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ARMISTICE DAY AT ST. FRANK'S

A dramatic, topical, long complete yarn of schoolboy adventure.

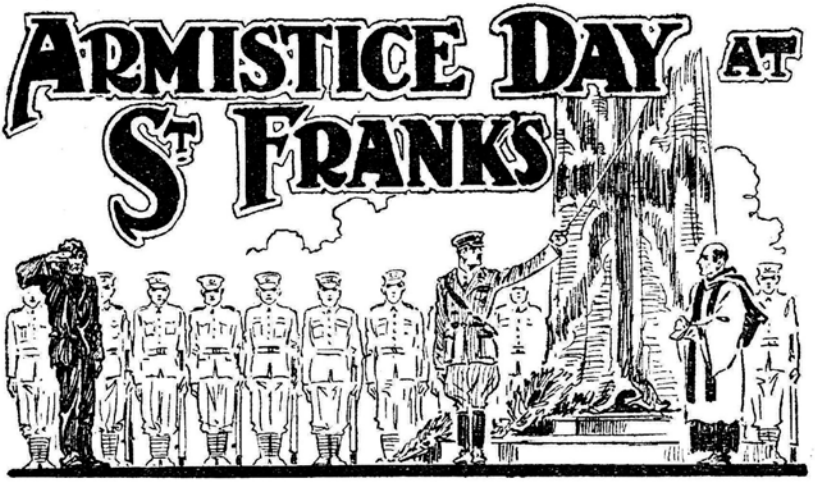
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The amazed juniors gasped as they saw the extraordinary figure standing at the top of the stairs. He was dressed in rags and tatters, his unkempt hair trailed over his disfigured face, and his eyes were staring—staring uncannily. He was the Wild Man of Bellton Wood!

THE MYSTERY MAN OF BELLTON WOOD!

ARMISTICE DAY AT ST FRANK'S



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

When Teddy Long comes rushing into the Remove common-room with the story that there is a mysterious wild man in Bellton Wood, nobody believes him; nobody takes much notice, either—they are too intent upon the preparations for Armistice Day. Yet that same night the man enters St. Frank's, and the next day actually walks into the Remove class-room! Who is this mysterious "Wild Man"? Get started on this stunning yarn now.—Ed.

CHAPTER 1.

No Sympathy for Teddy!

"ODDS cyclones and earthquakes!" Archie Glenthorne, of the Ancient House at St. Frank's, uttered that picturesque remark as he sat in the Remove passage. There were, of course, no chairs provided in the Remove passage, and Archie Glenthorne was sitting on the floor.

It wasn't his usual habit to sit on the floor. In fact, he hated sitting on the floor. His fastidious nature rebelled against such a thing. However, there were times when even Archie Glenthorne was compelled to seat himself in this undignified attitude.

The compelling agency, in this particular instance, had been a violently running junior who had come tearing round the corner, and had collided with Archie so forcibly that the genial ass of the Remove had gone flying. By the time Archie looked round the culprit had vanished.

"Hallo! What's the idea?" said Handforth, opening the door of Study D, and looking at Archie in surprise. "I thought I heard a thump just now. Is this one of your new exercises, Archie?"

Archie rose to his feet with dignity.

"Absolutely not!" he replied. "Some unknown blighter came whizzing out of the offing, and before I knew where I was he absolutely buzzed into me and upset the good old equilib! I must confess, Handforth, that I thought the blighter was you."

"Oh, did you?" said Edward Oswald Handforth, glaring. "Well, let me tell you, my lad, that I don't go rushing about the passages like an escaped hurricane!"

"As soon as I find the foul chappie, I'll

absolutely tick him off!" said Archie indignantly. "Good gad! It seems that a lad can't wander down the good old passage without——"

"That's all right—accidents will happen!" said Handforth with a grin. "Let me dust you down, old man!"

"Thanks, most frightfully," said Archie.

A moment later, however, his gratitude was a doubtful quantity. For Handforth's idea of "dusting him down" consisted of banging him on the back, thumping him in the chest, and knocking him this way and that way until he resembled a sapling in a storm.

"What-ho!" gasped Archie. "Kindly sound the bugle for 'cease fire'!"

"There's nothing like doing a job thoroughly," said Handforth genially. "There, Archie, that's better! I'm always willing to oblige a pal!"

Handforth spoke with more than his usual cheerfulness. The celebrated leader of Study D was always sunny. Occasionally he would have a brief period of impetuous temper, but nobody took much notice of him during those moments.

But of late Handforth had been one hundred per cent. genial. To tell the truth, he was very happy these days. Walter Church was back in the Remove—back in Study D—and that grim period, when Church had apparently died, was now but a vague memory. Although it had happened so recently, it now seemed very much like a nightmare.

Handforth was happy in consequence—for he and his chums were going on in the normal way, and the rest of the Remove was wondering how long this state of affairs would last. Indeed, among a certain section of the fellows there were quite a number of bets—as to when Handy would have the next scrap with his faithful chums.

Having seen Archie on his way, with most of the breath knocked out of him, Handforth strolled along to the Remove common-room. Church and McClure were there, to say nothing of Nipper, Fullwood, De Valerie, and many of the other prominent Ancient House Removites.

When Handforth walked in he found Teddy Long the centre of attraction. This was so unusual that Handforth stared in astonishment. Teddy Long was about the biggest sneak in the Remove—apart from being a funk of the most pronounced type. Ordinarily, he was ignored. He was regarded as a fellow of absolutely no importance. But just now he was in the limelight.

"What's all this?" demanded Handforth, as he advanced into the common-room. "What's the idea of crowding round this worm?"

There was every excuse for Handforth's term—for Teddy Long did, indeed, resemble a worm at that moment. He was pale and dishevelled. His eyes had a wild look in them—a look that told of fear and fright. He was trembling visibly, and he showed less courage than any self-respecting rabbit.

"I tell you it's true!" he panted, looking round apprehensively. "I saw the thing—lurking in the wood!"

"What thing?" asked Handforth bluntly.

"Goodness knows!" said Fullwood with a grin. "Two minutes ago, Teddy Long came rushing into the common-room like a cyclone——"

"Oh! So he's the chap who bowled Archie over in the passage?" interrupted Handforth.

"It's quite likely," said Watson. "He was too terrified to notice anything."

"I—I didn't see him!" faltered Teddy Long. "Did I run into Glenthorne, then? I believe I biffed against somebody, but—but——"

"What's the matter with you?" asked Handforth tartly. "Have you seen a ghost, or something?"

"It wasn't a ghost!" said Teddy Long, lowering his voice. "I was coming up from the village, you know. I—I'd been down to the tuckshop, to get some cakes for Chambers of the Fifth——"

"And I'll bet you ate half of them on the way up," interrupted Handforth sternly.

"I didn't!" said Teddy. "Chambers told me that he would count them, the beast, and he threatened to give me a swipe for every cake that was missing! But that's not the point! As I was coming past the wood, I saw something!"

"A shadow!" said Handforth tartly.

"It wasn't a shadow!" denied Teddy. "It was a—a man! A wild-looking man. He started coming towards me, and he had an awful look in his eyes. I've never seen such a frightful thing in all my life. I bolted—and I don't mind admitting it, either! I simply ran for my life!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Everybody in the common-room roared with laughter, and Teddy Long lost some of his nervousness. He was getting no sympathy from his Form fellows, for they took it for granted that his story was merely imagination.



CHAPTER 2.

Not Very Convincing

HANDFORTH wasn't inquisitive, but he had an inquiring turn of mind. This, at least, was the kindly way in which his friends put it. Others were in the habit of saying very different things.

"Look here, Long, you young ass!" said Edward Oswald, as he seized Teddy by the shoulder and swung him round. "What's all this nonsense about a figure in the wood? Out with it!"

"All right; you needn't maul me about!" said Teddy Long, wriggling.

"I'll maul you about as much as I like!" roared Handforth. "Of all the nerve! You come here, babbling out a story that you've seen something rummy in the wood, and——"

"Oh, leave him alone, Handy!" said Mc Clure. "You know what a fibber he is. I expect he's made up the whole yarn. Just one of his stunts—to get a little limelight!"

"Rot!" frowned Handforth. "Even Teddy wouldn't be such a lunatic as that! He's in a blue funk!"

"I'm not!" hooted Teddy indignantly.

"You were a minute ago!" said Fullwood.

"My dear chaps, there's a very simple explanation," put in Nipper coolly. "It's only recently that old Church has been freed from the menace of those mysterious Indians."

"Yes, thank goodness!" said Handforth, with a contented glance towards Church. "That's all over and done with now!"

"Well, those Indians were lurking in Bellton Wood for quite a time," went on Nipper. "I expect Teddy Long was thinking about the brutes, and so his imagination got the better of him. He probably saw a man—I'm not saying he didn't. But it's quite likely that the fellow was only a tramp."

"He wasn't!" said Teddy Long. "Do you think I'd be scared of a tramp?"

"You'd be scared of a beetle!" said Handforth contemptuously.

"You can jeer at me all you like, but I know what I'm saying!" said the frightened junior. "I tell you I saw a queer, wild figure in the woods. He wasn't a tramp, and he wasn't a ghost. But I believe he was an anarchist, or something like that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Chuck it, Long, you ass!"

"I'm fed-up with this!" said Handforth sternly. "Look here, Long—I'll give you just one minute to tell us the full story!"

"I've been trying to tell it all the time!" roared Teddy. "Only these chaps won't listen! They keep jeering at me!"

"The next chap who jeers will get my fist in his eye!" said Handforth threateningly. "Now then, Long! Out with it!"

The other fellows were looking on with amused toleration. A few of them began to trickle away. It was tea-time, and the short November day was already at an end. Outside the darkness had come, and there was a high wind blowing across the old Triangle. It was one of those raw, cold, November days, with a bitter east wind.

"I was coming up the lane," said Teddy, "and I wasn't thinking about anything in particular, when I saw that figure."

"Where were you?" demanded Handforth.

"In the lane."

"I know that, you chump! What part of the lane?"

"Opposite Bellton Wood."

"I know that, too!" roared Handforth. "I want to know the exact spot!"

"Well, it was about a hundred yards before you get to the stile."

"Oh!" said Edward Oswald. "So this—this figure wasn't on the footpath, or in the road? You saw him actually in Bellton Wood?"

"Yes—right in the wood!" said Teddy Long. "That's what struck me as being so rummy, you know. If he had been an ordinary tramp, he wouldn't have shown himself. Or if he had shown himself he might have sprung out upon me, and bagged those cakes."

"And what did he do?"

"He just stood there and looked at me," said Teddy Long in an awed voice. "It was nearly dark, you know—and I couldn't see distinctly. But what I did see fairly made my hair stand on end!"

"Anything is liable to do that!" retorted Handforth. "But let's have a full description of this strange man."

"I can only tell you that he was a big chap—all in rags and tatters, and without a hat," replied Teddy Long. "An awful-looking brute! There was a wild, demon-like light in his eyes, and he just stood there and looked at me. I can tell you, I was simply rooted to the spot!"

"What do you think you are—a tree?" said Handforth. "I don't think much of this story, anyhow——"

"Then he opened his mouth," went on Teddy Long. "His teeth were just like fangs—great, yellow teeth, all uneven and jagged. He wasn't like a man at all—but some horrid monster. And he put his arms up, and I could see that his fingers were all knotted and twisted. I believe he had claws, too—just like an animal!"

Teddy Long shivered with fright at the very thought—or, perhaps, at the picture which his imagination had conjured up. Even Handforth didn't believe that Long had actually seen any such monstrosity.

"And then you ran?" said Edward Oswald.

"Yes!" replied Teddy Long. "That Thing simply rose up, and was about to spring on me. I ran like the wind, and I could hear his feet pattering on the road behind me. A horrible sort of patter—and I'll swear that he was running on all fours, just like some beast of the jungle! Then I got to the school gates, and I just rushed in, and came straight to the common-room. I wanted you fellows to come out, and to hunt the thing."

"I think most of the fellows are more inclined to hunt for tea!" chuckled Ralph Leslie Fullwood. "I'm off to my study for tea, anyhow. If you'll take my advice, Handy, you'll ignore this silly yarn of Long's."

"I *am* going to ignore it," replied Handforth. "It's all piffle, from beginning to end!"

Within a minute everybody had left the common-room—leaving Teddy Long quite to himself. And, somehow, Teddy was feeling rather foolish. He wondered, vaguely, if he had seen anything at all. Perhaps it had been imagination all the time!



CHAPTER 3.

Handforth's Letter.

"WHAT'S the matter with this rotten ink?" demanded Handforth irritably.

Tea was in progress in Study D, and Handforth, who believed in doing two things at once, was writing to his pater while partaking of the meal. He had a slab of bread-and-butter in one hand, and a pen in the other. In front of him, on the table, was a writing-block, and the fact that the topmost sheet contained two or three grease-marks did not worry Handforth in the least. It is doubtful if he even saw them.

"Never knew such ink!" he went on, glaring at his pen-nib. "Has somebody been messing about with the inkpot?" He looked up, and found that Church and McClure were grinning. "What's the joke?" he demanded.

"There's no joke," replied Church gently. "But how can you expect the pen to write when you keep dipping it into your teacup, instead of into the inkpot?"

"Eh?" gasped Handforth, gazing blankly into his teacup. "Well, I'm blessed! No wonder the giddy thing wouldn't write! Anyhow, the tea must be pretty weak."

"We'd better finish feeding, and then we can clear the table," said McClure. "After all, Handy, the letter isn't urg- t——"

"Yes, it is!" insisted Handy. "It's a special letter to my pater. He's coming down on Friday, don't forget, and I want him to bring a lot of things with him."

Handforth was an optimist, and Church and McClure were inwardly amused. They had heard a few of the things that Handforth was expecting his father to bring down, and they were rather inclined to think that Sir Edward would make short work of his hopeful son's requests.

"Friday is a very important day," said Handforth reflectively.

"Yes, rather," agreed Church. "It's the day before Saturday—and Saturday is a half-holiday!"

"You silly ass!" frowned Handforth. "I didn't mean that. Friday is the eleventh of November! And, as everybody knows, the eleventh of November is Armistice Day. Now, every Armistice Day is a pretty solemn occasion—an important day for British people, all over the country. But this particular Armistice Day is trebly important for St. Frank's."

"Are you telling us something we don't know?" asked McClure. "The St. Frank's War Memorial is to be unveiled on Friday, and Major-General Osborne is coming down to the school especially for the ceremony."

"To say nothing of parents and brothers and sisters," put in Church. "We shall be crowded out, by all that I can hear—something like Prize Day. But, of course, there won't be any jollifications—because it's a serious business."

"There are the Cadets, too," went on Handy. "Most of us are Cadets, and we've got to get into uniform on Friday, and assist in the unveiling. By the way, Churchy, did you clean my tunic buttons?"

"I offered to, but you told me to go and eat coke," replied Church. "Of course, I didn't eat the coke, and I didn't polish the buttons, either. You can do that sort of thing a lot better, Handy."

Handforth grunted, and nibbled the end of his penholder.

The coming Friday was, indeed, to be an important occasion. Not only was it Armistice Day, but the St. Frank's Cadets were to appear in all their glory. There had been many rehearsals during the past week, and the Cadets were determined to make a good showing. Major-general Osborne was an Old Boy, and the fellows wanted to make a good impression.

A good many Old Boys of St. Frank's had fallen during the Great War, and at last the Memorial was completed. Nobody had officially seen it yet, but it was generally understood to be a handsome obelisk-like monument in the very centre of Inner Court. There had been very little talk about the Memorial, because Inner Court was out of bounds, and so the boys had taken little interest in the work that had been proceeding.

But now the Memorial was completed, and was waiting to be unveiled.

A very impressive ceremony had been planned out. There would be no lessons that morning, and this alone was an excellent feature of the programme. At ten forty-five, rain or sunshine, the whole school would march into Inner Court, and would form up in solemn order, complete with prefects and masters. The Cadets would then perform the most impressive part of the ceremony. At exactly eleven o'clock the bugle would sound, and then the great two-minute silence would follow. The whole school was looking forward very eagerly to the coming Friday.

"Now, lemme see," said Handforth, at last. "The most important thing I want the pater to bring is a set of new valves for my wireless. Yes, and there's a new high-tension battery wanted, too."

DON'T FORGET!

COMING SOON!

"Why not ask him to bring a new wireless set?" suggested McClure. "Since you knocked the old one off the mantelpiece, Handy, it's never been right."

"That's not a bad idea," said Handforth, with a gleam in his eye. "A portable set, eh? By George, I'll ask the pater to bring me one of those five-valve portable sets, so that we can have wireless with us in any part of the school. I can take it along in my Austin Seven, too."

"They cost about thirty quid, I believe," said Church casually.

"Eh?" said Handforth. "Thirty quid? H'm! I'm not sure whether the pater would go to——. But why not? He's got plenty of money, and I don't see why he shouldn't 'come across.' Anyhow, I'll ask him."

And he proceeded with his letter, much to the amusement of his chums. They knew perfectly well that Sir Edward Handforth was a generous man, but they also knew that, in this present year of grace, miracles were very few and far between!

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CHAPTER 4.

The Figure in the Lane!

"WELL, that's done!" Handforth thumped the flap of the envelope with satisfaction. He had written his letter, and he had sealed it up.

"I'll just pop along and drop it into the box," he said, rising to his feet. "Have you fellows got any letters?"

"No, thanks, Handy," said Church. "By the way, I suppose you know that the post has gone?"

SUPERB FREE GIFTS!

"Gone!" said Handforth, with a start.

"Of course it's gone," said Church. "The box was cleared nearly half an hour ago. You know it's always emptied at six o'clock."

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Handforth indignantly. "Why didn't you fatheads tell me before?"

"We only told you about ten times," said McClure, in a weary voice. "We kept reminding you that you only had two or three minutes, but after six o'clock had sounded we gave it up. We thought you were going to post the letter to-morrow."

"Rats!" said Handforth. "To-morrow's Thursday! Even as it is, the pater won't have much time to get all these things."

Church and McClure were of the opinion that the letter would do just as well on the morrow as this evening. There wasn't the faintest chance that Sir Edward would take any notice of the precious epistle. In all likelihood he would tear it up and throw it into the waste-paper basket. But it was no good pointing out these things to Handforth.

"We've got to go to the village now," said Edward Oswald gruffly. "Not that it'll do us any harm. Walking is the best exercise under the sun."

"Why 'we'?" asked Church.

"And why walk?" asked McClure. "Churchy and I can be getting on with our prep, while you run down in your Austin, Handy."

If Handy had thought of this idea himself, he would have considered it brilliant. But as it had come from one of his chums he immediately put his foot down on it.

"Not likely!" he said firmly. "A walk to the village will do us good. Besides, there's no reason why we shouldn't drop into the tuck-shop and sample some cakes and things. We haven't had much of a tea this evening."

"Well, of course, that's different," said McClure enthusiastically. "We'll go!"

"Rather!" agreed Church.

And so, a few minutes afterwards, they sallied out, and went to the cloak-room to get their overcoats. Just as they emerged they came face to face with Alec Duncan, of Study J. There was something about Duncan which looked unfamiliar. One of his cheeks was bulging out at an ominous angle, and he seemed to have the troubles of all the world on his shoulders, judging from the melancholy expression on his usually cheery face.

"That's a bad habit," said Handforth, pointing to Duncan's bulging cheek.

"It's not a habit," said the New Zealand junior sadly. "It's a complaint!"

"You shouldn't stick about half a pound of toffee into your mouth at once!" said Handforth severely. "It's bad for the teeth——"

"You hopeless ass!" interrupted Duncan, with a spasm of pain. "It isn't toffee! I've got a cold in my teeth or something, and my jaw has swollen. In fact, if you want to know the truth, I've got a sixty-horse-power toothache!"

Handforth's expression changed.

"Poor old scout!" he said sympathetically. "Sorry I spoke like that just now. There's nothing worse than toothache. Anything we can do?"

LOOK OUT FOR DETAILS!

"No, thanks," replied Duncan. "It may get better before long. Anyhow, I'm going to the study, and I'll have a read in front of the fire."

He went off, looking miserable and unhappy, while Handforth stood in the lobby, scratching his head.

"I wish we could do something for the

poor chap!" he said. "I know what toothache is—I've had it myself!" He suddenly brightened. "Well, we *must* go to the village now," he added. "Poor old Duncan's condition settles it, my lads! We'll call in at the chemist's, and we'll get some special toothache cure."

