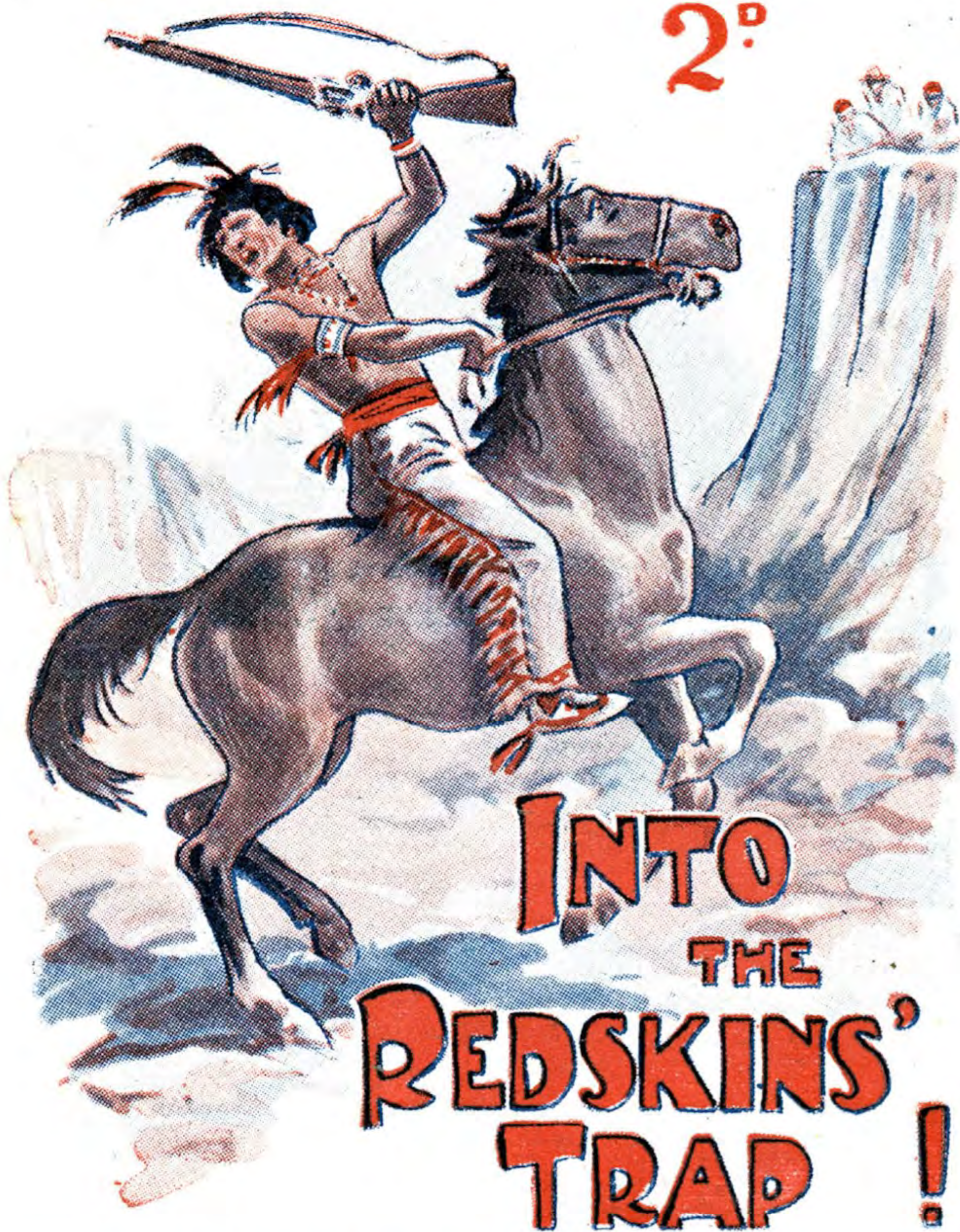


NELSON LEE

LIBRARY OF

SCHOOL STORIES

2^d



INTO THE REDSKINS' TRAP !

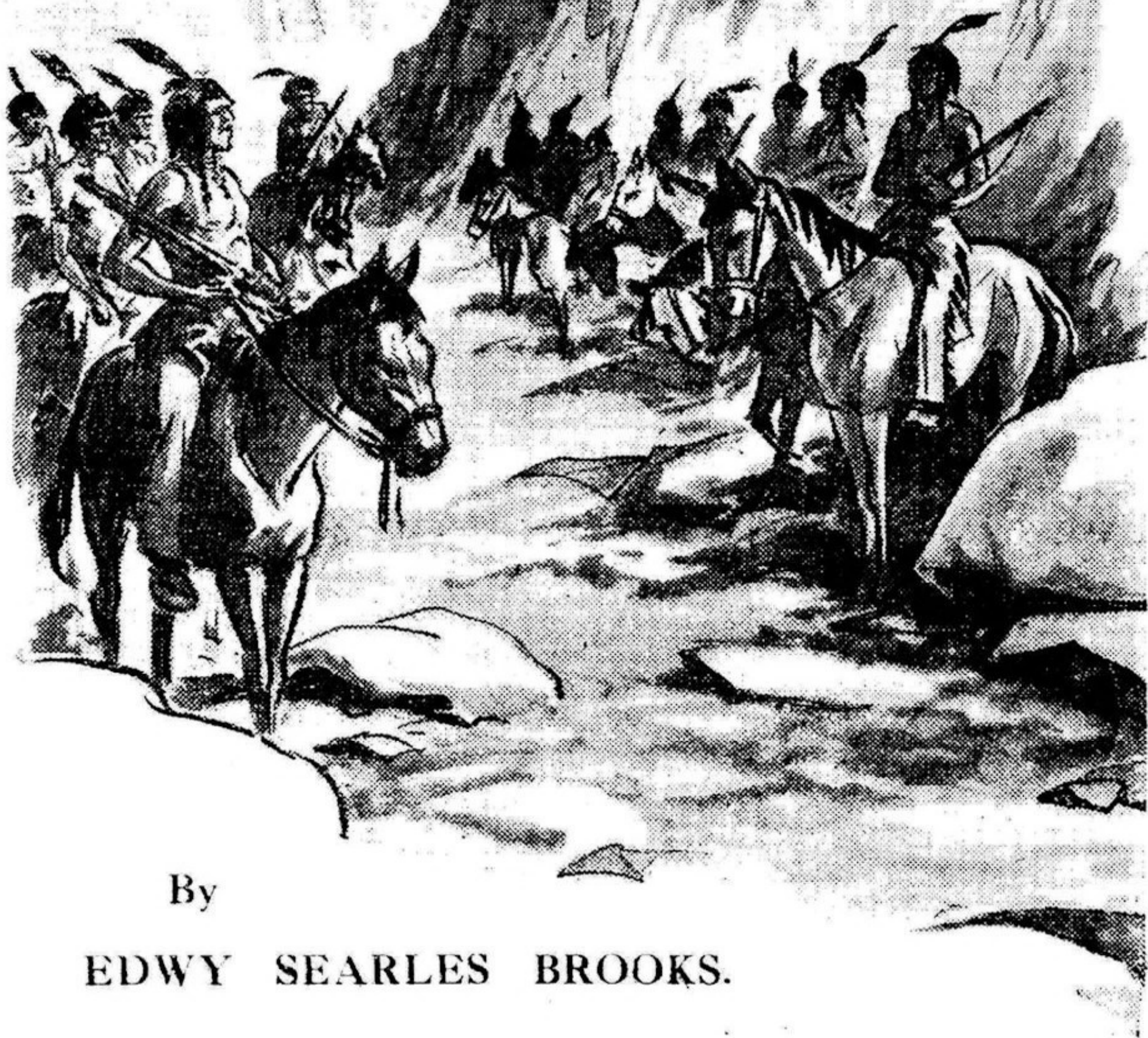
An exciting long complete yarn of schoolboy adventure in Arizona, featuring
the famous chums of St. Frank's.

New Series No. 172.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

August 17th, 1929.

INTO THE REDSKINS' TRAP !



By

EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

CHAPTER 1.

The Arizona Desert!

"THE gold ain't far from 'ere," said Hookey Webb, as he wiped the perspiration from his face with an already damp handkerchief. "Leastways, it ain't fur as the crow flies. But I reckon it'll take us a day o' two to locate the exact spot up the canyon. An' there's no tellin' but what these 'ere Injuns will git narsy, seein' as we're so close to their blooming reservation."

Nelson Lee nodded.

"You're sure you recognise the country, Hookey?" he asked.

"Reco'nise it?" repeated the old man, extending the hook which did duty for a left hand, and indicating the landscape. "Forty year ago, it was, matey—forty

The Arizona mountains ; magnificently grim and awe-inspiring. Through the deep, winding gorges passes the St. Frank's party—on the trail of gold. Following it, stealthily, unsuspected, is the hidden peril—Indians. Savage, untamed Apaches—waiting for their opportunity to strike !

year ago ! But a bloke ain't likely to fergit a scene like this 'ere ! Look at all them rocks ! Look at them peaks !"

"Yes," agreed Lord Dorrimore, "they certainly make never-to-be-forgotten landmarks."

The men stood on a rocky promontory overlooking the head of the canyon. Just below them, in the shelter of a great crag, the camp was being pitched. The figures of the St. Frank's boys and the Moor View girls were plainly visible as they moved about. The tractor cars were parked in a rough semi-circle, and the tents were being pitched within this.

It was evening, and the worst heat of the day was over ; the temperature, indeed, was rapidly cooling.

For out there, on the Arizona desert, the thermometer might go up to a hundred and twenty degrees in the shade at mid-day, and drop to forty degrees by nightfall. Overhead, the sky was cloudless and blue, and the air was so clear that one could see for tens of miles.



CIRCLE CITY had been left behind some days ago, and the whole party was now out on the barren desert, close to the edge of the great Chichon Mesa—this latter being a great tableland which rose menacingly near at hand, dominating the desert itself.

The whole party, with its tractor cars, had passed through the Pronto Basin, and the Mesa was now close at hand. Somewhere just beyond the jagged mass of hills and cliffs which denoted the beginning of the Mesa was the Blue Mountain

Indian Reservation. The boundary-line was vague and uncertain; it was not marked with any precision on the maps. But Nelson Lee was quite satisfied that the party had not penetrated any part of the Redskins' territory.

There was a stream coming down the canyon just here. It seemed to issue from the base of a basaltic formation. The limestone rocks were not so much in evidence at this point. And the waters of the creek were sweet and drinkable. Lower down the basin the Pronto Creek had been more or less poisonous, owing to the impregnations of lime. Everywhere on this desert there was the deadly alkali.

The rugged cliffs seemed to go up from the desert to the Mesa in a series of great terraces, magnificently formed by nature. As far as the eye could see, there was nothing but rock and sand—not a green leaf, not a blade of grass, not even so much as a cactus.

On all sides there were burned-out rocks—lava rocks, left in this wilderness for countless centuries, an ever-present reminder of the volcanic nature of the entire region. There were extinct craters amidst these hills. The rocks were of all colours, just as though some painter had been at work. On every hand were the greens and yellows and reds of the rock, sometimes changing to orange or lavender. And here and there, too, would be the dazzling whiteness of the limestone.

It was a part of Arizona which civilisation had left untouched. For here, in all this barren land, there is no possibility of irrigation or reclaiming the soil. It is nothing but a wilderness of sun-parched rock and sand.

It was difficult for the explorers to realise that within a hundred miles or so there were thriving cities, with teeming automobiles, with the thundering railroad, with picture theatres, with soda-fountains and ice-cream parlours.

Arizona is like that. On the train, one leaves a thriving city and plunges straight into the barren desert. Then follow hours of desolation, to be succeeded by another bustling city—and then the desert again.

But here, scores of miles away from the railroad, the desolation was a thousandfold intensified. For here there was never a trace of modern civilisation. Here, everything was exactly the same as it was centuries and countless centuries ago. And somewhere within comparatively easy distance were the Apache Indians. The Blue Mountain Reservation lay amidst the shadows of the hills. At this reservation there were Redskins as savage at heart

as they had always been—sullen and brooding. This particular tribe, at all events, had never established really friendly relations with the white races. Restricted to the limits of their reservation, the Indians were sullenly submissive—and yet, at the same time, they were resentful and vindictive, and jealous of any white men who ventured too near to the boundary line of their reservation.

It was a far cry from here to Brighton beach—where, on August Bank Holiday, Handforth and some of the other St. Frank's juniors had first met old Hookey Webb, the Punch and Judy man.

They had rendered him a service, and he had rambled on about a great gold strike which he and old Ben Dalton had made back in '89. For fifteen years, it seemed, Hookey had been a Punch and Judy man in Brighton, and everybody had laughed at his "tall" story of his gold.

Yet, when Lord Dorrimore had examined this yarn, it had not been quite so ridiculous as it first seemed. There was a ring of truth about it.

Those two men—then young—venturing into the Apache-ridden desert in the old wild days! The discovery of gold—and then flight, because of the menace of the Indians. Then Dalton had been injured, and had died as soon as a settlement was reached. And Hookey, finding himself broke, had drifted back to the sea, where he really belonged.

For years he had dreamed of making another trip to the Chichon Mesa, and for years he had tried to get people interested in his story. But, being a scaman, nobody took any notice of him. They thought it was just one of his yarns.

Hookey himself had never been able to raise sufficient money to provide the necessary outfit. For, of course, it was utterly impossible to venture into the desert without ample equipment—and Hookey alone could never have done the trip. He was no desert man, and even in the first place he would have been helpless without Ben Dalton.

After twenty years he had managed to get back to Arizona, and Dicky Siggers, who knew the desert intimately, had offered to go with him. But they could not raise enough money to buy the outfit—Siggers himself having always been a desert rat, and more or less broke.

So once again Hookey had wandered, and, having met with an accident which meant the loss of his left hand, he forsook the sea and became a beach performer—a Punch and Judy man at Brighton.

Lord Dorrimore, always on the look-out for an adventure, had promptly decided to "grub-stake" the old man. It didn't much matter to Dorrie whether this venture fizzled out or not; he wasn't interested in the gold. But it meant a trip which promised a few thrills.

And his lordship, with his usual lavishness, had spent thousands of pounds on the outfit. A crowd of St. Frank's fellows was invited, and a number of Moor View School girls, too. Everybody thought that there would be no danger—and the trip would be instructive and interesting for all.

It was only after the desert had been penetrated that Nelson Lee and Dorrie began to realise that the job was a fairly stiff one. No wonder Hookey Webb had never been able to go back!

Even to-day the Apaches were restive and unfriendly. They would not dare to do anything against the white party so long as their reservation was not penetrated; but these Indians had very vague ideas regarding the boundary line

of their reservation—or perhaps they preferred to have vague ideas—and already there had been indications that they were out to cause trouble.

"SEEMS like it was only yeste'd'y," said Hookey Webb reminiscently. "Everything's the same here."

"No; a century or so doesn't make much difference," remarked Dorrie. "The main

thing is, Hookey, for you to recognise your landmarks. We're practically on the edge of the Mesa now, but unless you've got an accurate idea of the right direction, we might just as well turn back at once."

"We ain't turnin' back, mister," said old Hookey. "I knows where I am. Straight up the canyon we goes, an' then out on the Mesa. There's a great big hunk

o' rock some miles on—like a big derelict stuck there on the sea o' sand. I remember old Ben sayin' so at the time."

Dicky Siggers nodded.

"That'll be the big butte," he said. "Thar's a sight o' them buttes around these parts, but I'm figgerin' that I know the one you mean, pardner."

"You seen it, eh?" asked Hookey.

"Uh - huh!" grunted the old desert man. "I sure seen it—more times than I care to think of. Thar ain't an inch o' this region that I ain't prospected. Gold? I ain't seen no gold."

"Well, you'll see some afore long," said Hookey. "Least ways, you will if these 'ere

Injuns ain't pinched it all."

"I'm figgerin' that if them Injuns 'ad found the gold I should have heard about it," said Siggers. "They'd try to get rid of it somehow, and in a country like this thar's a pile of excitement if any gold shows up. But I guess they know we're after it, and it seems to me that there must be some sort o' superstition hangin' around that big butte. It's some-

WHO'S WHO AT ST. FRANK'S.



EDGAR FENTON.

The popular skipper of St. Frank's. A brilliant all-round sportsman and one of the very best.

thing special, anyway, or the Redskins wouldn't be so dog-gone skeered of our locatin' it."

"But you don't think they'll interfere with us, do you?" asked Nelson Lee.

"Not openly," said Siggers. "They don't like the United States Gover'mint, but they're careful not to get the soldiers down on 'em, all the same. But up on the Mesa, whar thar ain't none to see, there's no tellin' what they might do. We'd best keep our eyes skinned—and our guns handy."

"We shall have to make our camp here," said Nelson Lee firmly. "This will be the main headquarters, so to speak. You and I, Dorrie, will go ahead with these two men. The boys and girls must remain behind, in the security of the camp."

"They won't like it!" said Dorrie.

"I don't suppose they will—but we can't allow them to face the risks," replied Lee quietly. "Especially the girls. It would be madness for us to let them go on. They're in our care, and we must be firm, Dorrie."

"You're right, of course," agreed his lordship. "But, by glory, there's going to be trouble amongst the young people when we tell them!"

CHAPTER 2.

Left Behind!

LORD DORRIMORE was right.

There was trouble—and plenty of it. The St. Frank's fellows were indignant, amazed, angry, and dismayed. Irene Manners and the other girls were frankly rebellious. The whole idea, in their opinion, was outrageously ridiculous. Just because of a few silly Indians, they were left behind! And just when the adventure was getting towards its most interesting stage!

"It's not fair, Mr. Lee!" protested Doris Berkeley, looking at Lee out of her keen brown eyes. "It's—it's not playing the game, either!"

"I'm very sorry, young lady——"

"You're not sorry at all!" said Doris indignantly. "Oh, I don't mean to be rude, Mr. Lee, but why don't you let us go? And the boys, too? These aren't the days of the Wild West! The Indians won't dare to attack us—especially if we've got you men with us all the time."

