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THE ARIZONA GOLD QUEST!

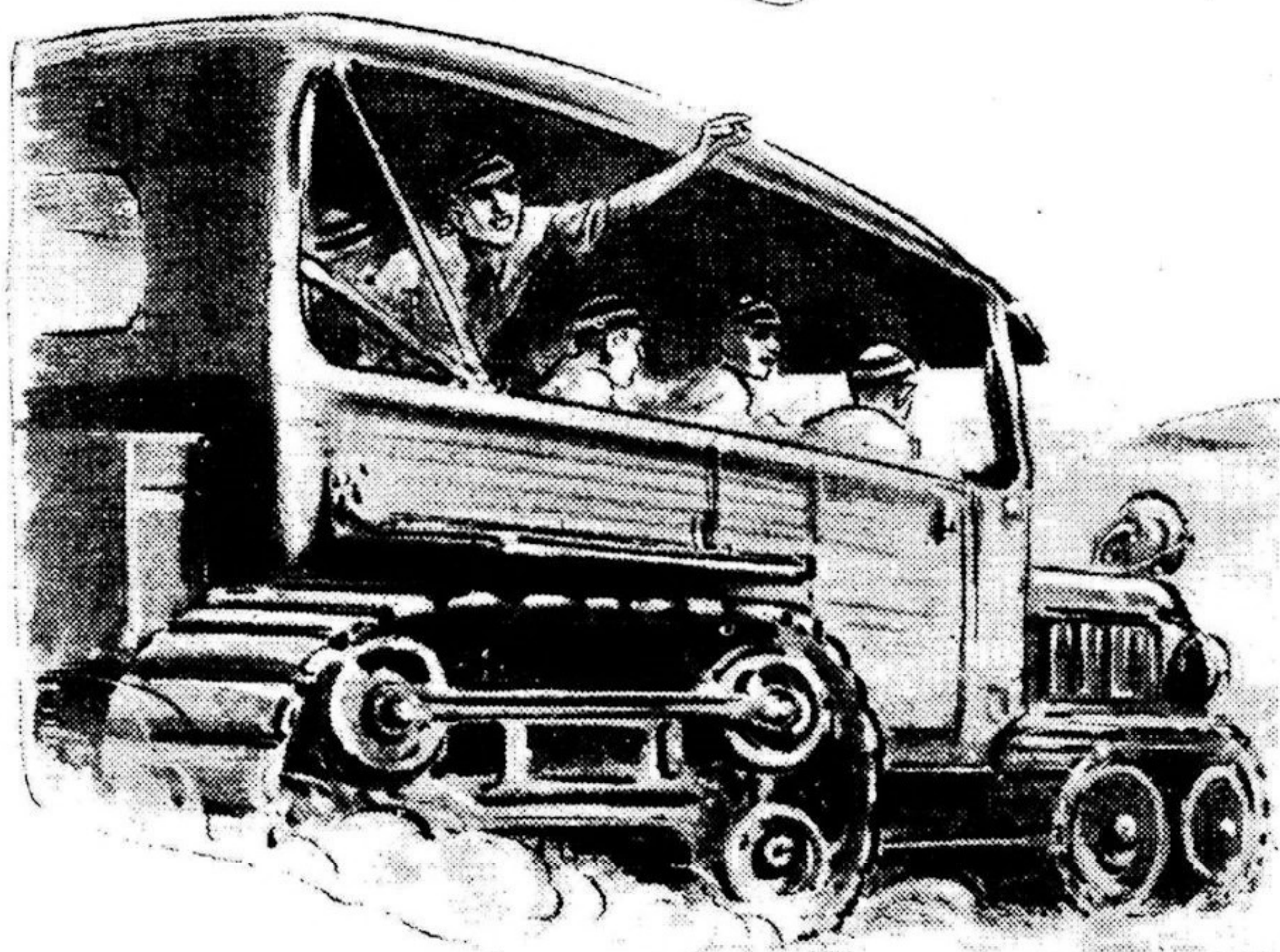
A gripping long complete story of schoolboy peril and adventure abroad,
featuring the famous Chums of St. Frank's.

New Series No. 171.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

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THE ARIZONA GOLD QUEST!



By
EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

CHAPTER 1.

Lord Dorrimore's Holiday Party!

CIRCLE CITY, Arizona, had never before witnessed such a spectacle in all its varied experience.

Main Street was bustling and throbbing with life, in spite of the heat of the morning. A particularly large gathering was in evidence near the State Hotel, a somewhat imposing wooden structure with an enormously wide veranda. The dusty roadway was filled with strange, unwieldy-looking vehicles—great tractors, some with commodious saloon bodies, others with truck bodies.

On the hotel veranda were numbers of youthful figures, some boys, some girls. They were all looking eager and interested. The boys were dressed in shorts, with open-necked shirts, and the girls, too, were attired in a manner suitable to the Arizona heat.

"Well, we shan't be long now," Nipper was saying. "Dorrie is going round, making the final arrangements; we ought to be off by noon."

Happy and lighthearted the St. Frank's holiday party starts on its journey into the Arizona desert. To them this is just a pleasure trip, with a search for gold to add to the enjoyment. Little do they realise the startling adventures and many perils that await them in that barren stretch of desert!

"Why wait until noon?" asked Handforth. "And why must we have all these giddy motor-cars? Dorrie isn't doing the thing properly at all! People don't go off into the desert for gold in motor-cars! It's all wrong!"

"I think Lord Dorrimore should know best, Ted," said one of the girls gently.

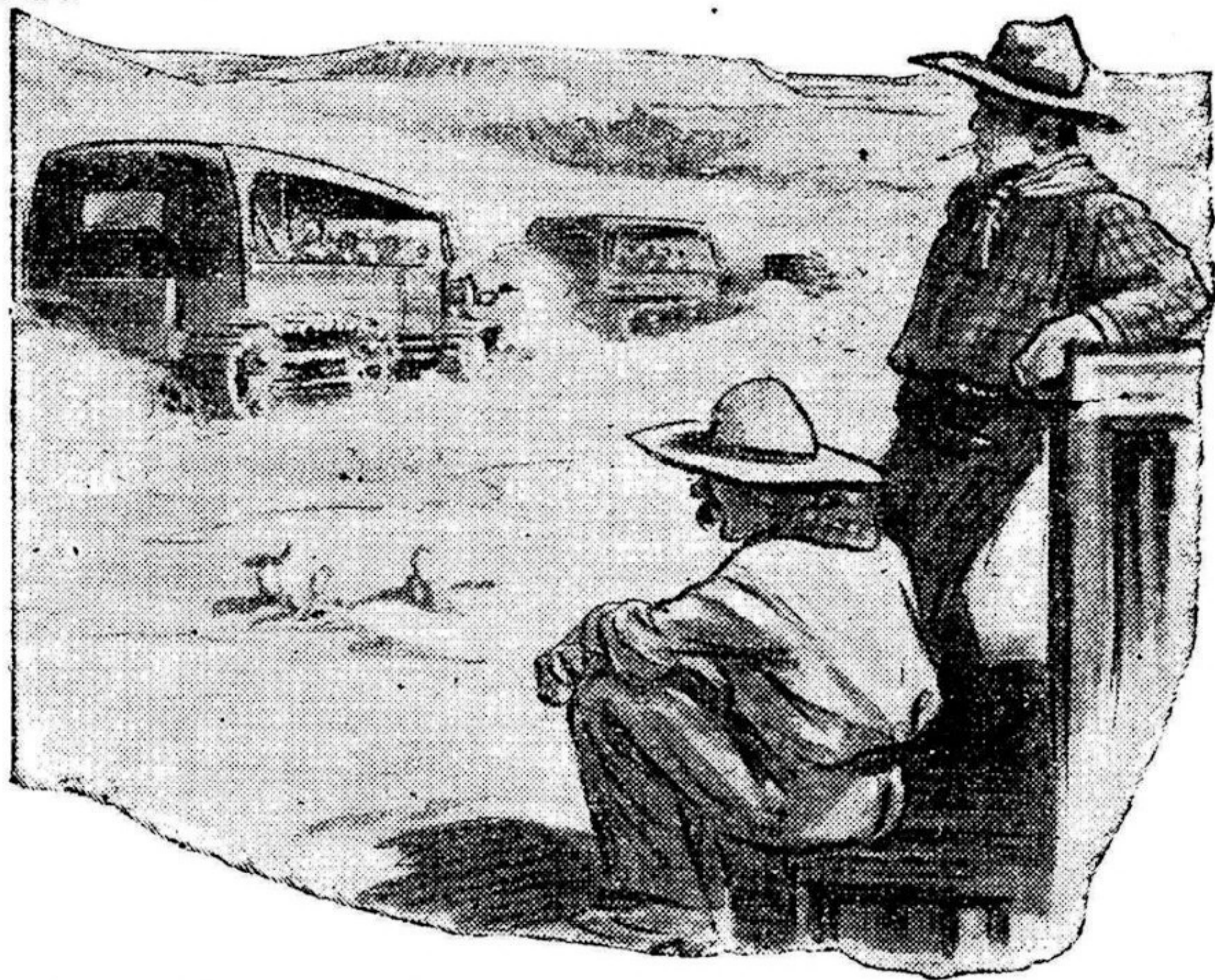
Handforth nearly grunted. He would have grunted if that remark had been addressed to him by a boy. But as Irene Manners was the speaker, he merely shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't see why Dorrie should spoil everything like this!" he grumbled. "In all the Western stories I've read, the prospectors start off on burros."

"Burros?" repeated Irene politely.

"It's a Spanish word—meaning mules," replied Handforth, with a careless wave of his hand.

"And that's wrong, too!" grinned Nipper. "A burro is an ass, Handy—not a mule."



"What's the difference?"

"If you don't know the difference between a mule and an ass, you've no right to be in the Remove," said Nipper. "I should think that any kid in an infants' school knows that a mule isn't a donkey. They're quite different animals."

"We won't argue," said Handforth coldly. "Never heard such a fuss over a trifle!"

The others chuckled, and they continued to watch the preparations with eager interest.

THERE were over thirty young people in the party—two-thirds of them being St. Frank's juniors. There were two seniors, too, these being the redoubtable William Napoleon Browne, of the Fifth, and his bosom chum, Horace Stevens. Browne had seen no reason why he should not give the party the great privilege of his company.

Since leaving England, not more than a week ago, Lord Dorrimore's guests had had a rather wonderful time. A swift trip across the Atlantic on board the steam yacht *Wanderer*; and this voyage, alone, had been delightfully enjoyable. The *Wanderer* was nearly as fast as a destroyer, and she had made the trip from England to Galveston, Texas, in record time. The weather had been perfect, and the sea ideal, all the way.

At Galveston the *Wanderer* had been left behind, and the whole party had taken train to Arizona, going by way of Houston, San Antonio, and El Paso, on the borders of Mexico. From there to Bowie, and then on a somewhat antiquated branch line to Circle City.

Handforth, of course, had been expecting to find a great town, with street cars, motor-omnibuses, and great skyscrapers. But Circle City was a very modest little place, tucked away among the mountains; a town of wooden structures, mostly, with dusty streets, and rough-and-ready inhabitants. Circle City stood on the edge of the desert, and it was a place of dust, of hot desert winds; and life, as a rule, was slow and humdrum.

But just at present Circle City was enjoying more excitement than it had known for years.

Even before the *Wanderer* had left England, Lord Dorrimore had cabled very precise instructions to the United States; and, as a result, these motor-tractors—these coaches and trucks—had been despatched to Circle City, and they had been all in readiness a day or two prior to the party's arrival.

Dorrie had spared no expense. Being a millionaire, and a man of extravagant habits, he had done the thing properly. It was a quest for gold, anyhow, and if it turned out to be successful, all this expenditure would be a mere trifle.

Of course, nobody in Circle City knew that gold was the object of this expedition. Not a word of it had been breathed. Even Edward Oswald Handforth had kept silent. Church and McClure, his faithful chums, had shadowed him constantly, and had seen to it that he held his tongue. Dorrie

had no wish to create a stampede, for, in his heart, he had an idea that the gold existed only in the mind of old Hookey Webb.

The people of Circle City believed that this trip was to be a mere pleasure expedition into the desert for these English schoolboys and schoolgirls, and they regarded the whole outfit with some amusement, and not a little awe. Never before had they seen such elaborate preparations for a desert journey.

Hookey Webb himself, resplendent in white drill, was out on the side-walk, in the glaring sun, looking up and down Main Street eagerly and intently. His bright, beady eyes were aglow, and his shrunken, shrivelled face was expressive of energy.

HOW different this old fellow looked from the Punch and Judy man who had amused the holiday crowds on Brighton beach!

He was the same white-haired old curiosity, with a hook instead of a left hand; but he was no longer shabby, and he seemed to have grown younger. It was many years since he had been in Circle City—more years than he cared to remember—but every inch of the place was familiar to him. Circle City had not changed much.

It was his story of gold which had appealed to the St. Frank's boys; and they, in turn, had related it to Lord Dorrimore. And the genial peer, with characteristic impulsiveness, had agreed to "grub-stake" old Hookey.

For over fifteen years Hookey Webb had been a standing joke in Brighton; everybody had laughed at his stories of gold. It was forty years since he and a companion had penetrated into the Arizona desert, into a region infested with Apache Indians. Old Ben Dalton, Hookey's companion, had met his death at the hands of the Redskins, and Hookey had escaped.

Yet, according to this queer old man, the pair of them had discovered gold before they had been compelled to flee for their lives. In vain, Hookey had attempted to get people interested in the story. He was no prospector—he was a sailor man. People with money had been amused, but they had regarded his tale as bunkum.

In the end, he had drifted back to the sea again, and for years he had lived in ship after ship, going to all parts of the world. And whenever he told his story of that great gold discovery, his listeners had

treated him with tolerance, and had taken it for granted that he was just "yarning."

Perhaps he was; perhaps this story of gold was a mere invention of his own imagination. Or perhaps there was a slim element of truth behind it all, and during the years Hookey had exaggerated and exaggerated until now he really believed in the truth of the story.

The St. Frank's fellows had become so interested that Lord Dorrimore had good-naturedly consented to take them on this quest. It did not make much difference to his lordship; indeed, he was quite happy to provide the outfit. It was something to do, and Dorrie was never more contented than when giving pleasure to others.

A trip in Arizona, providing that there was no element of real danger, would do these schoolboys and schoolgirls a world of good. It would be a change—a novelty. And if there really was any gold at the end of it—well, so much the better.

Nelson Lee was with the party, and he was enjoying himself as much as anybody else. He had very little faith in the quest, but he was quite certain that the trip would be instructive and interesting. And, since Lord Dorri-

more was paying the expenses, and was taking the most careful precautions against the possibility of any danger overtaking the party, Lee was content.

Of course, he would not have consented to the boys and girls making the trip had he thought there was likely to be any danger. But he didn't.

For once Nelson Lee was wrong.

"WELL, we shan't be long now, Hookey," remarked Lord Dorrimore, as he happened to come across the old man on the side-walk. "Ought to be shifting out of town within the hour."

"I ain't so sure as these 'ere moty-cars will be much good," said Hookey dubiously. "When me an' old Ben Dalton went up into the Pronto Basin, in '89, we didn't 'ave no moty-cars. We just used burros, an' went afoot."

"But times are different now," said Dorrie.

"The desert ain't no different," replied Hookey Webb. "The desert don't change, mister. A burro hain't much of a hanimal to look at, but 'e's useful."

"I don't doubt it," agreed Lord Dorrimore gravely. "And I can assure you, Hookey, that these tractors are useful, too. They're not ordinary motor-cars, you know. They'll travel over the roughest kind of ground."

"And wot if we don't 'it no water?" demanded the old man. "Them great things can't go far wi'out water. You'll 'ave the ingines b'ilin' afore they've bin in the desert a couple of hours. An' wot about the canyons an' cliffs? Burros can climb 'most anythin', but

you can't get them big moty-cars up no precipice—nor down one, neither, not with safety."

"According to all you've told me, Hookey, the going ought to be pretty smooth," replied Dorrie. "Desert and more desert, with a bit of rough country here and there. If we can't progress one way, we'll progress another. But with so

WHO'S WHO AT ST. FRANK'S.



WILLIAM NAPOLEON BROWNE.

Skipper of the Fifth Form and popular with everybody. Although a senior, he takes particular delight in mixing with the juniors. On the surface would seem to be a "swank," but really he is nothing of the sort. Very long-winded in his speech, and always ready to take part in a jape. He himself, in fact, is known at St. Frank's as the King of Spoofers!

many youngsters with us, we'll need to be careful. Can't expose them to any risks, you know."

One of the Circle City inhabitants joined them.

"I hear you're going up into the Pronto Basin, gents?" he said conversationally. "Up by Cedar Creek, and then on to the Chichon Mesa?"

"That's the region, generally," agreed Dorrie.

"It's a funny place to choose for a pleasure trip," said the man, staring.

"What's wrong with it?" asked Dorrie. "We've heard that there are lots of cave dwellings along the cliffs of the Chichon Mesa."

"You bet your life," said the other. "I reckon that there are cave dwellings in most o' the cliffs in Arizona, if it comes to that. Right near here the Moquis and the Zunis had their homes in the lava cliffs. Other tribes of the Pueblos, too. In the old days these tribes and the Apaches was pretty well always at war, but I guess the country's somewhere nigh settled now. 'Taint like it was in the bad old days."

"Pretty safe, eh?" asked Dorrie.

"Safe so long as you don't get too near the Indian reservation," said the Circle City man. "But them blamed Indians ain't much different from what they was. The Blue Mountain Reservation ain't like some o' the others; it's difficult to know the exact boundary of it, up there on the Chichon Mesa. An' them Indians don't like white folks hangin' around. You'd best watch out, gents. I guess you're goin' into the worst bit o' country in the whole o' this State!"

CHAPTER 2.

An Old Pal!

LORD DORRIMORE chuckled as the man walked off.

"Sounds cheerful, Hookey!" he remarked dryly.