Handforth had forgotten all about his letter now. At heart he was one of the kindliest fellows in the whole school, and when he saw anybody in pain his one desire was to alleviate it.

The famous trio opened the lobby door, and a flurry of wind came surging in. It was a biting, penetrating wind. They went out into the Triangle, and found the leafless chestnuts waving about eerily. Overhead, dark clouds were scudding across the sky. A star was twinkling here and there, and the moon would soon make its appearance. But there was no sign of rain, and the wind was increasing in force.

"Come on," said Handforth. "There's plenty of time for us to run down to the village and back before calling-over. Brrrrrh! A raw sort of evening, though, isn't it?"

They were the only fellows in the Triangle, and they made their way across to the gates and then turned down Bellton Lane. Just as they were getting near to the wood, which loomed up black and forbidding on one side of the road, Church suddenly halted.

"What's that?" he muttered, staring rigidly.

"Eh?" said Handforth. "What's what?"

"I thought I saw something just now," said Church in a queer voice. "A sort of figure standing there, looking at us—— Yes, there it is! Can't you see?"

In the dim gloom, and over by the wood, a figure was certainly visible—a strange, unkempt kind of thing, with hunched shoulders. He was looking over the hedge at the boys, and even in this semi-darkness they could see that his eyes were gleaming with a strange light.

"My hat!" muttered Handforth. "Then Teddy Long was right!"

The same thought had struck Church and McClure. Teddy Long hadn't been yarning, as everybody had believed. There *was* something peculiar lurking in Bellton Wood!



CHAPTER 5.

The Wild Man of Bellton Wood!

THE figure stood there, strangely silent and still.

He was undoubtedly human, and yet, at the same time, he seemed grotesque. He was hatless, and his hair was waving about in the wind.

"Hey, there!" said Handforth suddenly. "Who are you? What's the idea of staring over the hedge at us like this?"

The figure turned and suddenly vanished. There was something almost uncanny in the way he disappeared. Certainly the figure could not be that of an ordinary tramp, for no tramp would act in this strange way.

"Come on!" roared Handforth. "We'll find out who he is, and what he's doing here! I'll bet he's up to no good! His game is to scare everybody who comes along the lane, and he's probably bent on mischief!"

Blunderingly Handforth charged through the hedge, and Church and McClure went after him, although they were not very enthusiastic for this chase.

They found themselves among the trees of the wood, with a carpet of dead and rotting leaves under their feet. Overhead, the branches were waving about wildly in the high wind.

"There he is!" shouted Handforth, pointing. "Come on!"

Vaguely the figure of the stranger could be seen about twenty yards away. He was standing still, looking back, and it seemed to Church and McClure that he was beckoning them on. There was something almost sinister in this affair. Who could the man be? Why was he lurking in Bellton Wood and acting in this extraordinary way?

During the summer months, perhaps, a vagrant might have made his home in the woods. The juniors well knew that there were one or two deserted huts hidden away there in the recesses of the forest. But no man would live in the wood in the month of November. There was something deeper behind all this—something significantly mysterious.

"Keep back, Handy!" urged Church. "He may be dangerous!"

But Handforth took no notice. He was ram-headed at all times, and whenever there was a mystery he wanted to investigate it at once. He charged on, and in all probability he would have come to close quarters with the stranger, only he caught his foot in a projecting root and tripped.

He went over with a tremendous crash, and Church and McClure paused. Just for a moment they saw the figure of the wild man quite clearly. There he stood, all rags and tatters, hatless and wild-eyed, and still he uttered no sound. It may have been the gloom, but Church and McClure seemed to think that the man was hideous in appearance, with a face that warned them of evil. His mouth seemed to be half open and twisted; his eyes were staring—staring.

And then he was gone!

Handforth's chums only took their attention off him for a moment, while they helped Handforth to his feet, but when they looked again the stranger was not there.

"Let's get out of here, Handy!" muttered Church. "I don't like it!"

"Didn't you catch him?" panted Handforth, painfully holding one of his arms.



Handforth seized hold of the terrified Teddy Long by the shoulder and swung him round forcibly. "Look here, you young ass!" he said. "What's all this nonsense about a wild-looking figure in Bellton Wood?"

"You silly asses! What's the good of relying——"

"Cheese it, Handy!" growled McClure. "Let's get out of this wood! You know jolly well that Church has recently had some rotten experiences here! Even now he hasn't fully recovered——"

"By George, that's true enough!" said Handforth, with a start. "All right, we'll get out. I was forgetting about you, Churchy, for the minute."

"You needn't worry about me," grunted Church, colouring. "I'm not a funk! And I've forgotten all about that other affair, too. But I don't like the look of this man. There's something—something uncanny about him. He's like some evil spirit beckoning us on into the depths of the wood!"

They reached the lane again, feeling strangely unsettled.

"It's rummy!" said Handforth at last. "The very way I tripped over was rummy. Just as though something had deliberately stopped me from reaching that figure. I once read a story about a ghost that appeared in a wood, you know. He looked just like a man, and he beckoned people on, luring them into the depths of the forest, and then they were found, weeks afterwards, dead in a kind of gully."

"Oh, chuck it!" said McClure, with a shiver. "You silly ass! What's the idea of talking like that? Let's get to the village and post your letter!"

They walked on, and by the time the lights of the village came into view they were feeling much better. Handforth, indeed, was beginning to wax enthusiastic again. He was talking about making a thorough investigation.

"The best thing we can do is to leave the whole affair alone," said Church firmly. "And when I get back to the school I shall find Teddy Long and apologise to him."

"Apologise—to Long?" said Handforth, staring.

"Yes," replied Church. "We all scoffed at him, didn't we? We all said that he was lying, and that he was a frightened rabbit. Dash it all, let's be fair to the chap! We know he's a funk, but in this particular instance he was justified. He *did* see something in the wood."

"That's true enough," agreed Handforth thoughtfully. "But Teddy Long talked about fangs and all sorts of idiotic things. I didn't see any fangs, and as far as I could make out, the man didn't have claws instead of finger-nails."

"We only saw him in the deep gloom," said McClure, with another little shiver. "But Long, you must remember, saw him in the half light of dusk. I tell you, I feel very queer about it all. He didn't seem like a man at all, you know! He was—he was—— Oh, I don't know!" he added, pulling his coat more tightly round him. "I'm not a nervous chap, but I'm feeling pretty shaky now!"

Nothing more was said after that, and the three chums continued on their way. In a few minutes they had reached the little village post-office; Handy posted his letter, and then they went inside to make one or two purchases.



CHAPTER 6.

More Evidence!

AFTER coming out of that cosily lighted post-office, Handforth & Co. felt slightly better. It had been warm and cheerful in there, and now they were ready to face the homeward walk without any feelings of nervousness.

The wind was blowing gustily down the village street, and the glowing lights from the shops were very attractive.

A burly form loomed up and hesitated for a moment. He had touched the peak of his cap, and the chums of Study D recognised Joe Catchpole, the good-natured foreman of Holt's Farm.

"'Evenin', young gents!" said Joe, with a curious kind of restraint.

"Good-evening, Joe!" said Handforth. "What's the matter? Your voice isn't as hearty as usual. Worried over something?"

"Well, not exactly, Master Handforth," said Joe Catchpole, scratching his beard. "The fact is, I was just wonderin' if you young gents are goin' to walk back to the school?"

"Yes, we are," said Handforth. "Why?"

"I don't hardly like to say much," replied Joe, lowering his voice. "But if so be as you are passin' along the lane agin Bellton Wood, I'd advise ye to make haste over it. There's no sense in lingerin' near that wood on a dark night like this 'ere!"

The three juniors stared at the farm labourer curiously.

"What the dickens do you mean, Joe?" said Handforth bluntly.

"Nothin' much, young gent," replied Catchpole. "But you know what it is. There might be a tramp spring on ye, or somethin' of that sort. It's best to be cautious nowadays."

"Look here, Joe—out with it!" put in McClure. "What have you heard about the wood? We might as well tell you that we've just seen something very rummy in the wood," he added. "We saw a sort of figure—a queer, wild man——"

"Lor' sakes!" ejaculated Joe. "Ye mean ye've seen him?"

"Him?" repeated Handforth.

"Ay, *him!*" said Joe, lowering his voice still more. "Him that's bin frightenin' people hereabouts for the last two or three days. Folks haven't liked to say much, but there's a rare queer crittur hangin' about the countryside. Some say as he's a man, some say he's a ghost. I dunno, young gents. Personally, I ain't seen 'im—an' don't want to, neither, if it comes to that! But there's them as says that the thing ain't rightly human."

"My only hat!" muttered Church.

"I don't want to make ye narvous," went on Joe uncomfortably. "At the same time, young gents, since ye've seen *him*, ye might as well know the rest. There's Tom Belcher, now. Tom swears as how this crittur is a kind of demon—with horns, too!"

"Horns!" ejaculated Handforth, with a gulp.

"Ay, that's what Tom says!" went on Joe Catchpole. "'Taint as though I believe him, though, for Tom's an imaginative sort of cove. Still, he swears he saw——"

At this moment two running figures were seen. There was something significant in their abrupt arrival—particularly at that moment. Presently they came closer, and Handforth & Co. could see that they were Harry Gresham and Alec Duncan, of the Remove. Both of them were breathless.

"Is that you, Handy?" panted Gresham, as he came to a halt. "Oh, my hat! We've just seen something along the lane, you know—that wild man that Teddy Long was talking about!"

"There ye are, young gents!" said Joe Catchpole. "What did I tell ye? He's strikin' terror into the whole district! There ain't much said, mind ye! Folks don't like to talk—'cept in whispers. But there's not a woman in this village as would move out o' doors arter dark. Ay, an' there's not a woman, neither, who would allow any of her kiddies to step over the threshold!"

Handforth took a grip on himself.

"What did you see, Gresham?" he demanded.

"We don't quite know," replied Harry. "Alec has a bad toothache, and I persuaded him to come down to the chemist's——"

"That reminds me," said Handforth. "I was just going to the chemist's, to get something for Duncan's toothache."

"Bother that now," said Gresham. "We were coming past Bellton Wood, when we saw a man staring over the hedge at us; when we spoke to him, he didn't answer—he only looked at us. He didn't wear a hat, and his eyes were strange. Then, suddenly, he jumped at us!"

"He jumped at you?" said Church.

"Yes!" put in Alec Duncan. "Neither Harry nor I are nervous chaps, but I don't mind admitting that we bunked. There was something horrid about that figure, you fellows! He just stood there, without saying a word, and suddenly he leapt at us. We didn't wait—we simply bolted. He looked like some creature out of a nightmare!"

Joe Catchpole glanced nervously over his shoulder.

"Best not say too much, young gents," he said warningly. "It won't do no good to spread this 'ere story. Things are bad enough already."

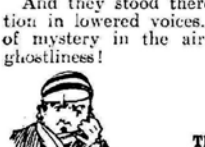
"There's nothing to be afraid of," said Handforth gruffly. "Why doesn't somebody tell the policeman?"

"He's bin told a'ready," replied Joe. "Not as Sparrow is very much good on a job like this. Why, he don't like to go on 'is beat a-

nights now! Folks are sayin' that Sparrow steers clear o' Bellton Lane."

"I don't blame him!" muttered Harry Gresham. "Even though he is a policeman, he's only human—and I'm not sure whether that thing we saw is human!"

And they stood there, discussing the situation in lowered voices. There was a feeling of mystery in the air—a sensation of eerie ghostliness!



CHAPTER 7.

The Deepening Mystery!

"WELL, it's no good standing here!" said Handforth, at last. "We'd better make a move, hadn't we?"

"Yes, I suppose so," said Church slowly.

The others were silent.

"We've got to get back to the school for calling-over," went on Handforth, "and there's no way of getting to St. Frank's except by the lane—unless we go all the way round by the towing-path, and that's just as bad, because we've got to skirt the wood. Besides, what's the good of being frightened?"

"Not a bit of good," said Harry Gresham. "Anyhow, there are five of us."

"I dunno as ye oughtn't to 'ave protection, young gents," said Joe Catchpole. "It might be a good idea to get some of the men together, an' we'll all escort ye up to the school."

"That's very kind of you, Joe—and very decent, too," said Handforth gruffly. "But we don't want an escort. We're not frightened babies!"

"Sorry, Master Handforth," said Joe. "I was on'y suggestin' of it. Folks are sayin' as there's real danger in the lane arter dark, an'——"

"Oh, you know what these village people are," interrupted Handforth. "They get all sorts of rummy ideas. Personally, I don't think there's any danger at all."

Joe Catchpole, after a few more words, touched his cap, and moved on. He was obviously very uncomfortable, and he was probably just a little scared, too. For in spite of Joe's bulk and brawn, he was superstitious. Like most of the other villagers, he had an idea that the thing in Bellton Wood was other than human.

"Well, come on," said Handforth. "Let's go to the chemist, and see about your toothache mixture, Duncan."

"Yes," said Alec Duncan. "I didn't want to come, but Harry made me. I don't suppose the chemist will be able to do me any good."

"He wouldn't report to the doctor," growled Harry. "I told him he ought to go into the sanny——"

"Rats!" said Handforth. "Fancy going into the sanny because of a toothache! I know it's painful, but there's no need to make too much fuss of it!"

"Just what I say," agreed Duncan. "I shall be all right before long."

They went into the chemist's, and that gentleman provided Alec Duncan with a potent mixture which was guaranteed to remove the pain within ten minutes. Alec was not very impressed, but he took the stuff, and the juniors then sallied once more into the night. Duncan had his face well wrapped up with a muffler, and as long as he kept on the go there was no danger of him catching a chill, to add to his pains.

"The wind's a bit high, but the weather looks like keeping fine," said Handforth, as they marched along. "Pretty good for the unveiling of the memorial, eh? Let's hope it keeps fine over Friday. It'll be an awful frost if it pours with rain during the ceremony."

"Yes, rather," said Gresham.

"Oh, what's the use?" growled McClure. "Why talk about Armistice Day when we're all thinking about that figure in the wood?"

This was true enough. Handforth had attempted to lead the conversation into pleasant channels, but all their thoughts were of the mysterious occupant of Bellton Wood. They had now reached the bottom of the lane, and for quite a little distance they would have to pass alongside the wood.

"Well, let's be ready for it—that's all," said Handforth, as he gripped his fists. "If he springs on us, we won't run. We'll face him—and grab him!"

"That's the idea," agreed Church. "Then we shall know for certain."

"Know what for certain?"

"We shall know whether he's human—or—or——"

"Oh, chuck it!" said Handforth. "Of course he's human! You don't believe these silly village yarns, do you? As for Tom Belcher, it must have been his silly imagination."

"What about Tom Belcher?" asked Gresham curiously.

"Why, Joe Catchpole told us that Tom saw this Thing—and Tom says that it has horns!" said Church. "I don't believe it, and——"

"Let's talk about something else," interrupted Duncan, holding a hand to his swollen face. "My toothache, for example. I can't understand why it's giving me so much pain. There isn't a decayed tooth, as far as I can see. I suppose I must have got a cold in the nerve."

And so they went on, talking on general subjects—but keeping their eyes turned towards the black mass of Bellton Wood, ready for any sudden attack. They were on tenterhooks—waiting for the appearance of that wild man. They all expected to see him—they were all convinced, in their own minds, that the strange creature would spring out.

But they walked on, and nothing unusual happened.

At last they got clear of the wood, and there were meadows on either side of them. They had seen nothing out of the common. Now and again one or two of the juniors had noticed a waving tree branch, and his heart had jumped into his mouth, but such incidents as this had been inevitable. Their nerves were on edge, and they were inclined to be fanciful.

The very wildness of the night added to the eeriness of the situation. The wind was high, and now the moon had appeared, low in the sky. At times, the swiftly moving clouds would cover the moon's face, and dense shadows would fall; all the time, too, came the buffeting of the wind.

But the juniors reached the gates of St. Frank's quite safely, and they were all relieved when they walked into the Ancient House. There was something cheery in the glow of the electric lights, and they breathed a sigh of relief as the heavy door closed behind them. They were in now—and that mysterious creature of Bellton Wood was shut out!



CHAPTER 8.

Handforth Isn't Satisfied!

REGGIE PITT, the genial skipper of the West House section of the Remove, strolled into the Ancient House Common-room with Jack Grey, Nicodemus Trotwood, Fatty Little and one or two other prominent West House juniors.

"What's this—an invasion?" asked Nipper, smiling.

"No," said Reggie. "We've come across to make a few inquiries. What are these rumours we keep hearing about a ghost? Some of the chaps are saying that you fellows have seen a monster in Bellton Wood."

"That's right!" said Teddy Long. "That's just the word—monster! He's not human at all—he's a horrible creature of the night!"

"Sounds interesting," said Nicodemus Trotwood. "Who's seen this apparition?"

"I have!" replied Teddy. "In fact, I was the first St. Frank's chap to see him, but I was jeered at and laughed at! But Handforth and Gresham and lots of others have seen the Thing now! They've apologised!"

Teddy Long was making the most of the limelight now.

"Yes, I saw the monster!" he continued. "He looks a bit like a man, but he isn't a man. I saw him in the dusk, and the other chaps only saw him in the darkness. So I know better than they do!"

"Look here, you jabbering ass," said Gresham. "We can tell these West House fellows——"

"Not likely!" said Long. "I know best! This awful Thing has got claws instead of finger nails, and there are terrible fangs in his mouth—just like a dog! He's got horns sticking out his head, and——"

"Rats!" said Handforth. "You didn't tell us anything about the horns, Teddy—until you heard Gresham telling the other chaps what Joe Catchpole had said!"

"But there were horns!" insisted Teddy Long. "I saw them distinctly! I can remember them now!"

Reggie Pitt chuckled.

"Well, having heard this fanciful piece of fiction, what about the truth?" he asked, looking at the other juniors. "We thought we should be able to get some information over here."

"I'm afraid you won't get much," smiled Nipper. "I agree about the fanciful fiction. Don't take any notice of Teddy Long—or of the villagers' yarns. In fact, the less discussion on this subject, the better."

"Hear, hear!"

"Let's talk about the programme for next Friday!"

"Or football!"

But Handforth waved all the juniors into silence.

"I've been thinking!" he announced. "And, what's more, I've come to the conclusion that we ought to do something. This wild man of the woods has been terrifying the neighbourhood, by what we can hear, and it's got to come to a stop!"

"But what can we do?" asked Nipper.

"Lots!" replied Edward Oswald. "For example, about a dozen of us can go into the wood with torches, and thoroughly search it. That's my idea. It seems to me that an investigation is absolutely necessary—and the sooner we make it, the better. So let's get a lot of torches, and then set out——"

"Squash him, somebody," said Fullwood.

"I'm not going to be squashed!" roared Handforth. "I call for volunteers!"

Nobody obliged.

"What's the matter with you?" demanded Handforth, glaring round. "Are you all frightened?"

Nipper grinned.

"You can't trap us like that, Handy," he said, shaking his head. "I agree with you that some sort of investigation is necessary, but—not to-night!"

"Why not?"

"Because it's after locking up."

"Are you afraid of breaking bounds?" demanded Handforth tartly.

"You know I'm not!" replied Nipper. "But I don't see any reason why a whole crowd of us should get into trouble with the Housemaster for nothing. And why explore the wood in the darkness, when we can explore it so much better in daylight? We'll have an investigation, but we'll wait until to-morrow. Then we'll go through the wood carefully, and explore it. If this wild man is really human, we shall find him."

"You'll never find him!" said Teddy Long, with a shiver. "He's not human! He only comes out at night—in the darkness!"

"Five minutes ago you said you saw him in the dusk!" remarked Reggie Pitt.

"Well, it's the same thing," said Teddy Long. "All these ghostly things appear as soon as the dusk falls!"

"Any more of that talk, you silly young chump, and I'll punch your head!" said Handforth aggressively. "You're as bad as the superstitious villagers! I call for volunteers—now! And if any of you chaps have got pluck, you'll stand forward!"

There were many grins, but nobody volunteered. Handforth's idea was too drastic. There was no earthly reason for the juniors to go out now, and condemn themselves to a certain gating, or a swishing. Naturally, official permission would be refused—and if they broke bounds they would have to suffer the consequences. Apart from all this, nobody felt inclined to penetrate Bellton Wood during the hours of darkness.

"All right—we'll go without you!" said Handforth aggressively. "By George, that's what we'll do! We'll hold this investigation on our own!"

"We?" said Church. "Who do you mean by 'we'?"

