in."

He led the way, and somehow they felt it necessary to tip-toe as they passed within. They found themselves in a low, vaulted chamber, and at the very first glance they could see a number of aged, mouldering chests round the walls.

And in the very centre stood a massive, sombre-looking stone coffin.

For a moment they stood silent, awed. They each knew the truth, without a word being spoken.

They were within the tomb of Petronius Tiberius!



CHAPTER 10.

Treasure Trove I

NIPPER was the first to speak.

"Well, we haven't had our trouble for nothing, have we?" he said, in a steady voice. "I think we ought to get up a vote of thanks to Bartholomew the Bull."

"Not forgetting Marmaduke the Monkey," murmured Sir Montie. "Begad! This is frightfully interestin', dear old boys! I don't know how you feel, but I'm tremblin' all over!"

"So am I!" muttered Watson. "I say, let's have a look in these chests! I can't wait!"

Nipper grinned.

"No need to be excited now," he replied. "The suspense is over. We know exactly where we are, my sons. We can take it easy."

But his chums were not inclined to dally. They went across to one of the old chests, and wrenched at the lid. It came away with very little persuasion, and they stared eagerly into the depths.

"It's a fraud!" said Watson, with keen disappointment. "There's only a lot of old junk in here!"

And it certainly seemed that he was right.

The chest was almost full to the top with scraps of dull, tarnished metal. There were all sorts of roughly-made, uncouth objects. Bowls, goblets, and things that looked like breast-plates. They were bent and twisted and unsightly. An old-iron man would have offered sixpence for the lot.

"Somehow," said Nipper, "I don't think Sir Lucian will be disappointed when he sees this. My dear old ass, do you realise that you're looking into the treasure-chest?"

"This!" said Watson contemptuously.

"Yes, this!" said Nipper. "These old things may seem valueless to you, but they're probably worth tens of thousands. You chump, it isn't their intrinsic value that counts. It's their historic value. Antiquarians would give a fortune for this chestful of stuff."

Tommy Watson brightened up.

"I jolly well hope you're right," he said.

"But I'm still puzzled," went on Nipper, frowning. "These chests aren't Roman—although I believe that stone tomb in the middle is. But the chests are of a much later date."

"Perhaps the tomb itself is a rebuilt affair," suggested Montie.

"That's quite possible, although I don't think it's probable," said Nipper, looking at the crumbling walls. "At the most, some enthusiast, centuries ago, might have done a little restoration work. I expect that accounts for the chests. He must have collected the Roman stuff, and locked it away in them."

"But why?" asked Watson. "Why didn't he take it away?"

"That's a poser," replied Nipper. "But I think there's a very likely explanation. The original discoverer may have been an intensely religious man—so he wouldn't disturb the tomb. Instead, he packed everything away, and built those heavy doors so that it would remain preserved. A religious man would easily do that, you know, especially if he was fanatical. Perhaps a monk, or somebody like that."

"In any case, old boys, it is really for Sir Lucian to puzzle over," said Montie. "Why should we bother our heads on these knotty problems of dates and periods? Leave it to the man who knows!"

Nipper nodded.

"Quite right, Montie," he agreed briskly. "Why should we worry? But I can just imagine Sir Lucian's joy. At the very best, he only expected a lot of ruins, and weeks of excavation, perhaps, to locate any trace of the treasure. But here he'll find it all preserved—ready for him. He'll go off his rocker unless we break it to him gently."

"What about the other chests?" asked Watson.

"I don't know whether we ought to open them," said Nipper.

"Why not?"

"Well, we shall dish Sir Lucian out of the greatest thrill of all if we open the lot," said the Remove skipper.

"We can peep in, and he'll never know," declared Watson. "Oh, blow it! I think we ought to have a look!"

They went to another chest, and this one proved to be rather more promising. It was filled with coins!

To the very brim, it was packed with roughly-shaped, dull, crude coins. There were thousands of them there. And when Nipper picked a handful of them up his eyes gleamed with sudden animation.

"Ye gods and little fishes!" he muttered. "Gold!"

"Gold!" gasped Watson. "All this?"

"Absolutely!" said Nipper, in a strange voice. "Phew! I must admit I never expected a find of this kind!—It's a real treasure, after all—a treasure in solid gold! Why, this must be worth thousands and thousands, just for the weight of the gold alone! What a fabulous discovery!"

They were startled by it, and for some little time could only stare down at that dull pile.

"And to think that all this has been lying on Holt's Farm for centuries and centuries!" said Watson. "My goodness! It's enough to make a chap's brain reel! I say, poor old Holt!"

"Why poor old Holt?"

"Well, he sold this property to Sir Lucian, and never knew what he was selling!" replied Tommy.

"That's nothing," replied Nipper. "I'll bet he got a fair price for his land. And he would never have found this tomb—not if he lived to be a hundred and fifty! Sir Lucian

located it because he has made a study of this sort of thing all his life."

"Gold!" said Watson, fascinated by the very sound of the word. "What about the other chests? Perhaps they're full up, too!"

Even Nipper did not try to stop him this time. There were two more of those chests, and they proved to contain ornaments, goblets, and trinkets of every description. And a great many of these were also made of gold. The value of that treasure was simply immense.

And there could be no doubt that the central tomb contained the remains of the Roman Governor. These earthly treasures had been buried with him, in the same chamber. There could be no other explanation.

"There must be hundredweights of gold here," remarked Tommy Watson soberly. "And how much is gold an ounce?"

"My dear chap, if we start reckoning the actual value of the gold we shall go dizzy," said Nipper, with a grin. "It's worth more than we're ever likely to make, anyhow."

These were significant words for the ears of Bill Dawson to overhear. And Bill overheard them all right. For at that very moment he and his rascally associates were crouching at the open doorway. They had succeeded in getting down into that ditch unobserved, and they were filled with curiosity to discover why Nipper & Co. had not emerged.

And Dawson heard those words.

"If we start reckoning the actual value of the gold we shall go dizzy!"

Bill caught his breath, hardly able to believe the evidence of his own ears.

"Gold!" he breathed. "Did you hear that, Ginger?"

"Ear what?" asked Ginger Welch, from behind.

"They've found it!" whispered Bili Dawson, hardly able to keep his voice in check. "Strike me pink, Ginger, these kids 'ave found the treasure! Didn't I tell you we was on the right track? Are the others just behind?"

"Yes!"

"Then tell 'em to rush in when I give the shout!" hissed Bill.

Within the tomb, Nipper was holding up a warning finger.

"What was that?" he asked breathlessly.

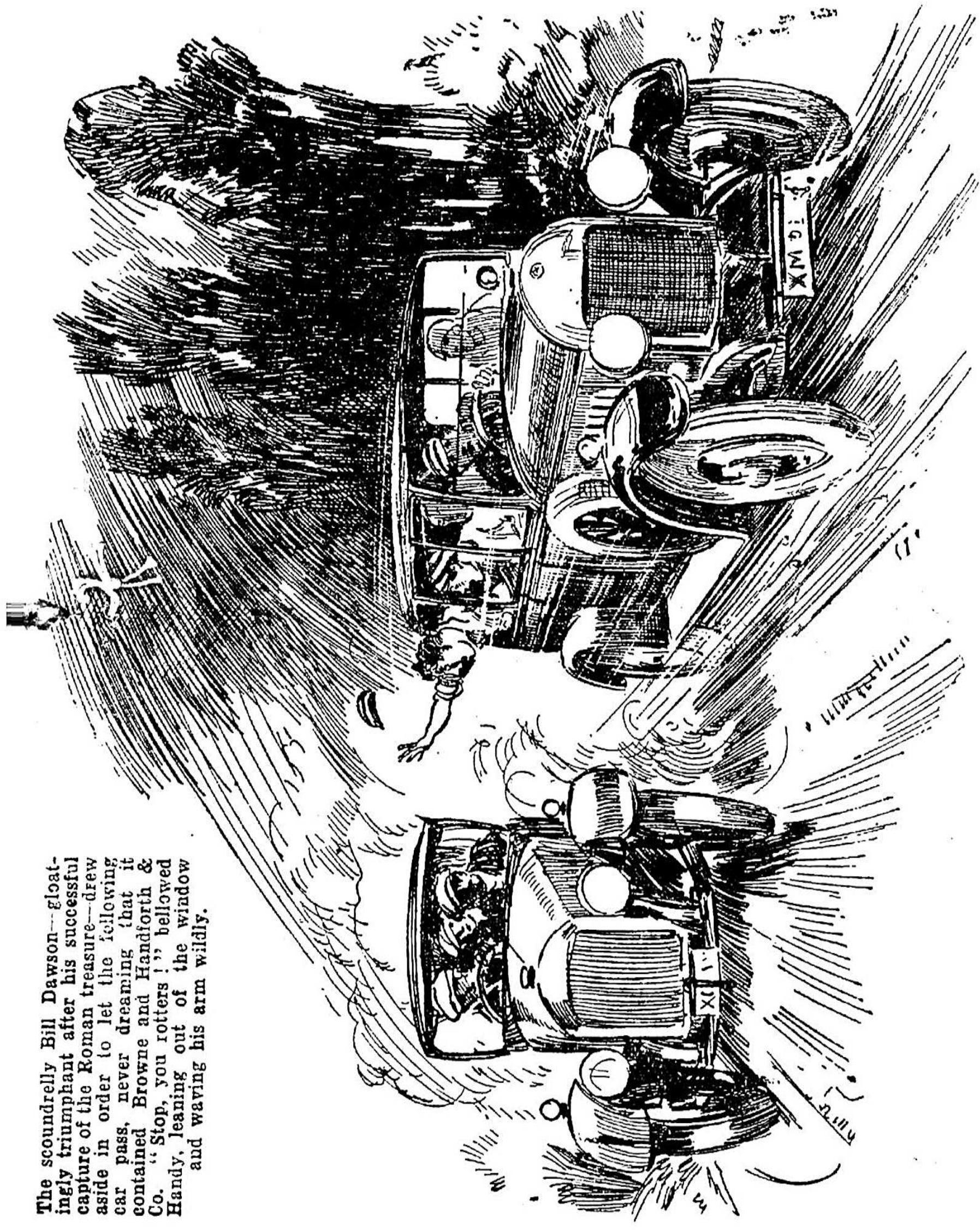
Tommy Watson started.

"Eh?" he said, with a glance over his shoulder. "What was what? You ass! You needn't give us a start like that!"

Now that his mind was taken from the gold, Tommy Watson realised that this place was very eerie. The flickering candle light created long, mysterious shadows. The whole place was earthy and crypt-like. And there was that coffin in the middle—containing the crumbled bones of a once-great man. There was a ghostly atmosphere in that chamber, as though Petronius Tiberius himself was frowning down on them.

"I thought I heard something!" said Nipper steadily. "It may have been only my imagination, but perhaps some of the other

The scoundrelly Bill Dawson--gloat-
ingly triumphant after his successful
capture of the Roman treasure--drew
aside in order to let the following
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Co. "Stop, you rotters!" bellowed
Handy, leaning out of the window
and waving his arm wildly.



chaps have come down after us. They might have dropped into the ditch by chance. Anyhow, it's time we were going. We've seen all that's necessary."

"That's—that's what I think," said Watson, with a nod.

And then, from outside, came a sudden shout.

"Great Scott!" yelled Nipper. "That was Dawson's voice!"

"Begad!" said Montie. "You—you mean —"

"Those men!" roared Nipper. "They've followed us down here—and we're in a pretty tight corner!"

"Rescue, Remove!" bellowed Tommy Watson.

But the next moment the chamber was filled with grim, determined men. The four of them were maddened by the lure of gold. They had heard Bill Dawson's words, and they knew that the treasure was actually here. And there were only three schoolboys barring the way!

Those ruffians were fit for murder at that moment!



CHAPTER 11.

The Living Tomb!

UNDER ordinary circumstances, these rascals were men of loose honesty. That is to say, they generally managed to live like other law-abiding people, but they were not averse to a shady deal now and again. They were all men who gained a precarious livelihood in connection with the racecourses.

And now, suddenly, they found a great treasure within their grasp.

Three of the blackguards, at least, had not believed in this treasure until now. Thus they were more mentally unbalanced by the sudden shock of it than Bill Dawson.

And when they found three schoolboys ready to give battle, they entered into the fight like savages instead of civilised men.

Only one shout had the juniors given—one yell for help. If the other St. Frank's fellows came, the men would be trapped—arrested! Their chance of a fortune would be gone!

"Knock 'em out!" snarled Bill harshly. "Don't 'ave no mercy, mates! Smash 'em—an' smash 'em quick!"

The chums of Study C had no chance.

Nipper, fighting desperately, received an uppercut which sent him crashing back against the wall, limp and stunned. He sagged down.

At the same moment Tommy Watson went under, and Sir Montie Tregellis-West was brutally grasped, and held back. One of the men tied a scarf round his mouth, and another roped his hands behind his back.

"That's done 'em!" said Ginger viciously.

"Smart work, mates!" panted Bill. "But we'll need to be quick, too! There mustn't

be no mistake about it! The sooner we're away from 'ere, the better!"

"What about the gold?" asked Sid White breathlessly.

"In these 'ere chests, I reckon," replied Dawson, going across, and pulling a lid off. "Why, what the blazes— There ain't no treasure 'ere! Nothin' but old lumber!"

"Lumber!" echoed the others.

"Scrap iron!" snarled Dawson.