"Well, I ain't sayin' as the bloke ain't right," replied Hookey Webb. "Up there, in the Pronto Basin, the country is pretty bad, as far as I remember it. You'd need to go a long way to find wuss. I told ye that at the start."

"That's why I'm taking this big outfit," said Lord Dorrimore, nodding. "The bigger it is, the safer. As for the Indians, it's absurd to suppose that there's any danger from them. They daren't start any monkey business, or they'll have the United States Government down upon them."

"There ain't no United States Government up there, on the Mesa," replied Hookey grimly. "There ain't nothin'—'ceptin' desert an' cactus an' rocks—an' Injuns. A fat lot they care about the Government!"

"Well, there's that, of course," admitted Dorrie. "I've been trying to find a man who's familiar with the desert—with the Pronto Basin, and the whole district of the Chichon Mesa. If I can get hold of an old desert 'rat,' he'll be very handy."

"Wot about me?" asked Hookey. "Ain't I no good?"

"You're the man who's going to show us the gold," said Dorrie. "But, on your own showing, Hookey, you don't know much about the desert—and it's forty years, anyhow, since you made your trip."

"Right enough, mister," said the old man thoughtfully. "Once I git round about the spot, I reckon I'll be able to locate the old creek, an' the gold. But I admit I don't know much about these 'ere deserts."

"Yes, it 'ud be better if we was to 'ave a desert man wi' us," went on Hookey, after a long pause. "Up there, by the headwaters of the Pronto creek, we're likely to fall in with Injuns. An' I don't reckon there's one of us wot knows two words of Apache, or them other dialects. We don't even know the sign language, an' I've 'eard that it's a ticklish job to 'andle them Injuns."

"Will they need to be handled?" asked Dorrie. "This isn't '89, Hookey. Things are very different nowadays."

"Injuns is allus Injuns," said Hookey, shaking his head.

"But they're tamed now," said Dorrie.

"Maybe they are—an' maybe they ain't," said Hookey. "Anyways, we don't need to go into their reservation. Show me the big butte, an' it won't be long afore I locate the old place. Ben an' me called it Samson Butte, 'cause it looked so durned strong an' big. Pity we ain't got old Dicky Siggers 'ere; 'e'd be the very man you're looking for."

"Dicky Siggers?" inquired Nelson Lee, who had come up a few minutes previously and had been an interested listener.

"'E's the bloke wot wouldn't come wi' Ben an' me when we fust went prospectin'," said Hookey. "'E said 'e had more respect for 'is scalp—an' I ain't sayin' but wot 'e wasn't right. In them days the Injuns was as wild as 'Ottentots. But twenty years arterwards Dicky was ready enough to 'ave a shot at it, only 'e 'adn't got the money. Nor 'ad I. So it come to

nothin'. It's twenty years since I saw old Dicky."

"Perhaps he's dead?" remarked Dorrie. "In any case, there must be plenty of other men. Most of the people of Circle City are miners or traders, and their dependents. They've more sense than to spend their time on the desert."

While they were speaking, a curious figure came into sight along the dusty street—in fact, two figures. One was a man, and the other a skinny little burro. The man himself was even skinnier, and his tallness seemed to exaggerate his lean, gaunt frame.

"Talk of the devil, an' I'm blowed if he don't appear!" shouted old Hookey suddenly.

"What the deuce——" began Dorrie.

"It's Dicky Siggers hisself!" roared Hookey. "That's 'im! That lean, 'ungry-lookin' human skeleton! Old Dicky Siggers hisself! Well, I'm blowed!"

The man with the burro turned his head as he heard Hookey's voice, and for a moment he paused. A grin appeared on his leathery, sun-tanned face.

"Howdy, strangers?" he said. "Didn't I hear one o' you speakin' my name?"

Old Hookey ran forward.

"I ain't no stranger, Dicky!" he ejaculated. "Remember me, don't you?"

"Waal, you can call me an alligator!" said Dicky Siggers. "Ef it ain't my old friend, Webb! Put it thar, pardner! Ain't seen you for fwen'y-five years!"

"Twenty years!" said Hookey.

"Seems longer," remarked Mr. Siggers.

"I ain't figgerin' to be pussonal, but it seems to me that you ain't all here, pard. How come you lost thet hand?"

"Oh, that ain't nothin'," said Mr. Webb, looking at his hook. "Accident, Dicky. 'Appened not long arter I saw you larst. They call me 'Ookey now."

"Then I'll call you Hookey, I reckon," said the gaunt giant. "You've sure struck the pay-dirt good an' proper, ain't you, old pal?" he added, looking at Hookey's clothes, and at the general scene. "Looks like you've made a pile."

Mr. Hookey Webb came closer.

"Don't say nothin' about gold, Dicky!" he muttered. "We're s'posed to be goin'

inter the desert jest for a 'oliday jaunt, see?"

"I got you," nodded Mr. Siggers.

"But, really, we're arter that big strike o' mine," went on Hookey. "Remember?"

"I'm a chunk of lava rock if you ain't a sticker, pardner!" said Mr. Siggers admiringly. "Gee whiz! So you've come out after all these years to have another try, eh? Waal, I sure wish you luck."

"We was just talkin' about you, Dicky," said Hookey eagerly. "You're the very man we wants for this job. You knows the desert like a book. An' I dessay you're pretty well acquainted wi' the Pronto Basin, ain't you?"

"Me?" said Mr. Siggers. "Thar ain't a stone that I don't know by its Christian name!"

"An' you've bin to the headwaters of the Pronto Creek, ain't you, near that big butte?"

"I don't mind tellin' you, Hookey, that I've searched Pronto Crick and Cedar Crick as fur as they go," said the old prospector. "Guess I've bin tryin' to locate thet strike o' yours. Never had any luck, though. I gave it up long ago. I sure reckoned you was crazy."

"You wouldn't be the fust," grinned Mr. Webb. "But I ain't crazy, Dicky—not me! This gent 'ere is 'im wot's found all

the money. Lord Dorrimore, one o' the finest gents livin'. This other one is Mr. Nelson Lee, wot's in charge o' the boys!"

"Pleased to meet you, pards," said Dicky Siggers, saluting. "Ef you want my services, I reckon they're for hire. Broke, I am—flat broke. If you're needin' a feller who

knows the desert, I guess I'm the guy you want."

"Good man!" said Lord Dorrimore. "It's a lucky coincidence that you came into town this morning——"

"Not so much of a coincidence, either," said Mr. Siggers. "There ain't no telegraph in the desert—nor radio, neither—but news gits around, jest the same. I heard o' this big outfit, an' I thought I'd come along an' give it the once over. I'm sure glad I struck town in time."

And Mr. Dicky Siggers, from that moment, was an important member of the expedition.



CHAPTER 3.

Handforth Insists!

HANDFORTH was curious.

"Who's the lean, leathery, lamp-post chap with old Hookey?" he asked, as Lord Dorrimore came up on the veranda of the State Hotel.

"That gentleman, my lad, is Mr. Richard Siggers—otherwise known as Dicky, the Desert Rat!" replied Dorrie. "He's a man who knows the country inside out, and I think he'll be useful to us. An old-timer, Handy—a hard-bitten prospector of the old school."

"I knew it!" said Handforth triumphantly. "I knew it as soon as I set eyes on him! He doesn't use any motor-cars, does he? He comes into town, out of the desert places, with a burro."

"Barrow?" asked Dorrie politely.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You may be right, Handy, but I must confess that I didn't see any barrow," went on his lordship, as the other fellows grinned. "Perhaps he left it further along the street——"

"I mean burro, sir," growled Handforth, turning red.

"Oh, I see!" said Lord Dorrimore gravely. "Burro. Of course. Siggers certainly came here with a burro."

"And I think we should have burros, sir," said Handforth, in a firm voice. "If this old desert man uses a burro, why shouldn't we? He ought to know best. He's spent his lifetime prospecting for gold. Why shouldn't we do the thing as it should be done?"

"Don't be an ass, Handy," said Nipper. "Dorrie has planned everything so that we shall get the maximum amount of comfort in this rough country. Why stick to the old methods when the new ones are better?"

"How do we know they're better?" argued Edward Oswald. "Anyhow, whether you chaps go along in these motor-cars or not, I'm going to use a burro."

"In that case, Ted, we shall have two burros with us," put in Willy, of the Third.

"Two?"

"You and the other one."

"But I'm not a burro, you silly young chump!" roared Handforth.

"You're an ass—and an ass is a burro," explained Willy. "Why the dickens can't you be satisfied? I've never known such a chap! Always grumbling about something or other."

Handforth frowned.

"If you want a burro, you shall have a burro," said Lord Dorrimore. "Why not?"

I'm an easy-going chap, and I'm perfectly agreeable to granting any reasonable request. While the rest of us go into the desert on the tractors, Handy shall have his burro."

"By George! Do you mean that, Dorrie?" asked Handforth eagerly.

"Honour bright, young 'un," said his lordship solemnly.

"Thanks awfully, sir."

"Don't thank me, my son—yet!" said Dorrie. "Leave it until later, and then, perhaps, you won't feel like thanking me. But if you want a burro, you shall have a burro. The point is settled."

There was something in Lord Dorrimore's tone which caused Nipper and Reggie Pitt and Travers and the others to grin to themselves. In fact, it was obvious that Dorrie was pulling Handy's leg. Not that Handforth had the slightest inkling of this.

"Perhaps we can get off soon, sir?" he asked. "I mean, as soon as I'm on my burro, we can start."

Dorrie glanced at his watch.

"We shan't start until to-day's train is in," he said. "Or it may be yesterday's train. I'm not sure which—on this railroad. They're sometimes a bit late—twelve hours, or so."

"But why wait for the train, sir?" put in Reggie Pitt. "Are you expecting somebody?"

"I am" said his lordship, dropping his voice. "Don't whisper it abroad, but the gentleman who is coming to Circle City on to-day's train is a highly important personage. If the expedition started off without him he would be rather annoyed."

"But I thought we were all complete, sir!" said Handforth, in surprise. "Who is this man, anyhow?"

"Not so loud, you young ass!" warned Dorrie. "Haven't I told you that this man is a highly important personage? To start the expedition without him would be like trying to start a railway train without a locomotive."

And Dorrie went bustling off, leaving the juniors somewhat puzzled.

"Wonder who the chap can be?" said Handforth, frowning. "Probably some United States official. What do we want with officials? Why can't we go into the desert on our own?"

"There may be certain rules or restrictions, Handy," said Church. "In any case, it's not our business."

"Well, I'm going to have my burro," said Handforth complacently. "You fellows can ride in those silly tractors. I believe in doing the thing properly."



Interestedly the St. Frank's juniors watched as the two curious figures came along the dusty street. One was a man, and the other a skinny little burro. The man himself was even skinnier, and his tallness seemed to exaggerate his lean, gaunt frame. "Why, it's Dicky Siggers himself!" exclaimed Hookey Webb suddenly, and dashed forward to meet the newcomer.

IT wasn't long before Lord Dorrimore returned. With him he brought a Circle City man, and a fine, robust-looking burro.

"Best animal in town," the man was saying. "If you search the whole of Arizona, you won't find a better burro than this, mister. Quite a youngster, and strong and lively. I guess he'll stand any amount of rough usage, and he'll like it."

"Fine!" said Dorrie, nodding. "He'll do splendidly. Where's Handy? Oh, here you are, young 'un! Well, here's your burro. Better take him, and——"

"There's no saddle!" said Handforth, as he inspected the animal.

"Saddle?" repeated Dorrie in surprise. "My dear kid, you don't need a saddle for a burro."

"Oh, I see," said Handforth. "All right, sir!"

"Better give him a ride round, and get friendly with him," went on Dorrie.

Handforth was keen enough. He had made up his mind that the only correct way to go into the desert was on a burro—having overlooked the fact that these little animals are generally used for the carrying of baggage. This, however, was a minor point.

The Moor View girls had come out on the veranda by now, and they were watching with interest. Handforth was aware of their presence, and he felt rather important. He would show everybody how these things should be done! It was all very well to procure these big motor-tractors, but a real desert man used a burro.

He led the little animal out into the middle of the sun-scorched road, and then proceeded to mount. This was quite an easy job, for the patient beast remained as motionless as a statue. The trouble was, it still remained as motionless as a statue after Handforth had clicked his tongue in the approved fashion, with the idea of conveying that he desired to proceed.

"Gee up!" he said sternly.

The burro remained statuesque.

"You won't get far like that, dear old fellow," said Travers, shaking his head.

"Fathead! I haven't started yet!" retorted Handforth.

"No?" drawled Travers. "Wake me up when you do!"

"Best burro in town, eh?" snorted Handforth, after he had ineffectually clicked his tongue again. "Where's the man who sold this thing to Dorrie? It's not a burro at all—it's a chunk of rock!"

The man came forward out of a grinning crowd of onlookers.

"He's all right, kid, but you don't handle him right," he explained. "I figger he don't understand your swell style of address. Guess he needs something kinder rough."

"Rough?" repeated Handforth, staring.

"Give him a taste of your heel, sonny!" advised the late owner.

Handforth was reluctant to do this. He held that any animal could be ruled by kindness. However, there was nothing really cruel in giving the stubborn beast a gentle jab on the flank. He gave the jab but still nothing happened.

"Rats!" said Handforth, exasperated. "This giddy thing isn't a burro! It's a mule!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you start with us on that animal, Handy, we shall find you still here when we get back," grinned Reggie Pitt. "Still you would have your own way, wouldn't you? Motor tractors may not be so picturesque, but they're certainly a bit more speedy."

Edward Oswald was beginning to feel supremely self-conscious. He had expected to ride off triumphantly, showing his chums exactly how this sort of thing should be done. Instead of that, he was stuck here like an idiot in full view of the schoolboys and schoolgirls. To make matters worse, Main Street was packed with local worthies who had gathered round to watch all the proceedings connected with the start of the expedition.

"Gee up, blow you!" hissed Handforth, bending over his steed's neck. "What's the matter with you? For two pins, I'll —"

At that moment the ex-owner delivered a resounding slap on the burro's rear, and this had an immediate and startling effect. The little animal started off down the street as though electrified. More by chance than skill, Handforth managed to keep his seat.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They're off!"

"I'll bet five to one that burro gets there first," grinned Travers.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

If Handforth had been self-conscious before, he was doubly so now. His only consolation was that his mount was taking him further and further away from the crowd. He expected to be thrown at any moment—but when he was thrown he would at least be comforted by the knowledge that there would be few witnesses.

He clung on desperately, and the burro swerved into a side road and went careering on faster than ever. If it had been impossible for Handforth to start the creature, it was equally impossible for him to stop it.

Round another corner and on past a few frame dwellings where there were no eyes to watch him. Clouds of dust were rising into the hot air in the burro's rear, and Handforth began to wonder what would happen to him when he lost his hold. Perhaps it would be better to fall off now.

He shouted in vain. Digging his knees into the burro's sides, he just managed to keep on. And then came the disaster. Just as he was expecting to be saved from the humiliation of being thrown in the full public gaze, the burro arrived back in Main Street, having gone completely round the block—without Handforth being in the least aware of this fact. He had had no time to take any note of his direction.

The little burro, careering at full speed into the main thoroughfare, was evidently startled by all the noise and commotion. Anyhow, he came to a sudden, abrupt halt. Handforth didn't. He wasn't prepared for that sudden check. He shot clean over his mount's head, turned a somersault, and landed in the middle of Main Street, smothered in a cloud of dust.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And this," said Travers, "is the way it should be done."

"Good old Handy!"

"Cheer up, Ted!" sang out Willy. "After a dozen or so lessons, I daresay you'll be able to ride properly."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth sat up, dazed and dusty. The burro, having got rid of its burden, was standing near by, docile and motionless. Handforth had not only been seen by his own schoolfellows and by Irene & Co., but by half the inhabitants of Circle City, too.

"My only sainted aunt!" he mumbled feebly.

Church and McClure came running up to him.

"Hurt, old man?" asked Church with concern.

"Of course not!" grunted Handforth. "Fancy asking such a silly question! Falling on your head on a hard road like this is a pleasure!"

"No need to be sarcastic," said Church. "Mac and I will lend you a hand——"

"I don't want a hand!" growled Handforth, as he rose painfully to his feet. "I don't want any burros, either! Of all the idiotic animals under the sun, this thing's

the most idiotic! Look at it standing there—leering at me! I believe he did it on purpose!”

“He looks cunning enough for anything,” agreed McClure. “If I were you, Handy, I’d give up the whole idea, and come with us in one of the saloon tractors. It’s a lot more comfortable—and not so risky.”

“I never want to see another burro as long as I live!” said Handforth thickly. “Where’s the hotel? Where’s some water? I’m so full of dust that it’ll need a vacuum cleaner to get it all out!”

He was compelled to run the gauntlet of the chuckling spectators, and it seemed to take him about half an hour to get into the hotel. As he vanished, Lord Dorrimore turned to the owner of the burro.

“Thanks for the loan of your trained laughter-provider,” he grinned. “If there’s any charge, just mention the figure.”

“Not on your life, sir!” said the man. “I guess I haven’t laughed so much in five years! I’m figgerin’ that your young friend is cured.”

“Cured?” repeated Dorrie. “He’s so cured that he’ll never dare to look a burro in the eye again.”

And his lordship went off, feeling thoroughly satisfied. He had known, of course, that that particular donkey was a tricky sort of animal. But the only way to teach Handforth a lesson was to be drastic.

Clang-clang!

Dorrie suddenly looked up as he heard the distant clanging of a bell. The St. Franks fellows, too, pricked up their ears.

“Look at Dorrie!” said Fullwood with interest.

His lordship was striding off down Main Street at a great pace, evidently anxious to get to the station in time to meet the train.

“Come on!” said Nipper. “We want to see who this important personage is!”

“Rather!” chorused the others.



“SHOW ME AN INJUN!”

THIS has been Edward Oswald Handforth’s cry ever since he arrived in Arizona.

A search for gold is all very interesting—but it’s not exciting enough for good old reckless Handy. And so he wants to meet a few Redskins.