"Rather!" put in Edward Oswald Handforth, the aggressive leader of Study D. "It's too thick, sir! We've come all this way, and I'm blowed if we'll stay behind here just because there's a faint chance of a scrap with the Indians!"

"Absolutely!" said Archie Glenthorne, with spirit.

"Hear, hear!"

"You ought to let us go, sir!"

"Rather!"

There was a perfect storm, and Nelson Lee faced it calmly, smilingly, and without the slightest change of manner.

"Have you all finished?" he asked dryly. "Because, if you haven't, you might as well save your breath. I have definitely decided that you must all remain in camp."

"Oh!"

It was a general groan.

"I have had a long talk with Dorrie and Mr. Siggers, and we have come to the conclusion that no good purpose would be served by you all coming on this last stage of the trip," said Nelson Lee. "Dicky Siggers knows the desert only too well, and he knows the Apaches. He doesn't think it would be sensible——"

"Oh, it's your doing, is it?" broke in Handforth, glaring at the tall, gaunt, scraggy man of the desert.

"Uh-huh!" said Siggers, grinning. "I sure reckon, young 'un, that the Mesa ain't any too healthy. Quite apart from the Injuns, I'm figgerin' thar ain't no call for you young people to hit this trail. It's sure a hard trail. We can't take them cars up into these mount'ins, and it means hikin' all the way. And you can take it from me that a hike in this territory, under a hot sun, ain't no cinch."

"We're ready for it!" said Nipper promptly.

"And so are we!" put in Irene, without hesitation. "I think we all ought to go!"

BUT it was no good. Nelson Lee was adamant. He gave orders that a sort of permanent camp should be made under the shadow of the rocky cliffs. The tents were pitched very securely, and the drivers and mechanics of the outfit were given strict orders as to keeping watch and remaining on the alert. Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore did not hesitate to go ahead, leaving the main party behind. There wasn't one chance in a million that the Indians would take any interest in the camp. It was well outside the reservation boundaries, anyhow, and the Apaches would never dare to molest any of the young people.

But it would be different up on the Mesa.

Although Dicky Siggers swore that the big butte was well clear of the reservation boundary line, he hinted that the Indians might ignore this fact. Up there,

on the Chichon Mesa, there was no definite line, and the Indians, for their own convenience, might easily insist that the white men were trespassing in their territory. No matter how many maps Nelson Lee produced, the Indians would stolidly maintain their supposed rights. And if these "rights" were violated, there might easily be a lot of trouble.

Lee was in no fear of the Indians. A bold front, and a calm air of authority, would probably quell any attempts at hostility. But it would be a very different thing if the boys and girls accompanied the party. Much greater preparations would have to be made—much more "gear" would have to be carried. And there was the question of water—and food. From every point of view it was better that the youngsters should be left at the camp.

For here they would have every comfort, and they would not be in any peril.

But this was just what the boys and girls objected to. They did not care much about comfort—and they hated the idea of being left behind because there was a possibility of peril. However, Nelson Lee had issued the edict, and he remained as firm as the rocky crags which surrounded the camp.

AT dawn the gold-seeking party started off.

It consisted of Nelson Lee, Lord Dorrimore, Hookey Webb, Dicky Siggers, and Umlosi.

The packs had been prepared overnight, after the schoolboys and schoolgirls had gone to sleep. Now, in the cool of the early dawn, the five men set off. There was no commotion about their departure. They fairly stole out of camp, each one heavily laden—and Umlosi carrying a pack which would have broken the back of most white men. The great Kutana chieftain was aglow with contentment. During the night he had dreamed—according to his own story—and even now he had the smell of blood in his nostrils. It was not a particularly cheerful announcement, although Umlosi seemed to relish the idea with gusto. If they got through this affair without any bloodshed, he would regard the trip as a complete failure.

An hour after they had gone, Handforth turned out. He was brisk and eager, and, needless to say, Church and McClure were with him. They had an idea that their leader was going to start something drastic, and it was necessary for them to keep their eyes on him.

"It's all right," he said, with relief. "No sign of anything yet. They're not even out of their tents."

"What did you expect—at this early hour of the morning?" asked Church.

"They didn't tell us what time they were going to start," said Handforth suspiciously. "I asked Dorrie last night, and he jawed about the stars. Deliberately tried to put me off! I believe they meant to make an early start."

Nipper appeared, to be immediately followed by Harry Gresham and Reggie Pitt and some of the others. Not long after the girls turned out of their tents, too, fresh and brisk.

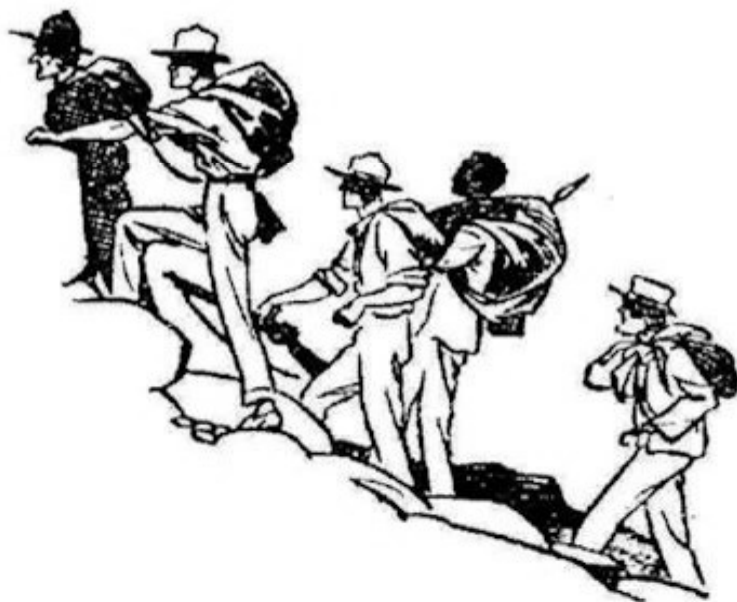
"There's something funny about this," said Nipper, frowning.

"I should think there is!" retorted Handforth. "It's all rot, this idea of leaving us behind. We're not going to stand it! It's like leading a thirsty man to a cool stream, and then binding him up so that he can't have a drink. We've got to the last stage of our trip, and now we've got to stick here. Not likely!"

"I didn't mean that," said Nipper. "Where's the gov'nor? Where's Dorrie? Why aren't they up and about?"

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Reggie Pitt. "You're not suggesting—"

"Yes, I am," said Nipper. "I believe they've gone."



"What!" went up a chorus.

"Well, doesn't it look like it?" said Nipper. "I believe they've stolen a march on us!"

There was a great deal of excitement, and in the middle of it William Napoleon Browne strolled up. He and Stevens were the only Fifth-Formers in the party, and this morning Browne was looking rather sad.

"Alas, brothers, the worst has happened," he said despondently.

"You mean they've gone?" yelled Handforth.

"Much as I hate to distress you, Brother Handforth, I feel compelled to state that we have been double-crossed. I have learned, on the best authority, that Brothers Lee and Dorrie and the others stole away into the morning dew over an hour ago."

"Well, I'm jiggered!"

"We've been dished!" roared Handforth indignantly.

"It's too bad!" said Irene, her blue eyes sparkling with wrath. "Supposing there is danger? We're not afraid, are we?"

"I hope not!" said Winnie Pitt.

"But we're a lot of infants, and we must be wrapped in cotton wool!" said Doris bitterly. "We mustn't be exposed to any risks. When I see Mr. Lee again, I'll—I'll punch him!"

"And what we'll do to Dorrie doesn't bear thinking of!" said Irene ominously.

IN the meantime, Nelson Lee and his companions were making good progress before the sun rose to the blistering heat of mid-day.

It was no easy trip, this, as the schoolboys and schoolgirls would have found out for themselves if they had undertaken it. It was a very different matter—on foot. In the tractor cars, with every kind of comfort, the journey from Circle City had been quite a joy-ride.

But there was nothing joyous about the arduous trudge that Lee and Dorrie and the others were now making.

The trail was extraordinarily hard. The party had to climb many of the crags and rocks from the lower level of the flats until they were up on the high tableland of the Mesa, but before they could reach this point it was necessary to pass through the grim canyons.

There was no real trail of any sort, and in places the men were compelled to hoist themselves over great masses of rock—rock which was burning and blistering hot to the touch. The weight of their packs, their rifles, and their ammunition became almost unbearable.

In some places the trail seemed to end abruptly and they were faced with smooth, barren rock which no man, single-handed, could possibly climb. In such places it was necessary for them to hoist one another up, and so onwards.

It was certain, however, that this trail had been used—perhaps for centuries—by mountain lions, goats, and possibly coyotes.

Towards mid-day the party found itself in a deep gully, or gulch, where the crags towered above on either side, and where

the trail led slopingly onwards towards the great plateau.

"Injuns!" grunted Dicky Siggers suddenly.

It was the first word that had been spoken for nearly an hour. So much effort was required just to move onwards that conversation was tacitly abandoned. There would be plenty of time for talk when a halt was made for food and drink.

But now the others looked up, and, sure enough, they beheld the figure of an Indian, naked to the waist, silhouetted against the skyline on the top of one of the rocks, nearly half a mile ahead.

"They're on to us, matey," said old Hookey.

"Guess they've been on all mornin'," said Siggers. "They ain't blind, these Injuns. They've spotted our game, an' I figger they've bin trailin' us ever since we left camp."

"But they won't dare to interfere with us," said Lord Dorrimore.

"I wouldn't be so sure, pardner," said the desert man. "We ain't far from the boundary line, and these durned Apaches git kinder fresh when they're practically in their own territory."

And then, unexpectedly, something happened. The little party was nearly at the head of the deep canyon, and not far away the canyon itself became reduced to a narrow gorge, where the rock walls rose sheer. Just here, too, there were ravines which cut into the canyon from right to left. And now two lines of Indians appeared—mounted Indians.

They were half-naked, with their blue-black hair hanging down in braids over their copper backs. Each man wore an eagle feather stuck imposingly above the forehead. They were riding ponies, and they sat superbly, even though the majority of them had no saddles. There were, perhaps, thirty or forty of the Apaches, and some of them were carrying rifles. The others were armed with bows and arrows—and lances.

"They don't seem to be very much interested," said Dorrie.

"Just their way," grunted Siggers. "Like as not they won't take any notice of us at all—to begin with. Best thing we kin do is to ignore 'em. We'll keep to the trail. Pretty fatal if we show any kinder hesitation. These dog-gone Injuns know if you're skeered."

"Well, we're not scared," said Nelson Lee grimly.

And they marched on—with the Indians forming a double line parallel with them—and keeping pace, too. It was an



"I have decided that you boys and girls must stay behind in camp here while Dorrie and I and the other men go on," declared Nelson Lee. A stupefied silence greeted the announcement at first—and then came an outburst of indignant protest.

ominous, sinister escort—all the more so because the Redskins pretended to be indifferent to the presence of the white men.

CHAPTER 3.

Developments!

BUT this state of affairs did not last long.

"It all comes back to me like it was only yesterd'y," said old Hookey, his beady eyes shining brightly. "I remember that there gorge. The trail runs clean through it, misters. Arter a bit, the gorge widens out an' then we come to a pretty bad patch where there ain't no water, nor shade, nor anythin'."

"Through the gorge?" said Lee. "Very well."

They prepared to march on, but it was at this point that the Indians made a definite move.

Gradually and insidiously they had been closing in on the white men, and just

ahead other mounted Indians had appeared in the mouth of that narrow gorge. In fact, they completely barred the entrance.

"Reg'lar Injun game, this," muttered Siggers. "Tryin' to skeer us, that's all. We'd best push past, just like they didn't exist."

"Wouldn't it be better to give the beggars a dose of their own medicine?" asked Dorrie softly. "I mean, why not scare *them*? A few rifle shots over their heads——"

"Wau! Wise words, N'Kose," rumbled Umlosi. "Methinks that thou art wrong, however, in saying that the shots should be over the heads of these copper-coloured dogs! If thou wilt say the word, my master, I will wield my spear——"

"Best not do anything like that, pardner," interrupted old Siggers. "We don't want to give these Injuns a chance to turn on us. Don't forgit we're outnumbered, and by a pretty tidy crowd, too."

There was a bit of a pause here whilst they picked their way over some stones in the bed of the little creek which meandered through the canyon. It wandered off into one of the side ravines, through green patches, where cottonwood trees were growing. In fact, there was quite a lot of green in this canyon; but a bit further on, where the narrow gorge started, there was nothing but bare rock, uninviting and harsh and ugly.

The Indians in the mouth of the gorge made no move. They sat on their ponies, immobile and resolute.

Dicky Siggers had been giving the Indians the "once over" during the past few minutes, and he had an idea that trouble was coming. Nearly all these Apaches were young bucks. There was scarcely a middle-aged man amongst them. They were reckless savages, only too eager for some excuse to have a fling.

It was pretty clear that one of the Indians was a Chief, for the others instantly obeyed when he muttered some orders in the Apache tongue. A number of the Redskins dismounted, and the Chief looked directly at the white men for the first time.

"Howdy?" he grunted, by way of greeting.

"Howdy?" returned Siggers, nodding. "What you do here, off your land?"

"Not off our land," replied the Indian. "This Apache land."

"No, sonny," said Siggers firmly. "I know my way about these parts, I guess. Your territory doesn't start hereabouts. The boundary line is some miles away to the westward——"

"This Apache land," said the Chief obstinately. "Not good for white man here."

"Best not give me any of your dog-gone jaw!" said Siggers aggressively. "Get out o' my way, you blamed Injun!"

"You get!" returned the Chief, his eyes flashing. "This Indian land. You understand? All of you! You not enter this gorge. Indian own this gorge. White man not come."

"We intend no harm to you," said Nelson Lee, looking at the Chief straight in the eye. "Go back to your reservation—where you belong. Take your men with you. Do you understand?"

The Chief's eyes dropped sullenly. He was unable to support Nelson Lee's steady, unwavering gaze.

"You not pass!" he said, with a menace in his voice. "Plenty Apache here. More Apache than white man. Huh? This

gorge Indian land," he went on fiercely. "You no come on Indian land."

"Guess we'd better talk this over," said Siggers. "You wait," he added, looking at the Chief. "We talk."

"Ugh! We wait!" grunted the Indian.

The white men drew back for some little distance, and Dicky Siggers was compressing his parched, wrinkled old lips.

"Tain't no good, pardners," he muttered. "I'm figgerin' that if we push past these Injuns they'll let fly into our backs."

"Shoot us down, do you mean?" asked Dorrie.

"Like as not," said the desert man.

"They ain't got the nerve," said old Hookey, with a snort. "We can't go no other way, Siggers. I know my bearin's all right, an' old Ben Dalton told me that this gorge doesn't belong to the Injuns."

"There wasn't no reservations in them days," replied Siggers pointedly. "These skunks look ugly. I've seen 'em in different moods, an' you kin take it from me that this perticular lot is out fer mischief. Thar ain't no cause to worry, neither. Best not give these fellers a chance to shoot us in the back. We'll go round by that side ravine."

"Is there a way out?" asked Lee.

"Sure thar's a way out," replied Siggers. "'Tain't known to everybody—perhaps not even to the Injuns. But I know it. Up thar the ravine gits kinder small, an' it seems thar ain't no outlet. Widens up a bit at first, with lots o' bushes an' trees, an' a decent-sized crick in the middle, though the water ain't much good. Too much lime. It's further round, but I guess we'd best not be too partickler."

Neither Nelson Lee nor Dorrie liked giving in to the Indians in this way. But Dicky Siggers knew the country better than they did—he knew the Indians, too. He was their guide, and it was up to them to accept his advice.

"Very well," said Lee, nodding. "We'll do as you say, Siggers."

They went back to the waiting Apaches.

"We go this way," said Siggers, pointing into the side ravine. "This ain't Injun land."

The Chief's eyes flashed.

"You go that way," he said, nodding. "Good talk."

"And you'd best not start any monkey-business," added the desert man grimly.

"Savvy, you copper-coloured heathen? You do anythin' to harm us, and Government soldiers come here. Get me? Hold inquiry in the reservation. Government

soldiers find out which Injuns left reservation. Big trouble."

The Chief remained immobile.

"Not afraid Government soldiers," he said, his voice full of contempt. "They far, far away. You here—and we here. Nothing all round but desert and mountains. Uh-huh? Apaches kill you if you come in Indian territory!"

THE white men were not molested as they made their way into the side ravine. Dorrie was frankly disgusted with the whole business.

"I don't like it, Siggers," he said, when they were out of earshot. "Knuckling under to those red-skinned blighters!"

"It sure went against the grain, pardner," agreed Siggers. "But if you don't use tact with these Injuns, you might as well git ready for your funeral. Thar comes a time when it ain't healthy to shoot."

"But, man alive, they wouldn't dare to fire on us!" protested his lordship.

"Not usually, mebbe," agreed Dicky Siggers. "But I've seen these Injuns in all thar moods. Sometimes you kin handle 'em easy. Sometimes they're difficult. An' just now they're darned difficult. Guess they've twigged that we're after that gold."

"You bet they have!" said old Hookey, his eyes gleaming. "An' by their refusing to let us pass they've as good as admitted that the gold is still there."

"I think we did right, Dorrie, in not provoking the Indians into any drastic action," said Nelson Lee. "We are hopelessly outnumbered, and it would be sheer folly to invite an attack."

"But we're off the trail now," said Hookey, shaking his head. "That's the trouble, mates. We ought to 'ave kep' to that gorge——"

"Say, listen!" interrupted Siggers. "I ain't such a dog-gone fool as to let them Injuns have all their own way. Thar's a kind o' crevice at the end o' this ravine."

"A crevice?" asked Nelson Lee.

"Sure," said the desert man. "Them Injuns don't know nothin' about it, seemin'ly. Leastways, they haven't tried to stop us. They think thar ain't no way through. But once we're out, I'm figgerin' that we kin kinder work round an' git up on the Mesa jest the same."