"You and Mac and me, of course!"

"Nothing doing!" said McClure.

"Absolutely nothing!" agreed Church.

"Do you mean to say that you chaps defy me?" roared Handforth. "Are you going to rebel against my authority?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Everybody roared at the tone of incredulity in Handy's voice.

"Are you?" thundered Handforth, glaring at his chums.

Church and McClure looked at one another, grinned, then nodded.

"It is sad, but true!" said Church. "As a rule, Handy, we'll stand by you, but now and again we find it necessary to rebel. We're rebelling now!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The expression on Handforth's face was quite comical; but Church and McClure were firm, and the famous leader of Study D found himself without any supporters. Even his own chums had failed him.

And so the investigation of Bellton Wood was abandoned!



CHAPTER 9.

Too Much Sympathy!

"PAINFUL, old man?" asked Nipper gently.

"Yes, a bit," said Alec Duncan, with a wry smile. "But I expect I shall be all right in the morning. Once I'm asleep, thank goodness, I shall be relieved."

"Yes; let's hope you'll get to sleep quickly," replied Nipper, nodding. "Good-night, old son!"

It was bed-time, and the juniors were in the Remove dormitory passage. Alec Duncan and Harry Gresham turned into their own little bedroom, and Harry looked at his New Zealand chum anxiously.

"You ought to have seen Dr. Brett," he said. "You're an obstinate ass, you know, Alec. Are all you New Zealand chaps like that?"

"Not all of us," smiled Duncan. "But I rather fancy we all hate making a fuss over a trivial complaint."

"That's the worst of toothache," said Harry. "It seems trivial, but it gives you a fearful twisting. Why, you can get more pain from an aching tooth than from a broken leg!"

The door opened, and Handforth looked in.

"H'm!" he said, inspecting Alec critically. "You look worse!"

"Thanks!" said Alec. "Did you come here to make me feel cheerful?"

"I came here to offer you some advice," said Handforth, marching into the dormitory, and shutting the door. "And I came here to be sympathetic, too."

"You've started well, haven't you?" growled Harry Gresham.

"I believe in telling the truth," retorted Handforth, going closer to Duncan, and looking at him searchingly. "Yes, old man, the swelling is increasing! The left side of your face is about three times as big as it ought to be!"

"Why tell me?" asked Duncan, with a glare. "Do you think I'm blind? I can't look anywhere without my face obstructing the view!"

"What about that stuff you bought at the chemist's?"

FREE GIFTS COMING—

When are they coming? What are they? Ah-a, that's got you interested, hasn't it? Well, they're metal models of—the world's fastest racing cars! How's that? Something novel, eh; something that no other paper has ever given away. Turn to page 30 and you will get some idea of what our first magnificent Free Gift looks like.

—IN A FORTNIGHT'S TIME!

"It's no good," growled Duncan. "I put some on, but it's made no difference. It's the nerve, I tell you, and all the toothache mixture in the world won't make any difference to it. I shall have to wait until the nerve has lost its inflammation. Once I'm asleep, I shall be able to rest the nerve properly."

"And the sooner you get to sleep the better," put in Harry.

But Handforth refused to take the hint.

"It's all very well to talk about getting to sleep, but how do you know that you can do it?" he asked. "The chances are that you'll lie in bed, tossing about from side to side, and suffering mortal agonies. I've had toothache myself, and I know what it is! You won't get any sleep, Duncan. After lying in bed for a bit, you'll get out and pace up and down the room, and wish you were dead!"

"And you came in here to sympathise?" asked Harry, glaring.

"Yes, I did," replied Handforth.

"Then the best thing you can do is to take your sympathy somewhere else!" said Harry indignantly. "You're a fine kind of comfort, aren't you? Here's poor Alec with a jawache like a throbbing motor-car engine, and all you can do is to tell him that he'll wish he is dead!"

"I'm not talking to you," said Handforth coldly. "Now, Duncan—undress!"

"It's not a bad idea," said Alec, removing his jacket.

"Undress and get into bed!" ordered Handforth authoritatively. "I'm going to massage you!"

"You're going to do what?"

"Massage you!" replied Handforth. "There's nothing like massage, my son! As soon as you're in bed, I'll get busy on your face——"

"Thanks all the same, but your style of massaging doesn't quite appeal to me," said Alec. "I don't want to hurt your feelings, old man, but your hand is like the hind leg of a mule. It's just about as tender and gentle as a bootscraper!"

"Don't you want me to massage you?" asked Handforth in surprise.

"I'd rather have the toothache, thanks all the same!" replied Duncan.

Handforth stared.

"Then all I can say is, you're a spoofer!" he said indignantly. "You can't have much of a toothache if you won't let me massage your giddy face!"

"Sometimes the remedy is worse than the disease—and I seem to think that this is one of those times," replied Duncan. "Why waste so much sympathy on me, Handy? I've heard nothing else but my jawache all the evening! Nobody will allow me to forget it. And that's the most important thing in a case of toothache. If the patient is only allowed to forget it, he might obtain some rest. I'm awfully grateful to you for your kindly thoughts, but, all the same, do you mind clearing off?"

"Yes, chuck it, Handy!" protested Harry.

"All right, I've finished!" said Handforth indignantly. "If you won't let me help you, you can jolly well have the toothache!"

"Thanks!" said Alec. "Good-night!"

"This is all the gratitude I get for coming in here and offering to massage you!" said Handforth heatedly. "I don't believe in these obstinate people! They won't take advice from anybody, and they won't listen to reason. You *deserve* to suffer!"

And Handforth went off, very ruffled. His departure was a signal for Alec Duncan's sufferings to diminish considerably!



CHAPTER 10.

The Thing in the Moonlight!

"OH, crumbs!"

The New Zealand junior tossed about in bed restlessly, and at last he sat up, holding his face in an excess of agony.

It did not comfort him in the least to realise that Edward Oswald Handforth had spoken the truth. For it was an absolute fact that Duncan's pain was so intense that he had been unable to obtain any rest. He had rolled from side to side, he had shifted his position a hundred times. He had got out of bed, and had paced up and down, only wearily to get back between the sheets again.

It was after midnight now, and the poor junior was tortured. Everybody knows the terrible agonies of toothache—when a tooth really starts to behave itself in that abominable way which only teeth can. There is probably no worse agony than a really aggressively aching tooth.

The worst of it was, Duncan couldn't have the offending molar extracted. He didn't know which one it was—for the whole side of his face was giving him beans, and, as far as he knew, all his teeth were sound. This was quite wrong, for one of them, at all events, must have been decayed at the roots. Later on, when the inflammation had gone down, a dentist would operate, and would probably find the seat of the trouble.

But for to-night there was no relief for Duncan. In his desperation he tried everything.

One is apt to act strangely when suffering from toothache. Duncan even stood on his head. This had a devastating effect for the time being. It felt as though his whole face was about to explode. The throbbing in his tooth was so agonising that the tears sprang into his eyes. The blood, rushing to his head, pumped through his veins with tremendous force, and the affected nerve was furiously agitated. As a consequence, the unhappy junior felt quite relieved when he assumed a normal position.

"Phew! That's better!" he muttered. "The pain's almost gone now, thank goodness!"

But he was wrong, of course. It was only the normal pain—although it seemed much less after the dreadful agony he had just suffered. Very soon, it struck him that he was just as bad as ever, so he got off the bed, and filled his mouth with cold water. The shock was terrific, but he obtained further relief for a few moments after he had gulped the water down.

Then he paced up and down once more, and did all sorts of extraordinary things.

He ducked his whole head into cold water, and found that this had little or no effect. He dried himself, and went across to the radiator. It was still quite warm, and he pressed his aching face against it.

"By jingo, why didn't I think of this before?" he muttered. "Good egg! The pain's gone now—absolutely gone! I'll stay here all night!"

But after a couple of minutes he decided that he had been a little too hasty. The relief he obtained was only temporary. The warm radiator, although effective at first, soon lost its charm. Indeed, he began to realise that the pain was worse than ever.

So he went to the window, and pressed his face against the icy cold pane. And then, while he was doing this, he suddenly forgot his toothache altogether.

It was moonlight outside, and he could see every inch of the West Square with startling distinctness. The wind was shooting through West Arch, and there were deep shadows over there. But as Duncan glanced absentmindedly out of the window, he saw a figure—a strange, grotesque-looking thing. It emerged from the blackness of West Arch, and stood there in the moonlight.

"Oh, my goodness!" panted Duncan. "That wild man of the woods!"

Harry Gresham stirred, and then sat up.

"Hallo!" he said, wide awake in a moment. "Poor old scout! As bad as all that? Can't you sleep?"

"Come and look here!" muttered Duncan tensely. "Quick, Harry!"

"Why, what on earth——"

"Look!" insisted Alec.

Harry Gresham got out of bed quickly. There was an urgent note in his chum's voice. Duncan stood there, still staring at that thing in the moonlight. It resembled a man, but yet, at the same time, it seemed inhuman. Rags and tatters were blowing in the wind, and the creature's hair was waving wildly. He stood quite still—like some grim sentinel of the night.

"Come on!" urged Duncan, with a glance at his companion. "I saw it quite by accident, and——"

"Saw what?" said Harry, staring out of the window.

"The figure!" replied Duncan. "There he is—— Why, he's gone!" he added blankly.

With a gasp of amazement, Alec Duncan looked at the spot down in the Square. The mysterious figure was no longer in evidence. He had gone—completely!

"Are you sure you saw something?" asked Gresham, looking at his chum rather anxiously.

"Yes, of course I saw it!" said Alec. "I can't understand how—— It's a complete mystery!" he went on, in a strange voice. "He was there a second ago, and I only turned round to glance at you. It was that wild man of the woods, Harry!"

"It was more probably your imagination!" growled Harry Gresham. "What were you doing out of bed, anyhow? How's your toothache?"

Duncan started.

"Well, I'm blessed!" he ejaculated. "I'd forgotten all about my toothache! Doesn't that just show you! As soon as you forget a pain, you don't even notice it! Now that I'm talking about my beastly tooth again, it's aching like the dickens!"



CHAPTER 11.

Handforth's New Remedy!

"URRRRH-uggh!"

It was a sinister enough sound, and it was proceeding from Edward Oswald Handforth's bed. Church, who was not a particularly heavy sleeper, sat up in bed and stared at his leader in sudden alarm.

"Handy!" he shouted. "What's the matter with you, you ass?"

McClure awoke with a start.

"Eh?" he mumbled, sitting up. "Hallo! What's wrong?"

"Urrrrh-ugggggh!"

That sound from Handforth's bed was repeated—and this time it was louder and more menacing. Church and McClure, leaping out of their own beds, stared at Handforth in horror. The moonlight was shining full upon the leader of Study D, and he was contorted into a queer knot, with his knees almost up to his chin. His face, clearly discernible in the moonlight, was screwed up agonisingly.

"Great Scott!" gasped Church. "He's having a fit!"

"Let's shout for help!" said McClure desperately.

"Wait a minute—perhaps we can do something!" said Church. "Water—quick! I've heard cold water is good when a chap's having a fit. And first-aid means everything! It may be too late if we call for help!"

McClure leapt across the room, and seized the water carafe. He swung back, and emptied the icy contents with a gurgling gush over Handforth's countenance.

The effect was instantaneous.

Handforth assumed a more normal attitude,

and he sat up, gasping like a freshly landed fish.

"Wooooosh!" he gasped. "What the—how the—— Brrrrrh! Oh, crumbs! What's happened? Where am I?"

"Handy!" panted Church. "Are you all right?"

Handforth came to himself, and he gave a roar of indignation.

"Who swamped me with water?" he bellowed.

"I did!" said Church. "That is to say—we did!"

"Both of us!" said McClure.

"You crazy lunatics!" snorted Handforth. "Do you think it's funny to dash cold water into a chap's face when he's asleep? I'm drenched! I'm soaked to the skin! My bed's simply swamped with water!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Church. "It's only a bit damp!"

"Damp!" howled Handforth, as his hand sogged into a pool of moisture. "You—you—you—you——"

Words failed him, and he groped about for a towel.

"We thought you were having a fit, Handy," explained McClure. "You were making the most awful noises, you know! Terrible sounds!"

"By George!" said Handforth, staring fixedly at his chums.

"What's the matter?" asked McClure.

"I remember now!" muttered Handforth. "I was having a dream!"

"Sure it wasn't a nightmare?"

"It must have been a nightmare," agreed Handforth, with a gulp. "Oh, my goodness! No wonder I made rummy sounds!"

"You were all screwed up in bed, too," said Church. "You were contorted and——"

"Who wouldn't be?" demanded Handforth. "Some idiot was shoving a red-hot needle into one of my teeth!"

"Oh, chuck it!"

"It's a fact," said Handforth. "I read about it somewhere once. Or somebody told me—I don't remember. Anyhow, I've heard that it's a jolly good remedy for an aching tooth to get a needle red-hot and push it right down into the nerve. The red-hot needle kills the nerve, and your toothache goes."

"It *was* a nightmare!" said McClure, with a shudder.

"You silly ass! I read about that months ago," said Handforth. "And Duncan's jawache, I suppose, made me dream. I dreamt that I was tied down to a chair in the middle of the Triangle, and half a dozen wild men were jamming a red-hot knitting needle into my pet tooth!"

"Well, thank goodness it was nothing worse," said Church, with relief. "We can get back to bed again—and I jolly well hope you don't have any more nightmares. You gave me a terrific fright."

"Me, too," said McClure.

By this time Handforth had dried himself, and he was so full of the idea that had been given to him by his dream that he forgot all about his soaked bed. And Church and McClure were much relieved, although they feared that trouble would be coming later on.

"Of course, that's the very idea!" said Handforth, with a nod. "Where's my dressing-gown? And where can we find a red-hot needle?"

"That's the worst of red-hot needles—a chap can never find one!" said McClure sarcastically. "Ordinary needles—yes. But red-hot needles seem to have a way of eluding us. Of course, you can put one in a fire and get it red-hot——"

"I don't want any of your rot!" interrupted Handforth, frowning. "I'm serious! As soon as I've found a needle I'm going to get it red-hot, and then I'm going to shove it into Duncan's mouth!"

"What?"

"It'll cure his toothache in a tick!" said Handforth firmly. "It's the only remedy that will put him right."

"Judging by the sounds you were making, it'll polish him off altogether!" said Church indignantly. "You were only dreaming about it, Handy, and you're proposing to do the thing in real earnest on Duncan. You'll find yourself in the dock, answering a charge of murder. You can't operate on the chap like that!"

"Can't I?" said Handforth. "We'll see about that! We'll find a needle, then we'll go straight to Duncan's bedroom, and we'll get busy. In fact, it wouldn't be a bad idea to shove the needle into his tooth while he's still asleep. In that way he won't know anything about it."

"Well, I'm jiggered!" muttered Church, as Handforth strode out of the dormitory. "He believes it, Mac! He really believes that he can do this deed!"

"It's a pity we ever woke him up!" McClure said despairingly.



CHAPTER 12.

The Night Intruder!

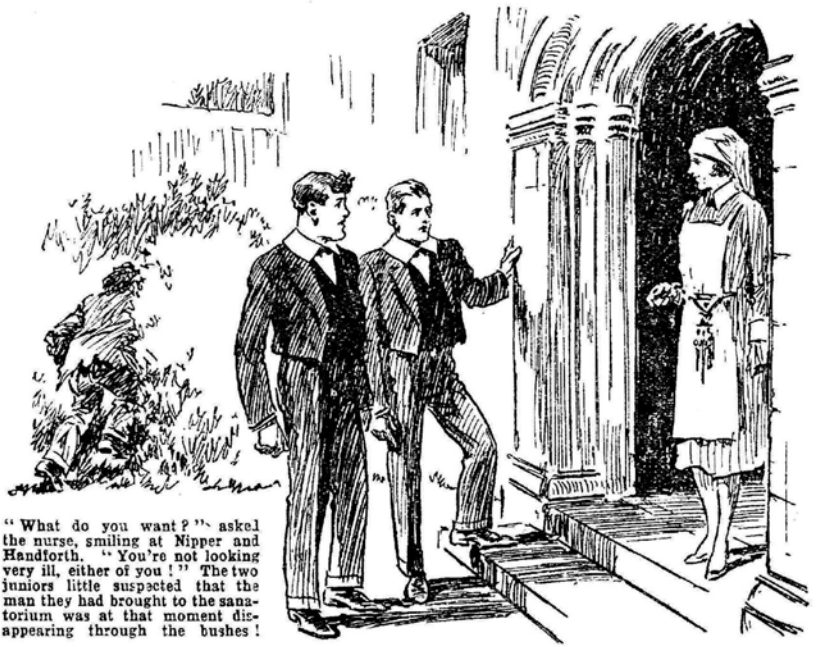
HANDFORTH, full of his latest "cure" for Alec Duncan, strode down the Remove dormitory passage, and opened the door of the bed-room that was shared by Gresham and Duncan. He was rather surprised to find the electric light gleaming. Gresham and Duncan were not only wide awake, but they were out of bed.

"Hallo! You fellows awake?" asked Handforth, looking at them in astonishment.

"What do you think we are, then—somnabulists?" said Gresham. "For goodness' sake go back to bed, Handy! We had enough of you before lights-out!"

Handforth frowned.

"I've come here with a remedy for Dun-



"What do you want?" asked the nurse, smiling at Nipper and Handforth. "You're not looking very ill, either of you!" The two juniors little suspected that the man they had brought to the sanatorium was at that moment disappearing through the bushes!

can's toothache," he said. "I expect it's still pretty bad, isn't it?"

"Awful!" said Duncan. "I couldn't sleep because of it. I kept tossing about and——"

"I knew it!" broke in Handforth triumphantly. "Well, it's your own fault—you wouldn't take any advice from me. But if you want to get relief for the rest of the night, I'll tell you what to do."

"Go ahead!" said Duncan wearily.

"First of all, you must get a needle, and then you must make it red-hot—white-hot, in fact," said Handforth. "Or, to be more exact, I'll do all that."

"That's very good of you," said Duncan. "And what then?"

"Then you'll have to sit in a chair and let me operate."

"It sounds thrilling," said Duncan.

"It sounds pretty murderous," put in Harry Gresham. "Any other fellow with a red-hot needle would be dangerous enough. But imagine Handy with such a thing!"

"Dry up!" said Handforth, frowning. "Duncan won't know anything about it—after the first second."

"Yes, but what about that second?" said Alec.

"You'll just feel a sort of spasm, and it'll be all over," replied Handforth briskly. "You see, the idea is quite simple. I'm going to shove that red hot needle right down into your tooth, and this'll have the effect of killing the nerve."

"Are you sure it won't kill me altogether?" asked Duncan.

"Of course it won't!" said Handforth. "Well, what about that needle? Any needle will do, and——"

"It's a funny thing," said Duncan, "but my tooth is a lot better now."

"Eh?"

"Heaps better," said Duncan firmly. "In fact, it's so much better that I needn't trouble you at all, Handy!"

The New Zealand junior was speaking the truth. Perhaps it was the recent excitement that had brought him relief. Perhaps it was the prospect of having a red-hot needle stuck into his tooth. Anyhow, the pain was so greatly reduced that he was feeling happy. He was aware of a sensation of buoyancy. He wanted to jump about, and to sing. Everybody who has had acute toothache will appreciate Duncan's emotions.

"Your toothache's better?" said Handforth, staring.

"Heaps."

"Then it's a swindle!" said Edward Oswald indignantly. "I take all the trouble to come here, and——"

The door, which had been left ajar, now opened, and Church and McClure came dashing in. Both of them were looking startled, and, indeed, slightly pale.

"There's something moving downstairs," whispered Church hoarsely.

"What?" ejaculated Handforth.

"It's a fact!" said McClure. "We were waiting for you, Handy, and we heard something—a sort of scraping, shuffling noise."

Gresham and Duncan exchanged rapid glances.

"My only hat!" muttered Duncan.

"He's *indoors!*" said Harry Gresham breathlessly.

"Eh? What's that?" said Handforth. "Who's indoors?"

"*He* is!"

"Who's he?" said Handforth. "What the dickens——"

"You remember that wild man of the woods?" whispered Gresham. "You saw him, Handy, didn't you?"

"Yes, of course—but——"

"Well, when Duncan had the jawache so badly he went to the window," explained Harry, "and he saw that wild man standing down there in the square. But when he called me the figure had gone. It had vanished as though by some sort of magic."