And he’s not disappointed! Unfortunately for him he meets umpteen of ‘em—wildly-yelling, painted Redskins who are on the warpath and who are out to cause trouble. Read all about Handy’s amazing adventures in next week’s gripping yarn entitled:

“INTO THE REDSKINS’ TRAP!”

CHAPTER 4. The Important

Personage!

THE railroad service to Circle City was antiquated.

It was only a branch line, at the best, and the single track was somewhat crude and uneven. The rolling-stock of the company, too, was not everything that could be desired. The train which Lord

Dorrimore now beheld was composed of ancient wooden coaches pulled by a decrepit locomotive which wheezed and clanked and rattled. However, Circle City was fortunate, perhaps, in having a railroad service at all.

Dorrie found that Nelson Lee was already at the “depot,” and Lee smiled as the sporting peer came up.

“I thought you might be too busy, Dorrie,” he explained; “so I came along to welcome him in.”

“Good man!” said Lord Dorrimore.

As the train creaked and groaned to a standstill, a crowd of St. Frank's boys came into sight, and they were breathless as they halted near Dorrie and Nelson Lee.

"If we're in the way sir, just say the word," said Nipper. "We don't want to butt in——"

"Who says you're butting in?" broke in Dorrie. "My dear kids, you're perfectly welcome to stay. My old friend, I am sure, will be glad to see you."

"You mean the highly important personage, sir?" asked Pitt.

"Exactly," grinned Dorrie.

They all looked at the train, wondering who this new arrival could be. He was evidently somebody of exceptional consequence, or Lee and Dorrie would not have come to the station personally like this. Some mining expert, perhaps, whose skill and knowledge would be needed later.

The juniors scanned the various passengers with interest. None of them looked particularly important. They were mostly mining men, and one or two bore the stamp of cowpunchers.

"He doesn't seem to be here," murmured Nelson Lee.

"Oh, he's on this train right enough," said Dorrie. "I had a telegram—— Ah, here we are! By the Lord Harry! What on earth has the big chump been up to?"

Another figure had appeared, and, even if he did not look highly important, he certainly looked remarkable.

He was a black man—as black as ebony—of huge stature, and he was dressed in the full glory of a gorgeous military rig-out. He was all red and blue and gold,

do you think you are—a field marshal, or a vice-admiral? I'm hanged if I can tell whether this uniform is military or naval!"

The St. Frank's fellows were crowding round, excited and eager.

"Umlosi!" yelled Nipper. "By Jove, you chaps! It's Umlosi!"

"Don't we know it?" grinned Fullwood. "Good old Umlosi!"

"And Dorrie didn't let us know!" said Reggie Pitt. "You bounder, Dorrie! Why didn't you tell us that Umlosi was going to join us?"

"I thought I'd give you a little surprise," chuckled his lordship.

THE juniors were certainly surprised.

Although Umlosi was Lord Dorrimore's most faithful friend and servant, the fellows had somehow never connected the important "personage" with the giant negro. It had never occurred to them that Umlosi would come on this trip into the heart of the Arizona desert. It was so very different from Umlosi's customary location. He was a native of Africa—a great chief in his own country. Indeed, he was the King of Kutanaland.

But Umlosi was a rover, and there were not many parts of the world that he had not visited with Lord Dorrimore. If Dorrie would have him, he would always go. At a call from "N'Kose," he would travel half across the world—cheerfully and eagerly.

"This is just the climate to suit the old boy," said Dorrie, with a chuckle. "In the daytime, at least, when the temperature climbs to somewhere round a hundred and twenty in the shade. He'll love it! And I think he might be useful—particularly if we come into contact with any of these cheery Apaches."

"Rather, sir!" said Nipper. "It's great to have Umlosi with us!"

Umlosi was solemnly shaking hands with them all—after having greeted Dorrie and Nelson Lee with considerable ceremony.

"But why the comic opera uniform, old fellow?" asked Dorrie. "I don't wish to be impolite, but I think you ought to know that you look too awful for words!"

"Thou art surely speaking with words of jocular, O my father," said Umlosi in surprise. "For is not this uniform the uniform of the great warrior chiefs of Brazil?"

(Continued on page 14.)



with gleaming buttons and festoons of braid. He might, indeed, have looked important, only for the fact that the uniform was rather too small for him. As a consequence, he became somewhat comic.

"Ye gods!" ejaculated Dorrie under his breath.

The black giant flung up a hand in salute.

"Wau! I am here, N'Kose!" he exclaimed, in a deep, rumbling voice.

"No need to tell us that, old man—we can see you're here all right!" said Lord Dorrimore, advancing. "By glory! What



Edward Oswald Handforth has always fancied himself as a detective. This amusing yet thrilling article finds him in the rôle of the world's greatest 'lec—and, what's more, he's on the track of the world's most notorious criminal!

THE world's cleverest and most famous detective was hot on the trail of the world's slickest and most notorious criminal.

In other words, Edward Oswald Handforth, the celebrated sleuth of St. Frank's, Sussex, was on the track of "Cut-throat" Charley, the crookedest crook of Crookland.

Gaze at Detective Handforth now. There he is, sitting in the cockpit of that huge aeroplane as it wings its way across the Atlantic at something like two hundred miles per hour. Only a youngster, yet for all that he is acknowledged as the world's master detective. The fact that he is flying non-stop from England to America across the mighty Atlantic does not worry him. Such a thing is nothing to this iron-nerved detective.

Somewhere ahead of him, travelling on a liner bound for New York, was Cut-throat Charley. For weeks now the notorious criminal had sought to elude his pursuer. Round and round the world the chase had been waged. Again and again Cut-throat Charley had succeeded in slipping Handforth, but always the marvellous detective had picked up the trail again.

A feeling of elation surged through the latter's finely-proportioned body as he pressed a lever and sent the aeroplane—a wonderful machine of his own design—whizzing through the air at an increased speed. On the ocean below him he had spotted a ship, and his uncanny eyesight had told him that it was the vessel on which Cut-throat Charley was travelling. He could tell this by the curl of the smoke from the ship's funnels, for Handforth always made a point of studying little details like this.

A daring plan suddenly occurred to him. Instead of flying straight to New York and waiting for the ship to dock, he would drop on to the vessel as the aeroplane flew overhead.

Terribly dangerous, you will say, but then, Handforth was always doing such things!

BY now the machine was flying almost directly over the boat at a height of a few hundred feet. The passengers were looking up in wonder. Among them was Cut-throat Charley, disguised as an Irishman, and when he saw Handforth climbing on to the wing of the aeroplane, his face blanched. For a moment he became a quivering jelly. Bah! Could he never escape from the accursed detective? And then he recovered his composure. He must hide. He made to run down a nearby stairway, but before he had moved a yard something hurtled through the air.

It was Handforth. Judging his jump to the millionth part of a second, the great detective had launched himself from his aeroplane and had landed on the crook's back!

Everybody was dumbfounded. Who was the human thunderbolt who was now wrestling in a death struggle with one of the passengers? And then they recognised him. Of course, only one man could have done such a thing, and that was the mighty Detective Handforth!

Backwards and forwards swayed the two struggling figures. Terror had lent Cut-throat Charley the strength of a hundred men and, to everybody's horror and amazement, he was assuredly getting the better of the other. For the first time in his life Detective Handforth was getting the worst of a fight. Now he was on the deck of the vessel. His assailant had one hand round his throat, with the other he was poisoning a big crowbar.

"I've got you this time, Handforth!" he hissed. "Never again will you worry me. Bah! Take that!"

The crowbar came crashing down. People shrieked and screamed. They were too terror-stricken to go to the rescue. Handforth uttered a gurgling cry—

"Wake up, Handy, you slacker! Rising bell went five minutes ago!"

And Nipper, with a chuckle, aimed another wet sponge at the snoring Edward Oswald Handforth.

THE ARIZONA GOLD QUEST!

(Continued from page 12.)

"Brazil!" echoed Nipper.

"That's right," nodded Lord Dorrimore. "You may remember that I was in Brazil for some months before coming to England. I left Umlosi there—as the climate suited him better. When I arranged to come out on this trip, I sent him a cablegram, and he caught the first available boat for New Orleans. Luckily enough, he was able to get a train so that he could land here in time for the start."

"Thou sentest me word to come, N'Kose—and I came," said Umlosi simply. "I am a warrior, and methinks there will be peril and danger in this strange and wondrous country. Already I have smelt blood."

"Oh, have you?" said Dorrie. "By gad, Lee! Those Indians are going to give us some trouble, after all! If Umlosi smells blood, you can bet your bottom dollar that there's going to be trouble. He's got an uncanny instinct that way."

"Don't you believe it, Dorrie!" laughed Nelson Lee. "Umlosi is spoiling for a fight, I expect, and he's hoping that there will be a few battles."

"Thou art surely right, Umtagati," said Umlosi, looking at Lee. "Life is dull and dreary for a warrior unless there is fighting. I am a warrior, and I am attired in the uniform of a warrior—"

"Well, you won't be attired in it for long, my son," said Dorrie with conviction. "As soon as we get you to the hotel, you'll shed that comic uniform. We'll soon have you in something more suitable."

AFTER Umlosi had been conveyed safely to the State Hotel, and after his baggage had arrived, Lord Dorrimore personally superintended the complete removal of the former's amazing uniform. And when Umlosi reappeared, he was dressed in comfortable shorts, with an open-necked shirt—just the same as the other members of the party.

"Well, I'm jolly glad that Umlosi's coming with us," said Handforth with satisfaction. "He makes you feel sort of confident. If those giddy Indians start any rot, they'll soon be squashed!"

Handforth had cleaned himself by now, and he was practically normal again. And it had been noticed by the other fellows that he made no mention of burros. He was quite keen on travelling in one of the comfortable tractor coaches.

"We needn't worry about Indians while you're with us, dear old fellow," said Travers solemnly. "Of course, it'll be better to have Umlosi—"

"We can deal with any Red Indians who go on the warpath," interrupted Handforth, nodding. "Still, Umlosi might make himself useful. You chaps needn't think that this trip is going to be all honey. The Apaches are a tricky, treacherous lot, and we're going quite near to their reservation. The chances are that they'll spot us and attack us."

"Rats!" said Church. "The Indians aren't dangerous nowadays!"

"Aren't they?" retorted Handforth.

"I've been speaking to some of these Circle City men, and I've heard some awful yarns. Every now and again the Indians break out of their reservation and go on the warpath!"

"What?"

"It's a fact!" said Handforth. "Only about a year ago a thousand of the Red-

skins came sweeping down on Circle City, and they took about five hundred scalps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't you believe me?" roared Handforth, turning red. "The manager of the hotel told me! He says that these Indians are just as bad now as they were in the old days. They may be in a reservation, but there aren't any walls round it. They can get out when they like—and they do get out, too. The young braves get together, and they lead attacks on the surrounding ranches and townships. I tell you we're going right into danger!"

Nipper chuckled.

"Poor old Handy!" he said sorrowfully. "Somebody has been pulling your leg."

Handforth started.

"Pulling my leg!" he ejaculated. "You don't mean to say that—"

"The hotel manager was having a joke," said Nipper. "The Indians haven't been on the warpath for twenty or thirty years! They're hardly ever seen in Circle City, anyhow. As for sweeping down on the place a couple of years ago, and taking five hundred scalps, you must be dotty to believe such a thing!"

"By George!" breathed Handforth.

He suddenly realised that he had, indeed, been spoofed. It had not taken long for the Circle City people to find out that Handforth's leg had been made to be pulled. And they had pulled it.

But even when he thoroughly understood that he had been kidded, he was still obstinate.

"I expect they think it's funny—but I don't!" he said tartly. "And I still maintain that the Apaches are going to give us trouble. You mark my words! As soon as we get into the hills, beyond the desert, we shall find the Red Indians there—with paint and feathers and everything! In these



reservations they're still wild and savage. And everybody knows that the Apaches are an untamed lot."

Some of the fellows laughed, but Nipper looked rather thoughtful. For once, Handforth had spoken the perfect truth. The Apaches *were* different from many of the other great Indian tribes. They were untamed, they were savage and hostile, and they resented being confined to their reservations. The Apaches had always created trouble—and the present-day Apaches were the same in spirit.

However, they were confined to their reservation—they were under the constant supervision of the United States' military. It was true that the military could not keep them under guard like prisoners in an internment camp. The Blue Mountain Reservation, for example, was many hundreds of miles in extent, and the country was wild and rugged.

Perhaps there was a germ of truth in Handforth's predictions. But as for there being any real danger, the St. Frank's fellows scouted the very idea.

CHAPTER 5.

Off into the Wilds!

SOON after noon the expedition started. Nearly the whole of Circle City turned out to watch it go. An outfit such as this had never before been seen in this region, and everybody was full of curiosity.

The tractor coaches led the way, to be followed by the trucks, and they all went rumbling off along the route that would take them to the Blue Mountain Ridge.

In Handforth's opinion the whole thing was "soft." This wasn't the sort of expedition he had anticipated. It was too much like an ordinary motor ride. At least, it was at first—but before the day was ended he was inclined to change his opinion.

The route lay through a rough pass in the mountains, and so into the Pronto Basin—which, really, wasn't a basin at all, but a wilderness of rugged mountain spurs, weird and fascinating. It was a region of extinct volcanoes, with lava rock strewn and scattered over the entire landscape.

Sometimes there were wastes of sand, barren except for the mesquite. They would see barrel cactus, too, forty or fifty feet in height, with the great branches sticking out grotesquely.

What the boys and girls had failed to realise was that Circle City was on the very edge of the desert. The party had travelled overland to Circle City, and it had come by rail. Towns had been passed occasionally, and even the barren sections had not seemed

utterly barren—owing, of course, to the railroad track.

But now it was different. A few hours after the start, the last vestige of civilisation had disappeared. Here there was no habitation—no out-of-the-way ranch—no mine or prospector's camp. There was nothing but the desert, and the rocks, and the cactus and the blazing hot sun.

The schoolboys and the schoolgirls felt that they were out in the wilderness. They had never believed that such a wild region as this existed in the United States.

Nelson Lee, Lord Dorrimore, Umlosi, Hookey Webb and old Dicky Siggers were riding in the foremost tractor. These vehicles were comparatively small—handy affairs, which could negotiate the ground at a comfortable sixteen or seventeen miles an hour if the going was good. More often than not, however, the speed was slowed down to five or six miles an hour, owing to rocks and fissures and sundry obstacles that had to be negotiated with care.

On frequent occasions long detours were necessary. In order to reach a spot only a mile away, the outfit was compelled to travel five or six or seven miles.

Now and again some creature of the desert would be seen. A sidewinder, perhaps—that is to say, a rattlesnake with horned projections over its demon-like eyes. Perhaps there would be hairy tarantulas—great fearsome-looking spiders, which scuttled out of the way over the sand, burying themselves in holes or hiding in the thorny mesquite.

Some of the schoolgirls actually screamed when they beheld a couple of these enormous spiders comparatively near to their car.

Once they saw a Gila monster. A bloated monstrosity, this, flabby and loathesome. The Gila monster is really a lizard; indeed, the only venomous lizard known. Its correct name is the heloderm. Although its bite is not fatal to man, it produces very injurious effects.

Deliberately and slowly, the expedition crept on over the apparently endless desert. Soon after mid-day the thermometer had risen to something over a hundred and twenty degrees—in the shade. The heat was tremendous, although, owing to the dryness of the atmosphere, it was not so exhausting as one might suppose.

The tractor cars were covered and the sides were all open, so that the passengers were shaded from the glare of the sun, and yet received a certain amount of breeze. In the rear came the trucks, laden with supplies, tents, blankets, and so forth.

"By Jove!" said Nipper. "We thought we crossed some pretty barren stretches while we were on the train, but you don't know what the desert is like until you come out to it in this way."



"It's—it's enough to scare anybody," said Tommy Watson soberly.

"Yes, it's a bit wild and fantastic," agreed Nipper. "Look at this, all round us. I'll bet we're crossing over the bed of a prehistoric lake of some kind. It must be choked with alkali."

"Alkali?" repeated Handforth, from one of the other seats.

"There's not a green thing to be seen," said Nipper. "Nothing green can grow on this stuff, anyhow. There's only got to be a rainstorm, and in next to no time the puddles of water will be deadly poison."

"How the dickens do you make that out?" asked Handforth, staring.

"Because of the alkali," replied Nipper. "Old Siggers was telling me all about it—and what he doesn't know about the desert isn't worth learning. We shall begin to feel the effects of the alkali sooner or later."

"My only hat," breathed Reggie Pitt. "The old pioneers must have been hardy beggars, you know! Look at old Siggers; look how the desert has dried him up, and made him into a kind of living skeleton. I'll bet he hasn't got a couple of pounds of flesh on all his bones. He's nothing but sinews and muscles and skin. It's the desert that's done it."

"We're having it pretty comfortable," said Nipper. "In these cars, we're not suffering any of the discomforts of the usual prospecting outfit. How about your giddy burro now, Handy? Would you prefer to——"

"Dry up about the burro!" grunted Handforth. "How the dickens was I to know that the desert would be like this?"

The others chuckled, and dropped the subject.

Long before evening fell, the party came to a halt and camp was made. A spot had been chosen in the shelter of a great wall of limestone rock. Very soon the tents were erected—splendid tents, these were, with every possible convenience and luxury. There were camp bedsteads, washing apparatus, folding tables for the meals, and a score of other comforts that one does not usually get on such a trip.

"How many miles have we covered since we started from Circle City?" asked Dorrie, after everything was shipshape, and he and Nelson Lee were having a pipe in the shade of one of the tents.

"Something between fifty and sixty miles, roughly," replied Lee.

"That's not so bad, considering the roughness of the going," remarked Dorrie. "Better than you've ever done on foot, eh, Dicky?"

The Desert Rat, who was nearby, shook his gaunt head.

"I don't figger to be quick when I'm on the trail, mister," he replied. "And thar ain't much for you to sing about, either. You ain't done fifty miles to day—nor yet thirty. So quit 'kiddin' yourselves. I know this country, and I reckon we ain't more than fifteen miles from Circle City right now."