They stared into the chest, aghast. For an awful moment they suspected that they had made a blunder. Then Ginger took the lid

The scoundrelly Bill Dawson—gloatingly triumphant after his successful capture of the Roman treasure—drew aside in order to let the following car pass, never dreaming that it contained Browne and Handforth & Co. "Stop, you rotters!" bellowed Handy, leaning out of the window and waving his arm wildly.



off the next chest, and a moment later he was acting like a madman.

"Feel the weight of it!" he gabbled. "It don't look much—but it's gold! Gold! 'Struth! I never saw such a 'eap in all my life!"

The others were equally excited—with the exception of Bill. He, as leader, managed to control himself.

"Steady!" he growled. "Stand back, you fools! You don't need to behave like wild beasts!"

"It's the treasure!" shouted Ginger triumphantly.

"Can't you keep quiet, you blinkin' son of a gun?" snarled Dawson.

"Don't you bully me!" snapped Ginger shrilly.

"You're all crazy!" granted Dawson. "An' you'll spoil the 'ole game between you! Who's got the sacks? We can't carry these 'ere chests out as they are, can we? We've got to put the stuff into sacks, an' then we've got to sneak it across into the wood!"

"There won't be no need," put in Sid quickly.

"Why not?"



"It'll be dark, an' we can get across the fields without anybody seein' us," replied Sid. "It's quicker across the fields!"

"Never mind about that!" said Dawson. "Our best place is the wood—we shall be safer there. We can take our time. You blokes don't seem to understand that this gold will be 'eavy. So 'eavy that it'll be as much as we can do to carry it. I don't know 'ow we're goin' to get out of the district without people suspectin' us, but we can think o' that later. The main thing is to get the stuff out of 'ere!"

His coolness gradually influenced the others.

"What about the kids?" asked Ginger. "One of them's comin' round, by the look of 'im. Shall I give 'im another bash on the 'ead?"

"No!" snapped Bill. "We don't want to 'urt the young beggars. We're committin' robbery as it is—an' we don't want to 'ave the cops arter us for murder. You fellows are mad enough for anythin'!"

He looked round, and his gaze rested on the central tomb.

"What about this 'ere?" he asked. "Lend a 'and, mates! Maybe we can lift this lid off. It'll make a good place to shove the kids. They won't get out in a 'urry if we can only get them in!"

They exerted their united strength, and the flat slab on the top of the tomb was gradually shifted. It was too heavy to lift, even for those four men, but they succeeded in slewing it round.

Dawson took his candle, and directed the light inside.

"Empty!" he muttered.

"Ain't there a skeleton?" asked Ginger.

"No—nothin'," said Bill Dawson. "Maybe there was a skeleton at one time, but I des-say it's crumbled away. A Roman, wasn't 'e? Lummy, it's a queer go! But there, them Romans didn't preserve their dead like the Egyptians!"

"'Ow d'you know?" asked 'Erb.

"Because I've bin to school!" retorted Bill scornfully. "But we ain't goin' to waste time by this 'ere talk, are we? Get the kids, an' drop 'em in! Lively, now!"

"You don't need to give orders!" snapped Ginger.

"Lively, I said!" repeated Bill in a dangerous voice.

And the unfortunate Nipper & Co. were bundled, one after the other, into that aged Roman tomb. Then the heavy slab was painfully and laboriously slewed round again, until it was in place.

"That's bottled 'em up!" said Bill.

"I s'pose they won't die in there?" asked Sid nervously.

"'Tain't likely!" put in Ginger. "There's a crack at the end where the air can get in. Look! It's all split up 'ere."

"I noticed that, too," said Bill. "We needn't worry. The other kids will find 'em before the night's out. A sight too soon fer us, anyhow. The longer they're in 'ere, the better. We want a chance to git away, afore the chase begins. It wouldn't be no good leavin' the kids outside, where they could yell for 'elp! Now, where's them sacks?"

Four small sacks had been brought—the men having carried them about for some days, on the off-chance. They were very useful now, and it was fortunate that they were strongly made.

Long before they were a quarter filled, they were too heavy to be lifted by one man. When the bottom of each sack was nicely covered, it was as much as the thieves could do to stagger under the weight. Gold in bulk is unbelievably heavy.

"We can't take the lot, wuss luck," said

Bill, with regret. "Still, I reckon this will keep us goin' for a bit—an' we might as well leave some for the old boy. Very likely 'e won't notice what we've took. It's on'y coins."

"I s'pose they are gold?" asked Ginger, with sudden misgiving. "They ain't made o' lead, by any chance?"

"You idiot! Whoever 'card o' coins bein' made o' lead?" asked Bill Dawson. "They're gold all right—an' we'll be goin' now. I'll lead the way, an' don't forget to keep well behind. If I signal for you to stop—keep still!"

With difficulty they slung the heavily-laden sacks over their shoulders, and staggered out of the chamber. The candles were extinguished, and after they had felt their way outside they found that darkness had descended.

As Bill was leading the way through the stone archway into the ditch something seemed to brush against his leg.

"What was that?" he asked, startled.

He stared down, and thought he caught a glimpse of a moving object. But he wasn't sure. It was gone in a flash.

"I could 'ave sworn somethin' touched me!" he muttered, with a sudden fear. "Quicer! The sooner I'm out o' this 'ere place, the better!"

By the time he got to the broken part of the ditch, where the bull had fallen through, he was feeling much better. He could not afford to let his thoughts wander. He could hear youthful voices in the distance.

One by one, the men scrambled out of that gully, helping one another with the bags of gold. And then, creeping round the paddock, they made off towards the woods.

Success had attended their efforts.

They had failed on other occasions, but this time, at least, they were the victors. And the situation was all in their favour.

Nipper & Co. had not told a soul of their intended movements, and it was highly improbable that anybody would think of searching down in that ditch. It was about the last place that would occur to the others.

And the chums of Study C were bottled up in that tomb!

What chance would they have of escape? How could they let the others know of their plight?

And it was a deadly plight, indeed!

Their captors had made no close examination of the stonework. What they thought to be a crevice was only a surface crack. Inside the tomb the stone was smooth—sealed. No air could get within that deadly place. The position of Nipper & Co. was too horrible for words. For they were in a living tomb!

Nipper was already recovering. In fact, he had half got over the effects of that

cowardly punch before the men had left the place. Montie was unhurt, and after Watson had pulled round the three of them were free to move about in their prison.

Only one match did Nipper strike—and that was sufficient.

"The hounds!" he said thickly. "The murderous devils! They've shut us up in here, and nobody knows we came down to this place! My sons, we're in a nasty fix!"

"But can't we get out?" asked Watson, horrified.

"I'm afraid not," said Nipper quietly.

"Strike another match! Let's see——"

"Matches burn up the oxygen—and we want all there is," interrupted Nipper grimly.

"Is it so bad as that, dear old boy?" asked Montie.

"Yes," replied Nipper. "Even if we get on our feet, the slab is too high for us to put our backs against—and we can't get any purchase by our hands. Still, we can try."

But all their efforts were unavailing. It was sheerly impossible to shift that great slab of stone. It weighed several hundred-weights, and fitted so closely that practically no air was admitted. A trifle, perhaps, but certainly not sufficient to keep these three boys alive.

And none of their companions knew they had come to this secret place!



CHAPTER 12.

Getting Exciting!

Just about that same time further events were developing.

Three figures were on the prowl beyond the further angle of the farmyard. To be exact, Handforth & Co. were treasure-hunting. They were a long way from the real treasure chamber, but as they did not know this they suffered no pangs.

"There's a place I want to look at near the road," said Handforth softly. "There's a high bank there, and I've noticed lots of stones in it. If we probe about, we may discover something."

"Just as you like, old man, but it's pretty hopeless," said Church. "We need daylight for a job like this."

"Yes, and have all the others looking on?" asked Handforth darkly.

"But we shan't be able to see a thing," said McClure. "What's the good of working in this gloom? Besides, there's your leg, Handy. You oughtn't to be out at all."

"Never mind my leg," interrupted Handforth. "It's better now, and I'm not going to be hindered by a silly bruise. I'll trouble you to forget my leg, if you don't mind, Arnold McClure."

"Just as you like," said Mac. "Let's get to the scene of the operations, and start business. There's one consolation—you'll soon get fed up with it."

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They walked on, and Handforth looked thoughtful.

"I'm wondering what's become of Nipper," he said suspiciously. "They haven't been seen for an hour or two, and I've got an idea they're on the track of something. By George! Supposing they've stolen a march on us?"

"Well, it's all in the game," said Church. "If they locate this stuff, good luck to 'em. I shan't be jealous, Handy. You needn't think that we're envious of— Hallo! What on earth—"

He broke off, as something came leaping round him.

"What's this—a dog?" asked Handforth, staring down. "Why, it's old Marmy!" he added. "Good old Marmaduke!"

"What's your minor doing, to let his monkey roam about loose?" asked Church. "He seems pretty excited over something, doesn't he?"

Marmaduke was, indeed, in a strangely agitated condition. He leapt up in the air time after time, and then ran off, looking back, as though expecting the juniors to follow him.

Bill Dawson had not imagined that "something" which had brushed against his leg. Marmaduke had been there. In fact, curiosity had led the little monkey to peep in at the scene within, and he had taken everything into that mysterious little brain of his. Exactly what he knew, or what he thought, would always remain a mystery. But his present activities proved, at least, that his instincts were keen enough, whatever his reasoning powers.

He was trying to lead Handforth & Co. to Nipper & Co.'s rescue!

For after the men had gone, Marmaduke had entered that chamber, and had heard movements from within the tomb. In some way he knew that there was danger for three of his friends. And, having failed to find his young master, he had come upon Handforth & Co.

"What the dickens is the matter with him?" asked Church in astonishment.

"I can't make it out," said Handforth, puzzled.

They watched the little monkey's antics, but made nothing of them.

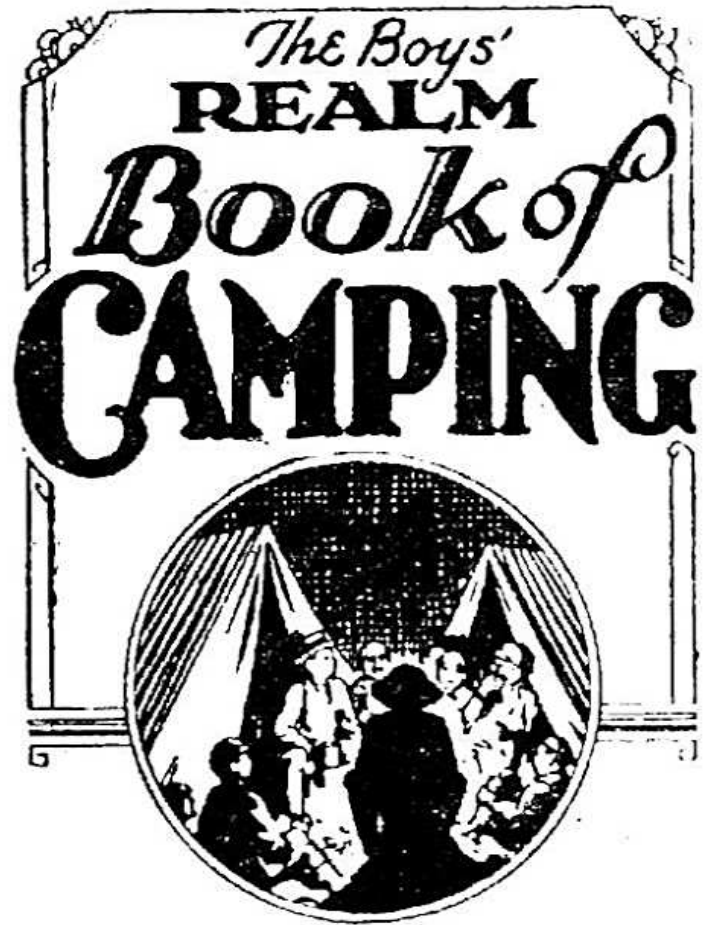
"Beats me!" said Handforth. "Chuck it, Marmy, you silly young ass! Get back to bed! Go on! Shoo-shoo! Now, Marmy, be sensible. It's time you were in bed and asleep. All good monkeys ought to be asleep before dark."

Handforth seemed to think he was talking to a child. But, curiously enough, Marmaduke sheered off. But it was not because of anything that Handforth had said. Marmaduke had heard something—something that human ears could not have detected. Perhaps the voice of his master had come to him across the meadows?

At all events he scampered away like a rabbit.

And Handforth & Co., still puzzled, went their way.

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They heard a motor-car coming down Bellton Lane. They heard it stop, just at the bend, but thought nothing of this at the time. They little realised that an unexpected drama was being enacted on the quiet road.

The car was a small four-seater, and it contained one occupant. The headlights were on, and, as the car drew near the bend, a figure stood out into the middle of the road and held up a hand.

The driver, a young local resident, at once applied his brakes. He certainly did not suspect any treachery.

But that man in the road was Bill Dawson. And Bill, on the spur of the moment, had decided to make a bold move. He and his men had almost reached the wood. And then that car had been heard. In a moment, Bill made his decision.

"It's the only way, mates!" he said grimly. "We'll hold this car up, pinch it, an'—"

"But there might be three or four men in it!" protested Ginger.

"We'll see about that," said Bill swiftly.