And so they continued their journey, satisfied that Dicky Siggers had done the right thing.

CHAPTER 4.

Handforth

Is Rash!

E DWARD
O S W A L D
H A N D-
F O R T H

GOLD!

In the heart of the Arizona mountains it lies; a cliff of gold!

It is the objective of the St. Frank's holiday party—but will they ever reach

it? For, guarding this mountain treasure trove, are Indians—savage, untamed Indians!

Many amazing adventures and perils befall the St. Frank's party next week. You simply *mustn't* miss reading this gripping yarn entitled:

"AT GRIPS WITH THE REDMEN!"

wandered about the camp, disconsolate, restive, and irritable.

Breakfast was only just over, but the sun was already gaining tremendous strength, and the heat was becoming fierce.

"They can't have got far by now," said Handforth, glaring at Travers, as he came to a halt. "I vote we follow them."

"Dear old fellow, why can't you resign yourself to the inevitable?"

asked Travers

mildly. "We're left behind, and let us give Mr. Lee the credit of knowing what he's up to."

"You silly ass!" said Handforth hotly. "Are you suggesting that Mr. Lee was right in leaving us in the lurch?"

"Well, well!" drawled Travers. "What have I done, dear old fellow, that you should look at me so balefully? You mustn't forget that there are Indians abroad. Bloodthirsty Redskins, armed with bows and arrows and tomahawks. No, I must confess that I haven't noticed any tomahawks. Perhaps they're a relic of bygone days."

"Blow the Indians!"

"I agree with you—blow them," said Travers complacently. "But you have evidently failed to appreciate, Handy, that we are mere children. At all costs we must be protected and preserved. Not a hair of our heads must be harmed—not the slightest risk must encompass us."

"You're mad!" snorted Handforth. "Dorrie brought us out here on this gold quest, and it's only right we should see it through. Being left behind like this is more than flesh and blood can stand! And now you're saying that we've got to be preserved—"

"My dear old ass, he's only kidding you," grinned Nipper, as he joined them with Church and McClure and a few others. "Travers is inclined to be a bit sarcastic, I think."

"This is no time for sarcasm," frowned Handforth. "What are we going to do?"

"Well, there are lots of these old cliff dwellings about here," said Nipper. "I vote that we get up a party, and do some exploring."

Handforth grunted, and it was a sound of utter disgust.

"Cliff dwellings!" he said sourly. "Who the dickens cares about cliff dwellings? We want to go and find that gold!"

"The girls are getting up a party to explore some of these cliffs, I believe," said Reggie Pitt. "They're just as fed up as we are—but, at least, they are accepting the position cheerfully."

"I don't accept it cheerfully—and I don't think much of you fellows for accepting it cheerfully!" said Handforth, with scorn. "We're not babies! There's nothing to pre-



vent us from leaving camp, is there? Why shouldn't we follow Mr. Lee and the others?"

"No, Handy, it wouldn't do," put in Nipper. "The Indians might easily grab some of us, and we shouldn't stand a chance."

"Not if we took our rifles?" demanded Handforth.

"We shouldn't use the rifles, even if we took them," replied Nipper. "Don't be an ass, Handy! It would be a totally different thing if we went with the men. But we can't go off on our own."

The others murmured their agreement. But Handforth was still stubborn.

"Well, I say we can!" he persisted. "The whole thing is rotten! Left behind like this—and just because of the girls!"

"The girls?" said Church, staring. "What have the girls to do with it?"

"Everything!"

"I rather think that statement requires enlarging upon," said Nipper grimly. "Come along, Handy—you'll have to justify yourself. Why blame the girls? They're just as upset as we are."

"I'm not blaming them—but it's their fault, all the same," argued Handforth. "If it wasn't for the girls, Mr. Lee would have allowed us all to go with him."

"Good gad! What priceless rot!" said Archie Glenthorne. "Dash it, old scream, that's a bit thick, isn't it? I mean to say, rather near the edge, what?"

"Oh, I'm not spoofed!" said Handforth with unnecessary emphasis. "It stands to reason that Mr. Lee and Dorrie couldn't take the girls with them. That sort of trip isn't suitable for girls."

"Well, that's right, perhaps," admitted Nipper.

"And we were left behind so that the girls shouldn't be upset," continued Handforth shrewdly. "Don't you see? If we were allowed to go, and they weren't, they'd naturally feel a bit fed-up. So, because Mr. Lee had to leave the girls behind, he was forced to leave us behind, too."

"H'm! I dare say there's something in it," said Nipper.

"No doubt about it at all," continued Handforth. "The girls have ruined everything for us! Just because of them, we've been left out of the gold hunt—left out of all the excitement!"

"Not so loud, old man," said Church warningly. "For goodness' sake, don't let any of the girls hear you!"

But it was too late. One of the girls had already heard. Quite by chance she was in a tent, not very far off; and Handforth, as usual, had been speaking as though all his schoolfellows were inflicted with deafness.

"Better get a bit further away from camp," suggested Nipper, as he glanced round. "None of the girls is near here, so no harm has been done."

They drifted away, under the shade of one of the rocky crags.

"The girls may be the cause of our being left behind, but we can't blame them," continued Nipper. "I mean, it would be beastly unfair to have any grudge against them."

"Oh, rather!" agreed Handforth promptly. "Of course! Who's talking about having a grudge? I'm just stating plain facts."

"Not that it makes any difference to the present position, dear old fellow," said Travers. "The gentlemen have gone on this

(Continued at foot of opposite page.)

LAMENT!



CLARENCE FELLOWE

is the poet of St. Frank's. There should be nothing against him because of that, but unfortunately for him his genius is not always appreciated at the school. Here is Clarence's latest effort—bemoaning this sad state of affairs!

FOR once I have received my due in being asked to write to you. The chaps at school, and masters, too, don't realise the things I do. They don't appreciate a bit, my pearls of scintillating wit.

I have just been to Crowell's room; his anger caused my profoundest gloom. He asked me why I missed my prep; a thing I often do forget. And when I started to explain, he cut me short and fetched his cane. You see, I'd just composed some verse, and quite forgot that time was scarce. I'd like to have it printed here. 'Twould take a page or two, I fear.

The other day I wrote a song; perhaps a thousand stanzas long. But no one seemed to know at all its beauty and its magic call. For no one stays to hear it through—they bolt after a verse or two. Though Fatty Little, I must say, seemed interested in a way. He listened for an hour or two, and said it made him feel quite blue. In fact, he asked me for a spread, to clear the cobwebs from his head.

Alas, he was the only one, who listened to me and did not run.

THE fellows often pull my leg, and try to take me down a peg. Young Handforth of the Third once found an ode of mine upon the ground. Instead of giving it to me, he kept it for his chums to see. And when I sauntered into Hall, I found it pinned upon the wall.

It made the fellows laugh all day, though why they laughed I cannot say.

I'm looking forward to the time when all St. Frank's goes into rhyme. When those whose words are crisp and terse, begin to speak in flowing verse.

Imagine Dr. Nicholls rumbling thus: "I'm sorry to make this fuss. It grieves me deeply, I'm afraid, to call your notice to a raid upon the tuckshop nearabout. Will the delinquent please step out?"

But not a sound comes from the Hall; and no one gives an answering call. Fatty Little sighs with great relief; for once he's not the blessed thief! You like that, chaps? I now will dash—

(Ed: Along the passage—hear the crash? Good! Take no notice of that bellow. It comes from luckless Clarence Fellowe.)

gold hunt, and it's up to us to make the best of a bad job."

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "I mean, grin and bear it, what? And, taking it all in all, the scheme isn't so frightfully unripe. I mean to say, it's so dashed hot that all a chappie wants to do is to relax."

"Rats!" said Handforth. "I'm suggesting that we should follow Mr. Lee and Dorrie—and start at once. If we take French leave, we shall be safe. Mr. Lee won't send us back after we've overtaken him—"

"It's all very well to talk about overtaking him, but how do you know that we can do

it?" put in Nipper. "They've got Hookey Webb as a guide—and we haven't. It's too risky to go off on an unknown trail."

"Unknown trail be blowed!" said Handforth. "Can't we follow their trail? We know which way they've gone."

"Well, I'm against it!" said Nipper. "I'd love to be on the trip, of course—we should all love it—but I don't think it would be playing the game. Besides, we don't know anything about the desert, or what difficulties there are to be surmounted. And if we got lost in a country like this we should pretty soon be in a hopeless mess."

The others discussed the matter, and the voting was all in favour of staying behind. If they could have gone with Nelson Lee and the others, everything would have been all right; but to start off on their own would be sheer folly.

So Handforth was defeated.

He took it very calmly, much to the relief of Church and McClure. They had expected a storm. Handforth evidently saw that a majority was against him, however, and he accepted the position with a good grace.

But for once Edward Oswald Handforth was crafty!

IN the meantime, Irene & Co. were preparing for their little expedition to explore the cliff dwellings—which were numerous in this district.

The girls were looking very businesslike with their packs on their backs. In their open-necked blouses, short skirts, and with their wide-brimmed hats, they looked quite charming.

"Well, it'll be something to do, anyhow," Irene Manners was saying. "Where's Ena? If we're all ready, we might as well be making a start."

"Wouldn't some of the boys like to come with us?" asked Doris Berkeley.

"Oh, bother the boys!" said Irene. "They're too full of grumbles. Perhaps they'll get over it by this afternoon. Let's go exploring by ourselves."

"Here's Ena," said Winnie Pitt, as Handforth's sister came hurrying up.

"Girls, I've got something to tell you!" exclaimed Ena Handforth tensely.

Her face was flushed, and her eyes were gleaming with indignation and wrath.

"What's the trouble?" asked Mary Summers.

"I was in one of the tents just now, and I couldn't help hearing what Ted was saying," replied Ena. "What do you think? What do you think those boys have been saying?"

"There's no telling what boys will say," replied Irene, smiling.

"They've been saying that we're the cause of them being left behind!"

"What?"

"It's a fact!" continued Ena breathlessly. "Isn't it too dreadful for words? We're the cause, if you please!"

"But why?" asked Doris in amazement. "How can they possibly say things like that?"

"Well, they're saying them, anyhow—particularly Ted," declared Ena.

"Oh, you must be mistaken, old girl!" said Irene gently. "Ted wouldn't be so unfair——"

"That's right—stick up for him!" interrupted Ena scornfully. "Do you think I don't know? Haven't I got ears? Ted was telling the others that Mr. Lee had left them all behind because of us. Mr. Lee couldn't

take them because we should be jealous. And so we've all been left behind, boys included. That's the argument they're trotting out!"

"Well, when you come to think of it, perhaps there's something in it," said Mary Summers slowly. "I hadn't looked at it in that way before."

"Do you mean to say that you agree with Ted?" asked Ena in astonishment.

"Well, I dare say that if we girls hadn't been here, Mr. Lee might have taken the boys," replied Mary. "But it's all nonsense, of course. If the boys could go, so could we go!"

"I should think we could!" said Ena warmly. "My only hat! Just think of it! Just because we're girls, we're barred! We're too tender—too delicate—too fragile—to undertake a march into the desert. We mustn't be exposed to the heat of the sun and to a few hardships. Oh dear, no!"

There were many exclamations of indignation.

"We're only girls—we're slim wisps of things that must be protected," continued Ena scornfully. "And if the boys had been allowed to go, we should get jealous! Oh, it's too bad!"

"But you mustn't accuse Mr. Lee like this," protested Irene. "It's only what the boys have been saying——"

"And it's true!" said Ena coldly. "Of course it's true! We girls are the stumbling-block—we've caused the boys to miss the best of the adventure."

"I think something ought to be done about it," said Doris firmly.

"So do I!" nodded Ena. "Something drastic!"

"Mr. Lee ought to be taught a lesson," continued Doris. "In fact, I rather think it's up to us to show him that we're not made of barley sugar, or Dresden china, or—or whatever it is that he thinks we're made of! We girls are just as sturdy, and just as hardy, as any of the boys!"

"Yes, rather!" chorused the other girls.

"When it comes to a test of endurance, we can equal any boys!" said Doris stoutly.

"Look here, why shouldn't we go off on this cliff-dwelling expedition, and then follow Mr. Lee's trail?"

"Oh!" murmured the others.

"Let's follow the men and overtake them!" said Doris, her eyes sparkling. "How's that?"

"Topping!" said Ena Handforth gleefully. "Girls, it's a wheeze!"

The other schoolgirls were excited and eager—and just a bit dubious.

"Do you really think we ought to?" asked Marjorie Temple.

"If we do it, we shall show Mr. Lee that we're not soft—and that's just what he wants showing," said Doris. "It'll prove to him that we're hardy and ready for any old adventure. Come, girls! We've got some

lunch in our packs—and water, too. The sooner we're off, the better!"

"And if any of these boys offer to come with us, we'll choke them off!" said Ena crisply. "Don't back out of it, you girls! Let's all stick together in this thing. It's up to us to teach Mr. Lee a lesson!"

"Yes, rather!" said the others, nodding.

When Nipper and one or two more of the boys came along soon afterwards, they found the girls cheerful and smiling. They were born actresses, every one of them, and they looked very innocent and guileless.

"We're just off," said Irene brightly.

"Going to explore some of the cliff-dwellings, eh?" said Nipper. "I think you'd better let some of us boys come with you—"

"Not likely!" said Ena. "You can do your own exploring, thanks!"

"Well, there's nothing like being blunt," smiled Nipper. "At the same time, it might be better for you girls if some of our chaps went with you—"

"To look after us, eh?" asked Mary Summers. "Thanks all the same, Dick, but we don't need any looking after."

"Not likely!" said Doris. "It's like your cheek, Dick!"

"My dear old thing, I didn't mean to be cheeky," grinned Nipper. "You're jolly independent, aren't you? I thought you might like a masculine escort—just in case of mishaps."

"I suppose you think that if there are any mishaps we shall be in a mess?" asked Mary. "We're not quite so helpless as you boys seem to think!"

"All right—go ahead!" chuckled Nipper. "I'm sure we won't come if we're not wanted. But mind you don't stray too far from the camp. And don't forget to be back in time for the next meal."

"WELL, I think we put them off all right," said Doris, some minutes later.

She and the other girls were climbing a rocky path leading up towards the cliffs. The heat was intolerable, and even in this short space of time the girls were beginning to feel the effect of it. But not one of them would admit that this enterprise was rash.

They had successfully fooled the school-boys. Nipper & Co. believed that the girls were merely going off to explore some of the cliff dwellings. Actually, the girls were intent upon getting straight on the trail of Nelson Lee and his companions.

LITTLE did the girls dream that Edward Oswald Handforth had started out on the same mission at almost exactly the same time.

The leader of Study D, not to be done, had

made up his mind to go on this trip alone. Handforth was a determined sort of fellow—and he was all the more determined when he was thwarted.

Nipper and the other fellows had voted against him, and he had apparently accepted the decision of the majority. But actually he had made up his mind to undertake the journey all by himself. He would play a lone hand.

He did not even dare to take Church and McClure into his confidence. Of late, his chums had been showing a great deal of independence—particularly McClure. In Mac's case it dated back from the time when he had discovered that he was of pure Scottish blood; and this had apparently given him greater confidence and determination. Church had caught some of Mac's independence, too.

Handforth knew that if he tried to get them into the wheeze they would be against him. Weren't they always against him? They would say that the idea was hare-brained and dotty and crazy. They would tell the others, and then the others might use force to keep Handforth in camp.

So Edward Handforth, with rare wisdom, went off entirely on his own. At least, it was the only possible way in which he *could* go off.

As to the wisdom of it, that was quite another thing!

CHAPTER 5.

Making Himself Useful!

"PHEW! This is warm work, if you like!"

Doris Berkeley was breathing hard, and her pretty face was flushed and hot. She had just succeeded in climbing a very difficult stretch of rock, and she now took a breather in the patch of welcome shade.

One by one the other girls climbed up—helping each other. They were finding that this trip was not altogether pleasant.

They were on the right trail. They knew that they had to leave the flats behind and climb through these rocky passes and gorges. It was necessary for them to get up on to the mesa, or plateau, and they were following the direction Nelson Lee's party had taken. Fortunately for them, the crags concealed the camp from view soon after they had started. So nobody in camp had spotted them after they had disappeared round the first cluster of rock.

"We're getting over the worst part," said Irene. "Once we've climbed this bit we shall be in a gorge. I heard old Hookey Webb telling Mr. Lee about it yesterday. The gorge extends right back into the mountains.



and then opens out into a big canyon, where there are trees and grass and running water."

"I hope we get to the running water soon," said Doris. "My hat, what wouldn't I give for a dip just now!"

"We can't waste time in having dips," said Mary. "Besides, we haven't any costumes."

"What does that matter?" asked Doris. "Who's to see us? I know jolly well that if we come across a stream I shall get undressed and dive in!"

"And we'll all do the same, too," said Irene. "Thank goodness we didn't let any of the boys come with us!"

The other girls chuckled, and prepared to move on again.

"Let's find a stream before we talk any more about having a dip," said Sylvia Glenn practically. "We may have to go miles before we find a valley where there's a creek."

They soon found themselves over the top of a ridge and descending into a gulch where, mercifully, there was plenty of shade. The gulch wandered down into the mountains—down rocky slopes, twisting and turning.

How were the girls to know that there was another gorge close at hand and running almost parallel with this one? And how were they to guess that Handforth, quite alone, was almost within half a mile, and taking the same general direction as themselves?

Handforth was feeling considerably bucked. He had got out of camp successfully, and he was striding along, careless of the heat. He was full of glee because he had "put it over" on Church and McClure. He had given them the slip.

He was jolly well going to show Mr. Lee that he, at all events, couldn't be left behind! He wanted to be on the spot when the gold was discovered; and if there were any Indians knocking about, he wanted to have a smack at them!

"O H, look!" cried Irene joyfully.

They had turned a bend in the gorge, and suddenly they beheld a sight which filled them with delight. Unexpectedly there was a sheer drop, almost at their feet. The gorge seemed to break up completely. No longer was there a sloping rock pathway down which the girls could continue their journey. There was just a ledge, narrow and precarious, and then, for about twenty feet, a steeply-sloping cliff. From this point it became utterly sheer, dropping straight down into a little valley of unbelievable beauty.