"I think that's true enough, Dorrie," said Lee. "In a direct line, Circle City is no further than Dicky says. But we've had to do so many detours, we've been compelled to zig-zag so often, that we've covered an extraordinary amount of ground."

"Mebbe thar's thet in it," said Siggers. "I ain't denying it. But on foot I could have come nigh as far."

Later on, after a good meal, camp fires were lit, and everybody noticed the remarkable change in the temperature. By sunset it was down to sixty, and as soon as darkness fell the air had become positively chilly, and Irene & Co. were compelled to seek their woollen coats.

"It's like that on the desert, missy," said Hookey, when Winnie Pitt remarked upon the coldness. "It scorches you all hup in the daytime, an' nips you something awful at night. Blowed if I know where the 'eat goes to, I'm sure."

"Well, it's a relief to get some coolness, anyhow," said Dorrie.

"I ain't sure but wot it ain't treacherous," said Hookey, shaking his head. "You're allus liable to forgit, an' it don't take long to catch pneumony. Best wrap up warm, missy."

"It's lovely round the camp fire," said Doris.

It was certainly very pleasant round the blaze, and the schoolboys and schoolgirls lingered.

"How long do you reckon it'll take us, Hookey, to get to the location?" asked Lord Dorrimore.

"It's right up beyond the headwaters o' the Pronto Creek," replied the old man. "Up there by the big Samson Butte. Old Dicky will know better than me, I s'pose."

"Waal, I'm figgerin' that if we don't meet with no bad delays, we oughter do it in three days," said Dicky Siggers. "But thar's no tellin' on the desert. Like as not we'll strike some sorter snag. Best say a week."

"When do you think we shall meet any Indians?" asked Handforth eagerly.

"The fewer we meet, the better," replied the desert man. "Some Indians is all right, but the Apaches ain't healthy. Leastways, the country ain't healthy where the Apaches is. Mebbe we'll come across a few of 'em tomorrow. Even if we don't come across 'em, they'll be watchin' us. I reckon they've seen us a'ready."

"But we're quite safe here, aren't we?" asked Nelson Lee. "We are still quite a good distance from the reservation boundary."

"All depends, partner," replied Siggers. "Thar ain't no posts markin' the boundary—nor wires, neither. An' it kinder suits them Apaches to forget just where the boundary line is. Jealous lot o' skunks. They hate the sight of a white man near their reservation—unless, mebbe, he happens to be peddlin' rum."

"Well, if we meet any of the beggars we'll try to get on friendly terms with them," said Dorrie.



Dicky Siggers flung the big piece of rock high into the air. It dropped—and went clean through what had seemed to be the solid ground. Gug-gug-gug! There came a horrible sucking noise, and a patch of black liquid appeared. Only just in time had the unwary St. Frank's party been prevented from traversing that treacherous mud pit!

Siggers took his pipe out of his mouth.

"Friendly terms—with Apaches?" he said, staring. "Holy smoke! You ain't a tender-foot, are you? I don't s'pose they'll interfere with us—unless we go too near their boundary line—but you can be sartin they'll come nosin' about, insolent and truculent, askin' us what we're doin'. And thar won't be nothin' friendly about 'em. Ain't I seen enough of the durned coyotes?"

"Somehow, Brother Dicky, I seem to have an impression that you don't think a great deal of the Apaches," remarked William Napoleon Browne, of the Fifth. "Correct me if I am wrong—"

"You ain't wrong, young 'un," interrupted Siggers. "I like them Apaches just about as much as I like an asp."

"I take it that you don't like asps—whatever they happen to be?" asked Browne politely.

"Waal, if I see an asp before he sees me, I generally put him out, good an' quick," said the desert rat. "Snakes, they are. Deadliest critturs on the desert. Even worse than rattlers!"

"If the Apaches don't behave themselves, we'll teach them a pretty sharp lesson," said Lord Dorrimore, with a grim note in his voice. "We haven't come on this trip, Siggers, without weapons. There are more than enough rifles to go round all the men—and a good few of the boys, too. And we've plenty of ammunition."

Dicky nodded.

"It makes a feller feel comfortable," he said. "At the same time, pardner, it ain't wise to make any show of firearms. It's

liable to start them Apaches right off. Keep 'em handy, but don't let the critturs see what we've got. That's the safest way."

And somehow the St. Frank's fellows gained the idea that this trip into the desert, searching for old Hookey's gold, was not to be so devoid of adventure as they had first believed.

THEY slept very soundly that night, and as soon as dawn broke the camp was astir. By the time the young people had had their breakfast, the whole party was nearly ready for starting on the trail again. While the sun was still fairly low, and before the heat had become unbearable, a start was made.

In the foremost car, the gaunt figure of the desert man was sitting well forward, and he pointed to a confusion of peaks and crags in the distance.

"Thar's the edge of the Chichon Mesa," he said. "Our route lies somewhere round thar."

"It doesn't seem far," said Dorrie.

"How many miles do you reckon them crags is away?"

"Not more than five."

"Kinder deceptive, ain't it?" said Siggers dryly. "I guess them peaks ain't less'n fifteen miles—an' mebbe they're twenty. It's sure difficult to reckon your distance on the desert. The air is so clear that it sorter deceives your eye."

And soon they went onwards—farther and farther into the mysterious wilderness!

CHAPTER 6.

The Lurking Shadows!

FOR the first hour, the going was smooth and uninterrupted. The ground was hard, caked and flaky, owing to the action of the sun. There was not a scrap of greenstuff to be seen in any direction—nothing but an occasional clump of cactus; and, here and there, a jutting promontory of rock, strangely coloured and weirdly shaped. The sun was mounting higher, and gaining in strength.

"Well, we haven't seen any Indians yet," remarked Lord Dorrimore lightly. "Personally, I'm rather keen on seeing some of the beggars. I don't believe they're half so black as you paint them, Dicky."

"I ain't sayin' nothin'," replied the desert man. "I guess you'll find out for yourself before long, pardner."

"As for Umlosi, I'm quite sure that he's thirsting for a scrap," went on Dorrie, with a chuckle. "He regards this whole trip as a very tame sort of affair. He's only really happy when he's on the warpath."

"Wise words, O N'Kose," rumbled Umlosi. "Good words, my master. But what chance of battle is there in a land like this? For is it not a land of desolation? There are no warriors—no enemies. Yet methinks the appearances might be deceptive. My eyes see no foes, but I feel, within me, that foes are on the watch."

Dicky Siggers looked at him thoughtfully.

"This guy knows what he's talking about, mister," he said, turning his gaze upon Dorrie. "I guess he's got the scent o' them Apaches. They're keepin' us under observation, or I'm a yaller dorg. Cunnin' critturs, them Apaches."

Suddenly, without warning, he grabbed at the steering-wheel. He happened to be sitting next to the man who was driving, and he caused the tractor car to lurch and sway.

"What on earth——" began the driver.

"Sorry, pard—but I ain't pinin' to hand in my checks just yet," said the desert rat. "Guess you'd best pull up. I don't like the looks o' the ground just ahead."

"Why, what's wrong with it?" inquired Nelson Lee curiously. "There's no difference, Siggers."

"Mebbe there ain't—to your eyes," replied Siggers. "But thar's a heap o' difference. I'll show ye."

All the other vehicles stopped, too, and a crowd of the schoolboys got out when they saw that Nelson Lee and Dorrie and the others were walking ahead, over the sun-baked soil.

"What's wrong?" asked Handforth.

"Blessed if I know," replied Church. "They seem to be looking at the ground."

"By George! Footprints!" said Handforth excitedly.

"Man Friday must have been here," murmured Travers.

"Indians!" went on Edward Oswald tensely. "That's it! They've found the footprints of some Indians!"

"You've got Indians on the brain, my lad!" said Stevens, of the Fifth. "This ground's too hard to take any footprints—as you'd see if you only looked."

Dicky Siggers was pointing just ahead.

"Yep, thar's one of the blamed things right there," he said grimly.

"But what is it?" asked Dorrie.

"Waal, they call it a sumidero, an' I'm figgerin' that's a Spanish word, or maybe Mexican, which is the same thing. Lucky for us we didn't drive into it."

"He's talking out of the back of his neck," murmured Handforth, staring. "There's nothing there—except hard ground. It's all the same for miles."

The desert man turned, having heard Handforth's words.

"All the same, young 'un, is it?" he said. "Look at this!"

He picked up a large chunk of rock which was lying near by. Raising his gaunt, skinny arm, he flung the rock with all his strength—high up into the air.

It seemed to the watchers that that piece of rock would drop on the solid ground, some little way ahead. It dropped—and went clean through the hard earth!

Gug-gug-gugh!

There came a horrible sort of noise—a sucking, muddy sound as the rock continued to sink. And now, on the glaring surface, there showed a patch of black liquid.

"Well, I'm hanged!" said Lord Dorrimore, glancing at Lee.

"A mud pit," said Nelson Lee, nodding. "Well done, Siggers! We were making straight for it just before you jerked the steering. We should have been in trouble if we had gone in."

"Trouble!" repeated Dicky. "Say, we should have been down in that mud and sucked to death before we could have done a thing!"

"Is it deep, then?" asked Handforth, awed.

"Not having tested this particular specimen, I couldn't say," replied Siggers. "But I reckon it's all o' fifty feet deep—an thar ain't no tellin' but what it ain't two hundred feet deep. Anyways, we should have gone straight down, without hevin' a chance. Just one 'ploomp!' an' the rest o' the party wouldn't have seen us no more."

"My only sainted aunt!" said Nipper. "How awful! And there's nothing to tell it by! The ground looks just the same as all the rest. By Jove! It's drying over again already!"

"It don't take long," nodded Siggers. "Within an hour thar'll be no sign o' that black patch."

"Well, it's lucky for us that we brought you with us, Dicky," said Nelson Lee. "And it's lucky, too, that you were keeping your eyes well open."



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"I've bin across this desert too many times not to keep my eyes open," replied the gaunt old man. "Even the Injuns get caught in these sumideros now an' agin—an' I guess thar ain't much you can teach an Injun about these desert pitfalls."

THEY continued over the flats for the remainder of the day, and when the evening drew near they made camp under the frowning crags of a jagged cliff. They had reached the edge of the great Chichon Mesa, and, judging by the look of the landscape, there were plenty of difficulties in store for them. Nelson Lee doubted if the tractors would be able to proceed any farther.

"What are all those holes in the cliffs?" asked Nipper, inspecting the frowning cliffs with interest.

"I've no doubt that the cave-dwellers lived there in the remote ages of the past," replied Nelson Lee. "It would be a fascinating task to search these caves, and to explore them thoroughly."

"Perhaps we'll get a chance, sir."

"I doubt it," replied Lee. "We should need a month or two for a task like that, Nipper. I'll warrant that old Siggers knows a great deal about these cliff dwellings."

Mr. Siggers nodded wisely when he was asked.

"Caves?" he said. "Waal, I guess so. I ain't sayin' that I've explored these par-

tickler ones, but I know some cliffs where the caves are purty interestin'. Passages, black an' windin' an' mysterious. Passages that go back into the cliffs for miles."

"Miles?" said Handforth sceptically.

"Miles," repeated the desert rat. "Yep, young 'un! An' now and again you'll come upon a kinder black hole leadin' straight downwards, seemin'ly inter the middle o' the earth. An' if ye listen, you'll hear water—far, far below. An' in some of 'em there'll be steam."

"Steam!" said Nipper. "From geysers, eh?"

"Volcanoes, most like," said old Hookey. "Queer part o' the world, this 'ere."

"You said it, pard," nodded Siggers. "Thar was folk around here centuries ago, I reckon. Before hist'ry started, maybe. It ain't nothin' unusual to find stone axes an' arrow heads. Made by the Injuns."

"The Apaches?" asked Handforth.

"Not on your life, sonny," replied the desert man. "That was before the Apaches' time. I reckon we'll see somethin' o' these cliff dwellin's before we start on the home-ward trail."

DARKNESS fell, and with it came a swift lowering of the temperature. The whole scene was softened now, and there was something rather charming and mysterious about it. Overhead, the star-spangled velvet sky—such a sky as one

only sees on the Arizona desert. And all round the blackness, with the cliffs just looming up in the flickering glare from the camp fires.

Towards bed-time, Nelson Lee and Dorrie had a conference, and they decided that guards should be set throughout the dark hours.

"We've seen no sign of Indians yet, but you can never tell," said Dorrie. "And have you noticed Umlosi, old man?"

"He seems a bit restless," said Nelson Lee.

"The old beggar is like a cat on hot bricks," said Lord Dorrimore. "He's prowling about, and his eyes are as keen as needles. Look at him now—standing over there like a statue."

Umlosi was indeed on the alert. When Nipper and Handforth and a few other juniors approached him, he was actually sniffing the air.

"Good, isn't it?" asked Church.

"Methinks it is evil, young master," replied Umlosi. "Waul! The enemy is abroad! I have seen him—I have even smelt him!"

"Great Scott!" said Handforth, staring. "Do you mean—Indians?"

"Oh, dry up about the Indians!" said McClure, exasperated. "I don't believe there are any Indians at all."

"Thou art wrong, O rash one," said Umlosi. "Have I not witnessed strange things since darkness has fallen? Figures lurking on the cliff top? They have been watching us—many figures. But these men are cowards and curs. They do not approach so that we may see them clearly. They prefer to lurk in the shadows, like the dogs they are!"

Handforth was becoming excited.

"I knew it!" he said tensely. "Indians! Apaches! Hanging round the camp, ready to attack us! We'd better prepare, you chaps! You know what these Indians are—they suddenly swoop down and massacre a whole camp!"

"You've been seeing too many Western films, Handy!" said Nipper, shaking his head. "Those sort of things don't happen nowadays."

"How do we know?" demanded Handforth. "We're miles from civilisation, aren't we? Those Indians might swoop down within the next ten minutes! Where are they, Umlosi?"

The giant black pointed.

"Somewhere in the blackness, O young warrior," he said. "Thou art a fighter after mine own heart. For is it not true that thy blood stirs at the thought of battle?"

"Cheese it, Umlosi," said Lord Dorrimore before Handforth could reply. "There's no need to get these youngsters too excited. There'll be no attack to-night. We're keeping the fires going and a constant guard. These Indians aren't like your warriors of Africa. They're treacherous and they're cunning—but they're not dangerous if we don't interfere with them."

"Why shouldn't we get up two or three search parties?" asked Handforth eagerly. "We can all have sticks, or something like that, and if we meet any Indians we'll chase them off."

"Don't you believe it, young 'un," said Dorrie. "You're going to bed—and to sleep. There'll be no fighting to-night."

And Handforth, much to his disgust, was compelled to turn in with the others. Both Nelson Lee and Dorrie were rather annoyed with Umlosi for having said anything to the boys. Not that Umlosi minded.

For once he was inclined to disdain the views of "N'Kose." He was all in favour of these boys who wanted to go in search of the enemy. Handforth, in particular, he regarded with respect and admiration. Being a warrior himself, he recognised the fighting spirit in Edward Oswald.

But then, when there was the slightest possibility of battle, Umlosi was a changed being. And Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore, who knew Umlosi's instincts of old, were privately uneasy. It was seldom, indeed, that Umlosi was wrong.

CHAPTER 7.

Captured by Redskins!

EDWARD OSWALD HANFORTH gave a grunt of dissatisfaction.

"It's a fatheaded idea!" he said indignantly. "What's the idea of sending us to bed like this? The camp is going to be attacked to-night!"

Church and McClure sighed. They held the view that there might be a few Indians knocking about, but they were quite certain that nothing dramatic would develop. And Handforth's melodramatic predictions made them impatient.

They were rather sorry that they had a little tent to themselves. It was set apart from the others, and they felt rather isolated. Nipper had suggested the idea to Handforth—quite casually. There was one small tent, just big enough for three fellows. Would Handforth like it for himself and his chums? Naturally, Handforth jumped at the chance, and he thought it was rather decent of the other fellows to give him the privilege.

He quite failed to realise that Nipper and the other juniors had had an ulterior motive. Handforth's snoring was apt to be disturbing. Church and McClure were accustomed to it, and their sleep was not spoilt. Indeed, it was generally believed in the Remove that Church and McClure could sleep through an earthquake. If they could stand Handforth's snoring they could stand anything.

The two chums fully understood why they and their leader were given a little tent to themselves, but they did not dream of explaining matters to Handforth. There was really no sense in asking for trouble like that.

THE ST. FRANK'S QUESTIONNAIRE!

Here are twelve testers for you, chums—questions which refer to St. Frank's and its members. Give them the "once-over," jot down the answers to those which you know, and then compare them with the correct list which will be given, together with another set of questions, next week.

- 1.—Who occupies Study T in the West House?
- 2.—Which Remove junior owns an old castle in his own right?
- 3.—What is the colour of Doris Berkeley's hair?
- 4.—Who is the postman who generally delivers letters at St. Frank's?
- 5.—Who presides over the School Shop?
- 6.—Does the Head's house adjoin the other St. Frank's buildings, or is it completely detached?
- 7.—What is the family name of the Duke of Somerton?
- 8.—Which junior was a terrible spendthrift when he first arrived at St. Frank's,

and who still displays some of the same characteristics?

- 9.—Which Removites have been mentioned as owning motor-cycles?
- 10.—What are the colours of the East House?
- 11.—What is the name of the French master?
- 12.—Which make of motor-car does William Napoleon Browne own?

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S QUESTIONS:

1. In the grassy hollow behind the gymnasium, which is in itself a natural arena.
2. Josh Cuttle. 3. Claude Gore-Pearce, Albert Gulliver and George Bell. 4. Mauve and yellow. 5. Tich Harborough. 6. Blue. 7. Electricity. 8. Headmaster. 9. Yes—Boz, his spaniel. 10. Bootboy. 11. Teddy Long. 12. The School House.

But now, to-night, they were rather sorry that they had agreed to the arrangement. They had a feeling that they would be unable to handle Handforth effectually. He was excited and sleepless; and there was a light of battle in his eyes!

TO their relief, Handforth was soon undressed and in bed.