"Oh, my goodness!" said Church, closing the door and putting his back against it. "Then—then we heard—— That thing is indoors, here—actually in the Ancient House! What shall we do?"

"Do?" said Handforth. "Why, we'll go after him, of course! What did you expect us to do?"

"Yes, but it's all dark, and—and——"

"It won't be dark for long," interrupted Handforth. "We know where the electric light switches are, and we'll soon discover who this 'monster' really is. He's had the nerve to come into the Ancient House, has he? By George!" he added, with a start. "I've just had an idea! I'll bet he's a burglar!"

"It's the first time I knew that burglars showed themselves in the full moonlight—before cracking a crib," said Duncan tartly. "Perhaps it's a new fashion!"

"Well, anyhow, let's go out on the landing and listen," said Handforth. "It's a chance for us to nab the fellow. We'll catch him red-handed, then we'll rouse the house, and Mr. Lee or somebody can telephone to the police."

Before the others could stop him Handforth had opened the door, and was creeping out. They had no alternative but to follow. With their hearts thumping against their ribs, they padded down the passage, and at last they came to the landing. Everything was dark and mysterious below. They couldn't even see the stairs, although a patch of moonlight was slanting in through one of the lower windows of the lobby.

"Listen!" breathed Church.

For a moment or two they stood tense and rigid, and then came a sound. It was a curious shuffling noise—sinister and eerie. It seemed to be almost below them right in the lobby.

Then abruptly it ceased, and a silence, broken only by the echo of the howling wind outside, followed.



CHAPTER 13.

The Alarm!

NOBODY spoke for a moment to two. The five juniors were listening—half expecting that sound to be repeated. But nothing reached their ears except the buffeting of the wind round the old buildings.

"What was it?" whispered Gresham, at last.

"Goodness knows!" breathed Church. "But it sounded like something brushing against the wall downstairs."

"Well, it's no good wasting time here!" said Handforth impulsively. "Come on—all together!"

With one of his characteristic plunges, he rushed down the stairs, and fondly believed that all the juniors were just behind him. But they were not quite so ramheaded as Handforth, and they hung back, hardly realising what he had done.

"Wait, Handy!" gasped Church. "It may be dangerous——"

"He's gone!" said Gresham.

He was right. Handforth was downstairs in the lobby, and he was groping about for the electric light switch. He knew exactly where it was, but in the gloom he couldn't quite locate it. And while he was still trying to find the switch, something brushed against him.

"What was that?" he gasped, leaping round.

He felt rooted to the spot. Something was pressing against him—a kind of hand gripped his arm, and he could hear something breathing. But the darkness was so intense that Handforth could see absolutely nothing. It seemed to him that an earthy odour came to his nostrils, and his excited imagination led him to believe that the grip on his arm was that of a claw—and not of a hand.

The Thing passed on, and Handforth found himself in possession of his faculties again.

"Hi!" he bellowed. "Help, you chaps—help! It's here!"

"Put the light on!" roared two or three voices.

"I would—but I can't find it!" panted Handforth. "I can't find the place——"

He heard a clatter of feet on the stairs, and then came a number of yells; for the juniors, as they descended, felt something brushing past them. It seemed to be going upstairs, and yet in that gloom—— Snap!

Handforth had found the switch, and he pressed it down. The lobby was flooded with light, and the juniors blinked in the glare, momentarily blinded. But when they looked round, there was nothing to be seen except the old familiar surroundings, and themselves. Of the strange Presence there was no sign!

"Oh, what was it?" shouted Church. "I felt it against me just now—it brushed past me as it went upstairs, and—and I thought I smelt something earthy, too!"

"That's what I smelt," said Handforth. "And look! There's some mud on the stairs! By George! It couldn't have been anything ghostly after all! Ghosts don't leave footprints behind them!"

They all stared at the marks, and, at the same time, they felt relieved. For this proved, without question, that the visitant was very material.

"Look!" shouted McClure suddenly.

His voice was so fraught with excitement that the others jumped into the air. They saw that McClure was staring upwards—towards the top of the stairs. And then they, too, uttered exclamations.

For there, on the top of the stairs, stood an extraordinary creature. Only for a flash did he remain. It was as though the juniors had received a photographic snapshot of the thing.

They saw a sort of human being, dressed in rags and tatters, with wild, unkempt hair. It was trailing over his forehead, and the lower part of his face was covered with a stubble of beard. His eyes were staring—staring uncannily—and right across his face there was a terrible disfigurement. One side of his mouth was twisted up, and——

But the juniors could see no more.

For the creature had turned, and was gone. In a flash, indeed, he had vanished!

"After him!" shouted Handforth excitedly. "I told you he wasn't a ghost, didn't I? He's a burglar! It's just a ruse, you chaps! He's been trying to scare us away—so that we'll crawl back to bed. Come on—we'll——"

"Boys!" came a sudden stern voice. "What is all this?"

They found Mr. Nelson Lee, the Housemaster, at the head of the stairs now, and when Nelson Lee descended, he was followed by Fenton and Biggleswade, and two other Ancient House prefects. Mr. Crowell also put in an appearance, together with Professor Sylvester Tucker, the absent-minded science master.

From upstairs came a buzzing of conversation. Fags, Removites and Fifth-Formers were all out and about—wondering what the alarm could be. The whole House was in a minor uproar.

Nelson Lee descended into the lobby, and looked at the juniors very sternly.

"What is the meaning of this?" he demanded. "Why are you boys out of your beds at this time of night?"

"We—we've seen that wild man of the woods, sir," said Handforth, with a gulp. "Didn't you see him upstairs? He must have passed you——"

"Nothing passed me!" interrupted Nelson Lee. "Have you boys been dreaming, or what? What is this nonsense about a wild man of the woods?"

"Haven't you heard about him, sir?" asked Duncan.

"I've heard a few ridiculous rumours concerning a stranger," replied Nelson Lee. "But there is no need for you boys to emulate the superstitious fancies of the ignorant villagers. The man is probably a tramp, and——"

"That's not fair, sir," interrupted Gresham. "We shouldn't get excited over a tramp. There's something very strange about him—something almost uncanny. And he's here—inside the House! He brushed past us up the stairs before Handforth turned the light on!"

"There ought to be a search, sir!" put in McClure. "For all we know, he may be dangerous!"

"Tell me exactly what happened," said Nelson Lee briefly.

They did so—and the famous Housemaster-detective was looking very grave when they had finished!



CHAPTER 14.

The Search!

PROFESSOR SYLVESTER TUCKER peered round inquisitively. He was very short-sighted, and, having come out of his bed-room without his spectacles, everybody and everything was a blur to him.

"What is the matter?" he asked mildly. "Bear me! Who are all these people? And what is the meaning of this strange disturbance in the middle of the night?"

"There is no need for alarm, professor," said Nelson Lee. "Perhaps you had better go back to bed. There is a stranger within these walls, I fear, and it is just possible that he is bent upon mischief."

"Good gracious!" said Professor Tucker. "Really?"

"Perhaps we can help, sir," said Fenton, coming forward.

"Yes, I shall need you all," said Nelson Lee, as he looked at the prefects. "The whole House is aroused, so a thorough search might as well be made at once. These muddy footprints on the stairs prove that there is an intruder in our midst. We must not rest until we have found him."

"The wild man of the woods!" came a scared voice from upstairs.

"Boys, you mustn't be alarmed," called up Nelson Lee. "This creature is not supernatural, as some foolish boys have been saying. He is probably a tramp, or a vagrant of some kind. He may have broken into the school with the object of looting the larders. At the same time, he may be a tough customer, so you younger boys had better return to your dormitories and remain there."

"Not likely, sir!" said Nipper. "We all want to help in the search."

"Rather!" agreed Fullwood, and several others.

"Absolutely!" declared Archie Glenthorne. "A good old man hunt, what?"

Nelson Lee soon organised a thorough search. The prefects were sent into different quarters of the Ancient House, the juniors were banded together into groups and were told exactly where to search. Even the masters were brought into this affair—Mr. Crowell taking charge of one part of the House, and Nelson Lee another. Professor Tucker, after wandering about aimlessly for a short period, found himself at one of the windows, looking at the moon.

"Remarkable!" he declared. "A very excellent view to-night. And yet there is something strangely different about the moon. A haziness—a blurriness. Can it be that there is some great astronomical wonder —— Dear me! How ridiculous!" he went on, with a start. "Of course, I am looking at the moon without my spectacles!"

"I think you had better go to bed, professor," said Nelson Lee, who happened to be passing.

"Bed?" said the professor. "Ah, yes, to be sure! A very excellent suggestion, Mr. Lee! But why? Surely it is a preposterous thing for a fully-grown man to go to bed in the early evening?"

"It is one o'clock in the morning, professor," said Nelson Lee patiently.

"Eh? Why, so it is!" nodded the professor. "I had quite forgotten! Quite! It is high time I was in bed! I wonder what it was that kept me up so late to-night?"

He wandered off towards the stairs, and in the meantime the search was progressing in every corner of the Ancient House. Professor Tucker had hardly taken two steps before he stumbled, and nearly came a cropper.

"Most extraordinary!" he muttered. "I appear to have some garment wrapped round the lower portion of my legs. Ah, to be sure!" he added mildly. "My dressing-gown, of course!"

The professor was so absent-minded that he had already forgotten that he had been to bed that night, and that he had been disturbed in the middle of his slumber. But now that he recalled the fact, he wandered off upstairs, and was soon groping about Mr. Crowell's bed-room, wondering why on earth everything seemed out of place.

And soon afterwards, the various search-parties met down in the lobby. Their reports were all the same. Nobody had found the intruder.

"He's not in the house—that's certain," said Fenton. "We've looked everywhere—into every room, under every bed, and into every cupboard."

"I'm not convinced that there was anybody indoors at all!" said Biggleswade. "How do we know that one of those silly juniors didn't make those footmarks on the stairs? You know what a crowd of young monkeys they are. It may have been a yarn about an intruder, just to excuse themselves."

"I don't think so," said Fenton thoughtfully. "They wouldn't have shouted, and made all that noise, unless they had seen something unusual."

"Then what's the explanation?" asked Wilson.

"The man must have taken alarm at the first moment—before we started the search," replied Fenton. "He probably got out of one of the back windows."

"But they were all barred—at least, latched," objected Biggleswade.

"Most burglars know how to latch a window from outside, I believe," replied Fenton. "They've got all sorts of tricks at their finger-tips, anyhow."

"Well, it's a rummy go!" said Handforth, as he came up. "No sign of him!"

"He is certainly not in the House, boys," declared Nelson Lee. "Well, you had better all go to bed—and do not come out of your rooms again. Go straight to sleep, and try to forget this incident."

"Hadn't we better make another search, sir, just to be sure?" asked Handforth.

"No, certainly not," replied Lee. "One search has been sufficient. Go to bed—all of you!"

And the juniors obeyed. The majority of them were feeling relieved, and they were glad enough to get back into their cosy dormitories.

"What about your toothache, Duncan?" asked Handforth, as he was about to enter his own bed-room.

"Nearly gone, thanks," replied Alec, smiling. "It must be all the excitement. Anyhow, the pain's practically gone, and I think I shall get to sleep in two ticks. Thanks for that red-hot needle idea—but we'll leave it for another time!"

And Handforth, greatly disappointed, went back to bed.

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CHAPTER 15.

Professor Tucker Entertains a Visitor!

UPON my soul!" Mr. Crowell, the master of the Remove, stared blankly at his bed. He had just come back into his own room, after the search, and he was amazed to find Professor Sylvester Tucker fast asleep in his—Mr. Crowell's—bed!

"This is awkward," muttered Mr. Crowell, in distress. "Dear me! Most awkward! How in the world could Professor Tucker have mistaken my room for his own? What a remarkable man!"

For some moments Mr. Crowell stood there, hardly knowing what to do. He certainly wanted to get back into his own bed, but he had no great desire to share it with Professor Tucker. After all, why shouldn't the professor go into his own bed-room?

And so, at last, Mr. Crowell went for-

ward, and gently shook the professor by the shoulder.

"Eh?" said Professor Tucker, sitting up. "I do not believe for a moment that the rings of Saturn are anything but infinitesimal fragments of gas. It has been scientifically proved—— Eh? Oh, Mr. Crowell! I see that you are here! Surely it is not morning?"

"I am sorry to disturb you, professor, but I would like to remind you that you are in my bed," said Mr. Crowell awkwardly.

"In your bed, sir?"

"Yes," replied the Form-master. "I can only conclude that you mistook this bed-room for your own."

Professor Tucker was out of bed in a moment.

"Please forgive me, Mr. Crowell," he said, with real concern. "How perfectly ridiculous! Indeed, how preposterous! I can only excuse my conduct by telling you that I have mislaid my spectacles. And yet, indeed, I certainly did notice something rather strange about the bed-room. Now, of course, I can understand. This is your own room, is it not?"

"Exactly, sir," replied Mr. Crowell stiffly. "Yours is further along the corridor."

"Thank you—thank you!" said the professor, toddling out. "I can only trust, Mr. Crowell, that you will forgive me for this unwarrantable intrusion."

The absent-minded science master vanished along the passage, and nearly made the mistake of going into a box-room. But he succeeded in locating his own bed-room at last, and he was feeling relieved when he closed the door behind him.

It was characteristic of the professor to start dressing on the spot. He apparently believed that it was time to get up, for he divested himself of his dressing-gown and pyjamas, and commenced to array himself in his daily attire.

"It will be a great relief for all when these winter days lengthen," he murmured as he dressed. "It is most unusual for the darkness to persist right up to the hour of eight o'clock. Ah, it would be quite a good idea to draw the curtains!"

He went across to the window, and pulled the heavy curtains aside, so that the daylight could come in. Professor Tucker had an idea that it was eight o'clock in the morning. But then he received a surprise. For when he looked out, he found the moonlight streaming in, and at that moment the school clock chimed out.

"This is strange!" murmured the professor. "It does not appear to be my usual hour for rising. Where is my watch?"

He groped his way across to the mantelpiece, and found his watch. He peered at it closely, holding the timepiece to within an inch of his eyes.

"Upon my soul!" he muttered. "It is not much after one! I must confess I am quite bewildered. I do not seem to remember——"

He broke off, and blinked across the room. It seemed to him that a figure was standing there, not far from the door, and that a cupboard was open in one of the corners. To the professor's blurred sight, it seemed that the figure was strangely unfamiliar.

"Ah, of course!" said the professor, with a flood of recollection. "The search-party! I had quite forgotten for the moment. I suppose, sir, you are one of the searchers?"

The figure made no reply. He stood there, gazing at Professor Tucker in a queer, intent sort of way. He was a man—a remarkable looking individual. His clothes were tattered, and he was pitifully emaciated. His eyes were wild looking and staring. His hair was matted and dishevelled, and he was looking at Professor Tucker with almost child-like curiosity.

"Really, my dear sir, it seems strange to me that you have not the courtesy to reply," said Professor Tucker, with a touch of tartness in his voice. "May I ask who you are?"

The figure moved slightly, and went towards the door. Professor Tucker, following, was bewildered when he saw the door open. The figure moved out, and the door softly closed behind him.

"Very uncouth!" said the professor crossly. "Indeed, very ill-mannered. And the impudence of the fellow coming into my bed-room in that fashion! I am afraid the modern manners are deteriorating lamentably!"

With that, Professor Tucker dismissed the intruder completely from his mind! There was something ironical in the fact that the science master had run the intruder to earth, and then had allowed him to go without giving the alarm!

And outside, stealing down the passage, the mysterious stranger found his way downstairs. He moved like a shadow, and, what was far more remarkable, he seemed to know every corner—every secret of the building!

At last he found himself at one of the lower windows. He opened it noiselessly, slipped out, and vanished into the night!

CHAPTER 16.

The Intruder in the Class-room!



NIPPER grinned.

"Well, the 'Wild Man of the Woods' affair seems to have fizzled out," he remarked dryly. "Nobody's seen anything of him, and nobody knows what became of him. The school hasn't been burgled, and nobody has reported anything missing."

"It's a frost," said Tommy Watson.

"Begad, I'm inclined to agree with you,



Mr. Crowell gazed on helplessly as the strange unkempt man sank down on to an empty seat in the front row of desks. "Really," the master began, "I—I——" "He's the Wild Man, sir!" broke in Gresham eagerly. "Let's collar him!"

dear old fellow," said Sir Montie Tregellis-West, nodding. "A frightful amount of excitement over nothin'. To say nothin' of our sleep bein' disturbed in the middle of the night. A storm in a teacup, in fact!"

The chums of Study C were lounging in the doorway of the Ancient House. The sun was shining with a cold radiance that morning, and the high wind of the night had gone down. It was really a perfect winter's day.

"Well, let's forget all about it," said Nipper cheerily. "To-morrow is Armistice Day, you chaps and we've got to get into our cadet's rig soon, and go through some more practice."

"Good egg!" said Tommy Watson. "Anything's better than lessons. All the cadets are excused after second lesson this morning, aren't they?"

"Yes," said Nipper. "It looks like being fine for the practice and drilling. And it looks like being fine for the unveiling ceremony, too."

Handforth & Co. came out, and Handforth was looking somewhat ruffled.

"That's what you get for making a good suggestion," he said indignantly, as he glared at Nipper. "That's what you get for being open and straightforward! It would have paid me better if I had gone off without any permission!"

"If you'll explain what you're talking about, I might, perhaps, understand," said Nipper politely.

"It's Mr. Lee!" growled Handforth. "In many ways I respect him. He's a decent sort—one of the best. But he's obstinate, and he doesn't seem to appreciate my capabilities!"

"Too bad!" murmured Nipper.

"I went to him, not five minutes ago, and I suggested that he should excuse me for the whole morning lessons," went on Handforth. "My idea was to make a search of the woods—with Church and McClure. I wanted all three of us to be excused from lessons. And what do you think Mr. Lee said?"

"I expect he was hard and callous, and put the stopper on the whole suggestion?"

"Yes, he did!" roared Handforth. "He even went further, and told me not to be silly!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Buster Boots, Bob Christine, Yorke, Talmadge, and several other Fourth Formers had come up, and they had heard Handforth's words. They were grinning widely.

"Poor old Handy!" said Buster Boots. "So Mr. Lee wouldn't allow you to search for the Old Man of the Sea?"

"You mean the Wild Man of the Woods," said Christine, with a chuckle.

"Well, I knew it was something like that," replied Boots. "I say, you Remove chaps, what's all this we're hearing about this wild man? You don't believe that tosh, do you?"

"It doesn't much matter whether we believe it or not," replied Nipper. "There was an intruder in the Ancient House during the night, and there the matter ends. We can't go into any discussion, anyhow, because the bell's going for lessons."

"You Remove fellows had better have prefects sleeping in your bed-rooms—just to keep you company, so that you won't be frightened!" said Clapson, with a grin. "Fancy being scared by a lot of village gossip!"



Mr. Crowell gazed on helplessly as the strang of desks. "Really," the master began, "I—

And the Fourth Formers went off, chuckling loud.

"Like their nerve!" said Church, with a glare.

"What's the good of getting wild?" smiled Nipper. "They're bound to have their little joke. Well, come on!"

Five minutes later all the Removites were in their places in the School House. Mr. Crowell came into the class-room immediately afterwards, and he gave his boys a quick, searching look.

"Now, boys, we've got to attend to lessons," he said briskly. "Let there be no talking—no wasting of time. Some of you are to be

excused after second lesson, so we must make the most of the early part of the morning."

"Any further news about the wild man, sir?" asked Handforth.

Mr. Crowell frowned.

"You will be good enough to give your attention to the lesson, Handforth," he replied curtly. "Let there be no talk about this—this wild man! There was quite enough commotion during the night."



k down on to an empty seat in the front row Wild Man, sir!" broke in Gresham eagerly.

And the Remove were compelled to get on with its work.

Many of the fellows were disappointed—for they had half hoped that the first quarter of an hour would be wasted in pleasant discussion. But Mr. Crowell was in one of his "worky" moods, and the juniors knew better than to upset him.

Everything proceeded smoothly for the first half hour, and the whole of St. Frank's was silent. This was the only time, indeed, when the school was so subdued and peaceful.

It was a geography lesson in the Remove Form-room, and the fellows were mapping. It was a quiet enough task, and only the occasional scratching of pens could be heard—to say nothing, of course, of the shuffling of feet.

The door opened softly, and a figure came in. For a moment he hesitated there, then he closed the door behind him, and walked forward.

Mr. Crowell glanced up, and a moment later he started so violently that his glasses dropped off his nose.