Far below, the girls could see a crystal stream running between green banks. There were cottonwood-trees, too, and any amount of bushes.

"Isn't it glorious?" asked Doris, her eyes sparkling. "What about that bathe now, girls?"

"Rather!" chorused the others.

"It'll be safe enough down there," said Irene. "There won't be a soul to see us—and, oh, how heavenly it will be to plunge into that cold-looking water!"

"There might be some Indians about," suggested Mary cautiously.

Irene laughed.

"Bother the Indians!" she said lightly. "We've hardly seen any of them ever since we left Circle City, and there aren't likely to be any here. We'll risk it, anyway."

The girls were so eager to have their dip—costumes or no costumes—that they were perhaps a little reckless.

"Look!" said Irene. "If we go along this ledge we can work our way round the rocks, and I believe there's a steep path on the other side which will enable us to get down——"

"Be careful, Renie!" warned Doris. "That ledge doesn't look any too safe! Some of those rocks are loose!"

"Don't be silly!" laughed Irene.

She was leading the way, and, even as she spoke, the laugh died out of her eyes, and an expression of acute alarm overspread her pretty face. For she had felt her foothold giving way! The ledge was narrow, and at this point the surface was loose. A big piece of rock broke away completely, and before Irene could spring back she went slithering down the sloping cliff—straight towards that sheer edge!

"Renie!" screamed Ena.

"Oh!" cried Irene.

It was all over in a moment. Owing to the sloping nature of the cliff just here, the girl did not fall sheer. She went sliding down, scraps of loose rock accompanying her, the large piece, which had given way under her weight, going in advance.

The horrified girls saw it go hurtling over the edge of the sheer abyss, and they expected to see Irene follow. They were transfixed—there was nothing they could do during that dreadful second. But the next moment they broke out into a clamour; for Irene, instead of vanishing from sight, had managed to clutch at a projection on the edge of the chasm. And there she hung, her body swinging in space—with two or three hundred feet of sheer drop below her, the hard, rocky ground at the bottom. She was only clinging by a desperate, precarious hold.

"Renie!" shouted Mary, in anguish.

"I'm—I'm all right!" panted Irene bravely. "Thank goodness I didn't fall right over! But—but I don't think I can last long, girls!"

In that moment of relief, the other girls were nearly sick with the shock of it. They could only stand there, looking down at their girl chum as she clutched despairingly at the fragile hold. At any moment she might lose her grip, and fall to certain death.

"The rope!" cried Ena suddenly. "Where's the rope? Who's got the rope? It's the only chance of saving her."

Doris turned as pale as death.

"The rope isn't here!" she muttered.

"Renie's got the rope!"

"Oh!"

It was a gasp of sheer dismay from them all. They had only brought one long length of rope with them, and that was carried in Irene's pack! It was beyond their reach.

"What shall we do?" cried Mary, in horror. "Renie can't reach the rope—and, even if she could, she couldn't throw it up to us! What shall we do?"

"I don't know, but we've got to do something!" said Doris breathlessly. "Keep hold, Renie! How long do you think you can last?"

"I—I don't know!" came Irene's strained voice. "I haven't got a very good hold, and I'm afraid— Oh!"

"She's slipping!" screamed Sylvia.

It was a piercing scream, charged with horror, and one or two of the other girls also screamed at the same moment.

It was not very surprising, therefore, that a moment later a figure should appear several hundred yards away. It was the figure of Edward Oswald Handforth, rising up from a ragged mass of burned out rocks—lava rocks, reddish and yellowish and ugly.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" he bellowed. "What the dickens are you girls doing here?"

He had heard the screams, and, after the first shock of surprise, he had run like mad in the direction from which the sounds had come. It came as a complete shock to him to find Irene & Co. here, quite a distance from the main camp. He had believed that they were going to explore the cliff-dwellings quite near camp.

"Oh, it's Ted!" cried Doris gladly. "Ted—Ted! Quick!"

Her voice was full of urgency, and Handforth knew that something must be seriously wrong. He moved with the speed of a hare.

"Ted—here!" murmured Ena. "It isn't often we're glad to see him, but this time he must have been sent by Providence!"

"And we were going to bathe, too—without costumes!" said Sylvia, with a gulp.

"Oh, never mind that!" said Doris impatiently. "Quick, Ted! Oh, why is he so long?"

Handforth, as a matter of fact, had never moved more quickly in his life. When he arrived he was nearly exhausted after his dash over the rocks. The perspiration was streaming from him profusely.

"What's wrong?" he gasped. "What's the matter? Why were you girls screaming— Oh, my hat! Renie!"

He had just caught sight of Irene's head, and the tips of her fingers as she clutched the edge of the abyss. The rest of her was hidden, but he knew that she was over-



Handforth gave a gasp of consternation as he saw Irene clinging to the ledge of rock; saw the enormous drop beneath her. "Ted—Ted, I'm slipping. I can't hold on any longer—" Handforth's arm gripped round the falling girl's waist. Would he be able to save her?

hanging that sheer cliff. He looked down upon her—horrified, dumbfounded by the acuteness of the situation.

"She slipped!" panted Doris. "Some of the rocks gave way, and we thought she was going to be killed! She's got the rope, and we can't do anything—"

"By George!" gurgled Handforth. "Rope! That's right! I've got some here! I'll soon have her up!"

"Please be quick!" cried Irene's strained voice. "I—I don't think I can last much longer! My fingers are beginning to slip—"

"No, no!" panted Handforth. "They're not slipping, Irene! Hang on just for another minute. I'll soon have you!"

Like lightning, he was uncoiling a rope from about his waist. The girls seized one end of it without any instructions from Handforth.

"Leave the end tied round your waist, Ted!" urged Doris. "Now go down. We'll hold you—we'll lower you gently."

"Never mind about being gentle—lower me as quickly as you can," said Handforth. "Here, shove the end of the rope round this smooth rock. It looks strong enough—and it'll make it easier for you!"

The rope was quickly given a turn round a huge projecting boulder. And then, foot by foot, Handforth was lowered down that steep slope.

"Easy—easy!" he called. "I'm nearly over the edge. That's right. Good egg! Gently now!"

His feet were overhanging space, and the rest of him followed. He was right alongside Irene, and he could not keep back a gulp of consternation when he saw the sheer drop beneath the girl, and when he noticed how precarious her hold was. Even in that second her grip was slackening.

"Ted—Ted!" she breathed. "I'm slipping. I can't hold any longer—"

"I've got you!" said Handforth coolly.

Reaching over, he seized her under the armpits, and his grip was like iron. In the nick of time, he got his arms completely round her chest, lowering his grip until it was just above her waist. He interlocked his fingers, so that she was clutched to him in a bear-like hug.

"Oh, Ted," she panted, "I—I thought—"

"Never mind what you thought, old girl! I've got you safely now," whispered Handforth. "Crumbs, it was a near thing, though!"

"In another second, I should have lost my hold—I should have dropped!" murmured the girl.

"Why talk about it?" asked Handforth lightly. "All right, up there. Haul away, girls! But go easy, you know. There's no hurry."

He was glowing with happiness as they were slowly and surely dragged up that treacherous slope. And Irene, limp in his arms, felt dizzy with the relief of it all. She seemed to realise that boys were rather useful creatures, after all.

CHAPTER 6.

Nipper is Anxious!

"BETTER?" asked Handforth anxiously. Five minutes had elapsed. Irene Manners was recovering her normal colour, and she was no longer shaky. A long draught of water had done her a

world of good, and the other girls had been relieved to find that she was in no way injured. Her hands were slightly grazed, but this was a mere trifle.

"I'm all right now, thanks, Ted," she said, as she gave him a grateful glance, and set about straightening her attire. "Oh, what a state I'm in! Look at these tears—"

"That's nothing!" said Handforth, as he regarded the several big rents in Irene's dress. "As long as you're not hurt, it doesn't matter a toss about your clobber. But I want to know what the dickens you girls are doing here?"

"If it comes to that," said Doris, "what were you doing here?"

Handforth started. He realised that he could not very well answer that question—and the girls were in just the same predicament. They couldn't give Handforth any explanation of their presence. For if he knew that they were following the trail of Nelson Lee's party he would assuredly do his utmost to stop them.

"We—we came exploring, you know," said Irene, after a glance at the others.

"But I thought you were going to have a look at the cliff-dwellings?" asked Handforth.

"Aren't there any cliff-dwellings about here?" said Irene innocently. "We understood—"

"Well, perhaps there are," admitted Handforth. "I don't know. I'm not interested in the giddy cliff-dwellings. But you needn't have come so far from camp."

"You were wonderful, Ted," said Irene softly. "The way you rescued me, I mean—"

"Oh, cheese it, old girl!"

"Wasn't he wonderful, girls?" asked Irene.

"I've never seen anything so fine in all my life!" declared Doris stoutly. "The way he went down that cliff was a sight that I shall never forget! Good old Ted!"

"Yes, rather!" chorused the others. "Well done, Ted!"

Handforth flushed uncomfortably.

"Here, I say, chuck it!" he protested. "I didn't do anything wonderful!"

Irene & Co. were inwardly dismayed. Now that they had got over the shock of that mishap, they could see that Handforth's presence was going to ruin everything. They couldn't explain why they were really here, and they couldn't continue their journey.

Handforth was in just the same fix. He wanted to go ahead, but, as this mission of his was a secret one, he could not take the girls into his confidence. He had decided to play a lone hand, and he wasn't even going to reveal his secret to Irene.

Besides, there was another point—and this one gave him a bit of a shock.

"Where are all my giddy things?" he asked, looking round. "My water container and my lunch—"

"You threw everything over the cliff, Ted," said Mary.

"Over the cliff?"



THE GREY BAT!

**A Thrilling Adventure
Yarn for - - - - 4^d.**

You've often read of cat burglars—but never of such a daring crook as the mystery man who masquerades as the Grey Bat. No wall is too steep for him to climb, no window can keep him out. He laughs at danger—flitting soundlessly through the night on his crooked quest of money and jewels. But there's a shock in store for him when he tries to steal the famous Doone diamonds. The two Doone boys are out to get him and there's tons of excitement from the

moment they started on the most thrilling adventure of their lives.

Ask for No. 203 of the

BOYS' FRIEND Library

You will also enjoy these other volumes just published in this library. Ask your newsagent to show them to you.

4^d

No. 201, DICK TURPIN'S DOUBLE. No. 204, CROOKED GOLD!

No. 202, BIG-FIST THE FEARLESS!

"Yes, when you were getting that rope unfastened," said Mary.

Handforth dimly remembered now. He had pitched his entire kit over the abyss! In the excitement of the moment he had thought only of Irene; and, instead of throwing his things down at his feet, he had flung them far and wide with his usual recklessness.

"Oh, well, it doesn't matter!" he said carelessly. "I was only out for a—a—I mean, I was just wandering round, you know. I suppose I'd better get back to camp."

"Yes, it seems to be the best idea," said Doris, nodding.

"And what about you girls?" asked Handforth. "You oughtn't to be all this way out, you know! And don't fall over any more cliffs, either!"

"We shan't—after this," said Irene with conviction. "My hat! We'll be more careful! That's about the narrowest escape I've ever had!"

RATHER to their surprise, and certainly to their relief, Handforth made his excuses and soon vanished. He went back along the trail which led to the camp. As a matter of fact, he soon forgot about the girls—taking it for granted that they had no intention of straying far away. He believed that they were merely exploring the gorges, and that they were looking for some interesting cliff-dwellings. He assumed that they would go back to camp within an hour or two.

In this part of Arizona there were all manner of ancient cave-dwellings—queer places, full of interest, where the Moquis and the Zunis and other tribes of the Pueblos had lived. Between these and the Apaches there had been everlasting warfare. It was quite natural that the Moor View girls should want to explore some of these quaint, honey-combed interiors of the lava cliffs.

So Handforth dismissed Irene & Co., taking it for granted that they were safe now. He was thinking only of his own

mission—his lone hand. And owing to that rescue stunt, he was now devoid of all equipment.

Handforth was reckless, but he was not a fool. He knew that it would be sheer lunacy to continue this pursuit of Nelson Lee's party unless he carried some food with him—and a reasonable quantity of water. In this sun-parched region, where only a few creeks were to be found in the canyons here and there, it would be suicide to venture out without water.

And, as it had been impossible for him to get food and water and other necessities from the girls without going into an explanation as to why he needed them, his only course was to return to camp. Fortunately, he was not very far on his journey, and only an hour or so would be wasted. But even an hour or so was an unfortunate delay.

With his usual optimism, he hoped that he would be able to get into camp unnoticed, and that he would soon get a fresh supply of "gear" and start on his lone trip again.

In actual fact, of course, he was able to do nothing of the sort.

For, as soon as he showed himself, he was immediately surrounded.

"Where the dickens have you been, Handy?" demanded Nipper, striding up. "We've been looking for you everywhere!"

Handforth was rather taken aback.

"Looking for me?" he repeated. "What for?"

"It's nearly midday, and you've been gone two or three hours," said Nipper. "Church and McClure have been nearly off their heads. They've had an idea that you deliberately sneaked off."

Handforth breathed hard, and he tried to hedge.

"What rot!" he said gruffly. "Why should I sneak off? I've been up there, in one of the gorges."

He was dismayed. More of the juniors were coming, and he was being surrounded.

"So you've been up in one of the gorges, have you?" asked Travers. "Handy, dear old fellow, what's behind all this? I believe you tried to double-cross us!"

"What do you mean, you fathead?"

"When you started off you had a big water container with you, and a rope and some other packages," said Travers accusingly. "One of the men spotted you and told us."

"He's got nothing on him now," put in Church, looking at Handforth suspiciously. "What have you done with the stuff, Handy? Don't be a chump, you know! What's your giddy game?"

Handforth was more alarmed than ever.

"Can't I go and do a bit of exploring without you chaps being so jolly inquisitive?" he blustered. "I lost my gear by accident, while I was rescuing Irene."

"While you were doing what?" asked Nipper politely.

"Eh? Oh, it doesn't matter!"

"Yes, it does," said Nipper. "What do you mean—while you were rescuing Irene?"

"Oh, it wasn't much!" said Handforth uncomfortably. "Irene slipped down a cliff, or something, and I happened to be handy."

"Well, you're always Handy," chuckled Travers.

"Don't be funny!" frowned Edward Oswald. "I was going along a sort of gorge when I heard some screams. And when I climbed the rocks, I found the girls as excited as the dickens. Irene had slipped over a sort of cliff. I went down on a rope and pulled her back. Nothing much in it, so you needn't make a fuss."

They could tell, by his very manner, that he had done something noteworthy. Handforth always affected an air of carelessness and indifference when he had done something plucky.

"Good man!" said Nipper heartily. "So you saved Irene's life?"

"Well, not exactly——"

"I think you did, old man," said Nipper. "And where did this happen?"

"Oh, up there somewhere!" said Handforth, pointing vaguely.

"But how far away?"

"Two or three miles."

"What!" yelled Nipper. "Two or three miles?"

"I—I mean——"

"What were you doing two or three miles away from the camp?" asked McClure, staring.

Handforth gulped.

"Well, I was—I was——" he began.

"Never mind what Handy was doing," said Nipper. "What were the girls doing two or three miles away from camp? I understood that they were going to explore some of these cliff-dwellings close at hand. Tell us about it, Handy. When did you see the girls last? Where did you leave them?"

"I've told you once," growled Handforth. "About two or three miles away. They said something about exploring the cliffs. I came back because I lost my outfit, and I couldn't go on without any water or food."

"Couldn't go on?" asked Reggie Pitt. "Couldn't go on where?"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" protested Handforth. "Any chap who takes the trail in this parched country without plenty of water is asking for trouble."

"Taking the trail, eh?" said Nipper. "So that's what you were doing? Which trail?"

"Eh?" gasped Handforth with a violent start. "I—I mean—— That is, I didn't mean——"

"That's enough!" said Nipper. "You were off on Mr. Lee's trail, weren't you? I can see your game, my son! You wanted to slip off quietly, and join Mr. Lee's party. And because you lost your kit, you had to come back."

Handforth was silent.

"It wouldn't be a bad idea to put chains on him," suggested Church caustically. "Or,

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.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.—Who is the Chairman of the St. Frank's Board of Governors? 2.—What is the chief physical characteristic of Josh Cuttle, the school porter? 3.—Who are the occupants of Study No. 9 in the Modern House? 4.—Who is the science master? 5.—What is Chubby Heath's Christian name? 6.—Who is the matron of the Ancient House? 7.—Who is the head prefect of the West House? 8.—How many sisters has Handforth got, and what are their names? 9.—Who is it that William Napoleon Browne is rather sweet on? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10.—What is the name of the Ancient House page-boy? 11.—Who is the leader of the Fourth Form? 12.—Who was the captain of the Fifth before Browne came? |
|--|--|

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S QUESTIONS.

1. Nobody. This study is empty. 2. Reggie Pitt. 3. Dark chestnut. 4. Mudford. 5. Mrs. Hake. 6. The Head's house is completely detached, and stands on the far side of Inner Court. 7. Hubert Arthur Alaric Cavendish. 8. The Hon. Douglas Singleton. 9. Nipper, Travers, and Tich Harborough. 10. Black and orange. 11. M. Henri Jacques Leblanc. 12. Morris Oxford.

if we haven't got any chains, ropes might do."

"We don't need ropes, or chains, either," said Nipper. "But we'll jolly well see that Handforth stops in camp after this!"

"You—you rotters!" roared Handforth, alarmed. "I'm blowed if I'll stop in camp! Rats to you! Just because I rescued Irene, you're not going to dish me like this!"

But he was "dished." He was given to understand that in no circumstances would he be allowed to leave the camp again. In fact, a special bodyguard was placed over him. He raved and he shouted, but it made no difference.

In the end he was compelled to give it up as a bad job.

NIPPER remained very worried.