"We'll wait," he said grimly.

"We'll wait until the camp is all quiet, and then we'll steal out and do some scouting."

"That's the idea," said Church promptly. "It's a brain wave, in fact."

"Rather!" agreed McClure.

This wasn't so bad. Whenever Handforth decided to keep awake for some reason or other, he always went to sleep. It was only a question of waiting a little while, and Edward Oswald would doze off. The doze would soon become a sound slumber; and once he commenced his famous snore, then everything would be all right.

"Things seem quiet enough now," said McClure, as they all snuggled down. "By Jingo! Isn't the desert a place of silence? Except for the crackle of the camp fires, and the occasional murmur of voices, there's nothing. I've never known such silence."

"You chaps will come with me?" asked Handforth.

"If you go, we'll go," replied Church.

"That's right, Mac, isn't it?"

"Yes, rather," said McClure.

"Good," murmured Handforth. "And you'll give me your word, honour bright, that you'll steal out with me silently, so that we can get on the trail in secret?"

"Of course," said his chums.

"All right—I'll hold you to that promise," said Handforth complacently. "No getting out of it, my lads!"

Church and McClure stoutly declared that they had no intention of getting out of it. They were quite certain that there would never be any scouting. When Handforth went to sleep, he went to sleep for the night.

"Might as well have a little doze," murmured Mac, after a while. "Can't do anything yet; Mr. Lee and Dorrie won't go to bed for another hour, at least. They're still chinwagging round the camp fire, with old Hookey and Dicky Siggers."

"All the same, we can't doze," said Handforth sternly. "Too risky. We've got to keep awake."

"Oh, just as you like," yawned the Scottish junior.

Church yawned a moment later, taking his cue. And, sure enough, Handforth caught the complaint. He yawned in turn, and then started.

"Cheese it, you fathead!" he protested. "You've got me yawning now, and I want to keep awake."

"You keep awake—and give us a shake when you're ready," said Church sleepily. "Dash it, there's no need for us all to be on the alert. We can trust you, Handy, can't we?"

"Of course you can, fathead!" said Edward Oswald.

Unfortunately for Church and McClure, Handforth changed his mind.

They went to sleep peacefully, taking it for granted that everything was all right. If he went to sleep, so much the better; if he remained awake, and shook them up, they



Handforth flung the sack from off his head—and then gasped in alarm. He was in a kind of lofty cavern, and dancing round fire was a number of villainous-looking, painted figures. “Ey, George!” exclaimed Handy. He had been captured by Redskin.

could easily think of some excuse to keep him in the tent longer.

But Handforth, after his chums had gone soundly off, decided to go on his scouting expedition without them!

It wasn't that he took compassion on them. He came to the conclusion, after due thought, that they would be more trouble than they were worth. A scout, to be successful, must be alone. And Handforth was, for once, so thoroughly wakeful that there wasn't the slightest possibility of him going off into a sound slumber.

So after an hour had elapsed Church and McClure were well off into dreamland, and Handforth was ready for his lone venture.

He crept out of his bed, slipped into his shorts and a pair of shoes, and prepared for departure. A peep through the tent opening showed him that the camp was quiet. The girls' tents were closed and silent. The men's tents were in a similar condition. The tents containing the rest of the juniors were also dark and still. Only two figures near the camp fires proved that an alert watch was being kept.

But Handforth did not worry. This particular little tent of his was pitched near the cliff, and it would be an easy matter for him to slip out at the rear, under the canvas, and to slide off down a little rock gully which he had previously noted. Within a few seconds the rocks would hide him from the view of the guards, and he would be well away.

Everything went all right.

He succeeded in worming his way out of the tent without Church and McClure being aware of his departure. What was more, he got round the rocks, and completely away from the immediate vicinity of the camp, without the guards hearing a sound. And this, for Handforth, was an exceptionally good piece of work.

"By George!" he murmured, under his breath. "I'll show em!"

He was glad he had changed his mind about Church and McClure. After all, why should he be bothered with them? They would only grumble at everything, and protest. Far better to let them sleep, and then he would give them a surprise later, when he got back.

He would find out how many Red Indians there were. In all probability the Apaches had a camp somewhere close by—perhaps hidden in a hollow of the hills.

Handforth fairly quivered as he crept along a rocky gully. After he had made his discovery he would creep back and startle everybody with his story. Perhaps he would be in time to—

"Ugh!" grunted Handforth, startled.

Suddenly, without warning, something had dropped upon his shoulders—something heavy and soft and warm. The weight bore him down to his knees, and the next instant he was struggling madly. Other figures had materialised out of the blackness, and they were swarming round him.

He did not think of calling for help, but he certainly thought of fighting. In a flash, he knew that he had been spotted by the Redskins. Like an idiot, he had walked right into them, and they had given him no chance.



Handforth flung the sack from off his head—and fire was a number of villainous-looking, painted fig-

He struggled grimly, but he really had no chance whatever. Within the first tense moment of the attack, something had been pulled over his face, so that it was impossible for him to make any outcry. The Apaches were determined that he should not give the alarm!

Sinuous arms wound themselves round his body, and he was quickly borne to the ground, flat on his back, by sheer weight of numbers.

IT would be idle to say that Edward Oswald Handforth was not alarmed.

He was.

He was tremendously alarmed. Not merely for his own safety, but for the safety of the camp. It came to him, with a burst of realisation, that a big attack was being prepared. He had walked right into the Indians, and they, not wishing their plans to be made known, had promptly rendered him helpless and incapable. At any second he expected to feel a spear thrust into his body.

However, Handforth had no

It came to him now, in a full burst of realisation, that he had been a hopeless idiot. Why had he not taken notice of Church and McClure? Or, at the very least, why had he not brought them with him? They might have seen his predicament, and they would have raised an alarm. The camp was only a hundred yards away, even now, and one shout would be sufficient.

And over and above Handforth's alarm there was a great rage welling up within him. He—Handforth—captured by these beastly Redskins! It was an outrageous affair! He wanted to fight—to smash headlong into a grim battle. But what could he do, bound and muffled and held as he was?

He felt himself being lifted, and it seemed to him that he was raised from one level of rock to another. Then, once again, he was carried onwards. Through the woollen thing which muffled his ears, he thought he heard a strange, weird, shuffling echo. And then, with a shock, he realised what it meant. He was no longer in the open, under the purple sky of the desert. He was being carried into one of those mysterious tunnels of the cliff dwellers!

He remembered what old Dicky Siggers had said about these strange passages, which ran perhaps for miles into the cliffs. The Indians were taking him into one of the innermost recesses, so that none of his outcries could be heard. Perhaps they were going to torture him!

He was dumped down without ceremony, and he felt a wall of rock at his back. He found his arms free, and, breathing hard, he pulled that woollen thing away from his head.

"By George!" he panted, aghast.

There was an eerie, flickering glow coming from a fire in a kind of brazier, and the glow revealed the fact that he was in a lofty rock cavern. And, moving about on the other side of the fire, were the lithe figures of the Apaches, only just dimly visible in the reddish reflection!

CHAPTER 8.

After Handforth's Scalp!

HANDFORTH stared fascinatedly.

He could not see the Apaches distinctly, but what he did see caused his heart to beat thumpingly against his ribs.

Never had he seen a more villainous-looking crew. There

were about a dozen of the Redskins, and their hideous faces were painted grotesquely. Each one wore a feathered head-dress.

"My only hat!" muttered Handforth.

He felt his heart give a sudden jump. One of the Indians was over by a ledge of rock, and he was slowly and deliberately sharpening a great knife. And while this man sharpened



m. He was in a kind of lofty cavern, and dancing round a !" exclaimed Handy. He had been captured by Redskins !

time to think of much. He was half smothered by the heavy woollen thing which was wrapped round his head. He was bundled this way and that, and he felt himself being carried bodily. It was useless for him to kick—indeed, impossible. Ropes had been passed round his ankles, and they were drawn tight.



Handforth undertakes to answer, in his own unique fashion, any question "N.L." readers care to submit to him. But, although of a certainty the results will be amusing and entertaining, the Editor takes no responsibility for their veracity. Write to Handforth, c/o the NELSON LEE LIBRARY, to-day.

L. BROOKS (Forest Gate), asks me where the parents of all the Remove boys live. I'm not going to tell you. You might be a burglar, for all I know!

D. MATTHEWS (Birmingham).—You've certainly come to the right chap if you want a few hints on "scrapping." I shall be only too pleased to give you some lessons in the noble art. I only make one stipulation, and that is that I am not responsible for any hospital or doctor's bills incurred by you during the course.

"J. P." (London).—So you're a girl, are you? Then I don't wonder at your wanting to meet a handsome chap like myself. Ahem! Once seen, I'm never forgotten, you know. I should be only too pleased to meet you. I'll ask Irene if I may, and then let you know. Of course I shouldn't punch you on the nose. I'm not likely to do that to a girl, am I? In any case, I'm a most peaceful sort of fellow, as you will agree when I tell you that I only find it necessary to put Church and McClure in their proper places about three times a day, and I only black Gore-Pearce's eye, punch Gulliver's nose, and biff Bell's ear about half a dozen times daily.

"TEDDIE" (London).—You got a bit mixed up, didn't you, Teddie? What's the idea of sending my letter to the Chief Officer. Now that's one of my strong points

—I never get mixed up. Follow my example in this respect, and you'll be a success in life. Yes, I have been to Shanklin, and I'm sure you'll enjoy yourself there. You'll find some wonderful scenery there—the Isle of Man is famed for its scenery, you know. Hope you have a good time, Teddie, and don't be seasick when you're crossing the North Sea.

"REGULAR READER" (Langford, Beds).—I strongly object to people calling my Austin Seven names, and when you have the audacity to call it an "old tin lizzy"—well, you can thank your lucky stars that I'm not anywhere near you. You don't deserve answers to your questions, my lad. In fact, I *will* punish you by not answering them. Why should I tell a bounder like you that one of my aunts gave me my Austin Seven, and that I consider my minor, Willy, is the cheekiest fag at St. Franks? Yes, you can go to the dickens and fish for those answers, blow you!

HUBERT PARKINS (Hitchin).—What's the idea of starting your letter thus: "My dear old Handy, sweet flower of St. Franks"? I'm not a giddy dandelion, you chump! In answer to your question of why a black hen always lays a white egg, I suggest you get it out of the horse's mouth by asking a black hen!

EDWARD OSWALD.

show you how rash it is to creep out of your tent like that. Supposing you *had* fallen into the hands of the Apaches? What chance would you have had?"

"But how the dickens did you know that I was going to creep out of my tent?" demanded Handforth, staring.

"We didn't know—but you generally run true to form, old man," said Nipper. "It was Browne's idea. You'd been saying such a lot about Redskins, and all the rest of it, that we decided to keep a watch on your

tent. And, sure enough, out you came. Some of the fellows wanted to do the thing thoroughly, and actually to scalp you——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth breathed hard. But, by now, his fury had subsided, and he was compelled to admit to himself that his relief was unbounded. He had, indeed, been fearing that his scalp was very unsafe.

"You—you silly chumps!" he said gruffly. "A jape's a jape, but you needn't have gone to such lengths as that!"

"Sorry we scared you, old man, but you're different from most chaps," explained Nipper. "It needs something drastic to——"

"Rats! Who's scared?" broke in Handforth indignantly. "What rot!"

"What about Church and McClure?" asked Travers. "Why didn't they come with you, dear old fellow? It seems to me that they have been lacking in their duty."

"I waited until they went to sleep," said Handforth. "You don't think I wanted them with me, do you?"

"That's not the point," said Travers gently. "Church and McClure regard themselves as your keepers——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They seemed so unwilling to do any scouting work that I let them go to sleep," grunted Handforth. "After that I crept out and—— By George! Other people have been lacking in their duty, haven't they?" he added. "What about Umlosi?"

"What about him?" asked Nipper.

"Wasn't he supposed to be on the watch?"

"He *was* on the watch."

"A fine watch he kept!" sniffed Handforth. "I always thought that Umlosi was as keen as mustard. But he's no better than any ordinary chap; he didn't even spot me, and he didn't know that you fellows were out of your tents——"

"Hold on a minute!" interrupted Nipper, with a grin. "We gave the tip to Umlosi

before the game started, and he agreed to be conveniently blind and deaf if he spotted any of us—or heard us. So you're wrong. Handy."

"It's all a plot!" said Handforth thickly. "All right! You've got the laugh on me—but one of these days I'll have the laugh on you. These Apaches are more dangerous than you suppose."

"Which Apaches?" asked Travers. "Have you seen any Apaches?"

"Whether I've seen 'em or not, they're here!" said Handforth stubbornly. "Didn't Umlosi see some lurking figures? The Indians are watching us—they're all round us—and at any moment they might attack. Even now, while we're in here, they're probably scalping old Dorrie, or Mr. Lee——"

"In that case, we'd better get back, brothers," said Browne. "Let us not linger——"

Whizz!

Without warning, something came shooting out of the darkness of the cavern. Everybody heard it. Then came a little click, followed by the sound of something falling to the rock floor.

"What was that?" asked Reggie Pitt looking round.

"Goodness knows!" said Nipper. "Something seemed to shoot past my ear——"

"It's an arrow!" gasped Tommy Watson.

What was the Eerie Secret of the Cave?



TOM MERRY & Co. FIND ADVENTURE IN CORNWALL

It was here, the Southernmost point of the British Isles—picturesque, eerie home of glorious adventure—that Tom Merry & Co. set out to enjoy their best summer holiday. What happened to them on their adventurous journey through the dangerous paths of the old smugglers' caves is vividly described in "The Secret of the Cave" by popular Martin Clifford in this week's GEM. The picture shown here will give you a slight idea of some of the weird discoveries they made.

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NOBODY believed him at first. He had been standing near the redly glowing fire, which the juniors had lit in order to make the scene impressive—and which, too, provided a certain amount of dim light in the place.

"An arrow?" said Nipper sceptically. "Are you sure?"

"Look!" said Tommy. "I've just picked it up! It hit on the rock wall here, and fell down. A rummy-looking arrow."

They all crowded round and examined it. Without doubt it was an arrow.

"Do you know anything about this, Browne?" asked Nipper quickly.

"I?" said the Fifth Form skipper. "What base suggestion is this, brother?"

"Don't rot, Browne," said Nipper. "If you know anything about this, please say so. We know what a fellow you are for practical jokes——"

"Let me hasten to assure you, brothers, that I know nothing whatever about this unlooked-for development," said Browne earnestly. "While admitting that I am sometimes original in my methods, I must deny the suggestion that I should cause sharp-pointed arrows to be flung promiscuously through the air."

"Well, it's very rummy," said Pitt, frowning.

The same thought was in all their minds. An arrow, coming out of the darkness! Who would dispatch such a messenger—but the Indians?

"I think we'd best get out of this place," said Nipper quietly. "When you come to think of it, it's not particularly safe. There's only a narrow entrance——"

"Listen!" ejaculated Handforth abruptly.

He was not the only one who had heard a fresh sound. A piece of rock, or something equally solid, had thudded down in the blackness near the tunnel entrance. At the same moment the boys ran forward. Then came something really startling.

There sounded the dull, heavy crashing of rock. The whole cavern seemed to shake with the force of it. A short, swift current of air came past the boys, to be immediately followed by a cloud of thick dust.

"Something's happened!" yelled Watson. "The rocks must have fallen down. Let's get out of here!"

"Without question," said Browne, "the suggestion has its good points."

Their little jape was over, and in the light of these peculiar circumstances they felt that they would be able to breathe more comfortably under the stars of the desert sky. But Nipper, who was leading, suddenly checked.

"Great Scott!" he ejaculated. "Something *has* happened, you chaps!"

"We know that, fathead!" said Handforth. "We heard——"

"The entrance is blocked!" said Nipper huskily.

"What!"

"Look at this! There's—there's no way out!" went on Nipper, his voice betraying

his alarm. "The whole space is filled with rock! If it wasn't for that arrow, I should think that we had accidentally dislodged something, and that——"

"The arrow!" broke in Handforth, staring in the darkness. "You—you mean——"

"Isn't it obvious?" asked Nipper. "The Indians!"

"Then I was right?" yelled Handforth.

"It looks very much as if you were, Handy," said Nipper quietly. "The Indians haven't dared to attack us openly, but they waited until we came into this cliff-dwelling place. They've bottled us up! They've imprisoned us in here! We'll never be able to shift these rocks!"

Somebody struck a match and held the flaming light aloft.

They all saw a big jumble of enormous rocks, entirely blocking the exit. They were trapped! They had come into this place in a spirit of fun—just to fool old Handy—but now the affair had taken on a grim, sinister aspect!

And who could be responsible for this treachery but the Apaches?

CHAPTER 9.

Umlosi Makes Himself Useful!

THIS is a facer, you chaps," said Nipper steadily.

"What are we going to do?" asked Tommy Watson. "We're bottled up! We're imprisoned!"

"Well, it's your own fault," said Handforth, with a touch of triumph in his tone. "Didn't I warn you about the Indians? And didn't you call me a melodramatic fathead? I knew jolly well that these Indians would get up to some tricks, but you thought I was talking out of the back of my neck!"

"We've got to admit, Handy, that your fears were justified," said Nipper. "We were asses to come in here——"

"Fears be blowed!" interrupted Handforth warmly. "What the dickens are you talking about? I wasn't afraid! My idea was to trail the Indians and to discover their game. But you've ruined everything by your silly japing! We're in a fine mess now!"

They could not quite realise it yet. They had come here in a spirit of fun, and it seemed fantastically impossible that a real peril could have developed. Everybody except Handforth had regarded the "menace" of the Indians as a joke. Wasn't it a well-known fact that the Indians, nowadays, were law-abiding and peaceful? At least, the boys had been led to believe so.

"It can't be any of the other fellows," said Reggie Pitt slowly. "They wouldn't throw arrows, and block up the cave in this way. And we mustn't forget that Umlosi saw some figures in the gloom. There isn't the slightest doubt that the Indians are responsible. But who'd have thought it?"

"I would!" retorted Handforth.