"Good gracious me!" he ejaculated, aghast.

His exclamation caused the Form to look up from its work—and the Form stared, too. For the figure that had just come in was—the Wild Man of the Woods!

Even those juniors who had not seen the stranger were convinced of his identity. But those who had seen him the previous night—at the top of the stairs—knew that this man was the same.

He was muddy, tattered and bent. His hatless head was unkempt and tangled. His boots were coated with mud, and he was, altogether, a grotesque specimen of humanity.

And without a word he walked forward, and quietly sank down into an empty seat in the front row of desks!

CHAPTER 17.

Extraordinary!

THE Remove was so surprised that it could do nothing but stare for the first moment or two. Mr. Crowell was similarly taken aback. He groped for his glasses, adjusted them, and gazed helplessly at the intruder.

There was something so deliberate about the man's action. He had come into the Form-room as though he knew the place well, and he had sat down in that empty desk in a perfectly natural way.

And now he was looking at Mr. Crowell intently—so intently that the Form-master was disconcerted. There was nothing evil in those wild, staring eyes. There was only an expression of childlike curiosity and simplicity.

"Really!" said Mr. Crowell at last. "Really, I—I——"

He rose to his feet, and cleared his throat.

"He's the Wild Man, sir!" said Gresham eagerly.

"He's the man who broke into the Ancient House last night, sir!"

"Let's collar him!"

Mr. Crowell turned to the Form, and raised his hand.

"Silence!" he commanded. "You will be good enough to let me deal with this situation, boys! I do not need any help from you!"

He walked forward and stood in front of the dishevelled stranger. And Mr. Crowell was shocked—inexpressibly shocked. For now he could see that the unfortunate man was pitiably emaciated. His cheeks were haggard, his eyes were hollow, and he had the appearance of one who has long been in a state of semi-starvation.

Across his face there was an ugly scar—obviously the reminder of a serious wound. There was nearly a fortnight's growth of beard on his chin, and his clothing was unbelievably muddy and tattered. Yet, through all this, there breathed an indefinable air of good breeding. This man seemed to be a gentleman—in spite of his vagrant-like appearance.

"Why have you come here?" asked Mr. Crowell quietly. "Do you realise that you are intruding? Do you understand that I am taking these boys in their lessons?"

The stranger looked at Mr. Crowell vaguely, with only a partial understanding.

"May I ask who gave you permission to enter?" went on the Form-master, feeling completely baffled. "Really, I—I——"

He paused, and the stranger slowly shook his head.

"You are a new master!" he said, in a tone of disappointment. "Yes, you are a new master!"

Mr. Crowell started.

"Really, I do not understand!" he exclaimed. "A new master? I can assure you that I am nothing of the sort!"

"Yes, you are," insisted the stranger. "And everything else is new, too. It's all so different—and yet it's all so familiar. I don't understand. Can't you explain to me? Can't you tell me what it means?"

His voice was refined—although husky and weak. To regard this man as a tramp was out of the question. He was a gentleman by birth, without any question, and to see him in this appalling condition struck compassion into Mr. Crowell's heart.

"Come, sir, you must leave this room," he said quietly. "You cannot remain here."

"The fire," said the stranger, glancing longingly at the blazing fire on the other side of the room. "I haven't seen a fire for so long. I'm cold. I'm very cold. Won't you let me go to the fire?"

Mr. Crowell looked round rather helplessly.

"Well, yes—— I mean, really, this is a very serious interruption of lessons," he said. "I do not wish to appear callous, but I must point out, sir, that you have really no right in this room. If I can do anything——"

"Oh, let him stay, sir!" said Handforth impulsively. "He's harmless enough!"

Mr. Crowell hesitated. Truth to tell, he didn't know what on earth to do. The whole thing was extraordinary—an unprecedented incident in the routine of the Form-room.

As for the Remove, the boys were looking on with interest—and with pity. Many of them were feeling indignant and angry, and more than one glance of hot animosity was cast at Teddy Long.

For what a difference there was between the fanciful and the reality!

Teddy Long had come rushing into the common-room the previous evening, and he had told of a hideous monstrosity with fangs, and with claws instead of fingers. The villagers had spoken of a demon with horns on his head.

Yet here was the man himself—a gentleman by birth, a hapless wanderer, who apparently did not wish harm to a fly. As the realisation swept over the Remove, the boys were full of compassion.

This stranger was absolutely harmless—he was an unfortunate. Handforth felt rather ashamed of himself as he remembered his own sensations the previous evening, when he and his chums had seen this man lurking in Bellton Wood. They had thought him to be a dangerous criminal of some kind. Then, later, in the night, they had searched for him all over the school—had hunted for him, as though he were some evil thing.

And, really, he was just a poor man who had apparently lost his memory. Perhaps he had been wandering for weeks—not knowing who he was, or where he was going, or where he had come from. He may have sought refuge in the wood because it had afforded him sanctuary.

At all events, amongst all those Remove boys there was not a single feeling of fear now. The truth was out at last. The Wild Man of the Woods was wild, certainly—but he was no figure of terror.

But why had he come to St. Frank's in this way? Why had he entered the Ancient House during the night—why had he wandered about, and then taken his leave so suddenly, so mysteriously? Why had he entered this Form-room now—in the full daylight of the morning? He seemed to know the old school, somehow. And there he sat, on that form, looking at Mr. Crowell with the same child-like expression in his eyes.

The Remove wondered what the Form-master would do.

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CHAPTER 18.

The Elusive Stranger!

HANDFORTH couldn't hold himself in check.

"I say, sir, what a shame!" he blurted out. "We've all been saying that this poor fellow was a criminal and a dangerous character! And here he is, as innocent as a kitten! You're not going to turn him out, are you? Look at him! He seems half-starved! Don't you think we ought to give him a feed, or something?"

"Yes, rather!" said Fullwood. "Let's make a whip round, too, and get up a collection. We might be able to set him on his feet again."

"Absolutely!" agreed Archie Glenthorne enthusiastically. "A frightfully brilliant idea, laddie!"

"Silence!" commanded Mr. Crowell. "Did I not tell you that I could deal with this matter? I do not require advice from any of you!"

"But you're not going to turn the poor man out, sir?" protested Handforth.

"I should hope, Handforth, that I am not entirely devoid of humane feelings," replied Mr. Crowell coldly. "This—er—stranger is intruding, and he is interrupting all the lessons. Naturally, I cannot allow this situation to persist, and something must be done at once."

The stranger rose to his feet, vaguely aware that he was in the way.

"I am sorry," he said quietly. "It all seems so different. Yes, you are a new master—I haven't seen you here before. And all the boys are different, too," he added, looking at the Form with vague unrecognition.

"He seems to know St. Frank's, sir," said Nipper. "Do you think it's possible that he's an Old Boy?"

"Good gracious!" said Mr. Crowell, with a gulp. "Do you really think—— But, no! I cannot conceive that a former pupil of this school should have so descended—ahem! I am really very worried about the poor man," he added hastily.

And yet, at the same time, Mr. Crowell felt that there was a good deal of sense in Nipper's suggestion. An Old Boy! The man's appearance counted for nothing. He had obviously lost his memory, and had been wandering about for weeks. Perhaps he was really a gentleman—a man of wealth and position! Yet Mr. Crowell did not remember having seen any sensational announcements in the newspapers. He had not noticed an account of any prominent gentleman being missing from his home. But then Mr. Crowell did not take a great deal of interest in the papers, and it was quite likely that he had missed such an item.

"Hamilton!" he said, turning. "Come here!"

Nipper left his place, and stood before the Form.

"You, too, Handforth," went on Mr. Crowell, beckoning. "I want the pair of you to take this unfortunate man to the sanatorium. It is quite obvious that he is in a weak condition, and he needs sustenance and attention. Give him into the care of Dr. Brett, and tell him that I will see him later. Do everything you possibly can for the unhappy man, and see that he is made comfortable."

"And we'll see that he gets a feed, too, sir," said Handforth, nodding.

"You can be quite sure that Dr. Brett will attend to that," said Mr. Crowell.

Nipper gently took hold of the stranger's arm.

"This way, sir," he said.

"I beg your pardon?" said the stranger, looking round wonderingly. "Oh! You want me to come with you? Certainly! We are going out, eh?"

"Yes, sir," said Nipper. "We're going to make you comfortable."

"That's it!" said Handforth breezily. "We're going to give you a good feed, and make you happy, and——"

"I can't understand it," interrupted the stranger, as though he had not even been addressed. "It is so different. And I don't know why. It isn't right. Why should it be different?"

He looked round the room in a disappointed way.

"Do you know St. Frank's, sir?" asked Nipper.

"St. Frank's?" repeated the stranger, with a flash of intelligence—a fleeting glimpse of understanding. "Yes, St. Frank's! I seem to know—— I beg your pardon? No, I can't remember. That's the trouble!" he added, with a sigh. "I can't remember! My head—my head! Oh, what is the matter with my head?"

He pressed both his hands to his temples, and bent forward. A fit of coughing racked him, and for a moment his weakened body was shaken by the effort. The Remove sat looking on in silent pity.

"Boys!" murmured Mr. Crowell. "Why do you not do as I told you?"

"Will you come with us, sir?" asked Nipper, plucking at the man's ragged sleeve.

"Come with you?" he said, looking up. "Why should I come? I am comfortable here. It is warm—it is very warm."

"But we'll take you to a better place, sir," said Nipper.

"All right," said the stranger, rising to his feet. "If you want me to come, I'll come. But I can't remember," he added, as though to himself. "It seems so strange—so completely different. What a pity!"

Between the two juniors, he went out, and the door closed behind them. Mr. Crowell

uttered a sigh of relief as he went back to his desk, sat down, and mopped his brow.

"Dear me!" he murmured. "What a singular experience! Poor man—poor man! I am genuinely sorry for him—and yet, at the same time, it was impossible to let him remain here."

The Form was buzzing with excited talk.

"Now, boys, we must get on with our work," said Mr. Crowell, rapping his desk. "This won't do! Cease this talking at once!"

"But we want to know about that man, sir!" said Fullwood. "I say, it's hardly fair to make us go on with our work——"

"Fullwood!" said Mr. Crowell sternly.

"Oh, hang it, sir!" protested Ralph Leslie. "We don't often have strangers wandering in like that! I believe he's an Old Boy of St. Frank's—and he doesn't know all about the new Houses. It seems different to him, and——"

"No doubt—no doubt!" interrupted Mr. Crowell. "But we can discuss this afterwards. Just at the moment we are dealing with geography, and I must insist that every boy continues his lesson."

And the Remove, filled with disgust, went on with its geography. A short time before the fellows had been thinking that Mr. Crowell was possessed of a real heart, after all. But now they knew differently. He was obviously a callous, heartless sort of machine! What did he care about that poor stranger's sufferings? All he thought of was his mouldy lessons!

But the Remove had a prejudiced view.



CHAPTER 19.

Difficult to Hold!

OUTSIDE, Nipper and Handforth were feeling rather uncomfortable in the presence of the stranger. They knew that he was not demented—that he was perfectly harmless. But they could not help feeling that he was a man who had lost his memory, and who did not know anything of his past. They felt, too, that any moment he might collapse. To question him was a very embarrassing task, but Handforth did not scruple to do so.

"We're at St. Frank's, you know," he said, waving his hand over towards the imposing

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building. "And now we're going through Big Arch, and so across Inner Court to the sanatorium. That's where we're taking you."

"Indeed?" said the stranger. "The sanatorium? But why? I am not ill!"

"Eh? I—I mean—— And that's the Memorial!" went on Handforth hastily, indicating a veiled obelisk in the centre of Inner Court. "Major-General Osborne is coming down to-morrow for the unveiling ceremony."

"Osborne?" said the other, with a little start. "Major-General Osborne?"

"Yes, sir," said Nipper quickly.

"Osborne!" repeated the man, halting in his tracks. "I seem to know—— No, I don't!" he added sadly. "I can't remember. I don't know what is happening. I get a glimpse now and again—just a kind of fleeting glance, but before I can grasp it, it eludes me. It's maddening—maddening!"

He stared at the two juniors—stared at them in a wild kind of way now.

"Who are you?" he went on, pointing a finger at Handforth. "What is your name? And why am I talking to you?"

"I am Handforth!" replied Edward Oswald with a gulp. "I am in the Remove, you know."

"The Remove!" said the stranger. "Yes, yes! I seem to know that! The Remove. And this is a big school, isn't it? The Ancient House! Ah, I seem to know that!"

"The Ancient House, sir," said Nipper. "If you'll only try to remember, you might be able to——"

"What?" broke in the tattered unfortunate. "What did you say?"

"We were just talking about the Ancient House, sir."

"The Ancient House?" repeated the man. "I don't know it. I've never heard—— But yet I seem to remember—— Oh, my head—my head!"

Nipper glanced across at Handforth, and that glance was significant.

"It's no good, old man," he whispered. "We can't do anything with him. Far better put him in Dr. Brett's charge. His mind's wandering—what there is of it to wander. His memory is clean gone."

"Poor beggar!" said Handforth huskily.

Gently they led him towards the sanny, and at last they arrived at the door. Here they paused for a moment, for the door was closed, and they had to wait until one of the nurses answered the bell.

After a very short pause the door was opened, and a delightfully fresh and pretty girl stood there. Both Handforth and Nipper pulled their caps off, and smiled with recognition.

"Good-morning, Dora!" they said, in one voice.

Dora Manners was very popular at St. Frank's. She was a cousin of the fair Irene, of the Moor View School—and she was on the sanatorium staff as a day nurse.

"Well?" she said, smiling. "What do you want? You're not looking very ill, either of you!"

"We've brought this poor chap——" began Nipper. And then he broke off, and stared round in bewilderment. "He's gone!" he gasped blankly.

"Oh, my goodness!" said Handforth, with a jump.

They looked about them in complete amazement. While they had been waiting at the door, with the stranger behind them, he had vanished! They hadn't cared to hold him by the arms, as though he were a prisoner, and they had given too much attention to Dora, too. Just in that minute, the man had gone!

The manner of his going was quite obvious. For close at hand there were large clumps of thick laurel bushes; further beyond there was a privet hedge, and many other evergreens. Something had disturbed the stranger's mind, perhaps. He had dodged away at the last minute—fearing, in some vague sort of way, that he was to be entrapped. Perhaps he had been dealt with harshly during these last weeks. Perhaps he had met uncharitable people who had tried to give him in charge of the police. At all events, he had gone—and that was the thing that mattered most at the moment.

"There was a stranger with us!" said Nipper quickly. "A poor chap who's lost his memory! He wandered into the Form-room, and Mr. Crowell told us to bring him to the sanatorium!"

"Oh, can't you find him again?" asked the girl, in distress.

"We'll jolly well try!" shouted Handforth.

They dashed among the laurels, and made a quick search. But there was no sign of the man. After five minutes had elapsed, they realised that he had completely given them the slip. For while they had been searching the nearest laurels, he had gone right away, and by this time, perhaps, he was fully a mile distant.

They came out into Inner Court again, and found Nelson Lee there—talking to Dora. They both ran up.

"No sign of him, boys?" asked Nelson Lee.

"Not a sign, guv'nor," panted Nipper. "What a beastly shame, you know! And the poor fellow is simply starving by the look of him! I blame myself entirely——"

"Rot!" interrupted Handforth. "I'm just as much to blame as you are!"

"Well, boys, there's no need for you to be so distressed," said Nelson Lee. "The man cannot be far away, and now that we know he is quite harmless, we can get up a search for him. Sooner or later he will be found—and we can then hand him to the proper authorities."

"The authorities!" ejaculated Handforth. "Do you mean you're going to hand him to the police?"

Nelson Lee shook his head.

"Of course not, Handforth," he replied. "The man will be well cared for—in hospital.

perhaps. At all events, you need not worry yourselves. Go back to your lessons, and leave this matter in my hands."

And Nipper and Handforth went—feeling very crushed and very angry with themselves.



CHAPTER 20.

The Cads!

THE Removites had very little chance of discussing, or thinking about, the unhappy man who had lost his memory.

For the remainder of the morning was filled up with drilling and practising for the morrow's ceremony. Half the Remove belonged to the St. Frank's Cadet Corps, and they were called upon to turn out for the full dress rehearsal. The Fourth and the Fifth were represented in this ceremony, too, and they did not get their freedom until morning lessons were well over.

After they had changed back into their normal attire, they found that everybody was talking of the "wild man" of the woods. There were many different opinions expressed.

"It's a jolly good thing he's gone!" Gulliver was saying. "We don't want those sort hanging about St. Frank's!"

"No fear!" agreed Bell. "It was sickening, the way Crowell spoke to him! Actually called him 'sir' once or twice! I think Crowell ought to be scragged for it!"

"Yes, rather!" said Hubbard indignantly. "Dash it, I'm not a snob, but we can't have a tramp like that wandering about the school!"

"You rotter!" said Fullwood. "The man isn't a tramp at all!"

"What about his clothes, then?" demanded Hubbard. "I never saw such rags and tatters!"

"What's the good of talking to these idiots?" said Nipper, with a contemptuous snort. "They haven't the sense to differentiate."

"Haven't the sense to do what?" said Hubbard, glaring.

"Haven't even the sense to understand plain English," retorted Nipper. "If a real live duke was dressed up like a scarecrow, you'd turn up your proud noses at him! And if a tramp came along, dressed in all the glory of plus fours, you'd toady to him!"

"Frightfully well put, laddie," said Archie with approval. "I mean to say, absolutely on the nail, what? That, I mean, is the stuff to give them!"

"Oh, rats!" said Gulliver, moving off.

He and Bell wandered round by the shrubbery. In those days, Gulliver and Bell were pretty harmless sort of fellows. They had no real leader now, and so they were nonentities in the Remove.

"Hallo, there's something doing out here!" said Bell suddenly. "Who's that over there?"

"Grayson, of the Fifth," replied Gulliver, as he moved forward a few more steps. "He's over by the monastery ruins, and there's Shaw with him, and—— By gad! There's that blessed tramp!"

"What!" said Bell excitedly.

"That rotter who came into the Form room!" said Gulliver. "I say, let's yell to the other chaps, and hustle him out! Let's hoot him off the premises!"

"Better go easy!" said Bell, in haste. "Lots of the chaps are sympathetic towards the rotter. We might get ourselves into trouble if we suggested anything like that. You know what a fellow Handforth is with his fists. Let's go up to these Fifth Formers, and see what they're doing."

They approached, and found Harold Grayson and Frederick Shaw staring at the "wild man." The latter was taking very little notice of them. He was wandering about the ruins, looking at them in a way that suggested that he knew them all by heart.

"Yes, yes!" he was muttering. "Just the same! Nothing changed—nothing altered! Here, at least, I know where I am! These ivy-clad ruins—these walls! And this is the tower that I climbed——"

"Soppy!" said Grayson, with a grin.

"Absolutely off his nut!" agreed Shaw. "The chap ought to be put into a lunatic asylum!"

The two Removites came up, and they were rather breathless.

"What have you done to him?" asked Gulliver.

"Done to him?" said Grayson. "Nothing, you young ass. We spotted him here, and asked him what he was doing, but he didn't even reply. He just gave us a queer sort of look, and walked on. We were wondering what we should do about him."

"Let's hustle him off the premises," suggested Bell. "It's safe here—nobody can see us."

"And what does it matter if they do see us?" asked Shaw, staring.

"Oh, I don't know—some of these Remove fellows are saying that the stranger ought to be taken indoors, and cared for," said Bell. "Just like those idiots! The man's a tramp, and he ought to be given in charge of the police. For all we know, he may be hanging about here just to see what he can grab. We shall only be doing our duty if we shove him off the grounds."

"That's right enough," said Grayson, nodding.

Grayson was one of the worst bullies in the school, and he and Shaw were about as popular as an epidemic of mumps.

"Yes, we'll shove him into the lane," said Shaw, with a vicious grin. "Come on—all together! The four of us ought to do the job in about ten seconds! The fellow is as thin as a skeleton, anyhow!"

They all advanced upon the "wild man." He did not even notice them until they were right upon him—until they laid rough hands upon his shrunken shoulders.

"Now then—out of here!" said Grayson curtly.

The stranger looked round, and there was an expression of pained surprise in his eyes—a frightened, pitiful look, which reminded Grayson of an animal.

"The ruins!" said the "wild man" softly. "Yes, these are the ruins. I know them all—I have seen them before. But where? Where? I don't seem to remember——"

"You'll remember us right enough!" said Shaw, with a brutal laugh. "Come on, you tramp! Out of this, before we get rough!"