He said nothing to the others about the suspicions that were in his mind.

But it struck him as very significant that Irene & Co. should have been so far from the camp when Handforth encountered them. That meeting had been quite by chance, and Handforth himself, on his own showing, had been following the trail of Nelson Lee's party.

What were those girls doing there—on that same trail?

Nipper was already beginning to suspect that the girls themselves had, by a curious coincidence, decided upon the same stunt as Handforth. Yet it seemed too outrageous. It was hardly to be believed. Surely the girls would not do anything so rash?

And Nipper was so reluctant to believe it that he decided to keep his own counsel until later in the day. Probably the girls would return during the afternoon, and then he would know that his worst fears were groundless.

If they had really gone off on such a mission, however, they might find themselves in considerable danger—and so Nipper had every reason to be exercised in mind.

CHAPTER 7.

Into the Forbidden Land!

MUCH as the girls liked the look of the crystal stream which meandered down the centre of the canyon, they did not risk that much-desired dip.

After Handforth's surprise appearance—when they had felt themselves to be utterly alone—they decided that the kind of bathe they had contemplated would be too rash. So they contented themselves with a cooling wash, kneeling down at the edge of the stream and splashing the water over their faces.

They had got down into the canyon without much difficulty, following a steep, precipitous path which had no doubt been worn by mountain goats and similar creatures.

The heat of the day was now intolerable, and the girls felt that it would be just as well to take a little rest—and to partake of some food, too. They did so, and after that they felt greatly refreshed and ready for another long spell.

Irene herself was quite normal again by now, and her blue eyes softened with gratitude when she thought of Handforth's splendid effort.

"It was too bad, sending Ted off like that, but we couldn't do anything else," she said, as they prepared to make a move. "We've made up our minds to follow Mr. Lee, and we're not going to be dished!"

Some of the other girls were beginning to have doubts.



The girls scampered into the cave. Immediately there was an outcry among the Indians outside, and then a sudden rush. "Oh!" cried Sylvia Glenn, in alarm. "The brutes are coming after us!"

"Do you think it's really worth it?" asked Sylvia Glenn. "I mean, it's afternoon already. We've been so slow that there won't be much chance of our overtaking the men."

"We may not overtake them to-day," admitted Irene.

"What!" said Sylvia, opening her eyes. "You don't mean that we may have to spend the night by ourselves?"

"What of it?"

"Oh, nothing, but—but——"

"Aren't we following Mr. Lee to prove to him that we're not such soft creatures as he believes?" asked Irene. "It'll be a pity if we can't make a camp for ourselves. We're not so jolly helpless. We can build a fire, and one of us can keep watch, and we shall be all right. Besides, it's more than likely that we shall overtake Mr. Lee's party before the darkness comes on."

"I'm not so sure of that," said Doris, shaking her head.

"Mr. Lee wouldn't be in any hurry," argued Irene. "He said they were going to take it easily—and, besides, it's quite possible that old Hookey made lots of stops as he located his old landmarks."

The girls knew that they were on the right trail—for on several occasions they had come upon footprints, and they had seen the remains of a fire, which the men's party had used. In a canyon like this it was almost impossible to go wrong. The trail naturally led onwards in the same general direction—towards the Mesa.

The going wasn't so bad in that canyon.

When the girls had restarted they found that it was quite easy to follow the course of the creek. Here, too, there was plenty of shade under the cottonwoods, and the vegetation gave them a feeling that this land was not so desolate after all.

However, this sort of vegetation only grew in close proximity to the creeks and brooks, and once the Mesa was reached there would be a very different tale.

For there, on that barren plateau, there was nothing but arid desert, with scarcely a cactus plant, with nothing but snakes and lizards and horrible spiders, and similar terrors of the sun-parched wasteland.

NOT that Irene & Co. ever reached the true Mesa.

When they got to the head of the canyon their slim legs were aching, and their whole bodies were feeling tired and weary, but they did not hesitate to enter the narrow gorge.

It was at this spot where Nelson Lee and the other men had been turned aside by the Apaches. But there were no Apaches now. There was not a sign of life. The canyon

and the gorge were deserted. The side ravines were empty.

And it was quite natural that the girls should keep straight ahead—penetrating that narrow gorge which obviously led upwards



The girls scampered into the cave. Immediately there was an outcry among the Indians outside, and then a sudden rush. "Oh!" cried Sylvia Glenn, in alarm. "The brutes are coming after us!"

towards the plateau. They did not even think of going down one of the side ravines. Unconsciously, they penetrated the forbidden land—that territory which the Indians declared to be their own.

According to all the ordnance maps, Nelson Lee felt certain that this gorge was well outside the boundaries of the Apache reservation. But the Indians were vague in

their ideas of the boundary lines—purposely vague, perhaps—and they regarded this land as their own.

It was getting towards evening now, and the sunlight did not penetrate this sinister gorge, where the rocks rose sheer on either side. It was narrow and forbidding, and the girls felt that they would be relieved when the gorge opened out. They missed the friendly creek, and the trees, and the bushes.

In the bigger canyon everything had seemed alive and cheerful. Here there was nothing but this ugly rock.

"Stop!" said Doris suddenly.

"Why, whatever's the matter?" asked Irene, struck by the curious note in the other girl's voice.

"Just now I thought I saw something moving behind us," said Doris.

All the girls stopped, and stared back.

"There's nothing," said Irene, looking at Doris. "How do you mean? What could you see? We've just come along there, and we know there's not a soul about."

"That's what I thought," remarked Doris, a frown puckering her pretty brow. "But when I happened to glance round quickly a minute ago, I thought I saw a figure glide into one of those old cave entrances!"

"It must have been your imagination," said Ena.

"Supposing the Indians are here?" asked Sylvia. "They might easily be lurking about, you know, and if they suddenly spring out on us——"

"There's no need to get such ideas into your head," put in Doris firmly. "I'm not suggesting that there are lots of Indians—just one or two, perhaps. And, in any case, I dare say they're quite harmless."

"As harmless as children," said Irene lightly. "These Redskins of to-day aren't like the awful savages of the Wild West times."

"All the same, I hope we don't meet any," said Winnie Pitt.

"Oh, my only aunt!" whispered Irene. "There *are* Indians here! Look! There's nearly a dozen of them up the gorge! They've just appeared, and they're coming towards us!"

"Oh, my goodness!" said Doris. "Then I was right!"

True enough, a number of silent figures had appeared only a few hundred yards ahead; and when the girls looked back they saw that another group of Indians was coming towards them from the rear. Somehow, they felt trapped. There were the sheer rock sides of the gorge on either hand—and these two parties of Indians closing down upon the girls!

It would be idle to say that Irene & Co. were not alarmed. They did their utmost to look indifferent, but their hearts were thumping against their ribs, and they were all showing traces of their emotion. And they knew now—if they had not known it before—that they had been unwise in leaving the secure protection of the main camp.

"Whatever we do, we mustn't let the Indians see that we're scared of them," whispered Irene. "But perhaps they'll be friendly—and perhaps they'll tell us where we can find Mr. Lee and the others."



"We're not scared," said Doris stoutly.

They could not help feeling, however, that there was something ugly in this position. It savoured of a trap. If these Indians meant them no harm, why had they laid this ambush? For it was an ambush, without question. The Indians in advance had not showed themselves until the girls were well into the gorge; and then the other Indians in the rear had closed in. There was something sinister and suggestive about the whole business.

"We'd better stop here," murmured Irene, trying to speak steadily. "There's a bit of a hollow in the rock here, and there's more space. Let's wait until these men come up."

They waited, and slowly the Indians closed in. There were perhaps forty or fifty of them. They were unmounted.

"Hallo!" said Irene brightly. "Do you speak English?"

"Uh—huh!" grunted the foremost Indian, nodding.

"We're looking for a party of white men who passed this way this morning," went on Irene, smiling. "If you can tell us exactly which way they went, we shall be awfully obliged."

She spoke calmly, but it was only with difficulty that she kept a little tremble out of her voice. For she could not fail to notice that these Indians were regarding the girls balefully and with open insolence. They were all young bucks; and there could be little doubt that they had no right to be off their reservation. But they knew that something was "on," and they were reckless. There was certainly no reason for them to be scared now. They had only a handful of white girls to deal with, and these girls were completely unarmed.

"This Indian land," said one of the Redskins—a young chief. "Not good for white girls here."

"Indian land?" repeated Doris, glancing at the others. "But we've been told that your reservation is some distance away—"

"Lies!" said the chief. "This Apache reservation—this our land. What are you doing here?"

"We're looking for the men who came through this morning," said Irene.

"White men not come," grunted the Indian.

"Oh, but they did come—"

"They go off in different direction," said the Apache, pointing vaguely. "We told them this Indian land. They went. Now you go. You understand?"

There was some talk among the other Indians—guttural and low and quick. They all began closing in, and their expressions were more insolent than ever. They were looking at the pretty schoolgirls with evil expressions on their dusky faces.

"Which—which way shall we go?" asked Irene.

"You come with us," said the chief, his manner changing, and a leer appearing on his face. "We not let you go now. You come here—Indian land—you come with us."

"We shall do nothing of the sort!" replied Irene stoutly. "And if you dare to hinder us—"

"I say you come with us—and I am the chief," broke in the Indian harshly. "You come quietly, or we carry you. We take you away."

"Oh!" murmured some of the other girls.

They could tell, instinctively, that they were in danger. And now it was brought home to them in full force that they had been foolish in thinking that they could follow Nelson Lee's party without running into trouble. They knew that Nelson Lee had been wise in deciding to leave them behind at the main camp. Their folly was exposed in all its stark reality.

And in this moment of crisis Irene proved herself to be a girl of resource and enterprise.

"Quick, girls!" she shouted suddenly. "Back! Back into this cave! Quickly! It's our only chance!"

The others were instantaneous in obeying the order. Behind them, in that depression of the rocks, there was a black opening, and with the speed of hares, the girls ran into it. A great outcry arose from the Indians, and there was a sudden rush.

"Oh!" cried Sylvia. "They're after us!"

"The brutes—the savage beasts!" panted Doris. "We mustn't let them get us, girls!"

They penetrated deeply into the blackness of the cave, blundering, stumbling, and breathing hard. Rather to their surprise, the Indians did not follow. They came to an halt in the entrance, shouting amongst themselves. Perhaps they were afraid of the darkness, perhaps there was some superstition attached to the cave. At all events, they remained outside.

"Oh, my goodness!" breathed Irene. "Isn't this dreadful? What are we going to do now? These Indians mean mischief—and we thought they would be harmless, too!"

"Harmless!" echoed Winnie. "Did you see their eyes? Did you see their horrible expressions? They're—they're demons! If they get hold of us—"

"Don't!" muttered Doris. "We mustn't let them get hold of us. But what can we do? The boys don't know that we've come, and they haven't any idea which direction we took. Mr. Lee doesn't know, either, and these Indians are outside—"

She broke off, finding it impossible to frame words for the thoughts that were in her mind.

(Continued on page 26.)

The POPULAR
Every Tuesday 2d



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.

GASTON F. COUELLE (Manchester).—You're a chump, you chump! What do you mean by sending me a postcard asking me when I'm getting engaged to Irene? That rotter Teddy Long got hold of the p.c., and showed it to Irene. Of course, she's a sensible girl, and only smiled at your nonsense—I believe she called you a "silly boy," with which sentiments I agree, only in more emphatic terms—but I can tell you I felt jolly awkward. So be careful what you do in future, you idiot—and, anyhow, mind your own business.

ANNIE WHITLEY (Dukinfield).—I am answering your letter as quickly as possible. I would have liked to do it sooner, but I receive thousands of letters from readers (ahem! Ed.), and so, in fairness to others of my admirers, it had to take its turn. You ask rather a large number of questions, and had you been a boy, I should have told you to go and eat coke. (1) I answer all letters that are worthy of an answer. I'd like to answer every letter, but I receive millions of them, and so it becomes an impossibility. (2) I have no use for either Ena or Willy. My sister is a nuisance, and Willy is a cheeky young bounder who's always trying to get five bobs out of me. It's lucky for my pocket that I'm strong-willed. (3) I have one grown-up sister, Edith—worse luck! (4) Of course I should be captain of the Remove, but when I suggest it to the other fellows, I'm only laughed at. (5) My birthday falls on April 18th. (6) My favourite master is Mr. Nelson Lee.

D. CHRISTIE (Dundee).—What's the idea of telling me to look under the stamp on the envelope of your letter? I've torn away the stamp and looked, and, naturally, I can't read what's there. Where's your sense and your brains—or haven't you got any?

Being Scotch, it's a wonder you didn't write the whole of your letter under the

stamp to save notepaper. Yes, I can quite believe you when you say that writing is not your strong point.

ERNEST HOLMAN (Leyton).—I don't know how you've got the nerve to ask me a question and expect an answer, after calling me an "old elephant." As a punishment, I absolutely refuse to answer your conundrum—which is a dotty one, anyway. In taking this justifiably firm stand, don't think I'm unable to work out your silly old riddle.

W. R. MARSH (Canterbury).—I must confess that stamps is one of the very few subjects about which I know little. And so I can't answer your queries. The only stamp I know is my fist—and the mark it leaves when I reluctantly punch anybody on the nose.

"LION" (London).—Thank you so much for your extremely courteous letter. It was so good of you to tell me that you think I'm an ass. Grrrrr! You—you—I'm glad you are of the opinion that you'd get on well with me and St. Frank's. Personally, I think otherwise—most decidedly. When I leave school I shall become one of three things—a famous author, or the world's cleverest detective, or perhaps a great actor—or I might become all three at once.

"A Trio of Yorkshire Lassies."—If you want to write to me again, please write in English—not in a blessed foreign language. I'm never going to live in Yorkshire if that's how you write and talk. All I could grasp from your alleged letter was something about a bit of moss—apparently meaning my hair—and then a lot of tommy-rot about cockles and winkles and tripe. ;!/@½)&6" to you. That's a bit of my own special language. Now decipher that!

PHYLLIS PARRATT (Dorking), asks if kippers swim folded or flat. I'm not quite sure, Phyllis, but I believe they swim like smoked haddocks.

★ INTO THE REDSKINS' TRAP! ★

(Continued from page 24.)

The girls found themselves in a real trap. There was no way out of this cave except by the entrance. It was shallow and it was low, the rocky roof closing down upon the girls so that it was impossible for them to stand upright.

Outside the Indians were jabbering excitedly, but there was no attempt to follow the girls into the cave. Instead, they soon prepared to make camp. Fires were lit, and the Apaches settled themselves in a kind of semi-circle round the entrance to the cave. They had plenty of patience.

"They're going to wait!" murmured Irene breathlessly. "Don't you see? They know we can't last long in here. We haven't much water, and scarcely any food. They're

going to wait until we're forced to surrender!"

"We'll never surrender!" said Ena Handforth fiercely.

They settled themselves down, gaining what comfort they could out of the hard floor. But they were so tired that any kind of rest was grateful. As for their predicament, it was too appalling for serious contemplation. They were trapped in this cave, and there, outside, were those young Redskins, waiting—waiting!

CHAPTER 8.

To the Rescue!

"THEY ought to have been back ages ago," said Reggie Pitt anxiously. "What do you think we ought to do, you chaps? Get up some search parties and go and look for them?"

"How do we know which direction they took?" asked Harry Gresham. "I thought they were going to keep comparatively near to the camp?"



The Scarlet Scarab

Having been left a legacy, Bill Travers is called from Canada to London by a solicitor, and landing in England, finds himself the object of the merciless attention of the Scarlet Scarab and his gang. From the moment when Travers came across the body of a wealthy financier hanging from a tree, his legs and arms strapped and with a cloth over his head in the true prison method, he finds himself plunged into a whirlpool of thrills and adventures. In this fine tale the author has put all his power and ability, and the result is a yarn that cannot fail to grip and enthrall you. Read it in

**A Book-
length
Thriller
for 2^d**

**THE
THRILLER**

THE PAPER WITH A THOUSAND THRILLS

Buy a Copy *TO-DAY* - - - **2d.**

"That's what we all thought," said Reggie. "By jingo! I'll tell my sister something when she does turn up! But I can't help thinking that something must have happened."

It was nearly evening now, and the sun was losing its power. The main camp was looking empty and forlorn. The schoolboys were standing in groups, talking. The men of the expedition—motor drivers, mechanics, and so forth—were busily preparing the camp fires for the night.

"If they don't come back within the next half-hour we shall have to do something drastic," said Vivian Travers. "Here's Browne. What do you think of it, Browne, dear old fellow? Why haven't the girls come back?"

William Napoleon Brown of the Fifth shook his head.

"I urge you, Brother Travers, not to ask me riddles," he said. "Where girls are concerned, I acknowledge myself beaten. Much as I like Sister Irene and her companions, I cannot help thinking that they are a wilful, headstrong set of damsels."

"Do you think anything serious has happened to them?" asked Fullwood.

"I doubt it," replied Browne. "You must remember, Brother Fullwood, that these girls are capable and resolute. They are girls of high spirit—girls of courage. Indeed, it is not too much to say that they are girls of pep. It is more than likely that they will turn up in a very short time, cheerfully, smiling, and happy after a day's exploration work."

"But they couldn't spend a whole day exploring those cave-dwellings!" protested Gresham.

"No?" said Browne. "If that is your opinion, Brother Gresham, then I can only assume that you are vastly ignorant of feminine ways."

"All the same, I'm beginning to get a bit worried," said Reggie. "Before long it'll be dark, and then what shall we do?"

They heard a hail, and saw that Edward Oswald Handforth was signalling to them.

"Come over here, you chaps!" sang out Handforth. "Nipper says he's got something to tell you."

Nipper, indeed, was looking sorely troubled. His earlier suspicions were becoming certainties. Irene & Co. had failed to return, and Nipper was almost certain that the girls had followed the trail of Nelson Lee's party. They had been rash enough to undertake that journey alone, without any male escort whatsoever.