"You blokes hide behind the 'edge. See? I'll stop the car, an' if it's full up I'll ask for a hob for a night's lodgin'. But if there's only one man in it, you come out an' 'elp. An' sharp's the word!"

There was no time for any argument on the subject.

The car stopped, and Bill and his men saw at a glance that luck was with them.

"Anything wrong?" asked the driver wonderingly.

"Come on, mates—quick!" panted Bill Dawson.

Three figures sprang out from the hedge, and before the startled driver could realise what was happening, the ruffians were upon him. They hauled him out of the driving seat by force, and flung him into the rear.

"Help!" he managed to shout. "You—you infernal—"

After that he was smothered and held down. It would never do to leave him on the roadside. The only way was to take him with them. They wanted no hue and cry.

But that one shout had been enough.

Handforth & Co. had heard it. And the chums of Study D wasted no time. They ran for the road, excited and eager.

"There's something wrong, sure as a gun!" panted Handforth. "Somebody called for help, and—"

"Look!" gasped McClure. "The car's going!"

They were just in time to see something which aroused their deepest suspicions. The car wasn't going, as McClure had thought,

although it was almost on the point of doing so.

The juniors topped a little rise, and they could see right down into the lane. Two men were staggering across the road in the full glare of the headlamps. They were carrying heavily weighted sacks.

"Dawson and one of those other men!" yelled Handforth.

"My stars!" gasped Church. "And they've got some loot, too!"

"The treasure!" said Mac, with a start. "Look! Look how they're swaying under those loads! They've pinched the treasure!"

Handforth & Co. hurled themselves forward. With a series of shouts, the ruffians dumped the stuff on board, leapt on to the running-boards, and the car lurched forward. The very nature of its departure was eloquent. The gears shrieked under the hand of an unfamiliar driver, and the car wobbled across the road.

"Help—help!" came a gasping, muffled appeal.

Then it was drowned by the sudden burst from the exhaust, and the car shot away into the dimness of the summer's evening. Handforth & Co. arrived in the road too late. And it was utterly useless to give chase on foot.

Dawson & Co. had scored again!

On the spur of the moment they had decided to steal this car, and the daring robbery had succeeded. They now had a means of getting swiftly out of the neighbourhood. Once completely clear, it would be almost impossible to recover that valuable booty.

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"I knew it!" shouted Handforth furiously. "Those hounds have been at their dirty games, and they've stolen Sir Lucian's treasure! What the dickens are we going to do now? I know!" he added, with a sudden yell. "We'll rush to the school and get out my Austin Seven!"

"That won't be any good!" said Church. "Think of the wasted time! Those men will be gone——"

"Look!" interrupted Mac. "There's a car coming!"

"So there is!" said Handforth exultantly. "We can tell the driver what's happened, and make him turn round and give chase! By George, we'll have 'em yet!"

They stood there in the road, wildly waving their hands. And the car came slowly to a standstill, revealing itself as a Morris-Oxford saloon.

"And why this amateur attempt at a highway hold-up, brothers?" came a familiar voice. "I trust, Miss Dora, that you will not think too hardly of my young friends. At times they behave in this Red Indian-like fashion. A sad, but——"

"Browne!" shouted Handforth, as he flung open the driving-door. "It's old Browne, of the Fifth!"



CHAPTER 13.

Marmaduke Insists!

WILLIAM NAPOLEON BROWNE was not exactly pleased by this violent disturbance. He was a placid youth, and his ways were always calm. Moreover he was, at the moment, escorting a lady.

To be quite truthful, Browne had taken Dora Manners to the pictures—quite unknown to the school authorities—and he was now on his way home. It would be a simple matter to smuggle her in. Dora was under-nurse in the school sanatorium, and, incidentally, she was the cousin of Irene Manners, of the Moor View School. Browne had fallen under her spell from the first moment she had come to St. Frank's.

It pained him to have his evening spoilt by this rude and uncouth interruption.

"Browne, old man, turn the car round and drive like the wind!" gasped Handforth. "Four beastly, burgling ruffians——"

"Kindly remember, brother, that a lady is present," said Browne warningly.

"Sorry!" said Handforth. "Evening, Miss Dora! Look here, Browne, did you pass a car just now?"

"In the village, yes," said the captain of the Fifth. "I may add that it was driven by a foul miscreant who should be warned off the roads——"

"That's the one!" interrupted Handforth. "It contained those four crooks—and they've just bolted with Sir Lucian's treasure. They stole the car, in the lane here, before we could stop them!"

And Handforth, assisted by Church and

McClure, gave the details as far as they knew them. Browne, for all his long-winded talk, was a fellow of swift action.

"Enough!" he said. "If you have no objection, Miss Dora, we will now emulate the heroes of film drama, and chase the villains at breakneck speed along the highway."

"Yes, yes!" cried Dora. "We mustn't let them escape."

"If you would prefer to remain behind——"

"Of course not!" interrupted the girl indignantly. "We've got to catch them!"

"We'll come, too!" shouted Handforth.

"I did not imagine for a moment, Brother Handforth, that you would be content to remain behind," said Browne. "But do not ride on the running-board. I have no wish to see you swept off while we are hurtling along at something like sixty miles an hour! There is ample room in the rear."

A minute later the Morris-Oxford was turned round, and was in hot pursuit.

Everything had been happening in a very brief space of time. It was less than fifteen minutes, in fact, since Dawson and his gang had stolen away from the Roman tomb. And it so happened that Willy Handforth and his chums of the Third were taking the footpath from St. Frank's to the farm. They had paid a visit to the school in order to raise funds, and were returning in high, good humour.

And then, shortly before they got to the farm, Marmaduke came bounding up. Marmaduke had, indeed, heard his young master's voice across the meadows. At that very moment drama was being enacted in the lane—but Willy & Co. were too far off to know about it.

"Now how the dickens did you get out?" asked Willy sternly. "I've a good mind to give you a tanning for this, Marmy! You've no right—— But what's the matter with you? What's the idea of this capering business?"

"He's going dotty!" said Chubby Heath, staring.

Willy stared, too. Marmaduke was acting in a most unusual way. Never before had Willy seen his little monkey indulge in these peculiar antics. He was rushing ahead, turning round, halting, and chattering in a wild state of excitement.

"Come here!" ordered Willy.

But Marmaduke disobeyed—and this, in itself, was something new.

"You young beggar!" said Willy sternly. "Come here when you're told!"

Marmaduke raced off, then paused again, pitifully excited.

"Well I'm jiggered!" said Willy. "I've never known him to disobey me like this before! I'll soon show him who's master, though."

He gave chase, sternly ordering the monkey to remain still. But even this had no effect. Marmaduke hurried on, chattering with fresh excitement and eagerness. And the more Willy ran, the faster the monkey scampered. At last Willy came to a halt.

"This is the rummiest thing I know!" he

said breathlessly. "He won't come when he's called, and he won't let me go near him. Something must have happened, that's certain. But what? I don't know what to do with him!"

"Better leave him alone for a bit," said Chubby Heath. "We're nearly at the farm, anyhow. Let's go indoors, and ask the other chaps if they know anything about him. Perhaps they'll be able to tell us."

"Yes, that's an idea," said Willy.

He was anxious. He had always prided himself upon the strict obedience of his pets. He trained them by kindness, and they never failed to respond. Marmaduke's present rebellion was all the more extraordinary because he had been particularly obedient that day.

The three Third Formers hurried across the farmyard towards the open back door of the house. A welcome light was streaming out, and voices could be heard from within.

Marmaduke was fairly mad with anxiety. He was standing some distance away, chattering noisily and making such obvious signs to his young master that Willy changed his plan. He took one step towards Marmaduke, and the monkey shot off towards the paddock.

"By jingo!" ejaculated Willy. "I've got it!"

"Got what?" asked Juicy.

"Old Marmy wants us to follow him!" said Willy keenly. "That's the reason for his rummy behaviour! He's trying to lead us somewhere, and we won't go! You wait! He'll soon prove it!"

"Oh, that's a bit too thick!" protested Chubby. "I've heard of dogs doing that sort of thing, but a monkey wouldn't have the sense."

Willy exploded.

"You ignorant fathead!" he shouted. "Marmaduke has got more sense than a whole pack of hounds! He's the brainiest monk that ever breathed! What an ass I was not to think of this before! Good old Marmy!"

Willy hurried off, and his chums went with him out of sheer curiosity. And Willy wondered what could be the meaning of it. Perhaps one of the fellows had met with an accident, and was lying injured, beyond the help of the others? And Marmaduke was leading the way—But, no, that didn't seem likely. The monkey was scampering down into the ditch, where the bull had met with disaster.

And when he found Willy following him, his delight was unbounded.

"What the dickens does he want to bring me down here for?" asked Willy, in astonishment.

"Better not go," said Chubby. "It's as black as ink."

"If you're scared——"

"You silly ass!" snorted Chubby Heath. "I'm not scared of the dark! But this ditch is choked with brambles, and we shall get scratched to bits!"

"Marmaduke knows best," said Willy firmly. "Just listen to him! He wouldn't

drag us down here unless he had a good object. And you needn't worry about the brambles. I've got an electric torch."

"Oh, that's different," admitted Chubby.

They found themselves in that strange gully, where Marmaduke was still edging away, and eloquently beckoning them on. If the power of speech had been given him, he could not have been more informative. The little monkey's actions were uncannily clear.

But Willy was still mystified. He could only conclude that some creature was trapped down here, and that Marmaduke wanted to draw his master's attention to it. Then, when it seemed that there could be no object in this penetration of the old ditch, Willy spotted the ancient archway. Marmaduke was in there, now crazy with animation.

"All right—all right!" called Willy. "I say, you chaps. Look at this! Here's a discovery! Marmaduke has shown us the way to the tomb!"

"Great Scott!" gasped Juicy Lemon. "But how did he know? Somebody must have been here before. Some of our chaps, I mean."

"I should think so," said Willy. "But we can't waste time on thinking things now. Let's see what he wants. If he goes on at this rate he'll make himself ill for a month."

They went into the old chamber, and at the very first glance Willy could see that something was amiss. His gaze rested upon a school cap, dusty and crumpled. He picked it up.

"R.H." were the initials within it.

"Nipper's cap!" he said suspiciously. "And look at these chests! And look at the coins littered all over the floor!"

"It's the treasure!" shouted Chubby excitedly.

"Yes, I can see that—but what's happened?" asked Willy. "Nipper's been here, but why isn't he here now? And why should Marmy be so agitated? I want to get to the bottom of this mystery, my sons!"

"There's no mystery about it," said Juicy breathlessly. "Nipper must have found the treasure, and Marmy wanted to tell you about it. I expect Nipper's indoors now, explaining to the others!"

"No fear!" said Willy shrewdly. "That can't be!"

"Why not?"

"Because when we came by the house there weren't any excited voices," replied Willy. "If the fellows had known about this treasure they would have been yelling at the top of their voices. No, something must have happened. I wish I knew——" He broke off, and stood listening. "Quiet, you chaps!"

"What's the matter?" breathed Chubby Heath.

"Didn't you hear a thud just then—a kind of thump?" asked Willy.

His hand was resting on the top slab of that tomb, and he was watching Marmaduke in a fascinated way. The monkey was scampering over that stonework, still excited.

"I've got it!" yelled Willy. "There's something in here!"



"What the dickens does he want to bring us down here for?" asked Willy, in astonishment, as his pet monkey led him and his two chums down into a deep gully. They little realised that they were on the threshold of a momentous discovery!

"In—in this tomb?" breathed Juicy.

"Yes!" snapped Willy. "Listen, for goodness' sake! Keep still!"

He banged three times on the side of the tomb, and then placed his ear to the stonework. To his startled amazement, three answering thuds came from within!

CHAPTER 14.

In the Nick of Time!



ELL?"

Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon asked the question in one voice.

"There's somebody in here—alive!" said Willy tensely.

"Alive!"

"Yes, alive!" insisted Willy.

"But—but it's the old tomb of that Roman Governor!" ejaculated Chubby, his voice hoarse with awe. "It—it can't be a ghost! You must have imagined it, Willy!"

"I'm not thinking about that old Roman Governor," said Willy. "There's somebody in here—alive!" He looked at his chums with a new expression on his face. "Those men!" he ejaculated. "Dawson and his lot!"

"In there?" yelled Lemon.

"No, of course not!" snapped Willy. "Nipper and his pals must have found this place, and those blackguards came along, and dumped them into the tomb—and then bolted with the treasure. It's as clear as daylight!"

"Yes, but——"

"Look at the coins scattered about," went

on Handforth minor. "Don't they tell their own story? Do you think Nipper would have pulled the place about like this? Quick! We've got to fetch help! Good old Marmy! This is his red-letter day!"

"But can't we do something?" asked Chubby excitedly. "Hi, Nipper!" he added in a yell, with his mouth close to the tomb. "Nipper!"

A faint, dim, far-away sound came to their ears. It was almost like a whisper—and yet they knew that it came from within those stone walls. Frantically they tried to lift the stone slab—but Willy realised, in less than a second, that they were powerless.

"Come on!" he panted. "We've got to get help! Oh, the murderous brutes! Even now we may be too late!"

They raced away, plunging along that ditch, careless of scratches and cuts. They scrambled out, then ran like mad to the farmhouse. And when they burst into the comfortable sitting-room—a wide, lounge hall sort of place—they found Sir Lucian Dexter entertaining Pitt and Fullwood and a number of the other juniors. It was a very peaceful scene—until Willy & Co. burst in.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Sir Lucian. "What in the name of wonder is all this?"