The cads seized the poor fellow, and jerked him round. He gave a little cry, and almost collapsed.

Just then a violent roar came from the rear—and that roar had been uttered by Edward Oswald Handforth!

Archie Glenthorne, Nipper, Fullwood, Pitt, and a crowd of others came surging round them. The "wild man" fell back a pace or two, looking on in a frightened sort of way. He was bewildered by all this commotion, but he made no attempt to escape. It was fairly obvious that he had not deliberately escaped before. He had just wandered off without quite realising where he had been going. For it was certain that he had been somewhere in the school grounds ever since.

"Here, steady on!" protested Grayson. "What's the matter with you kids? Take your hands off me, Handforth!"



Biff! Handforth's fist thudded into Grayson's face, and the bully of the Fifth went over backwards. At the same moment Shaw and Gulliver and Bell went flying, too. The Removites were on them like a pack of wolves; seldom had they been so enraged.



CHAPTER 21.

Under Archie's Wing!

THE cads looked round with sudden apprehension.

"You rotters!" thundered Handforth furiously. "Hi, Remove! Rescue! This way, you chaps!"

There sounded a thudding of feet, and before the cads could make any attempt to escape from the ruins, Handforth & Co., Archie Glenthorne, Nipper, Fullwood, Pitt, and a crowd of others came surging round them.

"All right—I will!" shouted Handforth. "Like this!"

Biff!

He clenched fist thudded into Grayson's face, and the bully of the Fifth went over backwards, yelling. At the same moment Shaw and Gulliver and Bell went flying, too. The Removites were on them like a pack of wolves. Seldom had the juniors been so enraged, for they had seen most of that little scene.

"Drag them right into the Triangle!" roared Handforth. "Then we'll duck 'em!"

"Rather!" sang out a dozen voices.

Nipper and Archie were by the "wild man's" side, and they were gentle with him.

"It's all right, sir—only one of our rags,"

said Nipper. "Don't take any notice. Did those fellows try to hurt you?"

"Which fellows?" said the stranger. "Hurt me? No! I don't seem to recollect —— It is all very bewildering," he added, in distress. "Why is there all this commotion?"

"I think you'd better come with us, sir," said Nipper. "We'll take you to the sanatorium, and then you will be well cared for."

"Absolutely," said Archie. "Better still, Nipper, old scout, supposing we take the dear chappie to my study? Phipps will look after him, you know. Phipps is a priceless sort of blighter for looking after people. It's absolutely uncanny the way he buzzes round and does the dommgs!"

Nipper nodded.

"It's not at all a bad idea, Archie," he replied. "Better than taking him to the sanatorium—for now, at all events. We'll put him in your study, and we'll let Phipps give him a good feed. Afterwards we can settle what is to happen to him. I don't like to think of him being handed over to the Poor Law authorities, or anything like that."

"Odds horrors and tragedies!" ejaculated Archie. "You don't absolutely mean to say that that will be his fate?"

"What else?" said Nipper. "We can't expect the school to look after him, and as he's wandering about the countryside, he'll probably be put into the infirmary at Bannington, or something like that."

"Absolutely not!" said Archie firmly. "From this minute onwards the dear boy is absolutely under my wing! After Phipps has rallied round I'll 'phone to the good old pater, and then we'll get things going."

"But your father might not approve," put in Fullwood.

"Kindly refrain from being absolutely dotty," said Archie. "The good old pater is at home at Glenthorne Manor, and the ancestral pile is only a mile or two outside Bannington. We'll have a car over here within the hour, and then this poor merchant will be whizzed off to the home of the Glenthornes. Hospitality, laddies, is one of our priceless characteristics."

There was something rather fine about Archie's attitude. He did not doubt for a moment that his father would agree to the plan. It would be a lot better for this unfortunate to be housed in the comfort of Glenthorne Manor—than to be taken off to the Bannington Infirmary.

"Do you mind coming with us, sir?" asked Nipper, touching the stranger's sleeve.

"Coming with you?" he said. "Yes, if you wish. I don't mind."

"Here we are!" said Handforth, bustling up. "We've biffed those rotters about pretty good. Now, we'll see——"

"It's all settled, old man," said Nipper. "Archie has taken the stranger under his wing, and Phipps will look after him for the time being. Later he'll be transferred to Glenthorne Manor, and everything will be all right."

"Well, there's a nerve!" said Handforth, glaring. "I was going to keep him in my study until to-morrow, and then I was going to make the pater take him home——"

"Too late, old cheese," said Archie, beaming. "The poor old cove is absolutely under my care."

There were crowds of fellows in the Triangle as the "wild man" was led across to the Ancient House by Archie, Alf Brent, Nipper, and one or two others. They went indoors, and knots of fellows gathered about, discussing the situation.

In the Ancient House the stranger was looking about him with that same curious expression of recognition in his eyes. He seemed to know his way about, too.

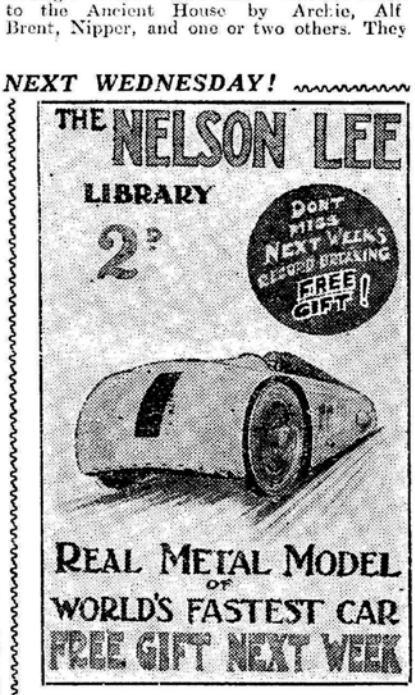
At last he was safely landed into Archie's study, and, at Nipper's suggestion, all the fellows went away.

"It will only confuse the poor chap if we keep pestering him," he said. "Let's leave him to Archie."

And the others agreed.

At least, they all agreed with the excep-

NEXT WEDNESDAY!



tion of Handforth. Handforth had already gone into Archie's study, and he was now standing in front of the stranger, looking at him purposefully. Handforth was never satisfied. He wanted to know more about this man, and Archie simply couldn't get rid of him. But the Genial Ass was not worrying much. Phipps would soon be on the scene, and Archie relied implicitly on the discretion of Phipps.

Nipper, too, had gone to Nelson Lee, and in all probability the Housemaster would be on the scene very shortly.

Meanwhile, the stranger was looking about him bewilderedly.

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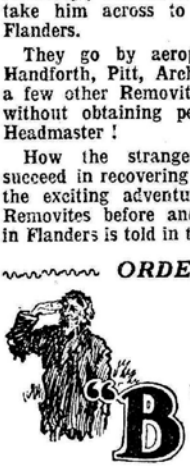
"ST. FRANKS IN FLANDERS!"

In the hope that the unknown "wild man" will recover his memory when he comes in contact with familiar surroundings, Colonel Glenthorne decides to take him across to the battlefields of Flanders.

They go by aeroplane, and Nipper, Handforth, Pitt, Archie Glenthorne, and a few other Removites go with them—without obtaining permission from the Headmaster!

How the stranger does eventually succeed in recovering his memory and of the exciting adventures that befall the Removites before and during their trip in Flanders is told in this vivid yarn.

ORDER IN ADVANCE!



CHAPTER 22.

Armistice Day at St. Frank's!

"BUT don't you know your name, sir?" said Handforth gently.

There was nothing aggressive in Handforth's tone. He was not deliberately inquisitive or curious. His motives were of the best, for he was hoping that he might be able to learn the poor man's identity. There wasn't a kindlier fellow in the whole of St. Frank's than the bluff Handy.

"My name?" said the stranger. "Name? Now, let me see, of course! How ridiculous! My name!"

He frowned and rubbed his stubbly chin.

"No, I don't know it!" he said in distress. "I've tried to remember. I've tried and tried, and I can't. No, I can't! Oh, my head! If only my head would cease this endless ringing and throbbing!"

"Handy, dear old boy, kindly desist!" murmured Archie.

"Yes, I think I'd better," said Handforth, with a lump in his throat. "Poor chap! Doesn't even know his name, or his address——"

"Address?" said the "wild man." "That's quite true—I don't even know my address. I can't think clearly. Everything's so blurred—so hopelessly muddled. I keep trying, but it's no good."

He fell into a fit of coughing, and Handforth gave Archie's arm a warm pressure.

"Good man!" he muttered. "You'll look after him properly, won't you? My only hat! I hope I haven't been inquisitive or nosey!"

"Absolutely not!" said Archie. "Leave it all to me. Or, I should say, and in other words, leave it all to Phipps!"

Handforth went, and Archie waited impatiently for Phipps to turn up. The stranger had fallen back on one of the lounge chairs, and his eyes were closed. He was utterly weary—tired out and wan. His sunken cheeks were eloquent of the semi-starvation from which he was suffering.

"This is rather frightful!" murmured Archie at last. "Why doesn't Phipps come? I shall give the lad a severe ticking off when he finally floats in."

He crept out of the study, and looked anxiously up and down the passage. He stood there for some minutes, hoping against hope that Phipps would soon turn up. At last, the figure of the valet appeared at the end of the passage, and came gliding up. Archie ran to meet him.

"Really, Phipps!" he protested. "I mean to say, I think this is somewhat steep!"

"I regret to say, Master Archie, that I was detained by the Headmaster," said Phipps. "You may recollect that I have certain duties——"

"That's all right," said Archie. "Better late than never, old thing! There's work for you to do, Phipps. Man's work!"

But when they got back into the study, the window was wide open—and the stranger had gone!

"Odds tragedies and catastrophes!" ejaculated Archie, in dismay. "The dear soul was here only a minute ago, and now he has whizzed into the middle distance! Kindly search round, Phipps!"

Phipps searched, and Archie searched—and, indeed, over half the Remove searched. But this time the stranger apparently had gone for good. For no sign of him was seen round the school—for the remainder of that day or during the night. It wasn't that he de-

liberately escaped. His mind was a blank, and he was like a helpless child. Finding himself alone in Archie's study, he had probably wandered off, some instinct telling him to go by way of the window.

At all events, the next morning dawned, and the pitiful stranger had not been seen again.

And this was Armistice Day—a solemn occasion for St. Frank's.

In fact, what with there being no lessons that morning, and what with parents arriving almost every minute, nobody had any time to think of the "wild man." He was completely forgotten now. Even Archie was so engrossed with his uniform that he had no room in his memory for the helpless man he had taken under his wing.

Everything was a-bustle throughout the old school. By great good fortune it was a fine morning—a brilliantly sunny morning, with scarcely any wind.

And Inner Court was looking very impressive, too. Celebrities were walking up and down, duly grave. Many Old Boys had fallen in the Great War, and many parents had lost their eldest sons—men who had spent their boyhood days amidst these old walls. All those names—those glorious names—were graven upon the Memorial, and there was a notable lack of noise in the great school to-day. There were no shouts of laughter—no ragging. That same impressive, sacred atmosphere had descended upon the old school, as it had descended upon the whole of Great Britain.

Sir Edward Handforth was in evidence, also Lady Helen Tregellis-West, and Sir John Brent, and many other great people. Major-General Osborne had arrived, in full uniform, and quite a number of the visitors were military officers of high rank.

At the moment, the major-general was discussing the final arrangements with Dr. Stafford

As the hour of eleven drew near, so the preparations for the ceremony began. The school was assembled in Inner Court, and it was truly a fine scene as everybody stood there, in the brilliant sunshine, with the Cadets lined up smartly to attention. And at last the school clock began to boom out the great hour

It was the time for the Two Minutes Silence!

As the last note of the old clock boomed out, a bugle sounded—clear, sharp and throbbing. Not a hitch had occured so far—and not a hitch occurred even now.

But at the sound of the bugle, a figure appeared from behind one of the privet hedges. It burst through and it came out into the open Many eyes were turned towards that strange, unkempt figure.

It was the "wild man" of the woods—and he had drawn himself smartly to attention, and he was saluting, his back as straight as a ramrod, his head erect and bare!



CHAPTER 23.

The Great Silence!

ST. FRANK'S was silent.

In the wide expanse of Inner Court, every boy stood with bared head—just as that unknown man stood. All Nature seemed to realise the solemnity of the occasion. Even the faint wind had dropped, and the countryside was hushed

In those wonderful two minutes of silence, not even the barking of a dog could be heard—nor the crunching of a wheel in the roadway, nor the distant hooting of a motor horn.

For all outside St. Frank's—in the villages and in the towns—in London, in Manchester, in every great centre—the people were standing with bared heads, silent, motionless.

It was in memory of the thousands who had fallen in England's Cause.

There was something so solemn, so sacred about it all that those minutes seemed long ones. And as the last second passed away, Major-General Osborne pulled the string which unveiled the St. Frank's Memorial.

It was the signal for the Great Silence to end.

"Fine, wasn't it?" murmured Handforth, in a husky voice. "By George, it makes a chap feel sort of worked up inside, you know."

"Yes, rather!" murmured Church. "Some people seem contemptuous of the Two Minutes Silence, but it's a wonderful thing really. By Jove, doesn't the Memorial look ripping, eh?"

A good many of the fellows wanted to cheer—just to relieve their pent-up feelings, perhaps. But no cheer came. This was not an occasion fo noisiness.

In any case the attention of the whole throng was attracted by a strange incident just then. For the "wild man," walking forward towards the Memorial, had a strange, intent look upon his haggard face. He was staring straight at Major-General Osborne—staring at him in a manner which caused many of those distinguished visitors to fall back, half frightened.

Then, suddenly, the unkempt figure leapt forward, a cry coming from his throat. There were one or two shouts, and one or two people tried to get in the tattered stranger's way. But they were too late. He leapt through and clutched at Major-General Osborne's arm.

"Charlie!" he shouted huskily. "Charlie!"

The great man turned, and stared at the stranger aghast.

"Confound your impudence!" he exclaimed angrily. "How dare you clutch at me like this? Go away!"

"Don't you know me, Charlie?" said the "wild man" anxiously. "You must do—you must!"

The Major-General looked round, embarrassed and uncomfortable. He was a big man—a fine, soldierly man.

"Why was this tramp allowed to come here?" he said, appealing to Nelson Lee.

"The whole situation is most distressing to me. In front of all these people——"

"The man is quite harmless, and he is not a tramp, as you seem to think," said Lee. "He has been seen in the neighbourhood by many people—indeed, he has twice been to the school, but he has always slipped away. He has lost his memory, I think, and——"

"What's the matter with you, Charlie?" interrupted the stranger, his voice trembling and his whole frame shaking as though with an ague. "You're not denying that you're Charlie Osborne, are you? You were in the Fifth with me, and I seem to remember—— I seem to—— I—— What? Where am I?" he added vaguely. "Oh, yes! It's Charlie!"

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the major-general, with a start.

An expression of utter bewilderment had come into his face. He was no longer conscious of the boys and the visitors who were looking at him. He was staring at the "wild man" now—confining all his attentions to this muddy, dishevelled man.

"Do you remember?" asked Nelson Lee quickly.

"Yes, I seem to," replied the great soldier. "Something in his voice struck a chord in my memory. But only for a moment—just for a flash. Some intonation, perhaps—some trifling mannerism of speech. I know it, and yet I can't remember who he is."

"You are convinced, I think, that he was at St. Frank's with you—in the Fifth Form?"

"There can be no doubt of it," said the Major-General. "What an extraordinary thing!"

He took the stranger by the shoulders, and looked hard into his face. But it was difficult to recognise anything there. For he was unshaven, he was grimy, and that ugly wound had disfigured him atrociously.

"Yes, I know him!" said the Major-General at last. "By that I mean that I am quite convinced that he was a boy with me at St. Frank's. But I don't know his name—I cannot recall who he actually is. I only know that he was a boy with me here—one of hundreds of boys. It is not surprising that I cannot remember his name."

"Not in the least surprising," agreed Nelson Lee. "You might meet a dozen old boys today—but I very much doubt if you will remember their names, although their features will be familiar to you."

"Exactly," said the general. "That is just the trouble. Indeed, I have already met several of my old school-fellows, but for the life of me I could not recall their names. But in their cases it made little difference, since they quickly introduced themselves, and thus we were able to renew old associations, and to speak of old times. But it is different when one of the parties cannot give his own name, and cannot——"

"Can't you tell me?" interrupted the "wild man." "You're Charlie Osborne—I know that. Good heavens! It's the only thing I do know. Everything else is vague—everything else is blank—is void. Can't you tell me? I'm so unhappy—so tired. Oh, I'm so tired!"

And suddenly he fell—sagging limply to the ground before anybody could hold him. The excitement had been too much for the poor man, and he had collapsed!



CHAPTER 24.

Archie Glenthorne's Promise.

A GREAT wave of pity swept through the crowds of schoolboys as they saw the poor fellow sink to the ground.

Many hands lifted him gently, and Nelson Lee was relieved when he found that the stranger was not completely unconscious. He was, indeed, attempting to steady himself on his feet.

"I am all right!" he murmured. "It is not the first time I have fallen. I am weak, I fear—I am very weak. If you will only let me go I shall be all right."

"We'd better take him indoors," said the major-general. "Poor fellow! And to think that he used to be in the Fifth Form with me in St. Frank's, here! I am afraid I acted very brutally when he first approached me."

"Not at all," said the Head, who had been standing by all the time. "You naturally thought the man was a tramp—as, indeed, I did. A most unhappy occurrence. I only trust that the unveiling ceremony has not been marred."

"On the contrary, it has been greatly enhanced, sir," said Major-General Osborne quietly. "For here we have an old boy of St. Frank's—obviously a soldier of the Great War—springing to the salute at the bugle call. It was fine—fine!"

The school was buzzing with excited conversation as the unfortunate was gently led indoors, and there were two or three juniors, at least, who felt that they were entitled to know more. Archie Glenthorne was one of them, and Handforth was naturally another. Nipper, too, was very concerned, and later on in the day he announced that just one or two of them would be allowed to see the stranger in the privacy of Nelson Lee's study.

"The guv'nor knows how anxious the whole Remove is, and it's very decent of him to let a deputation of us, as it were, go in to him," said Nipper. "You'll come, Handy—and you, too, Archie."

"What-ho!" said Archie Glenthorne. "I rather fancy that I'm the most important chappie of the lot. I mean to say, I've already seen the good old pater, and he's perfectly willing to take this stranger under the Glenthorne roof. In fact, the dear old dad is going to search the whole dashed country-side in an endeavour to trace the poor chappie's home and relatives."

"Just like Colonel Glenthorne!" said Nipper approvingly. "Let's hope that something comes of it."

And all the other Remove fellows were in agreement with this sentiment.

Very soon afterwards the three juniors went quietly into Nelson Lee's study, and they received a bit of a shock. For the stranger was sitting back in an easy chair in front of the fire. He was wearing a dressing-gown, and his face had been shaven, and his hair was neatly brushed. He looked a totally different man now—a refined, pale-faced gentleman. All that tramp-like appearance had gone. At the very first glance one could see that he was of good breeding.

"Any luck, sir?" asked Nipper.

"None," replied Nelson Lee. "Dr. Brett has told us what we already knew—that the poor gentleman has lost his memory. Gentle care and a thorough rest may restore him to complete health. But one can never tell in these cases."

"But can't you remember anything?" asked Major-General Osborne, as he sat next to the stranger. "You know that I'm Charlie Osborne, don't you?"

"Yes—I know that!" said the other, looking at the major-general in that same child-like way. "You're Charlie all right, although you seem so much older. I've met you before, Charlie—I mean, I've met you since we were at school. But where?"

"During the war, I dare say," said the major-general quietly. "In Flanders perhaps——"

"Flanders!" said the other, rising unsteadily to his feet. "Yes, yes! Ypres! Ah, I begin to remember now! Ypres! Hill 60. Charlie! Heavens! The horrors of Hill 60!"

He sank back, and the major-general patted his arm.

"Don't distress yourself," he said. "Perhaps your memory will come back soon."

"Tell me of Ypres," said the stranger. "I might remember things then!"

"There are many things that I can tell you of Ypres," said the major-general solemnly. "The Menin Road—and that place we used to know as Clapham Junction——"

"Ah, yes—I know it!" broke in the other, with a new light in his eyes. "I can see it all—every patch of mud—every trench! Ah, those shell-swept trenches! Those deadly, water-logged shell-holes!"