Until about an hour ago, Nipper had refused to believe that his fear could be justified. Now he was becoming convinced. The failure of the girls to return was significant—particularly in the light of what Handforth had said earlier. Nipper felt that it was time to take some sort of action. He was angry with himself for not having taken it before.

"I've got something to tell you chaps," he said, when they were all gathered round. "I've had a suspicion in my mind since this morning—but it was so outrageous that I didn't like to mention it to any of you. But now the time has come for me to take you into my confidence. I believe the girls have gone off after the gov'nor!"

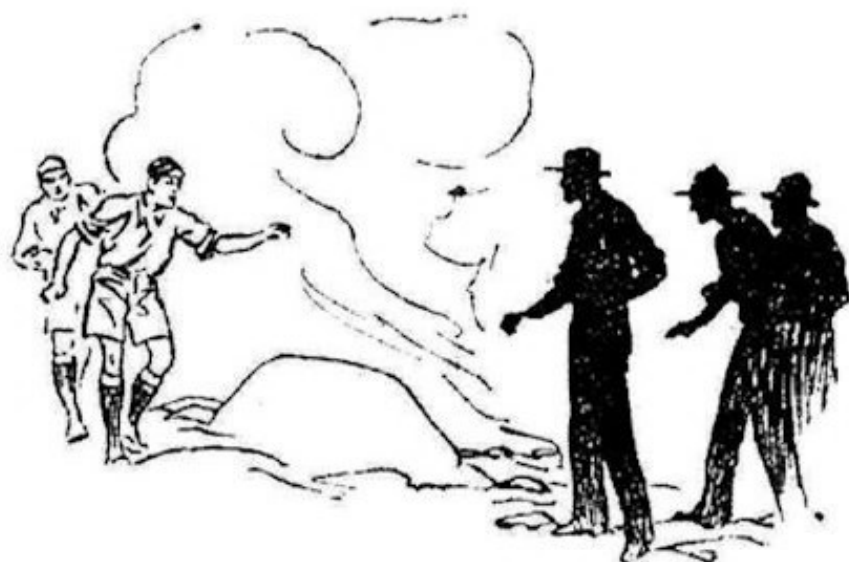
"What!"

"Oh, I say, cheese it!"

"Draw it mild, Nipper!"

"All day long I've felt the same as you," nodded Nipper. "I've felt that it was too ridiculous to be true. But, if it isn't true, why haven't the girls come back?"

"They wouldn't do such a thing as that!" protested Handforth, staring. "Great Scott! They wouldn't go off on their own——"



"We know for a fact that they did go off on their own!" interrupted Nipper. "Didn't you find them two or three miles from the camp?"

"By George! So I did!" said Handforth. "But I thought they were only going to explore some local cliff-dwellings."

"That's what we all thought," replied Nipper. "Yet why should they have gone so many miles away from the camp? That's the point that's been worrying me. What were they doing there?"

"But it's too thick!" said Reggie sceptically. "I mean, the girls going off on their own! I don't believe it! I'm worried because I think they must have met with some accident in one of the old caves. Perhaps they've got trapped somewhere——"

"Well, we can't explore the caves," interrupted Nipper. "That's impossible. We haven't the faintest idea which one they were going to, anyhow, and there are hundreds of them in this district. We should need a whole army for a search like that."

"What do you propose, then?" asked Travers.

"That we go to that spot where Handy saw the girls this morning, and look at it very closely," said Nipper. "It ought to be pretty easy to follow the tracks made by the girls. We shall be able to tell whether they turned back or whether they went straight on up the canyon. If they did go straight on, it'll prove pretty well that they've followed Mr. Lee."

"We ought to have done this hours ago!" said Handforth excitedly.

"I know it—and I'm a silly idiot for not having told you of my suspicions before!" said Nipper frankly. "But I thought it was so dotty that I didn't like to mention it."

"Wouldn't it be a good idea, dear old fellow, for us all to take a bit of grub and some water, and to arm ourselves with rifles?" asked Travers. "It won't take us long, and if the girls come back in the meantime, so much the better. But if we find indications that the girls went on, then we shall have our equipment with us, and we can stick to the trail without wasting any more time in coming back for our kits."

"Yes, it's a good idea," said Nipper. "We'll do it!"

THEY left the camp about half an hour later.

Even Willy & Co., of the Third, insisted upon accompanying the party. Browne and Stevens, of the Fifth, elected to remain behind in camp. As Browne said, it was just as well that somebody in authority should be left in charge of the valuable property. The men were dubious, but when they attempted to argue with the juniors they were told to go and eat coke. Nipper & Co. had made up their minds, and they were not going to be put off.

The daylight was failing as the party started off, and still there had been no sign of the girls. It was becoming more and more significant.

All the boys were well armed, and they carried a good supply of ammunition, too. What with their rifles, their water-containers, and their stores of food, they were fairly heavily laden. They carried blankets, too, for the night was likely to be cold, and it was pretty certain that they would have to camp out in the open somewhere.

There were no difficulties over the first part of the journey. Handforth was the guide. He knew where he had seen the girls in that canyon, and he could easily direct the others to the spot. It was here that the trail would have to be picked up. Nipper had a shrewd idea that he would be able to read the signs on the ground. For, even if there were no actual footprints, there would probably be other indications.

"Better go easy now," said Handforth, as they were nearing the end of the first stage. "The path gets tricky just ahead. There's only a kind of ledge, and a sheer drop. That's where Irene nearly got killed."

"Oh, she nearly got killed, eh?" said Nipper. "You didn't tell us it was as serious as all that before."

"Eh? Oh, well——"

"And it was you who saved her life, Handy?" continued Nipper. "We knew it all along—but you didn't like to tell us. All right—we'll be careful."

They arrived at the spot, and Nipper was now in the lead with Handforth. In single file they proceeded along that path, and the going was made all the more difficult because the daylight was now rapidly failing.

"By Jove! Look at this!" said Nipper suddenly. "The girls came this way! Can't you see the traces in this loose stuff? There's even a footprint here!"

"I can't see it!" said Handforth, staring.

"There is one—blurred, but distinct enough," said Nipper. "This proves that the girls continued on down this path, and I think it leads into the canyon."

They went down the tricky, twisting, treacherous path, and at length they arrived in the quietness of the canyon, where the creek trickled on its way, and where there was a welcome amount of grass and green stuff. And it wasn't long before they came upon traces of the camp that the girls had made—when they had stopped for their refresher by the stream.

"It's as clear as daylight!" said Nipper tensely. "Can't you see these footprints? The girls went on—right up the canyon. They went further and further away from the camp! I tell you, you chaps, that the girls did follow Mr. Lee's party! That's why they haven't come back, and goodness only knows what might have happened to them by this time!"

"Nothing's likely to have happened," said Reggie Pitt. "They'll be tired and weary, of course, and they'll probably be a bit sick of the whole business. But I don't think there's any reason to be alarmed."

"What about the Indians?" asked Handforth.

"As far as I know, there aren't many of the beggars," replied Reggie. "We've only seen one or two, and they weren't particularly ferocious. Not like the Redskins you read about, anyhow. Still, we'd better push on."

They could all read the indications, and they were all intent and excited. Some of them, indeed, were inclined to be indignant. It was like the cheek of Irene & Co. to go off on the trail like this without saying anything to the boys! They felt quite upset about it. The girls had stolen a march on them!

"I wouldn't say that the Indians are harmless," remarked Nipper, as they trudged on again. "Old Dicky Siggers knows a lot about these Apaches, and he hasn't a good word to say for them. Umlosi, too, is a regular beggar for 'hunches'; and he has told us plainly enough that the Indians are treacherous and dangerous. I'm horribly afraid that the girls are in real danger!"

They made good progress up the canyon, for, even though the daylight failed, there was a full moon sailing in the cloudless sky. The night was crisp and clear, with a welcome nip in the air.

The schoolboys trudged on, occasionally calling a halt to make a close inspection of



Crack ! Crack ! Crack ! The juniors fired their rifles into the air, and the Indians went tearing up the gorge as fast as their legs would carry them. The boys' ruse had succeeded ; the Redskins were completely routed !

the ground. Nipper came out strong here. His early training as Nelson Lee's assistant stood him in good stead, and whilst the others could see no indications on the ground, Nipper often detected a vague footprint—a girl's footprint—or some other sign that proved that the girls had passed this way !

AN hour passed—two hours. By now the moon was sailing high in the sky, and the schoolboys were beginning to feel tired and rather footsore. As yet, they had had no halt for food, although they had had an occasional drink. They had seen no sign of life—no Indians—no animals. It seemed that they had the entire universe to themselves. And by now, of course, their last doubt had gone. Irene & Co. had done the incredible thing—they had taken the trail to the Mesa !

"Hold on !" said Nipper keenly.

They had come to the vital spot—the fateful spot. For here it was that the big canyon ended. Ahead was the narrow gorge and the ravine—streaks of blackness in the night, where no moonlight penetrated. Dark, mysterious gashes in the confusion of crags. But just here, at the head of the canyon, the moonlight was so bright that everything could be seen with the utmost distinctness ; every rock stood out boldly and sharply.

"What is it, old man ?" asked Reggie.

"Let me go ahead, you chaps," said Nipper. "There are two ways here, it

seems, and I'd like to find out, if possible, which way the girls went. Did they enter this gorge, or did they go into this ravine ?"

"Into the gorge, I should think," said Handforth. "It leads straight ahead."

"That's nothing to go by," replied Nipper. "We mustn't take things for granted like that."

It was an excellent place for the finding of tracks. There was no grass just here, and no hard rock, either. Underfoot the surface was sandy and soft. The moonlight was quite sufficient for Nipper as he went forward alone, closely inspecting the ground.

It wasn't long before he uttered an ejaculation of alarm, and he called the others to him. They came up at a run and crowded round.

"Look here !" said Nipper tensely. "Do you see ? Here are the girls' footprints, leading into the gorge !"

"Didn't I say so ?" said Handforth.

"Yes, but look at this !" went on Nipper. "Here are other footprints—the footprints of men. And *these* lead into the ravine."

"You mean that Mr. Lee and the men went one way, and that the girls went another ?" asked Pitt.

"What else is there to think ?" said Nipper. "I don't suppose the girls thought of looking for footprints at all. They just went straight on—into the gorge. They took it for granted that Mr. Lee had gone that way. But, really, the gov'nor went the other way !"

"Phew! That's awkward!"

"Rather!"

"What are we going to do about it?"

"There's something else, too," said Nipper grimly. "There are more footprints here—leading into the gorge. Soft footprints—made by moccasins, I should think."

"Indians!" said Handforth, with a start.

"And they were made after the girls went into the gorge, too," said Nipper. "That's the part I don't like. It looks ugly to me. It indicates that the girls were followed by the Apaches!"

"We'd better buck up!" said Handforth. "We've made pretty good going so far, and if we hurry we might——"

"Wait a minute!" said Nipper. "We mustn't all go into the gorge—after the girls. We might need help. Some of you must take the ravine and go after the men."

"That's a good idea," nodded Travers.

"We'll divide up," said Nipper briskly. "Half a dozen of you ought to be enough to get on the track of Mr. Lee. I don't suppose they'll be very far off—they've made camp for the night by now, of course. They might be three or four miles away—or they might be ten. There's no telling. But you'll have to carry on until you find them—and the quicker you can go, the better."

"Who's going?" asked somebody.

"I think you'd better be in charge, Reggie," replied Nipper. "Take Travers and Archie and Gresham and two or three more. Handforth and the rest of us will go into the gorge, and we'll see if we can locate the girls."

"Right-ho!" said Reggie Pitt without hesitation. "You're the commander-in-chief, Nipper, and I'm the chap to obey orders. Squadron, 'tention!"

And the schoolboy party divided up. Six of them, under Reggie Pitt, went off into the ravine in search of Nelson Lee; the remainder, with Nipper at their head, plunged into the gorge.

CHAPTER 9.

Alarming News!

DICKY SIGGERS threw some brush-wood on to the camp fire, and withdrew a burning ember to apply to his pipe.

"Darnation queer how that exit got filled in," he remarked, shaking his head. "Guess it sure took me by surprise. But I ain't figgerin' that the Injuns had anythin' to do with it. Kind o' natural, I should say."

"Yet the fact remains, Siggers, that we can't get out of this ravine at this end?" asked Nelson Lee.

"You said it, pardner," nodded the desert man.

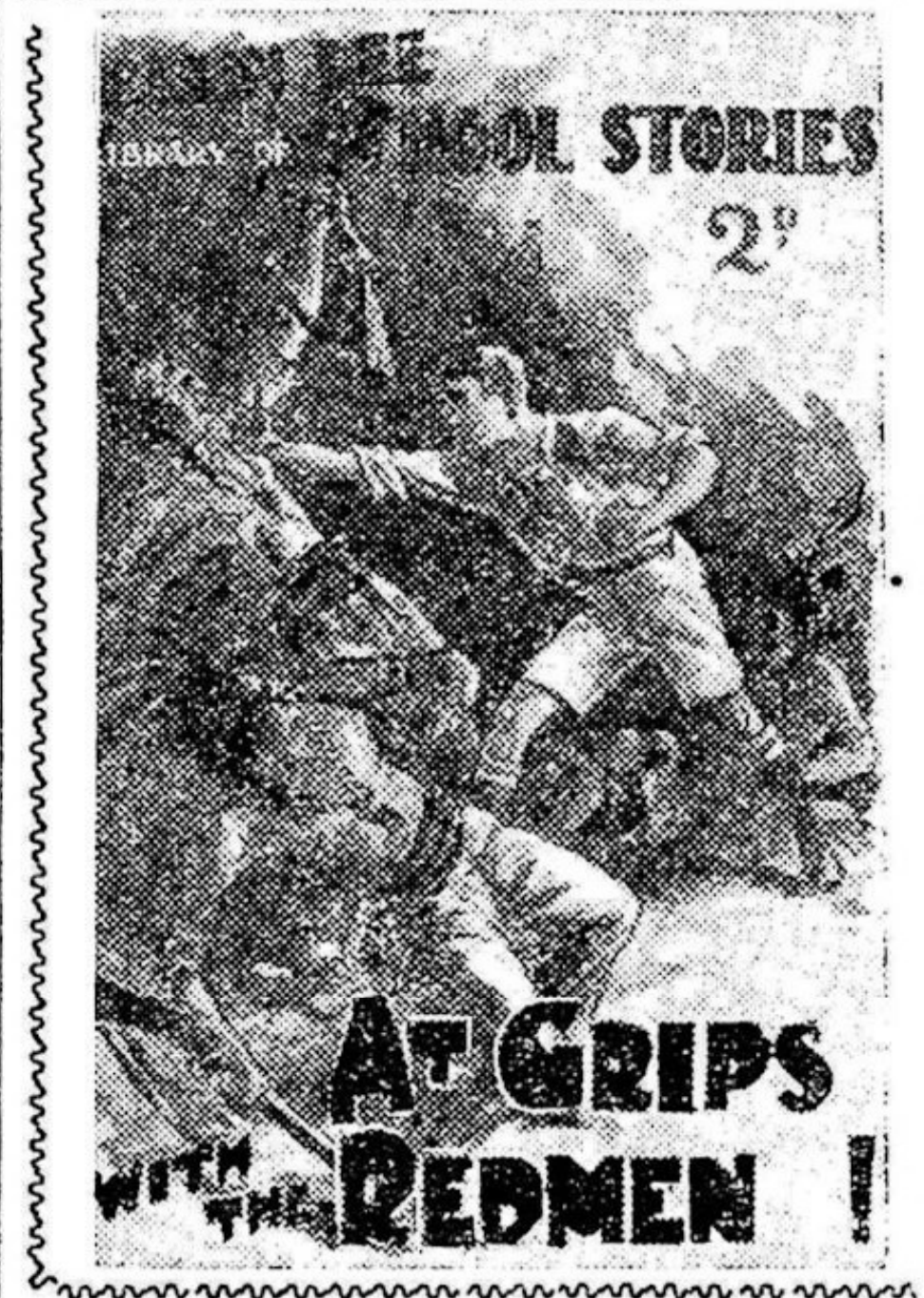
"You wasn't very fly, matey, in bringin' us this distance out of our way," said Hookey Webb. "We've lost miles, ain't we? An' we'll 'ave to go through that gorge, arter all, Injuns or no Injuns."

"Seems like it," admitted Siggers. "But I ain't blamin' myself, Hookey. I wasn't to know. The last time I came along this trail thar was a way through."

The camp was looking quite cheerful. It was pitched at the base of a frowning cliff, and the fire was crackling merrily. A little brook wandered along near by, and on the other side there were some trees, with deep shadows underneath.

The ravine was not more than a hundred yards in width, and it was full of twists and turns, sometimes narrowing to a mere fifty feet or so. On both sides the crags rose

COMING NEXT WEEK! ~~~~~



sheer for hundreds of feet. There was absolutely no exit that way. One could go either up the ravine or down the ravine.

Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore and Umlosi and Dicky Siggers and Hookey Webb had gone up the ravine, only to find that there was absolutely no exit.

They had spent precious hours in searching for one; at last darkness had come, and so they had made their way under one of the frowning cliffs, determined to get back to the real trail again with the coming of the dawn.

But this delay, although it had irritated them at the time, was later to prove really useful. For, because of it, they were only a mile or so away from the point where the ravine and the gorge met.

Old Siggers had been astonished at first, and then frankly disgusted. He vowed that he had been through this ravine on two or

three occasions, and it was quite obvious that he was telling the truth. His astonishment at finding no exit now had been very natural.

"Perhaps an earthquake came along and altered the landscape a bit?" asked Lord Dorrimore, yawning.

"Mebbe you're right, mister," said Siggers. "In fact, I'm figgerin' that it's the only explanation. Thar ain't often earthquakes in Arizony, but I guess we git a kinder tremor now an' again. 'Specially up here, among those burned-out old volcanoes. Queer part o' the world, this."

"AT GRIPS WITH THE REDMEN"

Trapped by Redskins!

Trapped in a cave from which there is only one way of escape, and across that solitary exit stretches a barrier of flaming brushwood!