"Quick, sir!" shouted Willy. "You're wanted. We've found the tomb and the treasure!"

Sir Lucian leapt out of his chair as though a hornet had stung him.

"What!" he shouted excitedly.

"But that doesn't matter—it can wait!" went on Willy. "Nipper is in the tomb—and he's probably dying! Come on—all of

you! It's a case of all hands to the pumps!"

"Look here, you crazy young ass!" said Reggie Pitt, seizing Willy by the arm. "What nonsense is this? I'll admit that Nipper hasn't been seen for some hours, but that's no reason why you should come here with these idiotic yarns!"

Willy shook Pitt's hand away.

"Leave the questions until afterwards!" he said. "It may be a matter of life or death! Come at once!"

He knew that if he remained he would be held and questioned. And that would mean more and more delay. So he turned swiftly, dodged, and ran outside. Sir Lucian and the boys followed him in an excited stream, just as he had desired.

They went across the farmyard at the double.

Sir Lucian was tremendously excited, and no wonder. The news that the tomb had been found had hit him like a blow. He had never expected anything of the sort. Indeed, he had not dared to hope that that tomb would ever be found.

And now, according to Willy, it was close at hand—and Willy seemed to imagine that it was of secondary importance. That was the extraordinary part of it.

They went down into that ditch, through the brambles and the archway, and then into the chamber. Sir Lucian Dexter gave one look at it, and then he seemed to go out of his mind.

"The tomb—the tomb!" he shouted exultantly. "Good gracious! What amazing preservation! Wonderful—wonderful! But what is this? Who has been tampering—Dear, dear! This is appalling—appalling! These chests have been rifled!"

"Never mind, Sir Lucian!" snapped Willy, looking at the juniors. "Get hold of this slab, quick! Help me to heave it aside! I believe Nipper's in here, and he'll peg out unless we give him air! Those men put him in!"

"Oh, it's too awful!" said Pitt, in horror.

But they wasted no time in arguing. Every fellow present heaved at the slab, and used his utmost strength. And Sir Lucian Dexter, suddenly appreciating what was toward, let out a wild cry of anguish.

"Boys—boys!" he screamed. "Do not dare to interfere with that tomb! This is an act of desecration! Nothing must be touched—nothing must be interfered with—"

"You don't understand, sir!" panted Willy. "Now then—all together!"

With a slithering sound, the great slab went slewing round, and a large gap was disclosed. Willy's electric-torch played into the depths. He caught his breath in sharply.

Three figures sprawled within. The figures of Nipper, Tregellis-West, and Watson! They were singularly inert, and the colour of their faces was alarming. Their tongues seemed to loll out, and their eyes were bulging. Willy, at least, knew that the unfortunate juniors had been on the point of suffocation.

"Good old Marmy!" choked Willy. "I believe we're in time!"

"Bless my soul!" said Sir Lucian, in horror. "I am staggered! I cannot understand—"

"Let's get them out into the open-air, sir," said Pitt sharply. "There's been some murderous work here! I think they'll be all right if we only get them into the open-air. Look! They're showing signs of life!"

Tender, gentle hands lifted the three unfortunate juniors out, and they were soon carried up into the cool air of the summer evening. And such was the reviving power of the fresh air that Nipper and his chums were soon breathing evenly. They recovered with almost startling rapidity—as people will who have been nearly suffocated. They needed air, and they received plenty.

And then they managed to tell their story.

"We couldn't do anything, of course, sir," said Nipper hoarsely. "I was knocked out in the first minute, and I don't remember much else until I was in that tomb. But we know that those scamps have got away with the best part of the treasure. Goodness knows which direction they've taken, but they can't have got very far. The weight of the stuff alone must have been tremendous."

"We must tell the police," said Sir Lucian, who was hovering between joy, indignation and fury. "To think that this discovery should be made, only to be marred by a scoundrelly episode like this! Those rascals have spoilt everything! Such a treasure has never been found in the whole history of England! And these brutes have taken the coins away! But why—why? They will never be able to sell them without detection!"

"They'll have the coins melted down, sir," said Nipper.

Sir Lucian uttered a cry.

"Melted down!" he repeated, horrified beyond expression. "Melted down! Roman coins! Impossible! Even such rascals as those would never dare to—"

"It's the only way the gold will be of use to them, sir," said Nipper. "You'd better tell the police at once. Have every town watched, and have the countryside scoured!"

"I will—I will!" vowed Sir Lucian. "These men deserve to be hanged! Good gracious! If I had my way, I would send them to the scaffold without a moment's compunction. They are little better than vandals. They are ghouls! They are—"

But Sir Lucian could not think of any descriptions bad enough. And just then Archie Glenthorne came hurrying in. It was so unusual to see Archie hurrying that he claimed everybody's attention.

"Oh, here you are, old lads of the farm!" he said breathlessly. "There seems to be some excitement of sorts on the go. Sundry chasings, and so forth. I understand that a few cartloads of gold have been pinched, and that this and that have been happening."

"How do you know this, Archie?" asked Pitt keenly.

NEXT WEDNESDAY!

The Opening Story of a
Great New Series

"ST. FRANK'S in the CONGO!"

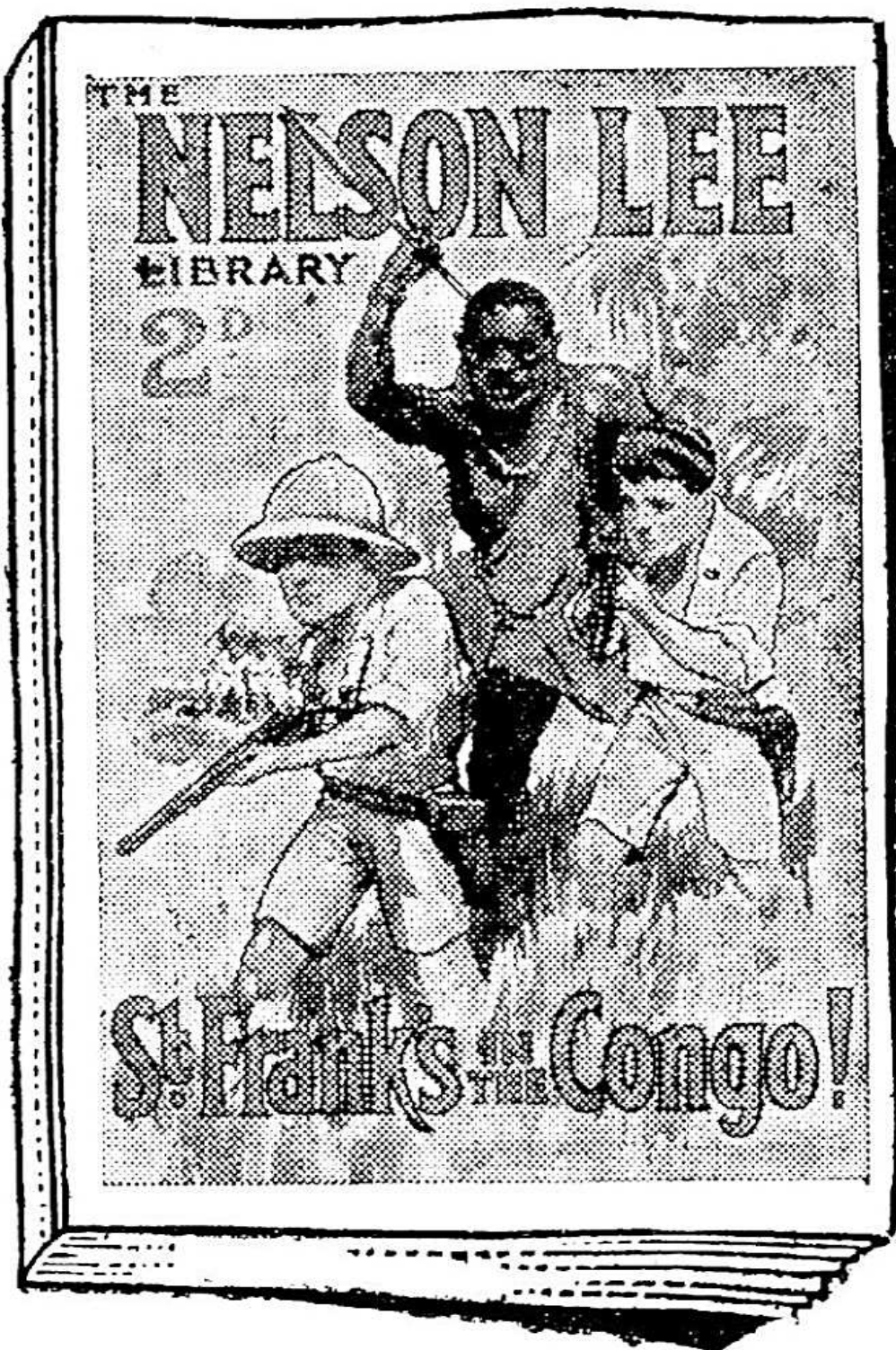
Surrounded by cannibals and
savage tribes—

Standing on the verge of one
of the greatest mysteries of the
unfathomable Congo—

Caught in the ruthless whirl of
swift, relentless event and start-
ling adventure—

The Boys of St. Frank's are
hurled into the wildest, most
exciting happenings they have
ever had on holiday?

Don't miss the first story in
this stunning new series. The
author has been working for
months on these magnificent
yarns, and you can make SURE
of reading this opening story only
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reserve your copy for you.



ORDER TO-DAY!

"I was wandering through the village, idly speculating on the problems of life, when a car swooped down out of the middle distance," explained Archie. "I found sundry good lads aboard, including Handforth and Browne and one or two others. It seems they saw a number of scaly merchants shoving a few bags of gold on a stolen car—"

"They're the chaps!" interrupted Nipper eagerly.

"And so they're giving chase, and dashing about over the countryside like anything!" went on Archie, nodding. "It seems that Browne likes that sort of thing. He's off on the hunt, as it were. In fact, he asked me to carry the tidings that he'll soon be back with the good old booty. There's really absolutely nothing to worry about!"

"Well, it's jolly good to know that those rotters are being chased," said Nipper. "And if Browne is half the fellow I think he is, he'll win. There's nothing to do now, Sir Lucian. We shall have to wait!"

"I cannot wait!" declared Sir Lucian. "It is utterly impossible for me to contain myself until further news arrives. I must go to this tomb, and make further examinations. It is a dreadful pity—an appalling pity—that I

was not allowed to see this sacred place before it was so rudely despoiled!"

However, Sir Lucian seemed to recover his good spirits as soon as he made a move towards the great discovery. And when he got into that tomb there were so many wonders for him to glory in that he even forgot that the bulk of the treasure had been stolen.

And in the farmhouse Nipper and Tregellis-West and Watson took things easily. They had passed through a dreadful experience, and they were by no means fit for strenuous activity. They wanted to rest. And they felt that they could leave everything else to the others.

CHAPTER 15.

Nipper & Co. Win.



"FASTER!" said Handforth fiercely. "Faster!"

"The needle, Brother Handforth, is already pointing to fifty-five,"

said Browne. "If you are under the impression that this car is a Brooklands racer,

I must beg leave to correct the error. The good old M.O. is a sturdy friend, and a sound one—but built more for comfort than for speed. She can do her fifty-five to sixty when pressed, but more we cannot ask of her—for assuredly, we shall not receive."

They were tearing along the main road between Bannington and Helmford, and so far they had seen no sign of the fugitives. And yet they felt that they were close on their track.

In Bannington they had been informed by two constables that an open four-seater had rushed erratically through the town a few minutes earlier. Farther along, a cyclist had verified this statement. Without question the rascals were still on the main road, and they probably had no idea that they were being chased.

The pursuers knew nothing of the actual facts. They did not know, for example, that Nipper and his chums had been murderously placed within that stone tomb. They only suspected that these men had discovered the treasure and had decamped with it.

But this was quite sufficient to spur them on.

"I thought I saw a red light!" muttered Handforth, after another mile had been covered. "By George, they're speeding! We ought to have overtaken them long ago!"

"I think we shall beat them," said Dora quietly. "We're bound to overtake them sooner or later—at this speed."

"If the pace is too great, Miss Dora, kindly say the word," Browne murmured. "I will at once close the throttle."

"You'd better not!" said Handforth tartly. "My hat! Did you hear him, you chaps?"

"He was only joking," said Dora hastily. "Look! There's that red light again! I wonder if that's the car?"

Handforth & Co., in the rear seats, were leaning forward, peering eagerly over Browne's shoulder. And the car in front presently resolved itself into an open four-seater—and one that contained several figures.

"That's the car!" shouted Handforth excitedly. "Light grey! Look at the hood, too! It's sagging down on one side!"

"Yes, I remember that," said Church, with a quick nod. "By Jupiter, we're overtaking the beggars, too! But how the dickens shall we make them stop?"

"You must leave that to me, Brother Church," said Browne. "I predict a minute of intense excitement, and I urge you to remain calm. Leave this matter in the hands of One Who Knows."

There was a long, straight stretch ahead, and the road was clear, save of these two cars. The Morris-Oxford was doing a valiant fifty-eight, a highly creditable performance, considering her load.

And the car in front was soon overhauled. She was of much less power than the Morris, and Bill Dawson, at the wheel, was no expert. When he heard the loud hooting of Browne's horn in the rear, he had no suspicion. He merely thought that a more powerful car wished to pass in the ordinary way.