"Odds life!" broke in Archie suddenly. "An idea, laddies! How would it be to take the dear old boy over to Flanders? Back to the Menin Road, what? Back to the Salient, where he can see the old scenes. I mean to say, it's not absolutely imposs. that he might recover his memory then. We can't take him back to his own home, because we don't know where it is. But, if he's in Flanders again, he might——"

"Yes, Glenthorne—a very good suggestion," said Nelson Lee quickly. "We must think about it. We must see what can be done."

"Well, I'm absolutely going to push it through," said Archie. "I mean, it's a kind of duty. The dear lad has absolutely been pottering about St. Frank's for days, and I've taken him under my wing, too. The pater wants to have him under the Glenthorne roof, and all that sort of thing."

"I say, couldn't we all go over to Flanders?" asked Handforth eagerly. "Just a party of us, you know? I've often wanted to see the battlefields!"

Nelson Lee stroked his chin, and glanced across at the major-general.

"It might be arranged," he said thoughtfully. "We'll see about it, Handforth. But now, for the time being, you boys must go."

And so the juniors took their departure.

When the news spread through the Remove—the news that a party might go across to Flanders—there was fresh excitement. Archie Glenthorne, at all events, was positive that the trip would come off. This stranger was an Old Boy of St. Frank's, and the Remove in particular felt a big responsibility.

How wonderful it would be if they could draw this poor stranger to his home—to those who loved him! If only that could be done, then Armistice Day at St. Frank's would indeed be a wonderful occasion to remember!

THE END.

COMING NEXT WEEK!

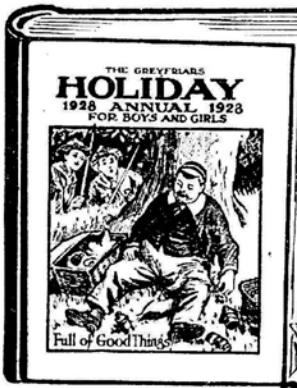
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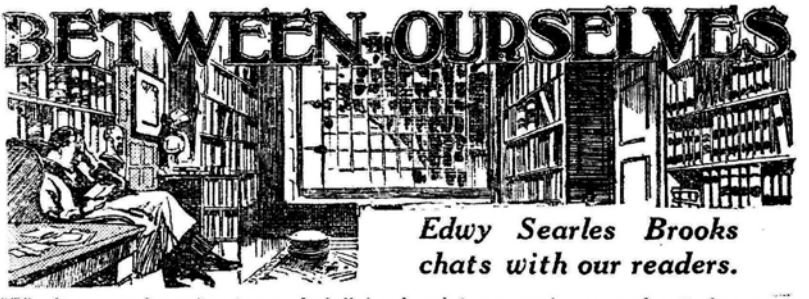
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Edwy Searles Brooks chats with our readers.

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: 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. Letters of very special merit will be distinguished by a star (*) against the sender's name. My photo exchange offer is still open: my autographed photo for yours—but yours first, please.—E.S.B.

"Curious" (Cobh), F. S. Bridge (Newcastle-on-Tyne), William Pearson* (Burton-on-Trent), Ernest Ash (Liverpool), "Echo" (Carlisle), Terence Sullivan* (Marlow), Myra Brittain (Leytonstone), Leslie F. Norton (Stoke Newington), L. Woonton (E. Twickenham), Geo. F. Alan Wheelhouse (Leeds), "Three Sunderland Admirers"—(Monk), Frank Whitham (Hebden Bridge), Mrs. E. Browne* (Hampstead), Bernard Cooke (Ashby-de-la-Zouch), L. Parham (Chadwell Heath), Frank House (Biddisham), Stanley Wm. Whitehouse (Stourbridge), R. P. Fairclough (Liverpool), A. D. Lake (Plymouth), Charles A. Blann* (Maritzburg).

* * *

The story entitled "St. Frank's in London," "Curious," appeared on September 13th, 1919—No. 223 of the Old Paper (Old Series, of course). No, I did not write "The Silver Dwarf" and "The Missing Heir."

* * *

Please apologise, William Pearson! On the top of your letter you put: "Hoping that you might read this." And then, on page 3, you say: "I've a bit of a suspicion that you, at least, scamp our letters, if not chuck them into the W.P.B. If my suspicions are ill-founded, then I'll do the right thing, and apologise. I can quite understand a busy man like yourself slinging over the letters to your clerks, and I know you'll understand my point of view." Yes, I do understand it, old man, but you happen to be wrong. Every letter that is addressed to me, via the Editorial Office, is read by me, and is answered if there is anything in it that strikes me as being of general interest for these columns. Where, after all, would be the value of "Between Ourselves" if I parked the work out to somebody else? The very essence of the thing is that it is, really and truly, "between ourselves."

* * *

Croquet may be a rotten game from your point of view, Mick Sullivan, and it may be from mine (although I don't say it is), but there are lots of other people in this world, remember. It's all a question of temperament—to say nothing of muscles and general fitness. I can quite understand lots of people revelling in croquet, and voting it the best game under the sun.

* * *

I greatly appreciate your nice letter, Mrs. Browne. You won't mind if I quote from it, will you? I think a few of your words might do quite a lot of good among parents who are opposed, for some reason or other, to my simple yarns: "I am sure no parent could reasonably object to their children reading these stories. I am a woman of nearly forty, and a great lover of fiction. The 'Nelson Lee Library' is the only weekly publication in that line I ever read, and I must say many of the series have been more entertaining than many seven-and-six novels. My son has taken it in for over eight years, and I used to read it to him when he was hardly old enough to understand the longer words. I became so interested in the various characters that I believe I look forward to it every week more than he does now." Surely this is another proof that there is some truth in my claim that my yarns are suitable for boys and girls of all ages, from eight to eighty?

* * *

I am greatly indebted to you, Charles A. Blann, for sending me "The Natal Witness," and the little Brochure of Maritzburg. I am always glad to receive newspapers, and such like, from the Dominions and Commonwealths, and from the lesser Colonies. With regard to your criticisms about Umlosi, perhaps I had better explain that in some of the earlier stories the Kutanas were supposed to be a branch of the Zulu tribe, and that they migrated to Central Africa at some remote period of the past, there taking on their own tribal name, but retaining many of the characteristics of the Zulus. Thanks very much for your "Some Facts About South Africa." I shall certainly pass them on to the Editor.

Kitty Lill* (Grimsby), "Bob Rover"* (Birmingham), Maureen Fleet (Birmingham), John Alcock (Hyde), "Nipper of Remove" (Brighton), "Jean"* (Widnes), Richard Dunn (Clapton), W. E. Classly (Wellington), Charles Francis de Stafford Ongley (Maritzburg), "The Green Archer"* (Toronto), Harry Fieldhouse* (Catford), W. Reg. Osborne* (Leicester), Douglas MacPhail* (Carlisle), "T. E. H." (Douglas, I.O.M.), "A Reader" (Bromley, Kent), George F. Hodgson* (Scarborough), Paolo Zuccarelli (East Grinstead), E. W. Wiseman* (East Ham), "A Vrystater"* (Bloemfontein).

* * *

Far from thinking it cheek on your part, "Bob Rover," I should very much like you to "tell me lots of things about the Channel Islands," as you say. The more you can tell me, in fact, the better. First-hand information is always very valuable. So, if you have time, please write to me again, and give me these details.

* * *

The numbers you require, Richard Dunn, are as follows: "The Fight for Mastery"—No. 164, July 27th, 1918. "The Moor House Mystery"—No. 167, August 17th, 1918. "The College House Mystery"—No. 294, January 22nd, 1921. All Old Series numbers, of course.

* * *

No, there is no Manx boy at St. Frank's, "T. E. H." It's about time I introduced one, eh? St. Frank's is situated in the county of Sussex, two or three miles from the coast. Willy Handforth is about fourteen years of age, and Nipper, so far as is known, has no relatives. Mr. Nelson Lee is his guardian.

* * *

Yes, it is sad but true, George F. Hodgson, that there are still many parents who think that my stories are harmful. As you say: "It would be fine if a few more people like the Rev. Clive R. Beresford wrote to you—also like Mrs. Chandler. If a few readers of their ages would only write to you, then you could print their letters, or parts of them, and parents might read these extracts, and think better. I only wish this would come into force. I bet you get plenty of letters with complaints, don't you? But the worst of it is, you can't satisfy those people." Yes, exactly. It is simply impossible to satisfy everybody all the time, old man.

* * *

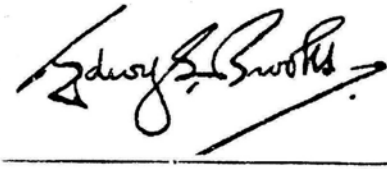
I rather think you'll have to justify your statement, "A Vrystater." You say: "I know some girls may want to do as much as boys, but the way the Moor View girls are made always to beat the St. Frank's chaps is utter bosh." But I didn't know that the Moor View girls were like this, old son. In what way do they beat the St. Frank's fellows? As far as my recollection goes, I have never brought the boys and girls into competition, as you suggest. So you want me to write more stories about friends who have quarrelled, and then make it up again? Yes, there is a lot of truth in what you say, further on in your letter: "Why not have some more stories of this kind? Besides, they are the kind which do a lot of good, for when pals who have quarrelled read those sort of stories, they more often than not come together again." I shall have to see what can be done about this.

* * *

"Harry & Co." (Huddersfield), Raymond Ball (Lewes), Eric C. Mitcham (Chalk Farm), Cyril A. Hinge (Margate), Sefan Laconski* (South Shields), Ivor Harry Hobbs (Clapham Park), Eldred Mountfort (Maritzburg), R. M. Hemans (Harpenden), L. G. Westacott (Putney), R. Murfitt (Louth), Richard N. L. D. Haslewood (Ramsgate), S. Atkinson (Ramsgate), George Burgess* (Arundel), Sydney H. Dyson* (Cambridge), Lawrence Newton (Winchester), William Pianner, Jnr. (Battersea), Norman Green (Leeds), Mary Sanderson (Thirsk), Robert Williams (Chester), Sid Perry (Barnsbury).

* * *

"Fighting for St. Frank's" appeared in No. 463, dated April 19th, 1924 (Old Series), Ivor Harry Hobbs.



What did Temme eat on his channel swim?

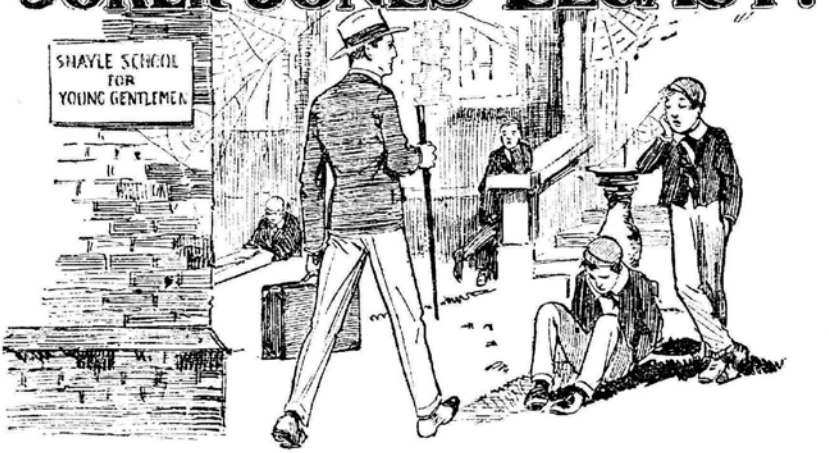
Here are his own words. "Throughout my Channel Swim I partook liberally of Cadbury's Milk Chocolate. This sustained me wonderfully for the big effort I had to make during the last six hours of the swim. As a 'stand-by' and a creator of fresh energy and resource, I consider Cadbury's Milk Chocolate to be peerless."

Cadbury's
milk chocolate

—Temme knew he could trust Cadbury's to sustain him mile after mile. He had proved it time after time on previous long swims. And you too—though you may never swim—will find Cadbury's Milk Chocolate just as useful in lesser emergencies.

See the name "Cadbury" on every piece of chocolate

JOKER JONES' LEGACY!



Specially written by

WILLIAM NAPOLEON BROWNE

of the Fifth Form at St. Frank's

THE MASTERLY OPENING IN BRIEF.

Robert Wellington Jones has unexpectedly inherited a moth-eaten school at Snayle-in-the-Hollow, Essex. Having successfully awakened the tortoise-like pupils, Jones has now received the order of the boot from Dr. Cobb Webb, the whiskery Headmaster. But Robert Wellington Jones has no intention of leaving. He is the sole owner of the school, although the Head thinks that he is merely an assistant master. Let us now proceed, brothers:

Light on a Dark Subject!

ROBERT WELLINGTON JONES eyed his alleged bread and butter not merely with distrust, but with positive suspicion. One bite from that scantily-spread slab had been sufficient to inform him that all was not as it should be.

Not that Jones professed to be an epicure. Either this butter was considerably below par, or it was frankly and unblushingly—margarine. Jones had never tasted margarine, to his knowledge. Yet he was willing to swear that this anæmic-looking grease was, indeed, margarine.

It cannot be denied that there is margarine and margarine. Many makers of this celebrated delicacy are apt to boast that in no circumstances can their product be distinguished from "the best dairy." It was not for Jones to quibble over these claims. Yet he was perfectly prepared to swear an affidavit that the particular margarine on his bread at this moment was the world's worst.

Let it be explained that Jones was presiding at the head of the table in the school dining-hall. Tea was in progress. At least, a meal was in progress. So far, Jones had seen no sign of tea. A certain swill, abominable in its tastelessness, had been served round, but if any professional tea-taster had sampled that brew he would undoubtedly have gone wonky at the knees.

It appeared to be a rule in Snayle School that the assistant master should partake of the same fare as the boys. The Head, it appeared, had his meals privately, as befitting one of such exalted position, and Jones had deep and grave suspicions that the headmaster's table groaned beneath a wealth of delicious luxuries—purchased out of the ill-gotten money that was saved from the usual school expenses.

"Tell me," said Jones, turning to the boy who sat on his right. "Is this the customary nose-bag?"

"This bread and butter, sir?"

"Bread and what?" asked Jones politely.

"Well, we call it bread and butter, sir—sounds better," replied the boy. "But we all know it's margarine, of course. As for the tea——"

"Spare me!" murmured Jones, pained.

He nibbled his slab thoughtfully. It must be explained that Robert Wellington Jones had much

food for thought—let the food for his stomach be what it might.

Gazing round that table, he could not help observing that all these scholars of Snayle School were weakly in appearance. Their eyes were hungry, as they wolfed the unpalatable viands. It was obvious that they had consistently been deprived of those vitamins and fats which are necessary for the healthy development of the schoolboy. In other words, the food at Snayle School was inadequate. In fact, it was rotten.

And Jones wanted to know the reason why.

He remembered his interview with Mr. Pinch, of Messrs. Pinch, Dolittle & Robb, Solicitors. They were the trustees of this estate, which Jones had inherited from his late lamented aunt, and Mr. Pinch had gone into many details.

At the time, it must be confessed, Jones had been bored. But now he was remembering many things. He had even commented upon the lavish outlay for foodstuffs, considering that there were under thirty boys in the school, and Mr. Pinch had explained, with much care, that Dr. Cobb Webb was a man who insisted upon his boys being well nourished.

Jones, of course, was in an ideal position. He knew ALL—being the owner. But Dr. Webb was labouring under the delusion that he was merely an under-master, and therefore a person of no account. Jones was beginning to realise that his practical joke was leading to concrete things.

Dr. Webb was in full control of the school accounts, and he had evidently been trusted for years. Was it not becoming perfectly obvious that the whiskery Dr. Webb was a twister of the first order?

"There must be radical reforms," murmured Jones firmly. "My voyage of idle adventure has unexpectedly become a voyage of discovery. Let us curb our impatience to apply the Jones toe to the Webb seat, and see what further scaly disclosures are to come."

The meal being over, the boys wandered away to pursue various juvenile amusements, since this was their hour of leisure. Ere long, prep would take its course in the class-room, with Jones presiding

It was now dark, and Dr. Webb had long since retired to his own lair. Jones had seen nothing of him since that heated altercation in the courtyard. Indeed, it was difficult for Jones to see anything of anything. By night, Snayle School was a place of gloomy shadows and inky eeriness.

In the passages, there were the merest glimmers; in the rooms, there were mere apologies for lights. It was not surprising to Jones that these scholars were consequently dull and spiritless.

By day, the school was enshrouded in dusty curtains; by night, after the fashion of the old song, the lights were low. And yet the illuminating system seemed to be adequate enough. There were gas burners everywhere, but not ten per cent of them were used. Curiously enough, however, they were in readiness, should they be required.

"Here," murmured Jones, "is another little mystery. We must make a few discreet inquiries. Tell me, Anastasius," he added, seizing a passing pupil by the hair, "from what source does this pernicious gas supply originate?"

"My name's Watkins, sir," said the boy.

"A grand old name, too," nodded Jones, with approval. "But you have not answered my question, Watkins."

"Why, the gas is made out in the big generator, sir," said Watkins. "It's petrol gas, sir, and the plant is big enough to light up the whole countryside,"

Jones placed a lean arm round the youngster's shoulders.

"I do not doubt it," he said confidentially. "Can you, by any chance, inform me as to the quantity of petrol that is weekly consumed by this apparatus?"

"Why, yes, sir," said Watkins. "Lots of us take it in turns to put the petrol in. It never uses more than two gallons a week."

"Ah!" said Robert Wellington Jones.

And we must add that there was a wealth of grimness in that word!

Jones Carries On!

"AH!" repeated Jones, after his informant had escaped.

And who can blame Jones for that repetition? Had he not heard, from Mr. Pinch's own lips, that the lighting system at Snayle School was singularly efficient, to say nothing of being extraordinarily cheap? Had he not heard Mr. Pinch state, in the plainest of plain words, that the cheapness of the lighting system could be gauged by the fact that the plant consumed no more than fifteen shillings worth of fuel weekly?

In a hazy way, Jones knew that the average petrol-gas plant requires a better quality spirit than the humble motor-car. But in no circumstances could it be assumed that this special spirit cost seven-and-sixpence a gallon.

"No!" Jones told himself. "One-and-sixpence per gallon is the limit. Which proves to my masterly intellect that while Dr. Webb charges for ten gallons weekly he only shoves two gallons into the works. Hence the all-pervading gloom. I even have it in my mind to suspect that Dr. Webb is using the commonest elevenpenny juice! Little does he dream that his hour of reckoning is rapidly approaching! In the meantime, there is much to be done."

The fact that all the burners were ready for service was significant. Dr. Webb evidently kept them ready, in case he should hear of an impending visit from the owner. It was all to the good that they should be available.

For Jones forthwith secured a long taper, and his next half hour was an enjoyable one. Round the school he went, and not a single burner escaped his eagle eye.

Behind him trailed a crowd of awed and wondering scholars. And as they progressed, so the awe and wonderment changed into happiness. It has been truly said that light bringeth cheer.

Snayle School was transformed.

With every light gleaming at its full pressure, the gloom was dissipated, and the old building stood out like a beacon in the night. Indeed, the villagers in Snayle-in-the-Hollow almost fetched out the fire-engine, labouring under the delusion that the place was ablaze.

"Light," said Jones, to his crowd of admirers, "is one of the essentials of life. Henceforward, there will always be light in Snayle School."

"Wait until the Head finds out, sir!" said Turtle, with excited horror.

"I am waiting," replied Jones complacently.

He was, in fact, looking forward with much enjoyment to the forthcoming interview. What did it matter if the ten-gallons-a-week average was now exceeded? For years this fraud had been going on, and Dr. Webb had obviously several thousands of gallons in hand, to be drawn upon. If not the actual petrol, he at least had the money that it represented.

It so happened that Dr. Cobb Webb emerged from his study as Jones was adjusting the lights in the main lobby, with the whole school watching. The place was blazing with brilliance, and Dr. Webb leapt a yard into the air.

"Jones!" he thundered. "What is the meaning of this?"

"I have always held," said Jones, "that light is essential. I am here to brighten the lives of

these unfortunate youths. I am here to——"

"Turn all these lights out at once!" roared the Head. "Good heavens! Have you had the audacity to turn them on all over the school?"

"My only regret is that there are not more burners," replied Jones smoothly.

The school held its breath, and the Head dashed for the nearest bracket.