"But—but it's so dotty!" said Fullwood. "Indians aren't dangerous nowadays! They don't go on the warpath——"

"Indians are Indians—and we're near their reservation!" said Handforth grimly. "What did old Dicky Siggers tell us? He knows this country—he knows what the Indians are like. He warned us that the beggars might resent our coming. Well, they've shown us that we're not welcome."

William Napoleon Browne nodded.

"There can be no question, brothers, that the Indians hardly regard us in the light of lifelong friends. In no circumstances can we say that they have given us an affectionate welcome. But surely there is no need for alarm?"

"Of course there isn't," said Nipper. "I don't mind admitting I was a bit windy when that arrow came in—because I was expecting lots more. It's pretty certain that it was only let fly as a kind of warning to us. But we're quite near the camp, and even if we are bottled up we shall soon be released."

"How do you make that out?" asked one of the others. "How do we know how much rock there is in this exit? There might be tons! How can we shift it—and what chance is there of our voices being heard if we all yell for help? And how are the people in camp to know what's become of us? We didn't tell any of the others where we were going."

"A point, brother—distinctly a point," said Browne musingly. "Indeed, a somewhat nasty snag. However, before finally giving ourselves up for lost, let us take a good look round. Be good enough, Brother Nipper, to produce your famous torch."

Nipper made a grimace.

"I haven't got it," he admitted. "I didn't think it was necessary. We've only got a few matches between the lot of us."

"And there's no more fuel for the fire, either," said Reggie Pitt. "We only brought a little amount in, and that's all burnt. The fire will be out very soon."

Even now the glow was becoming feeble. One of the juniors went back and raked the embers together, so that for a brief period there was a flickering blaze. But it soon died down again, and perhaps this was as well. For now that the cave exit was blocked up, the air was rapidly becoming smoke-laden.

"Didn't old Siggers say that these caves go back for miles?" asked Handforth. "Why not do some exploring? If we go right back, I dare say we shall find another tunnel, and then we can escape by some other exit."

"Too risky, Handy," said Nipper, shaking his head. "We're not equipped for any exploration work of that kind. We can't go along these tunnels and passages in the pitch darkness—and we haven't got enough matches to last long. We should only get ourselves hopelessly lost."

"Isn't that better than remaining here?" demanded Handforth. "I'm not keen on

sitting down and waiting for something to happen."

They penetrated back into the cave, and they weren't quite sure whether to be relieved or disappointed when they found that there was absolutely no exit. This was not one of those caves which "went back for miles." It was comparatively short, and there was no hole or cranny through which they could crawl.

"Well, that's settled the thing pretty definitely," said Nipper, after the examination. "We've got to stay, Handy, whether we like it or not. And, as far as I can see, all we can do is to wait until the others make some kind of move."

"Can't we shift the rock that's blocking the cave entrance?" asked Handforth. "Anyhow, let's have a try."

They had a try—and after five minutes even Handforth was compelled to confess that the task was too big. The Indians, in some way, had loosened a tremendous amount of rock—and it had completely blocked up the exit!

THE imprisoned boys made no reference to the alarming thoughts that were in their minds. If these Indians had blocked up the cave entrance so cunningly, was it not obvious that the Indians were still lurking about? Besides, nobody in the camp knew where the boys had gone, and so they would have no point at which to start the search. Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore and the others might wander for miles amidst this wilderness of crags and rocks, and find no trace whatsoever. The position was acute.

But for one circumstance it might even have been fatal.

That circumstance was the fact that Umlosi was on the alert.

The giant Kutana chief generally slept with one eye open, but to-night he was not sleeping at all. He had smelt trouble, and he had decided to remain on guard. Like a shadow, he prowled about amongst the rocks at the back of the camp, watching, listening.

And Umlosi had not failed to hear the dull thudding crash as the rocks had fallen in the entrance of that cave. He had not seen the schoolboys enter the cave because his attention had been concentrated in another direction at that particular time, but now, as he crouched behind a crag, he knew that something was wrong.

The camp was all quiet, and the fires were blazing merrily. There was nothing to indicate that a disaster had already befallen some members of the party.

Umlosi had heard the crashing of the rock, and his attention was naturally drawn in that direction. Like a shadow of the night, he crept nearer and nearer, moving from ledge to ledge, and using all the skill that he knew. Umlosi was a great warrior of proved worth, and in the darkness of the night he could move like a ghost, in spite of his bulk and



The two guards started forward in mingled alarm and astonishment as a big black form suddenly appeared in the camp. The newcomer was Umlosi, and he was carrying four unconscious Redskins!

brawn. He was as lightfooted as a forest creature.

"Wau!" he rumbled, under his breath. "Methinks these savage dogs, whom they call Redskins, are preparing for some attack. It is not well to give them time to complete their accursed plans. Already, mayhap, they have done much mischief."

Stealthily, spectral-like, he moved in the darkness. From close at hand came a soft shuffle—the tiny noise of a pebble moving. Umlosi heard, too, a soft whisper.

Edging his way round a mass of rock, he beheld two dark figures standing motionless, not three yards away from him. He knew, in a flash, that they were the savage men of this strange country. They were bare to the waist, and Umlosi could see, silhouetted against the night sky, a single feather sticking up from each man's head.

It was always Umlosi's habit to make short work of such spies as these. He saw no reason why he should hold his hand now. With a movement like that of a panther, he leapt out from his cover, and the two Indians started back, uttering guttural exclamations.

"Thou jackals!" growled Umlosi. "What doest thou here?"

The two Redskins rapidly recovered. They could see that this man was no paleface. Yet, at the same time, they knew that he was not one of themselves. He was bigger—brawnier—more formidable. And his very attitude was menacing.

Umlosi himself was unarmed. He had desired to carry his spear, but both Nelson Lee

and Lord Dorrimore had forbidden him to do so. They knew, from past experience, that Umlosi would kill first and ask questions afterwards. And if any of these Apaches were killed, it might go badly for the whole party. For then the Indians would have an excuse for a general attack.

With a swift movement, one of the Redskins swung his lance round, and in the darkness he hoped to catch Umlosi unawares. He might just as well have expected to pierce the moon.

With a rumbling laugh, Umlosi twisted like lightning, seized the lance as it was thrust forward, and turned it aside.

"Jackal!" he said contemptuously. "Think you that such a crude move will dispose of me? Wau! I fight not with such vermin as thou!"

He leapt forward, and his two great arms lashed out. The first Indian caught Umlosi's fist on the side of the head, and the unfortunate man went down like a poleaxed bull. The other Indian, turning to escape, was treated in a similar manner.

"Fools, and sons of fools!" laughed Umlosi. "What madness is this? Am I not Umlosi? Am I not the king of the Kutanas? Thinkest thou that these puny efforts——"

He broke off, for at that moment two other forms seemed to materialise out of the blackness of the night. They hurled themselves at him, and he met them squarely.

Thud! Crash!

Both the newcomers went down, to join their unfortunate companions on the hard

ground. Umlosi laughed again, and prepared for the next onslaught. An arrow split into the rock near him, and a lance came slithering at his feet. From the near distance came the sound of a few scuffles—and then complete silence.

"Is this a fight?" asked Umlosi scornfully. "Come hither, curs! With my bare hands will I defeat ye! Cowards and jackals! What manner of battle is this?"

Still there was no reply, and it became obvious to Umlosi that the other Indians had bolted. Perhaps there were only two or three of them, and it was possible that they had considered that discretion was the better part of valour. Having seen the downfall of their comrades, they had not dared to remain. Another arrow came hissing out of the darkness, but Umlosi merely laughed with additional contempt.

"As for these vermin, they shall be taken before N'Kose, to answer for their trickery and treachery!"

Umlosi's next act was astounding. Bending down, he took a grip on the four Indians, and hoisted them up as though they were mere featherweights. It was an astounding feat of strength—and yet Umlosi did it as though it were a mere nothing.

When he stood upright, he had two Indians under each arm, holding them there with apparently no effort. He laughed again. There was, indeed, something ludicrous in his appearance as he moved off, with those four men tucked under his arms.

And it spoke volumes for Umlosi's enormous strength. He was not doing this merely for the sake of effect—merely to create a sensation. He wanted to take those four men to Lord Dorrimore, and this was the simplest method of doing it.

Yet the two men who were on guard near the camp fires started to their feet with startled exclamations as they saw the black giant coming into the radius of the firelight. The two men were mechanics, belonging to the outfit, and they stared in awed amazement.

"Waal, what do you know about that?" ejaculated one of the men.

CHAPTER 10.

The Menace of the Redskins!

UMLOSI dumped his four prisoners down unceremoniously. They thudded to the ground, and rolled into grotesque attitudes. He had "outed" them so effectually that even now they were showing no signs of returning consciousness.

"Wau!" he said indifferently. "Lie there, ye dogs!"

"Say, big boy, what's all this, anyway?" asked one of the men, staring. "Where did you find those blamed Indians?"

"These men are enemies of N'Kose—they are enemies of us all," replied Umlosi. "In my own country I would kill them out of hand. But here, it seems, one must be careful. Wau! 'Tis a country of strange customs."

"You'd best not kill those Indians," said the other man, in alarm. "They're a revengeful lot, these Apaches. If we give them the slightest excuse, they'll be down on us—hordes of 'em."

This was perfectly true. Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore were well aware of the fact that the Apaches would probably remain indifferent if no attack was made upon them. If any of their numbers were wounded, or killed, however, then the others would rapidly spread the news to the young bucks in the reservation. And then, perhaps, there would be an old-time war-dance, and the Redskins

COMING NEXT WEEK!



would forget that there was such an institution as the United States Government.

"What's the meaning of this, Umlosi?" asked a sharp voice.

Nelson Lee had come out of his tent, and a moment later he was followed by Lord Dorrimore. They had been aroused by the voices, and they had come out to see what was in the wind. They were considerably surprised to see the four Indians sprawling on the ground.

"N'Kose, I bring prisoners," said Umlosi simply.

"He sure brought them all right," said one of the other men. "Gee! Never saw anything like it in my life! He came into camp with them Indians tucked under his arm, like they was bundles o' straw!"

"Umlosi, you old ruffian, what have you been up to?" asked Dorrie, giving Nelson

Lee a swift glance. "Didn't we warn you? Why did you interfere with these Redskins? As long as they weren't attacking us, there was no danger. They wouldn't have dared to take any action."

"There have been strange doings, my father," said Umlosi, waving a hand vaguely towards the darkness. "Have I not heard rumbles and thuds?"

"You probably have," said his lordship, looking at the Indians. "You must have heard a few thuds as you knocked these beggars out. By the Lord Harry! You did the job thoroughly while you were about it!"

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"It's madness!" said Nelson Lee sharply. "Don't you understand, Umlosi? If we show these Indians that we're not afraid of them, and if we remain utterly indifferent as to their presence, they'll probably be reluctant to attack. But now we have been the first aggressors. It is a fatal mistake."

"Thy thinking, Umtagati, and my thinking, are strangely different," said Umlosi, shaking his head. "Wau! I would have no dealings with such scum as this. They are enemies, and in my country there is no mercy for enemies—"

"But we're not in your country now, old man," said Dorrie gently. "That's just the point. You don't seem to realise that you can't behave in the United States of America as you would behave in Kutaland. That's why you shouldn't have molested these Redskins. As it is—well, it's going to mean trouble for us!"

Umlosi shrugged his shoulders.

"These men of the red skin were prowling in the darkness," he said. "I have brought them hither so that thou can'st see them, N'Kose. They live—but only because of thy orders."

"We'd better bring them round as quickly as possible," said Lee. "Where's some water? We'll question them, and ask them what their game is? Not that there will be the slightest chance of getting anything out of them."

**C**HURCH looked round the tent in dire alarm. Then, springing out of his bed, he grabbed at McClure's shoulder, and shook it.

"Mac! Mac!" he panted. "Wake up!"

"Hallo! What's wrong?" asked McClure, startled by Church's tone. "Steady, you ass! No need to get excited—"

"Handy's gone!"

"What!"

"I woke up just now, and Handy isn't here!" said Church breathlessly. "He must have sneaked out by himself, after all! Goodness knows how long he's been gone, but he's dished us!"

"My only hat!" said Mac blankly. "He's probably got himself into a mess by now—and we don't even know where to look!"

Church opened the tent flap, and peeped outside. Then he started. He could see Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore over by one of the camp fires, and there were some strange, grotesque figures lying on the ground. One of these figures was trying to struggle to its feet.

"Something must have happened!" said Church, glancing back. "Mr. Lee and Dorrie are out here, and Umlosi, too—and some of the men. We'd better go and tell them that Handy is missing."

"Yes, rather!" said McClure.

They rushed out, and as they came up to the group they checked. The Indian had got to his feet by now, and his expression was one of malevolent hatred. The other three Indians were still unconscious.

"Well, what have you got to say for yourself?" asked Dorrie, looking at the Indian.

The fellow was well-built and powerful. His blue-black hair hung down in two braids over his coppery back. There was a fillet of red about his brow, and a single eagle feather was sticking in it. His clothing was very scanty, in spite of the coldness of the night.

"What you want here?" he demanded aggressively.

"We have a right to be here," said Nelson Lee. "You cannot interfere—"

"No interfere," broke in the Indian sullenly. "This Apache land. Not good for white man. You go."

"We shall go when it pleases us," replied Lee. "This land is not on your reservation —"

"This Apache land," said the Indian obstinately, and speaking quite good English. "You say not reservation. I say, yes. I know. This land not good for white man."



"Waal, you can skin me fer a grizzly!" ejaculated Dicky Siggers, as he approached the group. "Injuns! Thar's trouble in the air, I guess."

"This man says that we are on the reservation, Siggers," said Dorrie, turning to the old prospector.

"He's sure a liar," replied the desert rat. "We ain't on the reservation—not by miles. I can show ye a map——"

"No care for map!" broke in the Indian fiercely. "Map lie. This Indian land!"

"They generally figger that way," said old Dicky. "An' it ain't no good argyin' with 'em, either. Thar's sure as obstinate as mules. Thar ain't no crittur as tricky as an Injun when he likes to be tricky."

Church and McClure thought it advisable to come forward now, and they did so. Nelson Lee caught sight of them out of a corner of his eye, and he waved them back.

"Now, boys, you mustn't bother!" he said impatiently. "We are dealing with these men——"

"Just a minute, sir!" said Church. "Handforth has disappeared."

"What!" snapped Lee. "Upon my word! If that boy has got himself into trouble——"

"He told us he was going to slip out and do some scouting, sir, and he must have waited until we were asleep," put in McClure. "If there are Indians about, perhaps Handy has been grabbed——"

And then came another alarm.

Some of the juniors, hearing the voices, had been aroused. And now came the startling information that quite a few of the fellows were missing, too! Nipper and Reggie Pitt and Fullwood and Browne—and others.

"This is beginning to look ugly," said Nelson Lee, after the names of the missing boys had been ascertained. "What can have become of them? Where are they?"

"Perhaps they followed Handforth, sir?" suggested Church anxiously. "But they can't be far away from the camp. Nipper's a sensible chap, and he wouldn't agree——"

"Why not fire a few rifle-shots into the air?" suggested Dorrie. "If they're any-

where near, that'll bring them back quickly enough."

"Yes, that's a good suggestion," said Lee, nodding. "We'll do that at once—and see what the result is."

**T**HE result was nil.

A regular fusillade of bullets was fired, and the whole camp was aroused. Irene & Co. came out, anxious and rather alarmed. The rest of the fellows turned up, excited. But there was not the slightest sign of Handforth or Nipper or the other missing schoolboys.

"What do you know of this?" demanded Lee, turning to the young Indian.

The other Redskins had recovered by now, too, and they were standing in a little group, sullen and silent.

"This Apache land," said the Indian, glaring at Lee. "You go from this land, or big trouble. You come for gold, but gold belong Apache."

"What do you know of the boys who are missing?" asked Lee sharply.

"No understand this talk," said the Indian, shrugging his shoulders.

But old Dicky Siggers gave a grunt of satisfaction. He had seen the glance that had passed between the other Redskins.

"Guess they're stallin', pardner," he said. "They know where them boys is. But I shouldn't worry too much if I was you. It ain't likely that the youngsters is killed. I'm figgerin' that these Injuns wouldn't be so blamed silly as to——"

"Wau!" came a sudden exclamation from Umlosi. "Methinks I know something, N'Kose! Did I not hear a rumbling of rock? And was it not this sound which attracted my attention?"

"A rumbling of rock?" said Lee sharply. "Good heavens! A cave, Dorrie! Perhaps those boys went exploring, and—— But come! Bring torches. Lights of any kind! We must look into this immediately!"

**U**P one of the gullies, some little distance from the camp, they found a confusion of rocks. Most of the searchers would have passed by without giving those rocks a glance, but both Nelson Lee and Umlosi were on the alert.

"There is something wrong here!" said Nelson Lee, pointing. "See, Dorrie! Here is a footprint—half obliterated."

"I don't follow you," said Lord Dorri-more. "It's only half a footprint. There's this great mass of rock over the other half—— By glory! You mean that this rock has just recently fallen?"

"Yes, of course," said Lee. "Don't you see? There was obviously a cave entrance here. No doubt these Indians loosened a lot of rock by levering one loose section. The sound was prevented from reaching the camp by reason of the gully."

"Thou art right, Umtagati," said Umlosi keenly. "Wau! Why did I not kill those accursed dogs?"

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Without wasting a moment he commenced pulling at the great chunks of lava-rock, and the others were soon helping, too. Lee and Dorrie worked like Trojans, and they were both filled with anxiety.

It was now that Umlosi was able to prove his worth. His enormous strength was invaluable.

In spite of the urgency of the matter, the rest of the party were compelled from time to time to stop work and watch the giant black; to marvel at his wonderful strength.

He would pick up with supreme ease, huge pieces of rock which three ordinary men would have found difficult to move. Raising these chunks of stone above his head, he cast them aside so that they broke into fragments, the while he uttered grunts and contemptuous words about Redskins in general.