Truth to tell, the four scamps were beginning to feel safe. They had got through Bannington, and now they were well on the road to London. Before long they would be able to get rid of their passenger—the unfortunate owner of the car.

Their plan was to rope him up, gag him, and leave him behind one of the roadside hedges. Later, they would abandon the car. After that they could easily disappear with their spoils.

And then came the shock.

Bill drew aside in order to let that following car go past, and as it swept by he became aware of a loud chorus of shouts.

"Stop, you rotters!"

"Pull over to the side and stop!"

There were other commands as well, but the men did not heed them. They knew, in a flash, that they had been chased. Indeed, they could see the faces of the St. Frank's fellows. Those infernal schoolboys were still at it!

Bill Dawson gritted his teeth, and trod on the accelerator with all his force. The two cars were racing side by side. Browne knew the danger, and he was on the alert. He did not forget that Dora was in the car, and he would never have forgiven himself if he had involved her in a smash.

Suddenly the fugitive car swerved, and Browne, with a steady hand, steered towards the off-side, and shot ahead. Bill Dawson had attempted to drive him into the ditch, but Browne's extra spurt of speed had averted the catastrophe.

"We've got him now!" shouted Handforth. "Pull across the road, and block the way!"

"A brainy suggestion, but I doubt if Brother Dawson would stop," replied Browne. "I must confess I have no great desire to imperil your tender young lives in this rash and foolhardy manner. And let me again remind you that Sister Dora is with us."

"Look out—curve!" sang out Church.

But Browne had already seen it—a sharp curve ahead where the road narrowed. Browne roared round with perfect skill and safety, and immediately afterwards came the disaster.

Perhaps Bill Dawson had not seen that curve until it was too late, for his attention may have been distracted by the other car. At all events, he swerved to the near-side, hit the bank, and the steering wheel was knocked out of his hands. The next second the car whirled giddily across the road on two wheels, hit the opposite border, and leapt at the hedge like a wild thing. It overturned with a crashing and smashing of twigs and branches.

It was all over in a moment.

Mercifully, the car did not catch fire, and the headlamps still continued to blaze out.

"Oh!" shouted Church, as he looked round. "They're over!"

"They've gone through the hedge!" yelled Handforth.

Browne was already applying the brakes, and a moment later the Morris-Oxford drew to a standstill. The boys poured out.

"No, sister, not you!" said Browne firmly, as Dora made as if to alight.

"But I shall," she insisted. "Perhaps these men are injured, and no matter how wicked they are, they must be given first aid."

Handforth & Co. were already dodging back along the road. They arrived at the scene of the accident, and were just in time to see two men running over a ploughed field. They were Bill Dawson and Sid White. Both of them had escaped without a scratch, and they were now running for their liberty. Needless to say, they had had no time to take any of the gold with them. Bill was cursing himself because he had not filled his pockets earlier.

On the ground lay a figure—close against the hedge. He was the owner of the car, and he was just picking himself up. In all the circumstances this gentleman was having a pretty rough time of it.

"Don't bother about me!" he said, as the juniors burst through the hedge. "I'm all right—only a scratch or two. Heave the car over. I think two of those beggars are trapped underneath!"

Browne and Dora had now arrived, and they all helped to raise the overturned car. Ginger Welch and the other man were dragged out. They were half stunned, and badly knocked about in other ways. But no bones seemed to have been broken.

"Go easy with us, guv'nor!" whined Ginger. "It was all Bill Dawson's doin'—we didn't want to 'ave no 'and in the affair!"

"That won't do," said the car owner. "You took my car, and quite apart from any other charges, you'll get a heavy term of imprisonment for it. You both deserve to be horse-whipped into the bargain."

Dora found that it was unnecessary for her to attend to any patients, so she accordingly went back to Browne's car. Ginger and his companion were allowed to moan in the hedge, nursing their bruises.

The sacks of ancient coins were then recovered, and transferred to Browne's car. While this operation was going forward, Ginger and Herb decided to make a dash for it. They weren't so helpless as they had made out. They ran across the ploughed field, and their departure was not noticed until they had obtained a good start.

"By George!" roared Handforth. "Those rotters are escaping! Come on! After them, you chaps!"

"Oh, don't trouble!" said the car owner. "Let the beggars go! I'm insured, anyhow, and there'll only be a lot of fuss and bother. We've got all the stuff they took, haven't we?"

"I think so," said Handforth. "All the same, it's a bit of a nerve for them to get away!"

"I really fail to see how we can hold them, Brother Handforth," said Browne. "After all, we are not policemen. We cannot produce handcuffs. Neither, for that matter, are we legally authorised to arrest them. It is better for them to go. I rather think they will give up the whole project as a bad job."

* * *

Sir Lucian Dexter was wild with delight when Browne's car turned up, forty minutes later, with the missing treasure. The fact that the men had escaped was a matter of slight importance to him.

Even Nipper did not mind.

"I don't think they meant to kill us, you know," he said. "They were so excited that they hardly knew what they were doing. It's been a pretty strenuous evening, but I think we can claim, on the whole, that we are the winners."

"Rather!"

"St. Frank's for ever!"

"And now that all this treasure-hunting business is over, I've got an idea that farming will lose some of its charm," went on Nipper with a chuckle. "In fact, it might be a good idea for us to get back to St. Frank's, and to resume the old life."

"Just what I was going to suggest," said Handforth promptly.

The Schoolboy Farmers had not been on the job for long, but they had discovered that amateur farming was too much like hard work.

"Well, we're all agreed, then," said Nipper contentedly. "Sir Lucian is happy, and we're happy, and—"

"And don't forget that Marmaduke claims the honours of the day," said Willy firmly.

And nobody denied it.

THE END.

(Look out for next week's opening story of a grand new holiday series entitled "St. Frank's in the Congo!" There's sure to be a great demand for this issue, so order your copy of the "N.L.L." now!)

COMING SHORTLY!

NEW SERIAL!

"BUCKING UP OLD ALGY!"

By **ARCHIE GLENTHORNE.**

This yarn has been written by the Genial Ass of the St. Frank's Remove. He has been busy on it for some time, and the result is so good that the Editor has decided to publish it. The story is told in Archie's own inimitable style, and is a novelty which will appeal to all readers.

DETAILS NEXT WEEK!

DON'T MISS IT!

Our Magazine Corner.**MEN OF THE LAND OF ICE!***Interesting facts about the little-known Esquimaux.*

THE land where the Esquimaux live is a land where no trees will grow. Wood, therefore, is a precious possession—almost as valuable as gold is to us.

As no trees can grow there, wooden houses are out of the question, and in a land where ice has been known to choke up the iron flue of a stove in which a fire has not for one moment been allowed to go out, neither clay can be made into bricks, nor stones cemented with water.

There is only one substance of which the houses can be made, and that is frozen water, either in the form of snow or ice.

But an Esquimau's house is only the work of an hour or so, and a couple of men—one to cut the slabs and the other to lay them—are sufficient labourers.

They have no wood for fires, and all their artificial heat is gained from lamps.

In the middle of the hut is erected a slight scaffold, which supports a rudely made net, and under the net is placed the lamp.

It is a very simple contrivance. It is merely an oval-shaped dish of stone, round the edge of which is arranged a long wick, made of moss. Oil is poured into it, and a quantity of blubber heaped in the centre of the lamp, so as to keep up the supply.

Over the lamp is hung the cooking-pot, but the value of the lamp is not so much its usefulness for cooking purposes, for the Esquimaux likes meat raw quite as well as cooked, but for its supply of warmth, for the water, for drinking purposes, which is obtained by melting snow over it, and for its use in drying clothes.

Each dwelling-place is illuminated by a broad piece of transparent, fresh-water ice, of about two feet in diameter, which forms part of the roof, and is placed over the door.

When snow is scarce, the igloo, as the Esquimau calls his house, is made of ice.

These houses, despite the material of which they are made, are so warm that the inhabitants, even in the middle of winter, throw off the greater part of their clothes when within them, and the bed of snow on which they recline, when covered with the proper amount of skins, can be even warmer than a European feathered bed.

In the summer-time the Esquimau prefers to live in a "tupic," or house made of skins.

The scarcity of wood in the land of the Esquimaux can best be realised when it is

stated that by far the greater part is obtained from the casual driftwood that floats ashore from wrecks.

Their harpoons are made of wood and bone. The runners of their best sledges are made from the jawbone of the whale, sawn into narrow planks and cut into the proper shape. Others are made of wood shod with bone, and in these cases the wooden part is usually in several pieces, which are lashed together with hide thongs. In the winter the hide of the walrus is often used for runners.

When neither wood, bone, nor walrus-skin can be procured, the Esquimau is still at no loss for runners. He cuts long strips of sealskin, and sews the edges of each strip together so as to make two long tubes. The tubes are next filled with moss and earth, and water is poured into them.

In a minute or two they are frozen as hard as stone, and are then ready to form the runners of a sledge. Whatever the runner is made of, it always receives a coating of ice, which is renewed as soon as it is worn off by friction. This coating considerably increases the speed of the sledge.

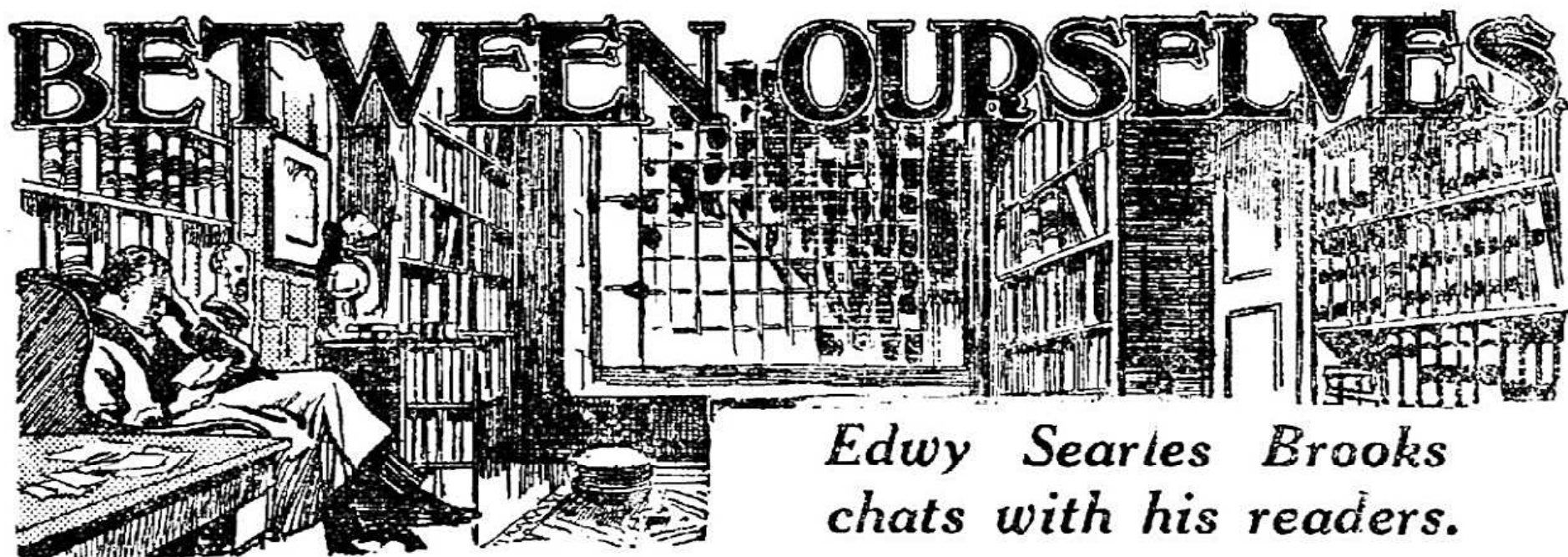
The cross-bars of the sledge are generally of bone. The dogs which draw the sledge vary in number from seven to ten or more. The trace of the leading dog is considerably longer than any of the others. No reins are used, but the animals are guided by a whip, the lash of which is from eighteen to thirty feet in length, and the handle only one foot long, very much like the stock-whip of Australia. The lash of the whip is flung on one side or other of the leader, who perfectly understands the signal.

The Esquimaux are not a strong race, and their necks are strangely thin and feeble, however well-proportioned their chests may be.

In winter-time they wear four pairs of boots at the same time. First, a pair of boots with fur inwards, then slippers of soft sealskin, so prepared as to be waterproof, then another pair of boots, and, lastly, strong sealskin shoes.

In summer-time one pair of boots is sufficient protection. The soles are made of thicker material than the rest of the garment, and it is the duty of the women to keep them flexible by chewing or "milling" them.

But the Esquimaux are gradually dying out, and in a few more years will altogether cease to exist.



*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.*

Every now and again I get a letter from some enthusiastic reader, asking me to acknowledge his epistle, or reply to it, the next week. In other words, somebody writes to me on a Friday, and expects to see a reply to the letter in the Old Paper on the following Wednesday. It sounds jolly easy, but it simply can't be done. I don't mean that I haven't time to reply, or that I'm not inclined to hustle. It is simply and purely a sheer impossibility. For the Old Paper goes to press some little time before publication date.

* * *

Quite a few readers have been writing to me recently, telling me that Handforth is their favourite character, or that William Napoleon Browne comes first, or that Archie Glenthorne is so honoured. Willy Handforth, by the way, seems to be well in the running for first place. And this puts an idea into my head. When you write to me next time, why not tell me your favourite characters, in order?