"Every one of these lights is going out!" he shouted. "I am the headmaster of this school, and——"

"One moment, sir!" interrupted Jones. "It will be a mere waste of time for you to extinguish these lights. For as you turn them out, so I shall turn them on again. It distresses me to vex you thus, but, as you have no doubt discovered, life is full of these little trials."

It must be frankly admitted that Dr. Webb no longer looked human. Strange and uncouth sounds emerged from his weed-infested mouth. Some instinct seemed to tell him that he was no match for this masterly young man.

"Very well!" he panted, at last. "For to-night, Mr. Jones, you shall have your way. But to-morrow, as I told you before, I shall go to London; I shall see Mr. Pinch, and I shall have you thrown out of this school, neck and crop!"

The Conspiracy!

DR. COBB WEBB meant exactly what he said, too.

On the following morning, long before the school was out and about, he took himself off to Slumberstead, and caught the early train for London.

The Head was not only infuriated, but he was alarmed. Hitherto, his under-masters had been only too willing to obey all orders, and to sink into the ruts that Dr. Webb had long since made. But this volcanic young newcomer was different. From his first moment in the school, he had proceeded to revolutionise the order of life, and if he were allowed to continue Dr. Webb would not only cease to feather his nest, but he would lose it altogether.

To be painfully frank, Dr. Webb had cooked the accounts for so many years that he now looked upon the system as a perfectly normal one. The only possible way of retrieving the position was to have Jones forcibly removed.

And so, in due course, Dr. Webb stormed into the sedate office of Mr. Pinch, of Messrs. Pinch, Dolittle & Robb.

Now, as the brainy reader will no doubt have realised, Mr. Pinch was half expecting some such visit. In fact, he was wholly expecting it. Indeed, he had already had a lengthy telephone conversation with Robert Wellington Jones, and he was fully primed.

"Good morning, Dr. Webb!" he said mildly.

"Are you responsible, sir, for sending me that—that outrageous youth named Jones?" roared the Head. "How dare you, sir? The creature has turned the whole school upside down. He has defied me to my face. I have dismissed him, but he refuses to go!"

Mr. Pinch withstood this blast stoically—partly owing to the fact, no doubt, that he had been fully prepared for it.

"In that, Dr. Webb, he was quite within his rights," he said. "As you know, Mr. Jones' engagement can only be terminated by his employer. If you are prepared to lay the facts before that gentleman——"

"I am!" interrupted Dr. Webb fiercely. "Who is he? It is a thousand pities that Miss Muggeridge died! She was content to leave things entirely in my hands, and to——"

"Quite so!" interrupted Mr. Pinch. "But since the lady is dead, we must confine ourselves to facts. The new owner of Snayle School may not be quite so trusting."

"Trusting!" shouted Dr. Webb. "What do you mean, sir?"

It was apparent that the remark had touched him on the raw. Mr. Pinch had not intended it in that way, however, and he made haste with his next observation.

"It is quite useless to argue with me, Dr. Webb," he said. "If you would care to see—er—Mr. Muggeridge——"

"Ah, the nephew of Miss Muggeridge, no doubt?" broke in the Head. "I understand that he has inherited the property?"

"The school has certainly been inherited by Miss Muggeridge's nephew," said Mr. Pinch, nodding.

It appeared that he was unwilling to make any statement that could be regarded as a whopper. Considering his vocation in life, this was all the more remarkable.

Since Robert Wellington Jones was his own employer, and since it was inadvisable, at the moment, to inform Dr. Webb of this fact, it was necessary to have a deputy. And the ingenious Jones had already removed that little snag. He wanted to remain at Snayle School incognito until he had completed his noble work.

"Then let me see Miss Muggeridge's nephew," shouted Dr. Webb.

"I will see what can be done," said Mr. Pinch guardedly.

He thereupon turned to the telephone, and had a somewhat lengthy, but entirely unnecessary, conversation with one of Jones' Oxford cronies. This conversation was unnecessary, since the aforesaid Oxford crony was only in the next room. But it was just as well to throw a little dust into Dr. Webb's eyes.

Five minutes later, during which time Mr. Pinch had a difficult task with his visitor, the door opened, and "Mr Muggeridge" was announced. He entered. At the first glance, Dr. Webb allowed an expression of triumph to spread over his features like a jelly in a hot sun. This young man was mild and meek, and could be very easily handled.

But what Dr. Webb did not know was that Jones' crony had earned a name for himself as an actor of mild and inoffensive parts!

Ringing the Changes!

IN the meantime, as all the best writers have it, Jones was making hay while the sun shone. Let it be understood that it is purely a metaphorical expression, since the sun was not shining at all. The morning was dull, and Snayle School was duller.

For years it had pottered along in this condition, with the windows three parts obscured by heavy, dust-gathering draperies. It will be guessed that Jones had already decided to dispense with these unhealthy relics.

"Now boys, we have a hard day's work in front of us," he said complacently, as he sat at the head of the breakfast table. "We must all make up our minds to do our best. Dr. Webb has gone to London with the idea of consolidating my dismissal—but let us not dwell upon such matters. Work, the great soother, will make us forget our worries."

"We hope you won't get the sack, sir!" said Watkins anxiously.

"And that is a hope, young man, that we unanimously endorse," said Jones. "It would be a tragedy for Snayle School if I were to be forcibly withdrawn at such a juncture."

The school was feeling unusually bucked. Something akin to a miracle had happened that morn-

ing. For, in lieu of the customary bread and margarine, crisp bacon had been served, to say nothing of hot rolls and real coffee. Jones had wasted no time in taking advantage of Dr. Webb's absence, and the Head's private larder had been ruthlessly ransacked.

Exactly what the boys thought, it is not for us to conjecture. We can only say that they were living in a kind of dream, with every expectancy that they would soon wake up. Jones, in the school's opinion, was too good to last.

"Yes," said Jones briskly—"work! Do not imagine, however, that to-day's work will be connected with reading, writing, arithmetic, or such-like trifles. This morning, we have a greater purpose."

When Jones proceeded to divide the school into five battalions with about six fellows in each party, the excitement knew no bounds. And when Jones directed these battalions to venture forth into the far corners of the school, and to drag down every dusty curtain, it was at once known that this new master's idea of work was warped.

The school hailed the occasion as a whole holiday, and it entered into the spirit of the enterprise with commendable gusto. The way in which those curtains were removed was truly astonishing.

In less than twenty minutes, the full daylight was flooding through the windows, revealing the drab distemper of the walls, and the all-pervading atmosphere of dinginess.

"Knowing something of the railway service," said Jones, "we can safely assume that Dr. Webb will not be back until tea-time. Therefore, we have many hours ahead of us. I venture to suggest that they will be hours of unrelieved labour."

And they were.

For even as Jones was speaking, a large van arrived, and the astonishment of Snayle School can well be imagined when the van disgorged endless tins of distemper, brushes by the dozen, and similar decorative aids.

"You will now understand my reference to work," beamed Jones, as the school collected round the assortment. "Battalions, ready! Take your orders from me, carry them out, and all will be well."

The various parties were detailed to different rooms—to the halls and passages—and in an amazingly brief space of time the interior of Snayle School commenced its transformation. It must be confessed that the execution of the work left much to be desired. For every brushful of distemper that went on to the walls, a couple of brushfuls went on to the floor. But as there was plenty of distemper nobody minded.

Those drab walls came to life with a vengeance. It is quite possible that Jones' colour scheme was revolutionary. He had a particular partiality for brilliant blues startling oranges, and vivid greens. Any self-respecting house decorator would have had a fit on the spot if he had wandered unwarily into that building.

But it must be remembered that Jones' main idea was to banish, for ever, the gloom of this house of shadows, and even if his colours were startling, none could deny that they were bright.

By tea time, most of the work had been accomplished. The boys had worked like Solomon Islanders, for Jones had inspired them all with an energy that had hitherto remained dormant.

And when the lights gleamed out in their full brilliance, and every window sent forth its joyous glare, Dr. Cobb Webb returned. He brought with him the school's new owner. At all events, he thought he did. Dr. Webb had not the slightest inkling that it was nearly time for the fireworks to go off!

It is no perversion of the truth when we say that Dr. Cobb Webb was more like a rhinoceros than a human being when he caught sight of the brilliant windows of Snayle School. We are judging solely by the uncouth sounds which proceeded from Dr. Webb's whiskery face.

With him was the alleged Mr. Muggeridge—actually, a perfectly harmless young gentleman named Ronny Winston, one of Jones' choicest pals—and Dr. Webb fondly believed that this companion of his was the sole owner of the entire property.

"See!" roared the Head, pointing. "Can you understand my anger, Mr. Muggeridge? By all appearances, every curtain has been pulled down from the windows! This—this impudent young puppy has been taking advantage of my absence!"

"And who shall blame him?" said Mr. Muggeridge. "That is to say," he added hastily, "how shocking! We must go in at once, and interview this inventive genius."

"Pah!" snapped Dr. Webb. "Genius, indeed! You have come down with me, Mr. Muggeridge, in order to give this puppy his dismissal! I would like to remind you that Miss Muggeridge—now deceased, alas!—was always content to leave the conduct of this school entirely in my hands. And I take it that you, too, are willing to let me carry on?"

"As far as I am concerned, you can carry on in any old way you like," said Mr. Muggeridge mildly. "It doesn't matter to me a jot! Go ahead, Dr. Webb!"

"Splendid!" said the Head, allowing a sinister gleam to enter his eyes. "I am very glad, Mr. Muggeridge, that you are so willing to trust me. Come! Let us enter! Let us seek out this young scoundrel, and give him his marching orders!"

They strode across the courtyard to the front door, the Head wildly anxious to know exactly what Robert Wellington Jones had been doing all day. Mr. Muggeridge, on the other hand, was merely filled with amusement and curiosity. He knew the redoubtable Jones' record, so he was quite ready for something startling.

Breathing hard, Dr. Webb flung open the front door, and entered the lobby. But he only took about two paces before he halted in his tracks, and tottered on his heels.

"Am I mad?" he panted hoarsely.

"I couldn't say!" replied Jones' pal. "But you ought to know best!"

The Head found himself looking at a weird and wonderful scene. When he had last seen that lobby, it had been drab, with dingy walls, and dim lights. But now there were lights gleaming everywhere, and the walls fairly seemed to hit anybody who happened to come in. They were vividly orange in colour, and the effect was startling.

"This—this is outrageous!" bellowed the Head, quivering like an under-done blancmange.

He dashed through into the dining-hall, and then he tottered again. For the dining-hall was dazzlingly green in colour, and every light was burning.

Dr. Cobb Webb may have been prejudiced, but it could not be denied that the interior of Snayle School was now as colourful as a house decorator's sample book!

"The—the scoundrel!" he panted hoarsely. "Come, Mr. Muggeridge, we will find him and dismiss him on the spot!"

(And here brothers, we must break off until next week. Much as I would like to carry on with the good work at once, I fear that I must draw the curtain over this riot of pleasure until next week.—W. N. B.)

HOW TO JOIN THE LEAGUE

ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE APPLICATION FORM No. 84.

SECTION A

READER'S APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP.

I desire to become enrolled as a Member of THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE, and to qualify for all such benefits and privileges as are offered to Members of the League. I hereby declare that I have introduced "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY" and THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE to one new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. Will you, therefore, kindly forward me Certificate of Enrolment with the Membership Number assigned to me, **and Membership Badge.**

SECTION B

MEMBER'S APPLICATION FOR MEDAL AWARDS.

I, Member No..... (give Membership No.), hereby declare that I have introduced one more new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. This makes me..... (state number of introductions up to date) introductions to my credit.

SECTION C

NEW READER'S DECLARATION.

I hereby declare that I have been introduced by (give name of introducer) ..... to this issue of "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY."

(FULL NAME).....

(ADDRESS).....

.....

INSTRUCTIONS.

INSTRUCTIONS.—Reader Applying for Membership. Cut out TWO complete Application Forms from Two copies of this week's issue of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY. On one of the forms fill in Section A, crossing out Sections B and C. Then write clearly your full name and address at bottom of form. *The second form* is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out Sections A and B, and writes his name and address at bottom of form. Both forms are then pinned together, and sent to the Chief Officer, The St. Frank's League, c/o THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4. **Member Applying for Bronze Medal:** It will be necessary for you to obtain six new readers for this award. For each new reader TWO complete forms, bearing the same number, are needed. On one of the forms fill in Section B, crossing out Sections A and C, and write your name and address at bottom of form. The other form is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out Sections A and B, and writes his name and address at the bottom of the form. Now pin both forms together and send them to the Chief Officer, as above. One new reader will then be registered against your name, and when six new readers have been registered, you will be sent the St. Frank's League bronze medal. There is nothing to prevent you from sending in forms for two or more new readers at once, provided that each pair of forms bears the same date and number.

Bronze medallists wishing to qualify for the silver or gold medals can apply in the same way as for the bronze medal, filling in Section B. Every introduction they make will be credited to them, so that when the League reaches the required number of members they can exchange their bronze medal for a silver or gold one, according to the number of introductions with which they are credited.

These Application Forms can be posted for ½d., 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.

You are offered free advice on choosing a trade or calling, and on emigration to the colonies and dependencies.

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.



Our Weekly Pow-Wow!

By The Editor.

Winners Ahead!

IN my Chat last week I mentioned that there was a splendid surprise coming for all readers of the "N. L. L." I will go a bit further this week, and say that the new feature consists of the most wonderful series of Free Gifts ever put before my chums! What are these Free Gifts? Just turn to page 30 and you will see.

We have had some notable successes in the NELSON LEE LIBRARY, but the magnificent presentation I am making shortly to all chums beats anything yet. Be on the *qui vive* for this grand novelty.

Too Much Cash!

It would be absurd for me or anyone else to pity the Manchester chum who is worried because he happens to be rich. It is a first-rate thing to have money. The only possible mischief is where the cash is put to wrong uses.

My correspondent tells me he is very keen to win the friendship of a fellow who is much poorer than himself. He bought this individual a copy of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY, but the recipient insisted on forking out the twopence. That shows proper pride—maybe a bit overdone.

But money need never stand in the way of friendship. It should not count. It is when the fellow who is well-to-do tries to "come it heavy" that trouble ensues. True comradeship can never be built on swank.

A Jolly Picture.

"A fine picture, this one," said Mr. Brooks to me the other day, showing me a snap of a girl reader of Hove with her small nephew, and keeping the two company a cheery little King Charles spaniel. Mr. Brooks' picture gallery contains portraits of readers all over the world.

No Need for Worry.

A Dover friend says he is going to Australia, and looks forward to the experience, only he is afraid he will not be able to get the "N. L. L." at the Antipodes.

He need not worry. The old paper is read all over the Island Continent from Brisbane and Rockhampton to Sydney, Freemantle, Perth, and Adelaide. I assure "Doverite" he will have no trouble in obtaining his favourite weekly.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.

Jack Kelvin Salisbury, Lamorne, Normanby Terrace, Grove, Brisbane, Queensland, **Australia**, wishes to correspond with readers living overseas.

W. Robinson, 15, Sherborne Road, Highfield, **Southampton**, wants to obtain copies of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY containing the Northestrian Series.

A. Watts, 9, Clifton Road, **Kingston Hill**, Surrey, wishes to hear from readers who will help to form a sports club, and also a cycling club.

Will readers interested in stamps send to B. C. Coward, 271, Wandsworth Road, **London, S.W.8**, with a view to exchanging stamps with members of his club? Particulars of the club will be given on application to all who would like to join. For readers within one and a half mile radius, cycling tours are arranged during the fine weather.

F. Grove, 14, New Street, Witton Road, Victoria, **London, S.W.1**, would like to obtain "N. L. L.'s." containing the "St. Frank's Trip to the Moon," and "Adventures in the United States" stories.

F. T. G. Wilson, 9, Old Ford End Cottages, **Bedford**, would like to hear from readers anywhere, especially South America. All letters answered.

Miss Winifred Stevens, 36, West Street, **Leytonstone, E.11**, wishes to hear from girl readers only in her locality who are interested in cycling, with a view to forming a social cycling club for winter and summer. Keen girl cyclists only.

R. Hayler, 42, London Road, **Bognor**, Sussex, wishes to hear from a reader in Devonshire, also from members in the Bognor area.

B. Rowe, Gladstone Road, North Island, **New Zealand**, wishes to correspond with readers in the British Empire.

W. E. Swonvell, 50, Park Crescent Terrace, **Brighton**, wishes to obtain No. 1 "N. L. L." old series, also No. 112, entitled "Nipper at St. Frank's"; must be complete.

James W. Norridge, 77, George Street, **Oxford**, wants Nos. 35, 37, and 64, new series "N. L. L."

George F. Hodgson, 70, Sunny Side, Scalby Road, **Scarborough**, wishes to hear from J. Jillick (Belfast) and readers anywhere, especially America, India, France, and Holland.

Fred Blakeborough, Jun., 5, Harbottle Street, Oldgate, **Morpeth**, Northumberland, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere.

L. G. Moody, 10, Downview Avenue, Antrim Road, **Belfast**, wishes to hear from an O. O. and to join a club.

P. Jordan, 3a, Queensmill Road, Fulham, **London, S.W.6**, wishes to hear from readers, ages 14-16, interested in football.

E. Ellmore, 25, Streatfield Avenue, East Ham, **London, E.6**, wishes to hear from readers willing to help form a club.

H. Lane, 76, Mabley Street, Homerton, **London, E.9**, wants to hear from readers in his district who will help form a football team.

(Continued on back page.)

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.

(Continued from previous page.)

E. R. Lock, 122, Cox Street, **Coventry**, wants to hear from an O.O., also from readers who are keen on swimming, cycling, and football (both codes). He has back numbers of the "N. L. L." from No. 37 to sell.

A. R. Thomas, 13, Oakland Road, Mumbles, **Swansea**, wants Nos. 366—380, and 485—497 of the "N. L. L." in good condition. State price.

M. D. Forero, Apartado 1065, Lima, Peru, **South America**, wishes to obtain copies of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY from March 26th to June 11th, 1927.

Donald Anderson, 17, Cedar Street, Hopwood Lane, **Halifax**, wishes to correspond with readers in the British Isles on any subject; he is interested in clubs.

James Gregg, 2, Hewer Street, North Kensington, **London, W.10**, wishes to hear from a reader in his district with a view to joining the League.

Miss Dorothy J. Smith, c/o Mrs. Mitchell, 10, Hillside Street, **Edinburgh**, wishes to hear from girl readers only, in India.

M. Pandit, Ranga Rao, c/o the Popular Stores, Calicut, Malabar, **India**, wishes to hear from keen stamp collectors in England, Africa, U.S.A., Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. He has old varieties of Cochin, India, Travancore, and Ceylon, also Native States, Gwalior, Patiala, etc.

Harry McMahon, 50, Long Street, West Broken Hill, New South Wales, **Australia**, wishes to hear from readers in Australia and elsewhere.

A. R. Perkins, 41, St. Stephen's Road, **Leicester**, would like to hear from readers interested in stamps, sport and music (pianoforte). He wishes to form a club.

Eric W. Barber, 281, Lincoln Road, **Peterborough**, wishes to hear from readers interested in fretwork, beginners and old hands.

Ron A. W. Alexander (age 16½), Harris Street, Exeter, **South Australia**, wishes to hear from readers anywhere; all letters answered.

W. A. Wilkins, 68, Fairview Road, Stamford Hill, **London, N.16**, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere, especially Australia.

M. Koji Mohamed, 191, Arab Street, Singapore, **Straits Settlements**, wishes to hear from readers in France, Austria, Iraq, and Hongkong; stamp collectors especially. He also wishes to form a social and sports club, and would like to hear from readers who would help.

Edwin F. Ebborn, Mount Leyshon, Charters Towers, Queensland, **Australia**, wishes to correspond with readers in Gloucestershire, and elsewhere, interested in stamps, photographs, cigarette cards, etc.

J. H. Sinclair, 5, Stepney Drive, **Scarborough**, has a complete set of NELSON LEE LIBRARY (New Series) and in good condition.

Thomas Guch, 614, Ovington Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, **Canada**, wishes to hear from readers.

G. Stuart, Maryfield, **Huntly, Aberdeenshire**, wishes to communicate with readers interested in cinematography.

THE EDITOR.
(Chief Officer).

26 DEPOSIT

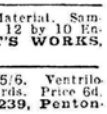


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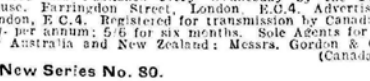
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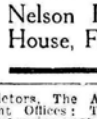
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