The St. Frank's holiday adventurers are in a terrible predicament. Smoke pours into the cave, suffocating the occupants. The heat becomes more and more intense, until——

Next week's grand yarn is a real stunner. Every chapter is packed with thrills. For sheer excitement there's never been written a story to beat it!

"RIVALS OF THE RAMPANT!"

Don't miss reading the concluding chapters of this popular serial.

Also many interesting and amusing features, and full details of a magnificent new serial which will be starting soon.

~~~~~ ORDER IN ADVANCE! ~~~~~

"It is," agreed Hookey. "An awful part o' the world, if you ask me. An' up there, on the Mesa, it's wuss!"

Siggers stirred the fire again.

"This exit used to be a kinder tunnel," he explained for the third or fourth time. "I couldn't be mistook about a thing like that. Looked just like a cave, I guess. But once you wus inside you could walk right through, an' after twistin' an' turnin' a bit you came out in a narrer gully. Then after a bit o' climbin' you could get up on the mesa quite easy. Now thar ain't any cave, even."

"And now we're trapped in this ravine," said Nelson Lee. "The place is a cul de sac. The sides are sheer, and the end is blank rock. The only way out of it is to go by the way we came."

"An' the Injuns is there," said Hookey. "Looks lively for the mornin'!"

"Confound the beastly Indians!" said Lord Dorrimore impatiently. "Hang it, we needn't be afraid of the beggars! If they start any nonsense we'll give them a taste of lead—and I shall let Umlosi tickle them up with that spear of his."

"Wau!" came a rumble from Umlosi, on the other side of the fire. "Good words, N'Kose! But methinks I shall do more than tickle."

"Well, we'll leave that until the morning," said Lee. "For the present we'd better get some sleep. Ready, you fellows?"

He knocked out his pipe, and he was about to get his blankets when his expression changed.

"Hallo! What's up?" asked Dorrie, noticing Lee's tense attitude.

"Listen!" muttered Lee.

"Injuns!" breathed Hookey Webb, starting round.

"I hardly think so," said Nelson Lee, as he beheld some figures coming along the ravine at the double. "These are no Indians—— Good gracious! Boys! They're some of the youngsters, Dorrie!"

Lord Dorrimore chuckled.

"I don't blame 'em," he said dryly. "I expect they got a bit fed up with being left behind in camp. Good luck to 'em!"

"You'd better not say that when they get here," retorted Lee sharply. "I shall deal with them very severely. The infernal young idiots! Coming along like this would have been bad enough in the day-time, but now——"

"Lucky they ain't bin stopped by Injuns," said Siggers. "It would just suit them critturs to grab a bunch o' schoolboys. Jest their mark, I reckon."

The figures came nearer, and now they could clearly be seen for what they were—schoolboys in running shorts and open-necked shirts. They came up, led by Reggie Pitt. They were all looking breathless and excited—and pleased.

"Thank goodness we've found you, sir!" said Reggie. "We thought you'd be miles and miles further on! This is a piece of luck, if you like!"

"You may regard it as luck, Pitt, but I regard it as sheer folly!" said Nelson Lee sternly. "What on earth do you mean by disobeying my orders? How many of you are there in this ridiculous escapade?"

"A big crowd of us, sir," said Pitt. "Nipper and Handforth and a lot of others have gone into the gorge, back at the fork."

"The gorge?" repeated Lee sharply.

"You don't understand, sir," said Reggie. "Something's happened! We wouldn't have disobeyed your instructions ordinarily. But the girls went off this morning."

"Went off?" repeated Lee. "What do you mean?"

"They followed you, sir!"

"Good glory," said Dorrie.

"They followed us?" repeated Nelson Lee incredulously. "The girls?"

"Yes, sir!"

"But how do you know this? We've seen nothing of the girls——"

"That's because they took the wrong trail, sir," interrupted Pitt. "They went into that gorge. That's why Nipper and Handforth and the others have gone that way—to find the girls, and to help them in case they're in any sort of trouble. We saw your tracks leading into this ravine, and so we came after you."

"By the Lord Harry!" said Dorrie. "They're smart kids, Lee! They don't miss much, do they? And as for those girls, I take off my hat to them! I've always said they were a bright lot!"

Nelson Lee frowned.

"I don't approve of such brightness, Dorrie," he said. "It was sheer idiocy for those girls to come into this country—in-fested, as it is, with Apaches. Heaven only knows what might have happened! Tell me everything, Pitt."

Reggie did so, and the men listened intently.

"You sure got to hand it to them gals," said old Siggers at length. "Darnation, but they're a lively spirited bunch o' dames. I'll sure say they are!"

"We must go back with these boys," said Lee crisply. "Come along—all of you! Get your guns, and be ready for action!"

"Wise words, my father," murmured Umlosi. "Good words!"

"Any words are good to you, you blood-thirsty old ruffian, if they mean battle," said Dorrie. "I'm not averse to a bit of a scrap myself, but in this case I'm hoping that there'll be no fighting. We don't want those young girls mixed up in an affair of that kind."

"We thought you'd be miles further on, sir," said Reggie. "But it's only about a couple of miles back to the fork, and we can be there in about twenty minutes if we run. Perhaps we can overtake the other chaps, and then the position will be better. We'd rather you take charge of the search, sir."

"I'll take charge of it," replied Lee, as he strapped on his revolver belt. "Look lively, Dorrie! You other men, too! We'd better all go."

"'Betcher life!" grunted Dicky Siggers.

"An' if we can get a smack at them Injuns I shan't be sorry!" added Hookey Webb, his beady eyes gleaming with anticipation.

The gold hunt was completely forgotten now. The Moor View girls had penetrated into that forbidden gorge, and there was a possibility—even a probability—that they were in danger. Their rescue was the only thing that mattered.

CHAPTER 10.

Trapped!

"LOOK!" whispered Nipper.

His voice was charged with excitement, but he managed to keep it subdued. And the other juniors, pressing closely round, peered beyond the ledge of rock.

They had penetrated deeply into the gorge, and at first they had progressed openly, only pausing now and again for Nipper to examine the ground.

And then an abrupt turn in the gorge had presented itself, and upon negotiating this the juniors had beheld a flickering glow of light in the distance. They could see that there was another turn a bit further on—and beyond this there was evidently a fire.

They assumed, without hesitation, that it was the fire of Irene & Co.'s camp. Yet it was not wise to take anything for granted. Handforth had wanted to dash ahead, shouting at the top of his voice, but Nipper had succeeded in restraining him.

"It's no good doing that, Handy, old man," he said. "Supposing it isn't the girls? We don't want to give ourselves away like that. Besides, caution doesn't cost anything."

Nipper's warning was justified, too. Personally, he had been pretty certain that the first idea was right—that this fire was the girls' camp-fire. And perhaps the girls were asleep. It would never do to go dashing up, startling them unnecessarily.

The juniors had noticed that there was a low pile of jagged rock barring the way. It did not extend right across the gorge, but only over a section of it. However, this rock provided an excellent cover for the boys to creep up silently to the turn. Now, from behind this barrier, they could get a full view of the scene.

Nipper's heart leapt into his mouth when he saw it, and it was not surprising that he ejaculated "Look!" in such a tense tone. For, when the others looked, they found that it was not the kind of camp they had expected.

They beheld Indians—dozens of them!

Apaches, dancing madly round two great camp-fires. The picture was so surprising—so startling—that for some moments the schoolboys could do nothing but stare. They were fascinated and bewildered.

Ever since arriving in Arizona they had been telling one another that the old-time Indians were for ever dead. Now, suddenly, they beheld a war-dance of the type that they had grown familiar with on the screen. Dozens of the Apaches were doing a kind of erratic jog-trot round the camp-fires—and they were completely silent about it, too. This was one reason why it was so impressive. Only the sounds of the shuffling feet came to the ears of the schoolboys. And they could now see that some of these Indians

were in full war-paint—a significant sign, this! It was a savage, heathen spectacle.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Handforth, when he recovered his voice. "What's happened to the girls? Where are they?"

"That's what I was wondering," said Nipper anxiously. "There's nothing to prove that they have been collared, yet, at the same time, I don't think the girls are very far distant."

As though to prove the truth of this statement, something happened just then. The war-dance abruptly ceased, and a number of the Indians took burning torches from the fire and held them aloft. They advanced towards a low cave entrance—which the schoolboys now noticed for the first time.

"Hallo!" muttered Nipper. "Twig that, you chaps? There's a cave there! My only hat! I wonder if the girls are bottled up in that cave?"

"That's it!" said Handforth excitedly. "They're cornered—they're trapped! Rescue, Remove! Come on, my sons—"

"Steady!" urged Nipper. "If we go dashing forward like that, Handy, we shall only get collared. There are scores of these Redskins. We're hopelessly outnumbered!"

"But we must do something!" panted Handforth.

"Listen," said one of the others.

They could hear a voice, and the words came clearly to them on the still air of the night.

"—come out, no harm," one of the Indians was saying in good English. "If you not come out, then Indians use force."

The words were significant.

"You hear?" went on the chief. "You not belong to this land. Indian land. Come out, and Indians let you go."

There was a clamour among the Apaches, and some of the men with the torches pressed closer to the mouth of the cave.

"The girls are there, right enough," muttered Nipper. "By Jove, we've got to do something—and do it quickly."

"But you've just said we can't all dash forward," panted Church. "It'll be too dangerous. There aren't enough of us."

"Rot!" said Handforth. "The girls are in danger, and we've got to do it!"

"Listen to me," said Nipper. "Some of you hurry back, as far as you can go. Others only go back a little way."

"What the dickens—"

"Our only chance of saving the girls is to spoof the Indians," said Nipper shrewdly. "If we show ourselves we shall be done! The Indians won't be scared by a small crowd of schoolboys. They'll be surprised for the first minute, and then they'll grab us. But if we fool them, there might be a chance!"

"How can we fool them?" asked Willy.

"There's no time to do anything elaborate, but we can at least try something simple," replied Nipper. "We've got to do it now—

within a minute—because the beggars look like going into that cave. It's clear enough that the girls took refuge in it, and that the Indians have been trying to scare them into surrender."

"What's your idea?" asked Handforth impatiently.

"We'll fire a number of rifle shots into the air," replied Nipper, "and as soon as we do that the other chaps will fire lower down the gorge. See? If we keep it up for a bit, the Indians will hear the shots—some near, and some further away, and some a long way off. They'll jump to the conclusion that there's a big party of men after them."

"By George, it's a stunt!" said Handforth breathlessly. "The Indians will think the soldiers have come—"

"Exactly!" said Nipper. "After the first volley of shots, I'll shout some orders, and that'll give the whole thing a military tone. I'll bet these Indians have heard soldiers before, and they'll get scared. Come on, let's try it!"

HARDLY a moment was lost.

Some of the fellows ran like the wind back down the gorge. Then—

Crack, crack, crack, crack!

A number of rifle shots rang out on the air. The juniors, who were watching saw the Indians spin round, and on the instant there was confusion.

Crack, crack, crack, crack!

More shots came from further down the gorge, and still more. The thing was working splendidly.

"Now then, step lively there!" roared Nipper at the top of his voice, and making it as deep as possible. "Look after those men of yours, Sergeant Smith! Tention! Quick march!"

Taking their cue from Nipper, the other fellows stepped hard on the ground, making as much noise as possible.

"Present arms—fire!" bellowed Nipper.

Crack, crack, crack, crack!

Another volley rang out, and it certainly

(Continued on next page.)



*Delivered to
your door for*

**2/6 NO FURTHER PAY-
MENT FOR A MONTH.**

14 DAYS' FREE TRIAL without obligation to buy. **JUNO CYCLES** are British throughout and sent straight to you direct from our factory.

£3-15-0 Cash. Perfect in every part. Superb quality and easy running. Guaranteed for ever. Don't delay. Write for Free Art Catalogue.

JUNO CYCLE CO. (Dept. U.2),
248 & 250, Bishopsgate,
London, E.C.2. Estab. 51 years.

JUNO

did sound like the real thing. The Indians thought so, anyhow. For suddenly, with one accord, they went tearing up the gorge as fast as their legs would carry them. It was a complete route.

"Now's our chance!" panted Nipper. "Quick, you chaps! It's got to be a quick dash!"

They went charging forward, and as soon as they reached the narrow cave they paused and peered in.

"Who's in there?" shouted Handforth.

"Oh!" cried a startled voice. "Ted! Oh, look! It's the boys! Thank goodness!"

"Renie!" yelled Handforth. "Are you all safe?"

The girls came pouring out, their faces flushed with excitement and joy.

"Oh, it's too good to be true!" cried Doris.

"We thought those dreadful Indians——"

"No time now, old girl," broke in Nipper.

"They'll be back in five minutes—or as soon as they discover that we've tricked them, anyhow. Come on! Let's get out of this gorge while we've still got the chance!"

THEY went out of the gorge at express speed. The girls needed no help from the boys. They had had a lesson that they were not likely to forget for many a day. They had been shown that, while their spirit was willing, they were not physically capable of undertaking a trip of this kind without an adequate escort. And, now that the boys were here, they were only too ready to place themselves entirely under the boys' orders.

They had nearly reached the end of the gorge before the Indians became aware of the trick that had been played upon them. Perhaps some of the boys had been spotted. Nobody ever quite knew. At all events, there suddenly arose a great clamour in the rear. Some arrows came hissing through the air, and there was one or two shots. The Redskins, discovering that there were no soldiers, were now in full pursuit, wildly infuriated because they had been so easily duped. They were the Redskins of old—the same breed! Now that their savage passions had been aroused, they dropped their veneer of civilisation. They became precisely the same as the deadly Apaches who had menaced the early pioneers. The savage instinct was still in their blood, and in the excitement of such a moment as this, it showed itself.

"They're after us!" cried Irene. "What can we do? We've only dragged you boys into this danger——"

"Never mind that!" said Handforth. "We've got you out, and that's the main thing. What's the next move, Nipper?"

"We'll cut down into that ravine," replied Nipper, as he ran. "The other chaps went that way—and perhaps they've been able to locate Mr. Lee by this time. Anyhow, it's the only thing we can do!"

"Supposing these Redskins overtake us?" panted Tommy Watson.

"We shall have to keep them off!" replied Nipper. "If necessary, we shall have to shoot at them—and not up into the air. It looks like being a fight now, you chaps!"

"Good egg!" roared Handforth. "The rotters! Fancy daring to threaten these girls! We'll show 'em something!"

But, fortunately, a welcome surprise awaited them as they arrived at the fork. The moon had shifted its position now, and it was streaming right into the entrance of the ravine. A number of figures was in sight, running out of the ravine—and the leading figure was of Nelson Lee.

"Hurrah!" yelled Nipper. "The guv'nor!"

"Look out, sir! The Indians are coming!"

"They're after us!"

"Are you all here?" shouted Lee.

"Yes, sir—girls as well!" sang out Nipper.

"We tricked the Indians, but they've spotted our wheeze now and they're coming after us like a pack of wolves!"

"This way, then!" shouted Nelson Lee.

"Into this ravine! It's narrow, and we can hold it with ease."

Two minutes later all the schoolboys and schoolgirls were in the ravine. They were placed well back, and the men took command of the whole situation. Both Nelson Lee and Dorrie were thankful that the youngsters had come to no harm. The whole party was together now. Nelson Lee and the other men placed themselves as a kind of a barrier in the narrow opening of the ravine. Their weapons were ready, and they were looking grim.

But the Indians did not make any attack.

They halted at the fork, and their cries died down. The sudden appearance of these men made all the difference. They were not dealing with boys and girls now.

And after a while they held a kind of council of war, massing at the outlet of the ravine—the only outlet there was.

FOR the moment, the situation had been saved. But it was clear to Nelson Lee that the Indians were inflamed and reckless of all consequences. They were, in fact, on the war-path. Having left their reservation, probably without authority, they were now determined to have a big fling while they could.

Upon the whole, the position was not very cheerful.

Nelson Lee's party was safe in this ravine. But what certainty was there that they would be safe for long. There was only one exit, and that exit was barred by the Indians, who were massing in increasing numbers.

The holiday party was caught in a trap—bottled up in this mountain gulch!

(Next week finds the St. Frank's party mixed up in many more hair-raising adventures with the Redskins. On no account must you miss reading this magnificent yarn, which is entitled: "At Grips With the Redmen!" Order your copy now, chums!)



Things Heard and Seen By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

GET ready for a ticking off. Not all of you, of course, but a few. How many more times must I make it clear that I'm not the Chief Officer of the League—or the Editor of the Old Paper. I'm the author of the St. Frank's stories, and if you don't think this job is big enough for me, without anything else, then I'm afraid you don't understand the trials of authorship. I'm not saying that I go about with a wet towel round my head, as the comic artists would have you believe, but sometimes I do get a sort of feeling that urges me to smash all my pens, chuck my typewriter out of the window, and sack my secretary, and get a job of a different kind. Something easy and soft. An Editor's job, for example (I hope he doesn't notice this bit!). Well, anyhow, I sometimes feel that an easier job would be welcome. Then, after a period of that sort, I brace my shoulders, take my courage in both hands, as it were, and have another wrestle with the typewriter—and I come to the conclusion that writing stories, after all, isn't such a bad game.

BUT let's get back to our original point. Here's a reader named H. Tichener, of Hackney, asking me to put an insertion in the "Correspondents Wanted" column. He is a League member, too, and ought to know better. I've passed on his request to the Chief Officer, who will deal with it. If you culprits would only send your requests straight to the C.O., you'd get results much quicker, and you'd save me quite a lot of unnecessary work. This feature, as the title implies, deals only with St. Frank's. Write to me as often as you like about the old school—it's characters, and so forth—and I'll do my best to answer your questions in these columns. But when it comes to the League, I'm like a fish out of water. That's the C.O.'s job, and not mine.

IN just the same way, you're not likely to get much satisfaction out of me if you write to me about the illustrations, or the serials, or the size of type, or the colour of the front cover, or about competitions. Things of this sort are purely editorial, and the Editor is the man to deal with them. Now I come to think of it, I don't believe his job is so soft after all! Write to me about St. Frank's, and its characters, and the district, and you'll be safe. Write to me about your likes and dislikes concerning the stories, and you'll still be safe. But write to me about editorial or League matters, and you'll get nothing but disappointments. And having got that off my chest, I'll get on with the job.