* * *

You know what I mean, don't you? Let's make a sort of voting affair over it. Supposing we say eight characters? Eight is a nice round figure, and it might help me a lot if I knew what the majority of you desire. This is the sort of thing I mean:—1. Edward Oswald Handforth. 2. Willy Handforth. 3. Archie Glenthorne. 4. William Napoleon Browne. And so on. If you'll only write to me like that, I shall soon know which characters to feature most, and which to shove into the background.

* * *

I am glad you got my photograph safely, Robert Potter, but there is one little sentence in your letter that I'm going to comment upon. This is it: "I showed your photograph

to several of my pals who are also readers." You shouldn't have done that, you boulder! I want their photographs, too, for my collection, and the chances are that they won't send them now. Besides, there's another point. What you ought to do is to show my photograph to non-readers. I'm not suggesting that there is any special attraction in my photograph, but if you can only get non-readers interested in my stories there is a distinct chance that they might buy the Old Paper, and become readers. And the more the merrier, you know. We want to raise the circulation of Our Paper higher and higher, and the way to do it is for you, and every other reader, to introduce the St. Frank's stories wherever and whenever you can. Don't forget there's nothing on earth like "personal recommendation." Better than all the ordinary advertisements. I'm not suggesting that my school stories are superior to others, but there may be hundreds and thousands of people who don't know anything about St. Frank's, and who would be glad to get hold of a little light reading. In this world, you know, the most surprising thing is the enormous number of people who don't know this, or who don't know that. There are more of those who don't know than of those who do.

* * *

V. G. B. Hill (Hendon), Robert Potter* (Bury St. Edmund's), Geo. T. Edgar* (Dunedin, N.Z.), Reginald Quarrell* (Yeovil), Arthur Palmer (Leicester), George Hodgson (Scarborough), "Appreciative"* (Brixton), Alfred Kemp* (Staines), F. Ferris (Auckland, N.Z.), Geo. Halliwell Mason* (Liverpool), "Fitsol" (Limerick), N. Brewerton* (Masterton, N.Z.), Miss Hilda F. Bowles* (Rockdale, N.S.W.), Kenneth James Webb* (Wellington, N.Z.), Smith Thompson* (Bradford), Gaston F. Cœulle (Manchester). "A

(Continued on next page.)

BETWEEN OURSELVES

(Continued from page 35.)

Nelson Lee Reader"* (London, E.2), J. M. Morgan (Merthyr Tydvil), Kenneth A. Summers* (Bournemouth), Ronald Saunders (Barnstaple), Wm. G. Marsh (Islington), V. M. Grossman (Seaford), Sidney W. Le Rouse (King Williams Town, S.A.), R. G. Lee* (Johannesburg).

* * *

Here, George T. Edgar, what's the idea? Allow me to tell you that you are quite off the rails. On the first page of your letter you tell me that you are seventeen years of age, and on page three you say this: "I am really too old to be reading the 'Nelson Lee Library.'" Too old at seventeen? If it will give you any satisfaction, I would like to tell you that many thousands of readers of the Old Paper are not only older than twenty-one, but a considerable proportion are married, with children. Many, indeed, are grandfathers and grandmothers! So when you tell me that you are too old at seventeen to read the St. Frank's stories I can't help smiling. You say that you want to correspond with readers in England, eh? Very easy—and very simple. You have only to join the League, and you can have your advertisement inserted free of cost.

* * *

Thanks, Reginald Quarrell, for your suggestion about voting in favour of the various characters at St. Frank's. The paragraph above was inspired by your letter. Let's hope that all the other readers come up to the scratch.

* * *

Don't spare me, please, Miss "Appreciative." Let me have that photograph of yourself—and I'll at once send you an autographed photo of yours truly in return. This "photo exchange" idea is, of course, still open to all readers. So you didn't like the idea of the Harry Gresham series finishing in four stories? I wonder which size of series are the most popular with the majority of readers—long series of seven or eight yarns, or short series of four? This is a point that lots of you can comment upon in your next letters to me.

* * *

The title of No. 2 of the "N.L.L." (old series), Alfred Kemp, was "The Case of the Secret Room."

* * *

I'm sorry to disagree with your pal, Eric Byne, but there are certainly tigers in China. Not in every part of China, of course. But I can assure you that tigers are quite commonplace in many districts there. You've got to remember that China is a large country, and that some parts of it are practically tropical.

* * *

Thanks, Sidney W. Le Rouse. I should much appreciate it if you would send me the

tips regarding scenery, slang, and so forth, as you offer in your letter. Perhaps other South African readers—and Australian and Canadian readers—will do the same? I am always keen to get information, particularly as regards local colour, slang, and all that sort of stuff.

* * *

George W. Humphrey* (East Ham), Alan C. Robinson (Walthamstow), Edmund Bolton (Accrington), Isobel Calder (Millden Cults), Mrs. V. Adnum (Verdun, Quebec), Sydney Thomas Gregory (Cardiff), B. W. Messer* (Forest Gate), A. Stamelman (Johannesburg), Arthur Lloyd (Ramsey, I.O.M.), E. J. J. Reilly (Victoria, Aus.), Ernest Fairlamb (Johannesburg), Wm. Griffiths (Halifax), "E. C. F."* (Deal), L. Starley (Maidenhead), Henry Charles Brown (Stoke Newington), Frank Palmer (East Grinstead), Glyn Povah and Sidney Jacobs* (Streatham), Cecil Etheridge* (New York), Basil Titchbourne (Pimlico), Wm. Planner, Jr. (Battersea), Emslie R. T. Bryan (S. Chingford), Rupert Dyball (Norwich), Dennis Burton* (Smethwick), Albert Borrow (Barnsbury), Stanley Spowart (Doncaster), Terence Sullivan* (Folkestone), Cecil A. Westrope* (Surbiton).

* * *

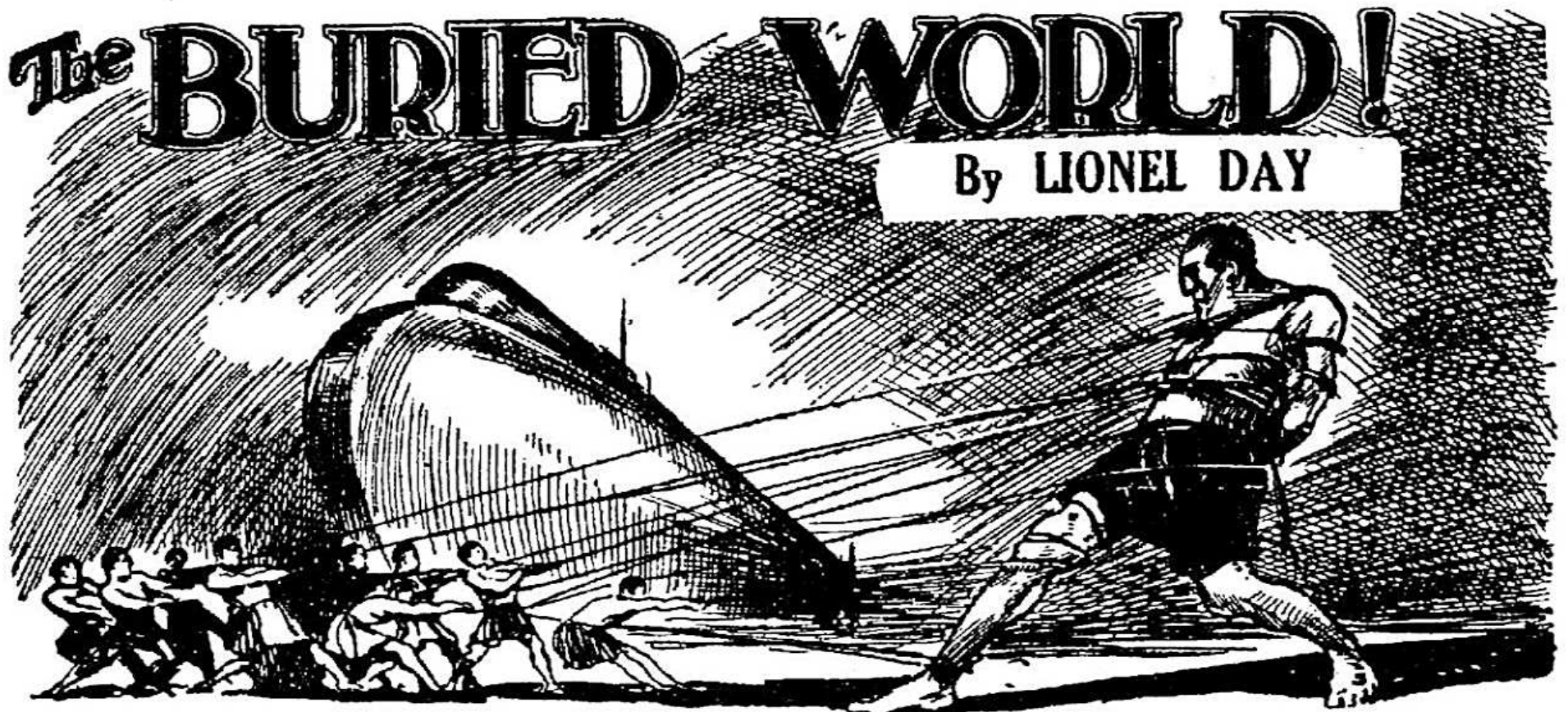
No, George W. Humphrey, you are wrong. Your supposition that I am more interested in the younger readers than the old ones is very far from the truth. I am interested in ALL readers, and I never even consider the question of age when picking out letters for comment. I choose the ones that are likely to be of general interest. Age doesn't come into it at all. You say that you have been a regular reader for the last twelve or thirteen years. I wonder if you started reading with No. 1? You ask me if anybody can beat your record. Well, I don't know. But I shouldn't be at all surprised! In fact, I shall be greatly interested if you "Old Timers" write and tell me which particular number you started with, and whether you have read the Old Paper consecutively, without a break, and so forth. It will be quite entertaining to hear from you.

* * *

Well, I think I have come to the end of my space this week, and yet there are one or two other letters that I wanted to comment upon. So I'm afraid I must leave them over until next week. Some of you who have been named above, therefore, had better look out next week, and you will probably see some comments of mine concerning yourselves. Sorry, but these pages aren't made of elastic, and they simply won't stretch.



Undersea Wonders! Read this Exciting Instalment Now!



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 Falta and inciting them to capture Cripps and his three companions. Jim escapes, and boarding the Flying Submarine, goes to the rescue. He arrives just as one of the Falta is in the act of sacrificing Cripps!

(Now read on.)

Jim to the Rescue !

A CRY of horror left Jim's lips as, gazing through the Flying Submarine's periscope, he saw Stanislaus Cripps' terrible predicament. Then he gave a gasp of relief when he saw the Falta pause just as he was in the act of plunging the knife towards the scientist.

The boy realised in a moment what had caused the executioner to hesitate. Just at the moment when this horrible rite was about to be performed, the Flying Submarine had flung aside that heap of piled up boulders, and the resultant noise had startled the Falta for a moment and distracted their attention.

Jim clearly had no time to lose. He sprang to the switchboard and moved the lever that controlled the engine. He heard the answering hum as the Flying Submarine sprang to life, and the vessel approached the scene of the massacre at an enormous speed. Recalling the mistake he had made once before.

Jim stopped the engines, and the Flying Submarine, carried on by its own momentum, began to move at an ever-decreasing pace towards the spot.

The vessel was too high up, he decided. The average height of the Falta was twenty feet, and he must be in a position to drive straight into that press of giants. He let air into the reservoirs until the dial registered the fact that he was only fifteen feet from the ground. Once more he turned his attention to the pictures projected by the periscope. A little sigh of satisfaction escaped from his lips.

Clearly the Falta were panic stricken. The giant who was holding Stanislaus Cripps was looking up stupidly, his knife still suspended in mid-air, as the Flying Submarine—a shining glittering vengeance—bore down on those monstrous figures grouped about the stone.

Another moment and it was among them.

Jim felt the vessel gyrate and tremble as it plunged into that press of giant forms. But all his thoughts were concentrated on the giant who had Stanislaus Cripps in his grip.

Steadying the great vessel, he brought it round with a swoop, striking the giant on the back of the neck. What happened to him he could not see, for his tumbling body passed out of the range of the periscope.

Jim darted up the ladder leading to the deck. The huge boulder that had blocked the way previously had been flung aside by the Flying Submarine when making its swift ascent a few minutes before. He gained the deck, and leaned over the rail.

There, just below him, was the figure of Stanislaus Cripps, emerging somewhat dazedly from under the huge form of the fallen Falta. And there, too, were Tinta and Masra. The giants, in a panic-stricken stampede, were racing away from the scene. Jim curved his hands about his mouth.

"Coming down, sir!" he shouted.

"Good, boy! Be quick about it, because I want to give these hypertrophied idiots a lesson!"

Jim raced down to the pilot house, and gently lowered the Flying Submarine until she rested like a bubble on the sacrificial stone. Then, running and sliding, he descended three hundred feet to the bottom of the vessel. The next moment he had flung the door open, and was greeting the three figures that came tottering towards him.

It was clear that even Stanislaus Cripps' iron nerves had been shaken, for his voice had lost much of its accustomed boom as he endeavoured to congratulate Jim.