"Never seen anything like it before," muttered one mechanic to his pal, as he paused momentarily in his task and gazed with open-mouthed admiration at Umlosi.

"Nor me," agreed the other. "I guess I've seen some of these so-called strong guys at circuses and such like, but this nigger has got 'em all beat to a frazzle. Holy smoke! Look at him now!"

There was every reason for the man's awed amazement. Umlosi, seeing Nelson Lee and Dorrie, and one or two of the other men, struggling with an exceptionally large piece of rock, strode forward and pushed them all aside.

"Exert not thyself, N'Kose, nor you, Um-tagati," he rumbled. "Methinks I can remove this rock for thee. Wau!"

He stationed himself firmly in front of the massive rock. His two immense hands gripped at the jagged edges. At the first attempt it did not move more than a few inches. Again Umlosi strained. The muscles stood out like huge eggs all over his body. Up, up and up the rock was slowly raised until Umlosi had it poised on a level with his head. A pause, an extra mighty effort, and it went hurtling to the ground, yards away, with a thunderous crash!

There was a cheer from the onlookers—and then they all set to work again with redoubled energy.

After twenty minutes of intensive labour, much of the rock mass had been shifted; and Lee, getting close in, let out a great shout.

"Boys—boys!" he called. "Are you there?"

"Good egg!" came a voice. "It's the guv'nor! All right, sir! We're in here!"

"Thank Heaven!" muttered Lee. "Are you all safe?" he added, in a loud tone.

"Rather, sir!" came Handforth's voice. "It was those Indians who bottled us up, blow 'em!"

"Thar ain't no tellin' with these Injuns," said Dicky Siggers, shaking his head. "Ye see, pardner? They wouldn't spill no blood, but they didn't hesitate to put them boys in this cave, and block 'em in. They thought, mebbe, that the youngsters would never be

found, and that it would scare us off. Cunnin' critturs, Injuns."

**H**ALF an hour later the entrance was sufficiently cleared for the schoolboys to squeeze out, one after the other.

There was much cheering, and quite a lot of excitement. And then it was found that the four Indians, in the meantime, had drifted off. They had taken advantage of the opportunity.

"I forgot all about them," confessed Dorrie. "We ought to have tied the beggars up."

"I was hoping that they would escape," said Nelson Lee calmly. "Don't you understand, Dorrie? We can't keep them prisoners, and we can't take any action. It is far better that they should have gone. After this, perhaps, they will not interfere with us again."

"They'd better not!" said Handforth breathlessly. "The rotters! They tried to kill us, sir."

"That's a good 'un!" said Dicky Siggers dryly. "Won't interfere with us again, eh? Let me tell you, mister, that these Injuns is on to our game. They know we're after the gold—and you can take it from an old-timer that they'll give us plenty of trouble."

They all went back to camp, thoughtful and impressed. Nipper and Handforth and the other fellows were lucky to get out of their predicament unhurt.

And what of the immediate future?

It really seemed that these Apaches were dangerous. The reservation was close at hand, and there were thousands of these Indians comparatively near by.

This holiday adventure was not quite so tame as it had first promised to be. The quest for old Hookey Webb's gold looked like being fraught with peril!

THE END.

*("The Injuns are going to give us plenty of trouble," old Dicky Siggers has said—and his words are to prove only too true! Look out for next Wednesday's fine yarn; it's entitled "Into the Redskins' Trap!" Order your copy NOW to save disappointment.)*



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## Things Heard and Seen by EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

**N**OW that St. Frank's has broken up for the summer holidays, the old school is very quiet. Still, there are plenty of topics that I can discuss in these columns while the fellows are away. I can remember heaps of incidents that might prove of interest to you readers. For example, when I ran down to St. Frank's just before the holidays, I was collared by a couple of Fourth-Formers in the Triangle, and they shoved their autograph albums in front of me. They wouldn't be satisfied until I had done my best to spoil a couple of pages by signing my name on them. This wouldn't have mattered so much, but one of the juniors mentioned that he was tremendously keen on film actors. And he had the nerve to suggest that I should take his album and forward it on to Mr. Harold Lloyd. I couldn't help being reminded of a reader—Madeline Springs, of Portsmouth—who made very much the same request. Well, as I told those two Fourth-Formers, the thing couldn't be done. I didn't mind signing my own name in their albums, and I'll do the same for as many readers as you like, but when it comes to forwarding their albums on to famous film actors and actresses and other people, I rather draw the line. If anybody wants an autograph from a celebrated personage, it's up to the autograph hunter to apply direct.

**T**HE other day Handforth grabbed me and wanted to know if I had ever written any detective stories. When I pleaded guilty, he wanted to know what these stories were. He's always been as keen as mustard on detective work, as you know, and now and again he even goes to the length of writing an alleged story of his own. One thing led to another, and before long I was confessing that I had written all the stories of Professor Cyrus Zingrave and the League of the Green Triangle which appeared in the Old Paper some years ago. And now that I'm on this subject, I might as well tell R. G. S., of

Manchester, that I perpetrated the Jim the Penman yarns, and the Circle of Terror stories, too. Yes, and there were those tales about Eileen Dare, the girl detective. I daresay you old readers will remember her. Curiously enough, I met her a few weeks ago, and she gave me a whole sheaf of particulars regarding some of her most baffling cases. And I've got quite a lot of information about some later exploits of Jim the Penman. So it sometimes occurs to me that it might be rather a good wheeze to write up some of these adventures. How would it be if I persuaded the Editor to devote a little space in the Old Paper to some serials, or series of short stories, dealing with Jim the Penman and Eileen Dare and Professor Zingrave? I wonder if it would be a popular move?

**T**HERE is certainly something amusing about William Browne, of the Fifth. He's a good fellow, though, in spite of his pretended "swank." Browne isn't really a boaster and a braggart; it's only just his way. You may have noticed that I referred to him just now as William Browne. The "Napoleon," of course, was an addition of his own. At home he is never referred to as William Napoleon Browne. I believe his father frowns upon that addition—not that this affects the Fifth Form skipper in the slightest degree. He has given himself this middle name, and he means to stick to it—evidently having some sort of notion at the back of his head that it adds dignity to an otherwise somewhat undistinguished name. A Jersey reader—W. L. Renouf—has asked me if Browne really has a middle name, and this paragraph answers his question.

**A**NOTHER reader—H. Vernon-Smith, of Porthcawl—wants to know if Browne's study, in the Fifth Form passage, has a number. I believe it has, but I'm not quite sure which number



it is. If I remember it, I'll have a look the next time I'm at St. Frank's.

\* \* \*

**A**NNIE WHITELEY, of Dunkinfield, has asked me whether Nipper has any brothers or sisters. Well, I had a chat with Mr. Nelson Lee about this a few days ago, and he assures me that he hasn't the faintest idea of Nipper's real parentage. He has been Nipper's guardian for so long that he almost regards him as his own son; and, certainly, Nelson Lee has lavished all the love and care upon Nipper that any son could expect. There's always a chance that Nipper has some brothers or sisters, but Nelson Lee very much doubts if they will ever come to light. When Nipper was quite a kid, his beloved "guv'nor" went to a tremendous lot of trouble to locate his real people, but he was never successful in these efforts. So it's hardly likely that anything can be done now.

\* \* \*

**T**HERE'S not much doubt that Edward Oswald Handforth is the most popular fellow at St. Frank's. Not because he's clever, but rather the opposite. He's such a good-hearted, bluff, genial kind of chap. And it's always so easy to pull his leg. But when it comes to a question of popularity with our readers, I'm inclined to believe that Willy shares this position with his major. I'm quite certain that Willy is just as popular as Edward Oswald—if not more so. This answers a query in a letter from W. Warner, of Exeter. By the way, this Devonian asks me if many of the readers who promised to write me a weekly letter keep their word. Well, I'm afraid they don't. There are one or two notable exceptions, but the majority keep it up for a week or two, and then drop off. I wish they wouldn't—because the more letters I get, the better I like it. Still, I don't really blame them, for it's the very dickens of a job to write a regular weekly letter like that. I'd much rather hear from readers when they felt inclined—hoping, of course, that the inclination may be very frequently to the fore.

\* \* \*

**O**UR photograph this week is of Mr. Edward Magnanie, of Grasse, A.M., France. He is one of my best correspondents, and I am always delighted to hear from him, because he makes me feel that I am, perhaps, of some little use in this world, even if my only mission is to provide people with a little cheer. If lots of other readers think as Mr. Magnanie

does, I certainly have cause to sleep easily, and to cast off that tired feeling which sometimes *will* creep over me in my waking hours. I am encouraged to do my best when I am told such things as this: "I never start reading one of your yarns without knowing for a fact that I am going to reap heaps of good from it. I have got so used to your stories by now that—why!—I simply feel out of date without them. They just give that sort of finishing touch to my moments of happiness, and I can assure you that nothing is so welcome to me as the weekly arrival of the good Old Paper." By jingo! I always try to please our readers, but if I can soar to the heights of giving them happiness, I'm more than happy myself.

\* \* \*

**W**HO do you think I met the other day? No less a person than Miss Trumble. Do you remember her? I'll bet some of you do! She's the forceful lady who, for a period—a very hectic period—ruled over St. Frank's as a kind of deputy Headmaster. I don't know what she's doing now—I didn't have the nerve to make any inquiries. I merely raised my hat and hurried past. And this reminds me that George Stuart, of Huntly, Aberdeenshire, has asked me to give him the title of No. 405 of the Old Paper. It was called "The Siege of Fort Resolute," and it was one of the yarns dealing with Miss Trumble's regime at St. Frank's. The other titles that George wants are: Old Series, No. 1—"The Mystery of Limehouse Reach"; No. 29—"The Three Millionaires"; No. 345—"Staunch to the School"; and No. 555—"The Schoolboy Despot."

\* \* \*

**T**HERE'S a bit of difference in Guy Sinclair nowadays. You older readers will remember that it was he who was school-boy despot. Giving those old titles to George Stuart reminded me of the business. Guy Sinclair was a thorough rotter in those days—and I'm afraid he's not much better now. In the East House, anyhow, he's very unpopular. I've got to admit, though, that Sinclair has at least one redeeming feature. He's an extraordinarily good cricketer, and during the present season he has been doing some great things for the St. Frank's First Eleven. It's a pity he's such an out-and-out waster in other directions. Of course, he hates me like poison—because I always portray him as he actually is. And he naturally likes to pose as a very fine fellow.

#### OUR READER'S PORTRAIT GALLERY



Edward Magnanie



Don't Miss Reading This Week's Thrilling Instalment of this Fine Serial!

# RIVALS of the RAMPANT!



By STANTON HOPE

## A Cad Gets His Deserts!

**H**EAVERY of heart, Jack and Ginger made their way to the Nelson Block, where they were now housed. Both would be "in the rattle," but it was not the thought of forthcoming trouble that depressed them, but the fact that Petty Officer Teak would think that they had "let him down."

If they told the truth when they were brought up on the following morning with the defaulters, it was most unlikely that they would be believed. The truth about their adventurous evening would sound a jolly sight more far-fetched than any excuse they could invent themselves.

"My head's beginning to feel stuffy," Ginger mumbled. "I feel I'm in for a cold, matey—thanks to Busky Smith!"

They responded to the challenge of another sentry, and, after leaving their wet swimming costumes in a drying-room under the stairway, made their way quietly up to their dormitory in the Nelson Block.

Peaceful snores and easy breathing suggested that their fellow Preliminaries were sound asleep after their strenuous day in the open, and by the one wire-encased electric light outside the open door of the

long room they saw the rows of bulky hammocks.

There were no other lights the pals could put on, for these were switched off from outside, and they quickly slipped out of their boots and jumpers. In stocking feet they crept to Busky's hammock, and Jack quietly picked up a pair of boots from the "deck" and took them to the doorway to examine them in the light.

"So you were right, Jack!" remarked Ginger grimly. "The steel moon of his left heel is missing and these 'pusser's crabs' are size eight all right. The mean skate must have followed us along the coast!"

Without a word, Jack turned the boots over in his hand again, but Ginger stealthily retreated

*Thanks to Busky Smith, Jack and Ginger are "in the rattle." But Jack doesn't mind. This is only one of many scores he's got to settle with his jealous rival, and this week he pays all—with interest!*

into the dormitory.

Inwardly the little Cockney was fuming as he remembered the chill hunt for the missing uniforms and the fact that, but for the merest accident, he and his "raggie" might have had to return to the Rampant without them.

He eyed the bulge of Busky's hammock and his foot itched to have a kick at it. He wished he had not taken off his boots. Then, on the impulse, he took a jack-knife



from the horizontal pocket of his serge trousers and reached upward.

Slash!

The keen blade ripped through the lashing just below the steel hook, from which the foot of the hammock was suspended—and the hammock, with Busky in it, dropped to the deck.

Thump!

Almost as Busky's sternsheets came into contact with the hard "deck" the silence was broken by a yelp of fright and pain.

"Ouch!"

Jack darted back from the doorway, dropped the boots on the floor and glared at Ginger in consternation.

"You chump!" he exploded. "D'you want to rouse the whole place!"

While allowing for Ginger's anger against the cad, he was irritated that the little fellow should have acted so rashly. Besides, Jack himself had wanted to deal with Busky in his own way and in his own time!

Already the noise had awakened some of the other fellows, and they blinked from their hammocks to see Busky seated on the "deck" in the gloom, with the top part of the hammock drawn up over his neck, and the two raggies standing by.

Next moment Busky bounded up, revealing himself clad in shorts, in addition to the flannel vest, which was the regulation night-wear. His pain and surprise had given place to fierce resentment.

"Who did it?" he burbled. "Which of you cheeky young beasts cut me down?"

"I did," said Ginger quietly—and took a step forward.

Instantly he was knocked aside by a hefty wallop on the chest from Jack, who placed himself in front of his old rival.

"But I'm the chap you've got to deal

with!" he snapped. "If you've got anything to say, you can say it to me!"

The fists of Busky clenched and his teeth gritted.

"Wh-what's the jape?" he demanded. "Let's hear about it before I knock seven bells out of you!"

Still there was no sign that the noise made had been heard, probably because the sentry outside the building was farther along his beat.

"That's what you'd call a jape, is it?" remarked Jack in a modulated tone. "I s'pose you'd think snaffling a fellow's togs and hiding 'em so's he's late getting back here is a jape as well?"

"What d'you mean?" rasped Busky. "I don't know what you're bleating about."

"Yes, you do," Jack retorted; and he explained how he and Ginger had found the footprints which corresponded with Busky's own boots in the sand near the former village of Paggleshale.

"You bet he was the chap who did it, Jack!" piped a voice from one of the hammocks. "He must have followed you along the coast, 'cause he never came back with us in the charybane."

It was the one thing which Jack and Ginger had wanted to know, and now they were certain that it had been Busky Smith, and none other, who had played that caddish trick on them.

In a rage at the remark made by the unseen boy in the hammock about him, Busky evaded Jack and jerked his big right fist within an inch of Ginger's nose.

"Splice that lashing," he ordered, "and get my hammock rigged! Jump to it, or I'll slaughter you, you measly whelk!"

Like lightning Ginger stepped aside, and Busky missed him with a vicious hook.

"Keep out of it!" cried Jack, applying

#### HOW THE STORY STARTED:

**JACK GILBERT**, a cheery youngster of some fifteen years, has just joined H.M.S. Rampant, a naval training school at Porthaven. His only living relative is his scoundrelly uncle, **LEW BONNER**, and the less he sees of him the better Jack will be pleased. The boy joins the Navy along with

**CLEM SMITH**, or Busky, as he becomes known at the Rampant. Smith is of the bullying type, and is very jealous of Jack's friendship with his—Busky's—uncle,

**BARNY MORLAND**, who has just died. It was Barny who got the two boys to join the Navy, and in his will he stipulates that a sum of £2,000 is to go to the boy who acquits himself best in the Service. Both settle down at the Rampant, and Jack makes a friend of

**GINGER JONES**. All three boys take part in the annual regatta between Rampant and Sandcliff Towers College, which is held at Sandcliff, a popular seaside resort. Jack gets a shock when he sees his rascally uncle there, but, fortunately, Lew Bonner does not spot his nephew. After the regatta the two boys set out to walk back to Porthaven along the coast. They come to a particularly bleak part, where once stood the village of Paggleshale, but which is now in ruins, having been "swallowed up" by the encroaching sea. They go for a swim here, and Jack sees a ghostly form walking on the bed of the ocean, while later he sees a light shining from a submerged house! Startled, the boys return to the shore and discover that their clothes are missing. Unknown to them, Busky, who has followed them, has taken the clobber and hidden it. Jack and Ginger make a search and eventually find it—but not before they have seen more mysterious forms moving about on the beach! The boys decide that they must have discovered a smugglers' lair. They return to the Rampant and learn that they are an hour late. This will mean trouble for them on the morrow.

(Now read on.)



his shoulder to his pal. "I claim first go at him!"

"You do, eh?" hooted Busky, aflame with fury. "I've stood your cheek long enough, Jack Gilbert, and if your precious pal will keep out of it for a minute, I'm going to hand out all I've been savin' up for you!"

"Carry on!" Jack challenged. "Ginger'll pipe down until you've finished with me."

As the last word left his lips, his head described a swift semi-circle, and Busky's left fanned the empty air. Then, before the bully could regain his balance, Jack slammed a brace of hooks hard home on his flannel vest, causing him to grunt twice like a pig.

"Hold those!" chuckled Ginger.

Now the whole dormitory was aroused, and a chorus of "Sh'sh's!" urged Ginger to silence.

The light from the doorway was sufficient to give illumination for the battle which proceeded with remarkable quietness. Jack himself wore socks, and Busky was in bare feet, and only the sound of their heavy breathing and the thud of blows broke the silence.

Though it was not discernible in the semi-light, there was a fierce gloating in Busky's close-set eyes.

He remembered that first fight in the wash-house when he and his rival had been New Entries—how he had got Jack beaten and only the intervention of Petty Officer Teak had saved him from the knock-out. This time he would hammer Jack as limp as the bunched-up hammock cut down by the impulsive Ginger!