"Just in time, boy. Given up all hopes. Second time I've had that knife at my throat. Ought to have got used to it by now, but haven't."

The tears were streaming down Tinta's face as she clasped Jim's hand.

"Oh, Krim, never did I think to look upon your face again!"

"Bit unpleasant for all of us, my dear," Stanislaus Cripps broke in. "We've got to hear the boy's story; but that'll have to wait until I've settled my accounts with these big, murderous, bullying brutes. Shut the door, boy. We don't want any of the hypertrophied idiots poking their clumsy fingers into this pie!"

Fooling the Falta!

WITHOUT waiting for Jim to carry out this order, he made his way to the foot of the spiral staircase and began to climb slowly upwards. When the others had followed him they found that the Flying Submarine had already risen from the ground, and was moving slowly forward. Stanislaus Cripps was watching the racing shadows on the surface of the white topped table. Following the direction of his gaze, Jim saw that the great vessel was pursuing a little knot of ten Falta.

"Going to give that bunch the surprise of

their big, oafish lives!" Stanislaus Cripps exclaimed viciously. "Watch, boy!"

Jim watched, with Tinta and Masra gazing in astonishment over his shoulder. With the propeller hardly moving, the Flying Submarine rapidly overhauled the giants. When it was just above them, Stanislaus Cripps allowed enough air to enter the reservoirs to sink the vessel a little. It struck the Falta on their shoulders, hurling them to the ground, and, as they lay there, the Flying Submarine settled down upon them like a piece of thistledown on a flower.

"Only got to fill the reservoirs with air and I'd squash them as flat as pancakes!" Stanislaus Cripps boomed. "But I'm not going to butcher another soul. I'm just going to frighten them!"

And he certainly succeeded in his object. For a while the Falta writhed and struggled, setting up a piteous, twittering scream. Then, as the Flying Submarine continued to hold them pressed to the ground, they seemed to realise that, for all their great strength, they were utterly helpless, and lay still.

Stanislaus Cripps slowly moved the lever that controlled the air reservoirs, and the Flying Submarine rose nearly a foot. The Falta made as if to struggle to their feet; instantly Stanislaus Cripps caused the huge vessel to settle on their backs again. Three or four times he repeated this manoeuvre.

"Boy, I know now exactly how a cat feels when she plays with a mouse," he exclaimed, "but I'm not going to follow the feline instinct for cruelty to its logical end. These fellows have had their lesson, I think. I'm going to speak to them."

He clambered up the ladder to the deck and, leaning over the side, shouted to the cowed giants:

"Are you humbled now, O Falta, or do you wish that I, by my magic, should make you flatter than the fish you eat?"

From those recumbent figures came a twittering appeal for mercy.

"We are your slaves, O Hairy One! Never again will we dare to lift our hands against you!"

Stanislaus Cripps shouted down the open port-hole:

"Send her up a few feet, boy. I've got these fellows to eat out of my hand."

Jim moved the air control and allowed the Flying Submarine to rise a few feet into the air. He could hear Stanislaus Cripps speaking again to the assembled giants.

"Rise, O Falta, and listen to the commands I am going to give you."

The ten giants, moaning and twittering, rose and stood in a dejected line below the vessel.

"I've given you your lives in spite of your treachery. Now you must work to earn that boon. You must hasten and bring hither all the Falta. Those who will not come you must bring by force. Let me see that you are worthy of your lives by the haste you make."

The giants nodded their heads, raising their hands at the same moment. Then, dividing themselves into two parties of five, they dashed in opposite directions. Jim, joining

Stanislaus Cripps on deck, saw them searching among the boulders—now dragging from some hiding-place one of the trembling giants, or summoning another from one of the stone houses in which he had taken refuge.

Some were reluctant to come, but when their comrades, laying hold of them, made it clear that they intended Stanislaus Cripps' order to be obeyed, they submitted. In little dejected parties they gathered about the Flying Submarine, which had been lowered once more to the ground.

Stanislaus Cripps made his way down to the bottom of the vessel and, opening the door, stepped out on to the floor of the Outer Cavern. There, looking a very truculent figure with his red beard, he marched slowly down the long line of giants, examining each in turn as if he were an officer inspecting troops.

Right at the end of the line was Gra. In front of him he paused and reached out his hand. Gra bent down and engulfed those fingers, his huge palm almost swallowing up the whole of Stanislaus Cripps' arm.

"Gra," Stanislaus Cripps exclaimed, "you're a Falta who knows the value of his word. You can step out. The words I have to say are not for you."

Gra broke ranks and stood leaning against the shining side of the Flying Submarine, while Stanislaus Cripps took his place in the centre of the line.

"Down on your knees, Falta," he shouted.

The giants dropped on their knees like one man and lay grovelling there, uttering their twittering sighs.

"Henceforth, Falta, you are my slaves. But I shall not deal with you directly. Gra here, who is the noblest and most intelligent among you, shall be your leader. Through him shall my will be known. You will swear to obey him!"

The Falta swore that oath by raising their hands.

"See, O Falta, I arm him with my magic! Woe to anyone who disobeys him!"

As he spoke, Cripps took from the inner pocket of his coat a bundle of papers. Jim, who was standing by his side, saw that they were a bundle of bills, summonses and applications for payment which had rained down upon Stanislaus Cripps at Widgery Dene!

"There, O Gra!" Stanislaus Cripps exclaimed gravely. "There is the secret of my magic, and I give it you. Woe to those who disobey you!"

And, as he spoke, he handed over the bundle of documents to the giant!

Cripps' Vow.

WITH just a faint twitching of his lips, indicating his enjoyment of the joke, Stanislaus Cripps turned again to that line of giants.

"As proof that you recognise Gra as your lord and master and my spokesman, O Falta, you will each approach him slowly on your hands and knees, and take the oath to obey him in all things!"

"Got to do this, boy," he muttered in an aside to Jim. "They're only children, and they've got to be impressed by childish tricks!"

One by one those titanic figures—who could have crushed Stanislaus Cripps between one finger and a thumb—crawled obediently to the feet of Gra, and there repeated the oath of allegiance which Stanislaus Cripps invented on the spot.

"Gra is our lord and master! We will obey him in all things. His enemies shall be our enemies. Woe to those who disobey him!"

Each then kissed the packet of papers which Gra obviously looked upon with superstitious awe as possessing some mighty magic.

The performance of this ritual took the better part of three hours, and before it was over Jim was thoroughly tired. But Stanislaus Cripps refused to abate one jot of the ceremony.

"Only way to tame these hypertrophied children, boy. They'll remember this. It will be much easier to deal with them through this good fellow, Gra, than directly."

When the last of the giants had sworn the oath and Gra, with great care, had tucked away those papers in the ample folds of his loin cloth, Stanislaus Cripps turned to his lieutenant.

"Tell them, Gra, to return each to his own hut and to remain there peaceably until you've issued further orders, which I will send you."

"It shall be done, O Hairy One," Gra answered submissively. "Mighty is the magic which you have given me!"

He addressed the Falta, who began to file away to their homes, and Stanislaus Cripps looked at Jim with a comical grimace.

"I wonder what all those thieves of tradesmen and those bullying solicitors would think, boy, if they knew the use to which their impertinent communications had been turned? Let's go aboard again, eat some Christian food, and then sleep."

When the door of the Flying Submarine had closed and the vessel had been raised some thirty feet in the air, they partook of a good meal, Tinta, as on a previous occasion, paying particular attention to the sugar. Afterwards beds were made in two of the innumerable cabins for Tinta and her father, and the little party forgot for some eight hours all the trials and tribulations through which they had passed.

It was over the meal that followed their awakening that Jim related his adventures with Ka-Ra, and listened in turn to a recital of the circumstances in which Stanislaus Cripps and the two Kru had fallen into the hands of the Falta.

"He was a bad man, was that Ka-Ra," Stanislaus Cripps exclaimed. "He came to a very unpleasant end, and I hope it was painless, even although he gave me a very bad time. He told me he had killed you, boy, and I confess I wanted to have his blood for that." He regarded Jim with a friendly grin. "Taking you all round, boy, you are one of the most intelligent youngsters I have ever met."

Jim could only murmur a confused "Thank you, sir."

"And now I must get to work," Stanislaus Cripps exclaimed.

But Jim had no desire for any more adventures in the Buried World.

"Now that we're safely on board the Flying Submarine, sir, can't we go home?" he begged.

Stanislaus Cripps shook his head.

"Patience, boy! I have set my hand to the plough and I cannot turn back. I have established my authority over the Kru and the Falta, and I've got to justify my position. I've got to establish peace and order in this Buried World. Patience, boy. Patience!"

The Underground Miracle.

JIM required all his patience before Stanislaus Cripps was through with his plans of organisation. As he had appointed Gra his deputy among the Falta, so he established Masra in a similar capacity among the Kru. In the latter case, the Kru being the most intelligent people, he set up a sort of council, carefully selected, to assist Masra.

The creation of this social machinery was easy enough. Once it was working satisfactorily, Stanislaus Cripps turned to matters in which he was much more interested.

"There are enormous resources here, boy, and the Buried World is fortunate in possessing a scientist of my eminence at its head. Now we must set about the task of turning those resources to the best advantage."

His first act was to inspect the Great Drain.

"That was a very considerable engineering feat of HE's, and showed that he hadn't lived all those years without getting some sense. The pity of it was that he didn't know how to turn it to the best advantage."

"But it provides the Falta with food, sir," Jim remarked, failing to see what other practical purpose it could serve.

"Think of the amount of power that is running to waste, boy. The water is pressing down that drain at thousands of tons per square inch. It is a matter of marvel to me that HE discovered the way of controlling that enormous power. But he did, and I pay him the compliment of stating that it was a great achievement."

"How are you going to utilise it, sir?" Jim inquired.

"Electric power, boy, that will light the houses I intend to build, and provide the means for heating and cooking. Further, boy, we can use the light so generated for growing corn and raising vegetables.

"The agent of some big wholesale nurseryman once called on me at Widgery Dene, imagining that I was a simple farmer," continued Cripps. "He was so anxious to get orders that I allowed him to send me whatever he suggested. For no reason that I can imagine, except that I didn't want any creditor of mine to seize anything, I stored them on board the Flying Submarine. They will be useful now, boy."

Jim almost forgot his longing for home in his excitement and interest in the work of reconstruction into which Stanislaus Cripps flung himself with such fierce energy.

From the abundant gold deposits—all those yellow vessels used by the Kru and the Falta were found to be made of that precious metal—he constructed an alloy which was as hard and, under an enormous temperature, as malleable as steel. The coal from the Inner Cavern supplied the heat for his furnaces.

Selecting some of the most intelligent Kru, Cripps taught them personally, and then gave them small gangs to work under their instruction. For the heavier work the Falta proved invaluable. To see one of those huge giants pounding at a great mass of molten metal with an enormous hammer was a sight never to be forgotten. Jim was reminded of the old pictures of Vulcan and his Titans.

"A very just observation, boy," Stanislaus Cripps exclaimed when Jim mentioned this to him. "And it may be that the whole of that legend was got from some rumour as to the existence of these Falta. Most of the mythological stories, when they are sifted, have a residuum of fact."

With the metal thus provided, Stanislaus Cripps constructed a hydro-electric plant suitable for the enormous pressure of the Great Drain. One thing he lacked was timber, but the metallurgic resources of the Buried World were so enormous that he found he could dispense with this. Poles of glittering gold carried the great arc lamps that he constructed.

The day when the electric light system was first turned on was made a public festival, Stanislaus Cripps, standing on a dais with Jim on his right hand, and Masra and Gra occupying places a little in the rear, addressed the assembled Falta and Kru.

"The first great work has been accomplished," he said in his booming voice. "I have given you the use of a great power. From now onwards you will have light. To-day, O people, shall be known hereafter as the Coming of the Great Power; and it will be a day of festival in which you will recall the instructions I have given you, and the words with which I have spoken to you—to work in peace, to toil usefully and intelligently, and to be happy one with another. Look, O my people!"

He touched a switch, and instantly throughout the Buried World two thousand great arc lights sprung out of the blue haze, lighting up the towering sides of that enormous vault.

The effect on the Kru and the Falta was instantaneous. Like one man, they sunk on their faces and, raising their hands, acclaimed the magician who had accomplished this marvellous feat.

"O Hairy One—O Great Giver of Light! Mighty art thou, O Lord and Master!"

Stanislaus Cripps combed his red beard reflectively with his fingers.

"True, I am," he remarked complacently. "It would be foolish to deny it. But our work is not done yet, O people! There is still much that remains."

Tinta Offended.

WITH untiring energy Stanislaus Cripps next set about teaching the Falta to build houses of properly worked stone, the rafters of which he constructed out of his gold alloy. He was very proud of those houses when they were finished.

They stretched in a street of nearly fifty miles—vast buildings not unlike the skyscrapers of New York, but without the numerous windows. They were all lit with electric light, and for several days after they had been installed in these new homes, the Falta, like children, spent most of the time switching the current on and off in order to see the effect.

The hydro-electric plant was not employed merely for lighting the Buried World. He used the power to drive the machines in the spinning and weaving factory he had set up, where the fibre from the giant fungi was transformed into bales of shining cloth which supplied clothing, not only for the Kru, but for the Falta.

He even used the fungi for the production of certain dyes, selecting a special purple coloured one for the use of Masra and Gra, which was forbidden by edict to be used by anybody else.