Inch by inch, Jack gave way under Busky's first furious onslaught, his retreat taking the path of a circle round the cut-down hammock.

"Think this is a runnin' race!" taunted Busky. "You'd got plenty of pluck on the bridge of the old target-ship, they say—when no one was looking!"

Weaving between the cad's flailing fists, Jack brought his left hand over to the mouth.

"And you," he retorted, "had oceans of pluck, too, aboard the ferry—also when no one was looking!"

It was like Busky, who had even proved himself a coward aboard the target-ship, to utter taunts! True, he was bold enough now in facing Jack, but only because he still believed from previous experience he could trounce him in a fight of this sort.

What Busky failed to take into consideration were the long weeks of training

in H.M.S. Rampant which had made an enormous improvement in Jack, who had not previously been so well nourished as himself.

Breakfasts of coffee, poached eggs on toast, bacon and chips, fried whiting and liver and mash had been mere dreams in Jack's former life in Brass Alley. Dinners of mutton chops, new potatoes, marrowfat peas, salads and stewed fruit had put the steel into the slum-boy's muscles, so to speak. And, combined with his present strength, was Jack's wonderful fighting spirit which his shipmates had glimpsed in that previous losing fight against his rival.

Then Jack had shown himself of the same bull-dog breed as the old Navy fighters. In the tradition of Sir Richard Grenville, who refused to strike his flag to the whole fleet of Spain, he had fought until heart, flesh, bone and muscle had refused to function any longer.

Now, in the same spirit, he fought gamely back until he hammered into Busky's astounded consciousness the fact that there was no longer much physical disparity between them.

All Jack's brilliant boxing skill was employed to avoid punishment from his burlier foe and to teach the cad to play fair with him in the future.

Crack! Thwack! Thud!

Relentlessly Jack's fists drove against Busky's face and body. It was Busky's turn to retreat, and soon his footwork resembled a sprint.

To the joy of Ginger and the other boys, Jack went hot-foot after him, hitting at will the beaten bully. Jack had many old scores to settle with his rival, and now he paid them all—with interest. Never before had Busky received such a thrashing.

"Ouch! Garoogh!" spluttered Busky. "C-clew up! Someone's coming!"

With a final swinging right to the jaw, Jack deposited his battered rival among the blankets of the cut-down hammock; then, without a word, calmly completed the task of undressing.

"W-wait!" panted Busky, almost sobbing. "I—I'll report you in the morning—the pair of you!"

"Report what?" inquired Jack, breathing hard. "That we had a stand-up fight? If so, you'll be 'for it' as well, old son."

"And squeal about my cutting down your giddy hammock," threatened Ginger, "and we'll prove it was you who snaffled our togs and made us adrift over leave to-night!"

It was checkmate to Busky Smith, and although he tried to bluff Ginger into



slinging his hammock again, he finally had to do the job himself. And then, sad, sore, and sorry, he clambered awkwardly into it and lay awake thinking what he would do to Jack and Ginger if only he were a petty officer and they were serving under him!

Jack, on his part, put Busky out of his mind, and, although tired, remained awake wondering what mystery was hidden by the tumbled sand and sea at Paggleshale on the "haunted coast."

to say nothing about Busky being responsible for their lateness, and they had a feeling that, without mention of him, their excuses were likely to fall flat.

"We're sorry if you think we let you down, petty officer," responded Jack. "Near Paggleshale, on the way back to Porthaven, we went for a swim, and some silly japer snaffled our uniforms."

Teak's face became sterner, if anything.



"Oueh! Garoooh!" spluttered Busky. Relentlessly Jack hammered away at the beaten Busky. Then, with a final swinging right to the jaw, he deposited his rival on the floor.

#### The Man With the Spade!

"**W**HY were you adrift last night?" Petty Officer Teak sternly eyed Jack Gilbert and Ginger Jones, although he asked the question without rancour in his tone.

It was the following morning, and before the time of the defaulters' parade, the petty officer had called the two chums aside from the others in the preliminary class to learn their explanation.

Standing there in the lee of a gun-shed, Jack and Ginger felt uncomfortable, although they knew they had not been to blame for being adrift. They had decided

"You came back in your uniforms," he pointed out brusquely.

"And a dickens ob a job we had to find 'em!" snuffled Ginger, suffering from a cold. "Someone had shifted 'em, and, when we did stumble upon the duds, we had to wait on account ob a gang ob smugglers."

It sounded a bald and unconvincing statement, and P.O. Teak grew sarcastic.

"And then," he remarked, "I suppose a sea-serpent came up on the beach and chased you half way back to Sandeliff? Now let's get the truth of this: Firstly, you say that your uniforms were shifted.



"Who removed them? Do you know?"

The pals were silent, and so uncomfortable that they shifted uneasily on their feet, with the result that Teak rapped out a sharp order in his best Navy manner for them to stand still.

"We—we can't tell you that, petty officer," mumbled Jack. "But it's true enough that we had to wait because of a gang of four chaps who were either engaged on smuggling or up to some other fishy game."

Not another word did Teak say while Jack and Ginger between them told of their strange adventure.

Somehow, in the broad light of morning, the yarn sounded as fantastic as anything ever conceived in a book. When Jack told of how he had seen the lighted house under the sea, the petty officer permitted himself a slight smile. When the boy added about the ghostly figure walking along the sea-bed and the spectre-like

"smugglers" who had emerged from out of the sand, apparently, his smile grew a shade broader.

But it was by no means a pleasant smile; it was an expression of his utter disbelief in the statements made, and under it Jack and Ginger grew more and more uncomfortable.

"We wondered," remarked Jack feebly, "whether we ought to report it to the commanding officer or the coastguards or police."

Teak ignored the hint for advice.

"I've heard a few hundreds of excuses in my time," he snapped, "and yours is the rottenest by a cable's length. The only thing that can be said for it is that it's original, so far's I know. Tell that to the commander, and you'll get a week's extra stoppage of leave and pay—and serve you right, me lads!"

There was nothing more to be said, and Jack and Ginger returned to the class which was being shown the parts of a six-inch gun, feeling squashed and uncomfortable. Nor did the sight of Busky's bruised face and his explanations that he had "fallen down the dormitory stairs" give them any satisfaction.

In half an hour they had to appear with other defaulters before the commander.

What was the good of telling their strange tale again? they asked one

another. No wonder Petty Officer Teak had smiled in that sardonic way!

Was it likely that official investigations would be made in the region of Paggleshale on such an absurd-sounding story, and without an ounce of real evidence to back it up?

The upshot was that they made no excuses at all before the commander, beyond saying that they had gone for a swim and had mislaid their clothes. So they got off with two days' stoppage of leave and pay, and Ginger was ordered to buy another pair of Service socks in place of those he had split.

"Well, it might hab been worse, Jack," snuffled Ginger, on their way back to join the class. "Let's go back to Paggleshale when we can, and take anudder dekkio around."

"Those chaps said something about Thursday next," Jack replied. "We'll try and wangle to go then."

"Rightio! A-tish-oo!" responded Ginger. "Hang dis cold in der dose!"

In the days intervening between the Sandeliff regatta and the following Thursday, the pals were so taken up with their work in the Rampant schools that they had little time to think of smugglers, or any-

thing else outside.

There were extra drills for them during their two days' stoppage of leave, and various odd jobs which they did not get in the ordinary way. Their worst ordeal, like that of their fellow Preliminaries, was a keen examination in mathematics and kindred subjects under their schoolmaster. In addition, they had to attend lectures in elementary seamanship, attend the range for instruction in the rifle and shooting, and do a certain amount of boat work and signalling.

The recreations during this period consisted almost entirely of learning life-saving in the baths, and playing cricket on some splendid fields connected with the establishment.

It was a busy and happy life even for Jack and Ginger who had got themselves into trouble. The only one probably who failed to enjoy it was Busky Smith, who found himself passed by Jack in the examinations, and easily surpassed by him as a batsman and bowler at cricket.

In spite of that strange prank of fate

## A STUNNING NEW SERIAL

by a

**FAMOUS AUTHOR**

is

**COMING SHORTLY!**



which had made him the hero of the ferry incident, Busky began to fear for his chances of getting his uncle's legacy. And but for the determination to win that £2,000 by fair means or foul, he felt he could have run away from a life entailing a discipline which was sheer torture to his slovenly and selfish nature.

Thursday proved warm and close, and at the end of the day, when there was a leaden haze over the sea, the boys were tired and glad of a spell-off duty. As it happened, the film of a historic naval battle was showing in Porthaven, and it was announced that lads wishing to attend could have extension of leave until ten-thirty.

Jack and Ginger astutely jumped at the chance of the extra time off, and, moreover, actually paid their sixpences and saw a portion of the film. Then they quietly left and, after hiring a couple of bikes, pedalled out of Porthaven and along the two miles of roads to the vicinity of the ruined village of Paggleshale.

Here they left the road and started down a treacherous path without lighted lamps in the gathering darkness. Then, suddenly, Ginger skidded and crashed heavily.

Instantly, Jack himself leaped off and tossed his machine aside.

"All right, Ginger?" he demanded.

The little Cockney was badly shaken and dazed from striking the side of his head against one of the numerous worn bricks among the sand in this vicinity. He rose pluckily enough, but needed Jack's assistance to walk.

"It strikes me your giddy luck's out, Ginger," remarked Jack. "You've only just got over a beastly cold when you must needs go damaging your figurehead! However, here's a comfy-looking sort of cave. You stay here and I'll steer a course down to the sea and wet a handkerchief to tie on your bump of disaster. Maybe you'll feel better then, raggie."

Ginger said that he was all right, but Jack insisted that he should take it easy for a time to get over his fall. So, having put the bikes in the small cave as well, Jack cautiously made his way down the treacherous sand cliffs and among those ancient ruins of Paggleshale village, some of which extended under the sea itself.

Without mishap, he reached the water's edge and wetted his handkerchief. There he paused for a few moments, gazing out upon the sea which he had chosen to follow for his livelihood. To-night it was ugly and sluggish, and merged into the gloom of a heavy bank of clouds rearing from the south horizon.

"It strikes me," muttered Jack to himself, "that we'll be needing oilskins before we're through to-night!"

He turned his back on the threatened storm, and took a different route toward the cave where he had left Ginger. He roughly knew the position where they had seen the mysterious gang on their former visit to Paggleshale, and he headed that way without much expectation that the men would be there.

Suddenly he became aware of something moving about thirty yards ahead. He crept nearer and saw it was a man, digging in the sand with slow, muscular rhythm by means of a flat-bladed spade.

His every vein a-tingle with excitement, Jack crept nearer still among the tumbled sand and ancient brickwork. Without perceiving him, the man went on with his work, but paused as there was the clatter of metal striking against metal. Still eagerly watching, Jack saw the man resume and uncover a large flagstone with an iron ring-bolt attached.

"Phew!" breathed the boy.

Sometimes since that eventful evening of the Sandcliff regatta, he had wondered whether that strange house under the sea and the ghostly figure moving near it had been figments of his own imagination. Now he was certain that the house existed—how and why he knew not—but it existed and was connected by some secret tunnel that led from under this bolted flagstone.

Jack stuffed the wet handkerchief inside his jumper and squirmed silently forward through the wet sand like a snake. A sound nearer to hand than the man with the spade startled him, and he half turned and rose. On the instant two men, who had been quietly waiting in one of the depressions nearby, flung themselves upon him, and the beam of an electric torch dazzled the young bluejacket's eyes.

A coarse oath roared out in a voice that Jack could have recognised among a million. The torchlight was switched on and, temporarily blinded by its white glare, the boy was unable to make out anything but the rough forms of his captors. But an icy hand seemed to have wrapped itself about his heart, paralysing his whole being, for in a dazed sort of way he realised that one of the men was none other than his dissolute uncle, Lew Bonner, whom he dreaded more than anyone or anything in life!

*(Here's a shock for Jack. He thinks he's stumbled upon a smugglers' lair—and finds that his rascally uncle is mixed up in the mysterious business! Don't miss reading next Wednesday's exciting instalment, chums!)*



# HOW TO JOIN THE LEAGUE

## ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE APPLICATION FORM No. 109.

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 leave 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, 5, Carmelite Street, 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, providing that each pair of forms bears the same date and number.

Bronze medallists wishing to qualify for the silver 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 they have secured the requisite number of readers they can exchange their bronze medal for a silver one.

These Application Forms can be posted for 1d., 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.

### NOTICE.

The St. Frank's League has now attained such proportions that we are compelled to discontinue the offer of gold medals in connection therewith. The silver and bronze medals will still be available, however, as heretofore, to those who qualify for them in accordance with the rules.



# The ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE CORNER!



*The Chief Officer Chats  
with his Chums.*

*Here's his address if you want to  
write to him: The Chief Officer, The  
Nelson Lee Library, Fleetway House,  
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.*

**Hurrah!**

**T**HE St. Frank's League is booming. Evidence of this is shown in the recent huge increase in its membership. Also by the fact that my postbag has assumed twice its former size. And naturally I'm feeling very pleased.

In addition, many readers have written expressing their approval of the St. Frank's League Corner as a new feature in the NELSON LEE LIBRARY. It is only right that the League should have its own feature in the Old Paper, they say. What's more, it adds interest.

That is just what I wanted it to do; and if I have succeeded in my object, then I am satisfied.

**Interesting!**

**A**. MITCHELL, of Exeter, a new and now enthusiastic supporter of the League, writes asking me if the badge which appears on the League certificate is the St. Frank's School badge, and also what is the meaning of the motto, "Consilio et Animis."

Two very interesting points, these, which must also have made other readers of the Old Paper wonder. The badge which appears at the top of the League certificate has nothing to do with St. Frank's School. It was specially designed for the League.

The words "Consilio et Animis" means "by wisdom and stoutness of heart."

**Our Prize-Winning Poet!**

**H**AROLD BRITTON, the sender of this week's prize-winning letter, tells me he is a poet. Poetry, in fact, is his hobby. To prove his words he has sent me an example of his work—a specially-written poem about the St. Frank's League. Very modestly my chum says that this poem is not one of his best efforts. If that is the case, then I can only say that his other efforts must be very good. Here is the poem. It's entitled: "The St. Frank's League."

## THIS WEEK'S WINNING LETTER

DEAR CHIEF OFFICER,

*I have received my certificate of enrolment and membership badge to the St. Frank's League, and thank you for them. I am very pleased to join the League, and will do my bit for the Old Paper, which I have been reading for two years.*

*It seems to me that the League numbers among its members boys with every hobby under the sun. One can see this by reading through the "Correspondence Wanted" column, and also by your weekly chat. Stamp collectors, living perhaps hundreds or thousands of miles apart, bend together in correspondents. Clubs of all sorts are constantly being formed.*

*This shows what good the League does. I think every sensible boy who has a hobby, or who takes an interest in things around him, should join the League.*

*Yours truly,  
(Signed) HAROLD BRITTON  
(S.F.L. No. 9,449).*

*(For this letter Harold Britton, of Nottingham, will receive a useful penknife.)*

Over far-stretched, rolling seas

A voice goes out to friends afar,  
Calling them in twos and threes.

The St. Frank's League, a guiding star,

Sending hope and cheer to those  
In lonely, distant, far-off lands,  
Helping boys of Northern snows,  
Guiding boys of Southern sands.

Advice, the foremost guide of all,  
Sent to boys at home, abroad,  
Sent to boys, both old and small;

*(Continued on next page.)*

All members of St. Frank's League are invited to send to the Chief Officer letters of interest concerning the League. The most interesting will be published week by week, and the senders will receive pocket wallets or penknives. If you don't belong to the League, join immediately by filling up the form on the opposite page.



## The St. Frank's League Corner!

(Continued from previous page.)

Sent to girls. A linking cord,  
Binding all together by a bond.

A League that throws its hope afar,  
That boys in other lands may correspond  
With boys at home, and evilness, all bar.

A most appropriately worded poem, don't you think? One which conveys the ideals of the League excellently. Harold, please accept my congratulations!

THE CHIEF OFFICER.

### CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.

A. Baker (aged 16), 34, High Row, Loftus, Yorks., wants correspondents in New Zealand and South Africa.

F. Marvin, 34, Dawlish Road, Leyton, London, E.10, wants correspondents interested in sport, particularly football.

Clifford Monks, 20, Lily Lane, Moston, Manchester, offers N.L.L. new series from No. 1.

Wilfred Ponsford, 31, Ardoch Road, Catford, London, S.E.6, wants back numbers of the N.L.L.

Bob Richards, 4, Harefield Road, Stoke, Coventry, want correspondents.

E. F. Mills, 43, Ravensbourne Road, Catford, London, S.E.6, wants to join a sports club.

Harold Lees, 55, Alphonso Street, Old Trafford, Manchester, has N.L.L. new series from No. 1 for sale.

B. Hilliard and E. W. Beck, 6, St. Orbet's Road, Brockley, London, S.E.4, want cycling correspondents.

Colin Power, Stratford Police Station, Stratford, North Island, New Zealand, wants correspondents in China, Africa and Samoa.

G. Alexander, Groll Park Road, Neath, S. Wales, wants to hear from Arthur Wall; also wishes to exchange numbers of the N.L.L.

G. Taylor, 97, Fernbank Road, Alum Rock, Birmingham, wants Australian correspondents.

Bertram Farmer, 22, Waterworks Lane, Broadwater, Worthing, wants correspondents anywhere.

Harry Gray, c/o F. Bilcock, 10, Bensons Row, Biggleswade, Beds, wants to hear from readers interested in ju-jitsu, football, skating and cycling.

Clem O'Sullivan, 40, Vincent Street, Mt. Lawley, Perth, Western Australia, wants issues of the N.L.L. before the "Boot Boy Baronet" series. Also wants correspondents in India, South Africa, and England.

Thomas G. Mercer, 1, Sweden Grove, Waterloo, nr. Liverpool, has N.L.L. Nos. 115-153, new series, for sale; 1d. each.

## XMAS CLUBS

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**NORWOODS (Dept. N.L.), 16, Cullum Street, London, E.C.3.**



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