"Got to establish their authority by every device I can think of," Cripps explained to Jim. "It's trifles like this, boy, that carry such weight with a primitive people!"

Jim nodded, and he cast an admiring look at Cripps. He was still partly dazed at the remarkable metamorphosis that the scientist had effected in the Buried World.

By now perfect harmony reigned between the Falta and the Kru. The ancient feud seemed to have been completely forgotten, and the dwarf Kru were allowed to enter their neighbours' territory without fear of any molestation whatsoever.

At first Stanislaus Cripps had been just a little apprehensive on this score, in view of the Falta's tremendous advantage physically. Their fear of the scientist's so-called magic outweighed everything, however, besides which the giants realised that it was for their own benefit to remain at peace.

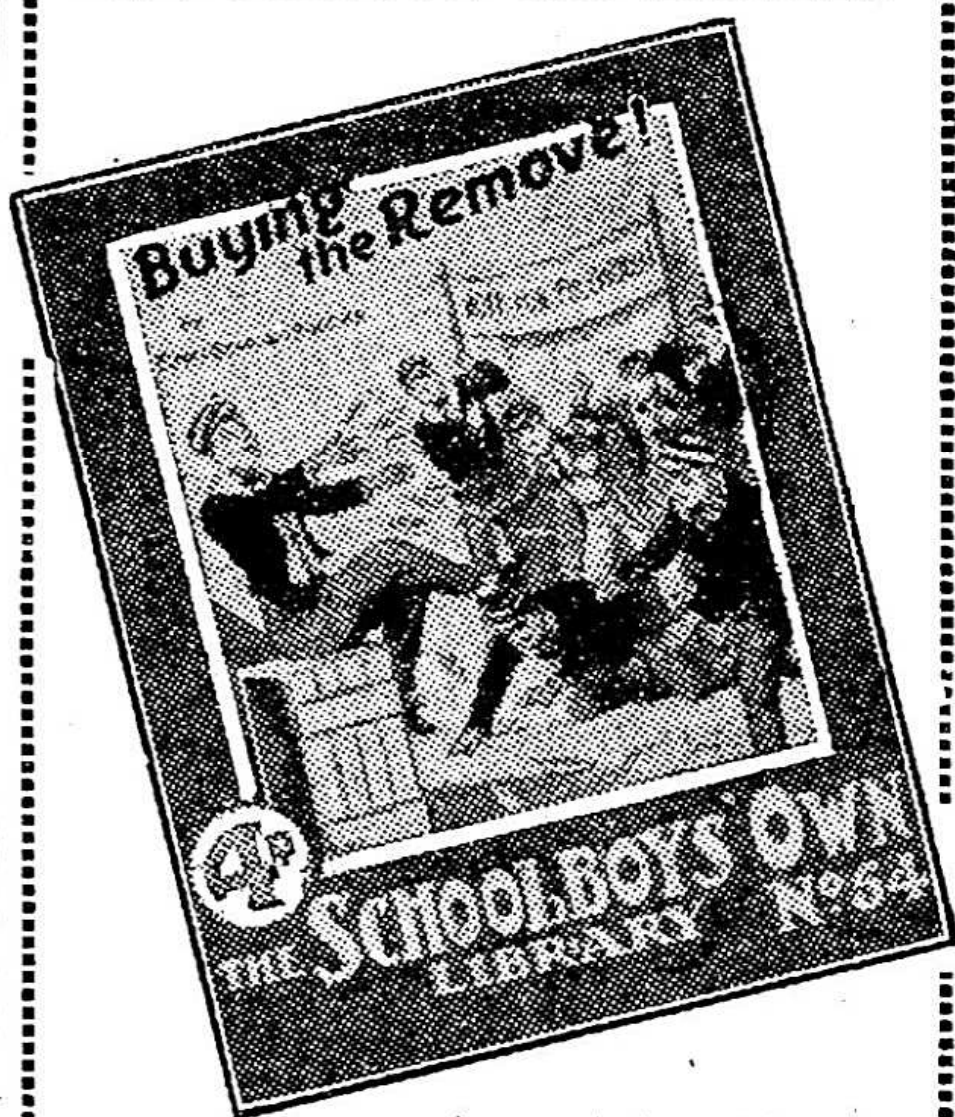
And so, for the first time in the history of this wonderful undersea world, a complete understanding existed between these two widely different peoples.

The Kru women were particularly delighted with the new dyed cloth. Some days after the mills had produced their first issue, Jim was seated in the house which Stanislaus Cripps had built for himself, when Tinta entered. Her eyes were glowing, and there was a radiant smile on her face. As always, Jim was only too delighted to see her.

"Won't you come and sit down, Tinta?" he exclaimed.

But Tinta, for some extraordinary reason, did not move from the threshold, but stood there with her arms stretched out, her head held very high, and an expectant look in her eyes. For some moments Jim waited for an explanation, and then, as none was forthcoming, again asked her to sit down. A look

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of disappointment gathered on Tinta's pretty face.

"But, Krim, you haven't said anything," she exclaimed.

Jim could only stare at her in astonishment.

"But what do you expect me to say, Tinta? You don't need me to tell you how glad I am to see you, surely? I did ask you to come and sit down."

Tinta pouted, and something very like tears gathered in her eyes.

"But, Krim, my new clothes! The Hairy One himself chose the colours for me, and it's the first woman's dress that has ever been made in the Place of the Grinding Wheels!"

Jim, who like most boys was unobservant of ladies' clothing, gaped a little awkwardly.

"I think it's very nice, Tinta," he stammered.

At that Tinta broke down, sinking into a chair and sobbing bitterly. She had thought to impress Jim with the style and beauty of her clothing, and his cool reception of her new garments was bitterly disappointing.

"Oh, Krim, you do not care for me any more! You are no longer my friend!" she sobbed.

(Don't miss next week's concluding instalment of this thrilling serial. Details of a grand new feature will also be announced in the next issue of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY—look out for them!)

HOW TO JOIN THE LEAGUE

ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE APPLICATION FORM No. 75.

SECTION A	READER'S APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP. I desire to become enrolled as a Member of THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE and to qualify for all such benefits and privileges as are offered to Members of the League. I hereby declare that I have introduced "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY" and THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE to one new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. Will you, therefore, kindly forward me Certificate of Membership with the Membership Number assigned to me, and Membership Badge.
SECTION B	MEMBER'S APPLICATION FOR MEDAL AWARDS. I, Member No..... (give Membership No.), hereby declare that I have introduced one more new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. This makes me (state number of introductions up to date) introductions to my credit.
SECTION C	NEW READER'S DECLARATION. I hereby declare that I have been introduced by (give name of introducer) to this issue of "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY."
(FULL NAME).....	
(ADDRESS).....	
.....	

INSTRUCTIONS.

INSTRUCTIONS.—Reader Applying for Membership: Cut out TWO complete Application Forms from Two copies of this week's issue of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY. On one of the forms fill in Section A, crossing out Sections B and C. Then write clearly your full name and address at bottom of form. The second form is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out Sections A and B, and writes his name and address at bottom of form. Both forms are then pinned together, and sent to the Chief Officer, The St. Frank's League, c/o THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4. **Member Applying for Bronze Medal:** It will be necessary for you to obtain six new readers for this award. For each new reader TWO complete forms, bearing the same number, are needed. On one of the forms fill in Section B, crossing out Sections A and C, and write your name and address at bottom of form. The other form is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out Sections A and B, and writes his name and address at the bottom of

the form. Now pin both forms together and send them to the Chief Officer, as above. One new reader will then be registered against your name, and when six new readers have been registered, you will be sent the St. Frank's League bronze medal. There is nothing to prevent you from sending in forms for two or more new readers at once, provided that each pair of forms bears the same date and number.

Bronze medallists wishing to qualify for the silver or gold medals can apply in the same way as for the bronze medal, filling in Section B. Every introduction they make will be credited to them, so that when the League reaches the required number of members, they can exchange their bronze medal for a silver or gold one, according to the number of introductions with which they are credited.

These Application Forms can be posted for 4d., providing the envelope is not sealed and no letter is enclosed.

A FEW OF THE ADVANTAGES OF JOINING THE LEAGUE.

You can write to fellow-members living at home or in the most distant outposts of the Empire.

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If you want to form a sports or social club, you can do so amongst local members of the League.

You are offered free hints on holidays, whether walking, biking or camping.

You can qualify for the various awards by promoting the growth of the League.

If you want help or information on any subject, you will find the Chief Officer ever ready to assist you.



THE CHIEF OFFICER'S CHAT.

All **LETTERS** in reference to the League should be addressed to the Chief Officer, The St. Frank's League, c/o THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon St., London, E.C.4. Enquiries which need an immediate answer should be accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope.

The Burton-on-Trent Club.

G. D. Richardson, 22, Astill Street, Stapenhill, Burton-on-Trent, is to be felicitated on all he has done for the S. F. L. Club in this famous Staffs town. For twelve solid months he has done his whack, and created a lively interest in a topping club of which he is president.

Here To-day and Gone To-morrow.

A Yorks pal says he is discouraged because people come and go in dozens in his part, and never stop long enough to join the League. One week there is a rush of work, and in troop the workers. Following week they are all off somewhere else. He should not worry. This is inevitable.

All About a "Dial."

A Cape Province chum wants my portrait. Just that! Not my blood, you understand. "If you did this," he writes, "we would know what you look like—whether you are:

- (1) An ugly, whiskered gentleman.
- (2) A Rudolph Valentino.
- (3) Just an ordinary chap."

We can take No. 3 and say no more!

Who's for Bloemfontein ?

A keen reader in the capital of the Orange Free State tells me that there is plenty of talk of diamond finds in his neighbourhood these days. The other day a man called on a friend of his. This man picked up off the ground—not dug for—a paraffin tin full of diamonds worth £100,000! Now if any of us picked up a paraffin tin, the chances are it would not contain as much as a halfpenny! Just luck!

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.

W. Light, 10, Boyne Valley, Maidenhead, Berks, wishes to correspond with readers overseas.

L. Norton, 42, Oxford Street, Liverpool, wishes to hear from readers who want photos of film stars.

A. Tipplach, 6, James Street, Bedford, wishes to hear from readers who will help him form a cricket club.

HOW TO GET YOUR SILVER MEDALS

All holders of **BRONZE MEDALS** who have qualified for **SILVER MEDALS** (see instructions on Application Form on opposite page) and wish to exchange their medals for the higher award should send their bronze medals, accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope, to the Chief Officer, the St. Frank's League, c/o the NELSON LEE LIBRARY, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4. The **SILVER MEDALS** will then be sent to them.

G. Desmond Richardson, 22, Astill Street, Stapenhill, **Burton-on-Trent**, wishes to hear from readers anywhere on any subject, especially cricket, photography, autographs, and music.

Fred Griffin, 13, Colwick Street, Sneinton, **Nottingham**, wishes to communicate with members interested in football, cricket, photography, fret-work, or draughts.

A. D. Luke, 8, Paradise Place, Stoke, **Plymouth**, wants to buy back numbers of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY.

George F. Hodgson, 70, Sealby Road, **Scarborough**, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere.

George Halliwell Mason, 174, Oakfield Road, Anfield, **Liverpool**, wishes to hear from Wednesday football clubs in his district.

P. J. Roche, 14, Mary Street, Coburg, Melbourne, Victoria, **Australia**, wishes to correspond with readers who are interested in camping and stamp-collecting.

C. H. Hunter, 61, Collingwood Road, Haverton Hill, near **Middlesbrough**, wishes to hear from members; he has back numbers of the N.L.L. for sale.

Daniel Hughes, 2, Chemical Street, **Belfast**, wishes to hear from readers who want back numbers of the N.L.L.

D. Harvey, c/o P.O. Box 128, Port Elizabeth, **South Africa**, wishes to correspond with readers on sports and matters of general interest. All letters will receive prompt reply.

A. W. Harvey, Awarua Plains, Southland, **New Zealand**, wishes to correspond with readers in Great Britain, Australia, and South Africa. All letters answered.

(Continued on next page.)



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(Continued from previous page.)

S. G. Thornton, Aubin House, Quail Street, Longreach, Queensland, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere; keen on photography; also has early copies of the N.L.L. in perfect order.

J. Fleiser, 36, Ascot Road, Bertrams, Johannesburg, South Africa, wishes to correspond with readers in England, especially in London.

J. White, 38, Kellner Street, Bloemfontein, Orange Free State, South Africa, wishes to hear from stamp collectors in Abyssinia, Afghanistan, Antigua, Bermuda, South America, United States, Europe, Heligoland, and North Africa.

James Deane, c/o Govt. Printing Office, Davey Street, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere.

A. Watt, 9, Clifton Road, Kingston Hill, Surrey, wishes to hear from readers in a radius of about

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William C. Blatchford, 17, Rose Hill, St. Blazey, Cornwall, has copies of the "Nelson Lee Library" for sale.

R. A. Lambourn, The Corner Stores, Shinfield, Reading, wishes to hear from readers in his area.

E. Goldsworthy, 26, Kildalton Avenue, Evandale, South Australia, wishes to hear from readers anywhere.

G. Boot, 9, Havelock Street, Nottingham, wishes to hear from readers anywhere.

Frank Leyshon, Fairlawns, Heathcote Road, St. Margaret's, Middlesex, wishes to hear from readers in his district.

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