FATTY LITTLE, very indignant, collared me the other day and asked why I don't write more about him. He complained bitterly that I've been writing story after story, and I haven't even mentioned his name. Very patiently, I told him that if he would do something noteworthy I should not hesitate to give him the full limelight. But as he spends most of his time in the school shop and in going from study to study inviting himself to meals, there is precious little I can write about where he is concerned. I pointed out that the readers would soon get fed up with reading the same thing over and over again. As soon as he distinguishes himself in some way or another, I'll certainly give him prominence.

HORACE DILLEY, of Langford, is curious to know who is the most popular prefect in St. Franks. Well, I haven't much hesitation in naming Edgar Fenton, of the Sixth. He's not such a genial, happy-go-lucky fellow as, say, Biggleswade, but he's a giant at sports. And

popularity at school centres, to a large extent, round sports prowess. Biggleswade, of course, comes a good second. He's not such a chap for sport, but he certainly is easy-going. And an easy-going prefect is bound to be popular.

* * *

IT'S only a habit of William Napoleon Browne's to refer to everybody as "brother." He even calls me "Brother Brooks" when he's talking to me. George Melhuish, of Bristol, has brought up this matter, so I thought I'd better explain. Browne never seems to be disrespectful when he uses that form of address. In an absent-minded moment, he'll say "brother" to the Head himself. Browne looks upon everybody with the same benevolent eye.

* * *

OH, here's a subject for a paragraph. About this Questionnaire. Any number of you readers will find the exact information you want in the "Answers" section of the Questionnaire. For instance, Jack Marshall, of Stamford Hill, and Jim Stevens, of Exmouth, and Edna Tansell, of Dartford, and "Regular Reader," of Hertford, and D. Weston, of Cardiff—to mention only a few—have asked me what studies certain boys occupy, what Houses they are in, what Christian names they have got, and so forth. If I deal with such things in this "Gossip," I shall be going over the same ground again and again; and the majority of you—who don't want any of this information—will be simply bored. You're probably bored, anyhow, but you'd be bored even more if I did a lot of that repetition stuff. So it's up to all readers who want to know such details as I have mentioned above to keep their eyes on the Questionnaire. All such matters as Christian names and numbers of studies and geographical details of the district will be dealt with in the Questionnaire as time goes on. Personally, I think it's a good way of supplying these facts. You have an opportunity of testing your own knowledge or memories a week in advance.

* * *

SOME of the readers tick me off sometimes because the Moor View girls are all so nice and pretty and likeable. I am told that real girls are very different. Some readers even go so far as to abuse me for having the nerve to introduce girls of any kind. But I shall continue to introduce them when they are needed—because I am pretty certain that Irene & Co. are popular with the majority of the readers. Sometimes they might appear two or three

weeks in succession; at other times, they might not be mentioned for months. It all depends. My job is to record the adventures of the St. Frank's chaps, and if the Moor View girls take part in some of these adventures, I've simply got to bring them in. They all seem so cheery and nice because they *are* cheery and nice. Nipper and Handforth and the others wouldn't be friendly with the other sort. And I can assure you that there *are* the other sort at the Moor View School, unfortunately. I have really only mentioned one such girl—Joan Tarrant—and she isn't so very bad, either. Just a bit cattish and spiteful, perhaps, but otherwise quite harmless. However, there are one or two Moor View girls who are positively comparable with such outsiders as Gore-Pearce and Gulliver and Bell, and one of these days it may be necessary for me to record some of their doings. So far, they have steered clear of the St. Frank's chaps, and I haven't even mentioned their names. But you never know!

* * *

OUR reader's photograph this week is exceptionally interesting. I think. For here, in the person of Mr. Henry Davies, of Lithgow, New South Wales, Australia, we have an example of the type of reader I have often mentioned. Although Mr. Davies is a married man, he doesn't consider himself too old to read the St. Frank's stories, and he tells me that his wife is as keen a reader as himself. So if any of you other readers are chipped by your friends, and feel that you are getting too old for school stories, just take an example from Mr. Davies.

* * *

I SAW Ezra Quirke the other day—just as mysterious and as weird as ever. He's living in a little place called Market Donning, and I happened to be driving through it rather late in the evening. Just outside the village I stopped my car to have a look at a signpost, and up comes Ezra Quirke out of the darkness. The young idiot gave me quite a start, with his pale, ghostly-looking face, and his uncanny eyes. Quite a number of readers have repeatedly asked me to record some more of Ezra Quirke's doings. The trouble is, Ezra Quirke cannot possibly be as attractive now as he used to be. In those earlier stories, he was an absolute mystic, and nobody knew exactly what was coming. Now it's different. Still, Ezra Quirke is living in the St. Frank's district, and it's quite possible that he might get mixed up in something odd one of these days. If so, I shall naturally record his adventures in the Old Paper.

OUR READERS' PORTRAIT GALLERY



Henry Davies

Another Full-o'-Thrills Instalment This Week, Chums!

RIVALS of the RAMPANT!



By STANTON HOPE

The Breaking of the Storm!

A FLASH of lightning split the thunderous heavens like a jagged vein of silver, and by its steely illumination Jack made out the evil face of his uncle and the glowering visage of the man who had been with him that day on Sandcliff pier. The latter, too, had been the ringleader in that enterprise when the privately-owned motor-boat had made off with the practice torpedo—the clever and unscrupulous person known as Jem Gavin.

The man with the spade came lumbering across the sand to them, hoarsely demanding to know "what was up?" As Gavin growled some response, Jack vainly tried to free himself from his captors.

"Who is this cub?" demanded Gavin. "D'you know him?"

Lew Bonner made a choking noise in his throat.

"Do I know him!" he snarled. "This is the guttersnipe I told you about, that nephew o' mine—the scum who tried to 'out' me!"

"Belay!" panted Jack. "Let me go!"

Another flash of fork lightning revealed Lew Bonner's distorted face close to his

own. A crash of thunder obliterated the crook's next remark, but he repeated it as the reverberations of the coming storm died away.

"So you're in the Navy now, you scum!" he spluttered. "Brass Alley and my company weren't good enough for you, heh? So you tried to do me in and start all afresh!"

"It's a lie!" cried Jack, turning to Gavin. "I hit him in self-defence, and he went through the rotten floor of our cellar in Brass Alley and into an underground sluice. I went in after him, and, not seeing him when I came out into the Thames, I thought he was gone for good."

Lew Bonner cackled mirthlessly.

"You mean you hoped I'd gone for good, me fine young cock sparrer!" he jeered. "I can jest imagine you going in to save my precious life! He, he! 'S matter o' fact, I was surprised meself when I found meself being hauled out of the Thames by a boat belonging to a tramp steamer. I made a mighty big effort to locate you before shipping for a short v'yage, and I'm more pleased than I can say that I've done so at last!"

He concluded his remark by snapping his knuckles across Jack's mouth, and

Captured by smugglers! This comes as a great shock to Jack Gilbert, but it's nothing compared with when he realises that one of the smugglers is his rascally uncle, Lew Bonner!

Gavin laughed and tightened his grip when Jack half raised a fist as though to retaliate.

But the boy's fist dropped limply; indeed, he felt more limp than he had done after his long swim on the occasion of the discovery of that strange house under the sea. In his mind's eye, he saw the abrupt ending of the happy career in the Royal Navy on which he had well embarked. His spirit temporarily dropped to a lower ebb than ever before since the night that he had arrived in his sordid home in Brass Alley, to find Lew Bonner waiting with the demand that he should take a fresh batch of stolen property to the "fence," or receiver.

"Ho, ho, ho!" chuckled Bonner. "And so you lied your way into the Navy! I s'pose it was that snivelling old fool, Barny Morland, who put you up to it? Well, I'll crab your bright young career! You're going out of it quick when I squeal to their blessed lordships o' the Admiralty as to who you are—a guttersnipe, a low young crook, and ex-reformatory brat!"

The next flash of lightning revealed the fire of resolve again in Jack's eyes.

"All right—squeal!" he challenged. "You can cook my career, I know that, but, spike me, I'll have you put away for a turn! I read in the papers that they got back the stuff you stole from the Superb Cafe, but the 'fence' never gave you away. I will! And I'll tell 'em there's somethin' fishy going on here, too!"

Jem Gavin yanked Jack nearer to him.

"What d'you know, you whelp?" he rumbled. "Were you spying on us? What were you doing down here at this time of the evening?"

Quite truthfully, Jack explained that he had a pal from the Rampant who had hurt himself by falling from a bike, and he had gone to get a handkerchief wet with sea water to put on his head. The handkerchief he produced as proof, and Gavin seemed more satisfied. Nevertheless, he sent the third man, whose name was Joe Sparling, to investigate in the direction that Jack indicated Ginger to be.

During the interval, Gavin and Bonner spoke in such a low tone with one another that Jack had a difficulty in following their remarks. The gist appeared to be as to what had best be done with him.

"If he's lied about that chum o' his," growled Lew Bonner in a louder tone, "we'll kill the cub!"

"Don't be a fool!" snapped Gavin. "So long as you're working in with me, you'll do as you're told. I'm not going to put my neck in the noose for the sake of this whelp!"

Soon Sparling returned to report that there was indeed a boy and two bicycles where Jack had indicated, and the lad appeared to be either asleep or in a faint.

"You can go then, you guttersnipe!" said Lew Bonner with ill grace. "But mark my words—if you squeal about anything you know of me or anything you've seen here to-night, I'll send an account of your early life and where you got your schooling to the naval authorities. Understand? It means you'll stay in the Service jest so long as you keep that trap o' yours closed. One word from you about me or these mates of mine, and I'll have you kicked out o' your present calling for the worthless gutter scum that you are!"

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 secs 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**. One evening Jack and Ginger are walking to Porthaven, along the coast, when they come to a particularly bleak spot, where once stood the village of Paggleshale, but which is now in ruins, having been "swallowed up" by the encroaching sea. The boys go swimming, and are startled to see a ghostly form walking along the bed of the ocean, while later they see a light shining from a submerged house. Moving about on the beach, too, are mysterious figures! The lads decide that they must have discovered a smugglers' lair. A few days later they again visit the place to do a bit of investigating. Ginger falls off his bicycle and injures himself. Jack goes down to the sea to soak his handkerchief, and, returning, he sees a man digging up the sand. Then suddenly two other men spring on the boy—and he is horrified to find that one of them is his rascally uncle, Lew Bonner!

(Now read on.)

He swung a foot in farewell, but Jack, released from Gavin's grip, nimbly side-stepped to avoid it. Then, losing no time, the youngster hurried back to re-join Ginger, whom he aroused from a

Not a word did Ginger say as they turned towards the bikes, but he reached out and gripped his chum's hand in the stormy darkness. His pal had determined to do his duty as he conceived it, though, by so doing, he might sacrifice the career he had grown to love!



"Take a dekkko there!" cried Jack, pointing out over the black tumbling waters. His companions looked. Dimly discernible in the gloom was a ship, and she carried no navigating lights. Was it the mysterious smugglers' vessel?

half-doze by the application of the cold handkerchief to his bruised head.

Eagerly Jack told his raggie of what had occurred, and his suspicion that his crooked uncle was a member of a smuggling gang skippered by Jem Gavin.

"This is a fair knock-out, Jack," muttered Ginger. "You say that your uncle has threatened to have you kicked out of the Navy if you say anything. What the thump are we to do about it?"

The first raindrops of the storm came lashing down, and vivid lightning clearly illuminated the boys for a moment or two. Jack's lips, as Ginger saw, were set in a firm line.

"We're going back to Porthaven, and quick," Jack said firmly. "That gang, I'm convinced, are up to some rotten underhand game, and, by Nelson, they're not going to bribe me to let 'em get on with it!"

A Mysterious Craft!

"**W**HERE is Petty Officer Teak, please?"

Jack and Ginger dismounted breathlessly from their bikes at the main gates of the training schools, and eagerly asked the question of the sentry. They were told in reply that Teak was "aboard," and probably in the petty officers' recreation-room. So having got permission to leave their bikes against the rear wall of the guard-room, they hurried across the parade ground, or "quarter-deck" as it was called in the Rampant.

Teak was not in any part of the P.O.s' mess, but they ran him to earth in the small recreation-room used by the Preliminaries.

Various juniors were playing dominoes, bagatelle, or reading, and P.-o. Teak was

benignly watching Busky Smith playing another lad at draughts.

Into this peaceful atmosphere, Jack and his pal burst with the news of the evening.

"You thought, petty officer," said Jack, "that we were 'swinging the lead' when we told you that there were smugglers on that bit of the coast at Paggleshale. To-night we went along there to take a look-see, and there were three chaps scullin' around."

"Probably fishermen on their way home," commented Teak.

"They weren't," answered Jack decidedly, but hesitated to mention the name of his uncle. "They were beastly crooks, and one of 'em dug in the sand and uncovered a slab of stone with a ring-bolt in it. The way we figure it, there's a tunnel that leads from the shore to that house under the sea we told you about."

Petty Officer Teak looked dubious, as well he might, but Busky, who had been listening, burst into an unmusical guffaw.

"My aunt, those two skates are wasted in the Navy!" he chuckled. "They ought to be employed in writing the comic column for the 'Fisherman's Gazette'!"

"You clew up!" snapped Ginger, whose head was throbbing. "And don't judge everyone by yourself, you big lobster!"

"Oh, go and spout your yarn to the Marines!" retorted Busky; then, noticing that his opponent was looking away from the board, he quietly removed one of the draughtsmen and said: "Huff you!"

"Well, your yarn sounds a bit far-fetched to me, lads," remarked Petty Officer Teak, "but I don't think you would dare stick to those statements you made the other day unless there was something in it all. Come with me and we'll speak to the duty lieutenant."

To the lieutenant with whom they obtained audience outside the officers' mess, Jack repeated all that he had seen and heard on the two occasions at Paggleshale, and mentioned the names of Lew Bonner and Jem Gavin. He still shrank from stating his relationship with Bonner, though faintly hoping that in some miraculous way it would never be necessary for it to become known. Yet deep in his heart he knew that if his uncle were captured, nothing would stop that unscrupulous crook from getting his revenge by revealing the secret of Jack's earlier days in the reformatory school.

The officer, as the captain of the Rampant was "ashore," decided himself that the matter called for investigation.

The result was that he telephoned to the coastguard station, and a few minutes later Jack, Ginger, and Petty Officer Teak were cycling to join some coastguards for a visit to the Paggleshale sand cliffs. Naturally enough, perhaps, P.O. Teak was not in the best of moods. As he rode along, with the rain beating into his face and his oilskins running with it, he grew the more convinced that, although there might be something in Jack's story, they had come on a mere wild-goose chase.

The coastguards, whom they met near a signpost half a mile from Paggleshale, were frankly sceptical of the information advanced by the boys.

Certainly, they agreed, smuggling had been going on somewhere along that coast, but never a coastguard patrol had reported anything amiss at Paggleshale. As for there being a lighted house under the sea, it was impossible!

By the time they reached the crumbling cliffs of Paggleshale the rain had stopped. No one appeared to be about other than themselves, and they dumped their bikes unceremoniously in one of the many caves. Jack led the way towards the place where he had last seen his uncle and the two other men, with Ginger, Teak, and the coastguards following behind. One of the coastguards carried a spade, having been advised to do so by the lieutenant over the telephone.

"We shall soon know, anyway," growled P.O. Teak, as they pressed forward in the wild darkness. "Now, where's this stone slab, Gilbert, me lad, or the place where we've got to find it?"

Turning his back to the sea-wind, Jack looked about him, trying to pierce the gloom. There was an old groyne down the beach and various of the ruined cellars of Paggleshale from which he had previously taken his bearings. He could dimly make out the groyne, but he was frankly puzzled by his immediate surroundings.

The more he searched, the greater became his bewilderment, and the more annoyance was expressed by P.O. Teak and the coastguards.

"Tar me!" ejaculated Teak at last. "Where is this place?"

Hot and uncomfortable, Jack made a gesture that signified his complete ignorance. Then he suddenly realised the reason for his dilemma.

"My hat, I understand now!" he exclaimed. "The coast has altered its shape since we were here last--there's been another landslide!"

Hardly had he spoken than there was a dull roar as of distant thunder, though

the storm itself had ceased. To the westward of them the unstable cliffs crumbled, and thousands of tons of sand roared down upon the seashore!

The wind blew the dust from the landslide in clouds past the awed group among the ruins.

"By jingo, Gilbert may be right," muttered Teak. "If so, it's possible there are three men somewhere under all this sand who are unable to get out."

The coastguards agreed, but it was impossible for Jack to say where digging operations could be commenced with any chance of success. Looking for that flagstone with its ring-bolt now would be like searching for a needle in a haystack!

They went down to where the surf came screaming in.

Suddenly Jack looked excited.

"Take a dekho there!" he cried, pointing over the black, tumbling waters. "There's a ship—and she's without navigating lights!"

"Where away?" demanded Teak. "Hanged if I can see anything!"

"I can!" piped Ginger. "I can just make out her outline; looks like a trawler to me!"

The men had more difficulty in seeing her, but when they did their whole attitude to the evening's enterprise changed completely.

"There's a small vessel out there," muttered Teak. "She's anchored, I should judge, but she's wearing no riding lights."

"And it occurs to me," added Jack, "that she's lying at about the position of that house under the sea I told you of."

The coastguards themselves were eager to investigate this vessel, which was defying all the rules of the sea, and quite probably with some unlawful purpose. Then Ginger, who had been wandering along the shore, pointed out a place where a small boat, about the size of a skiff, had been drawn up on the beach, with the marks of footprints about it.

No one switched on a torch, for they were not anxious to give the offending vessel out there warning of people on the shore. Thus it was with the greatest difficulty that they were able to make out these signs in the sand that denoted that some man, or men, had recently pushed off in a small boat from that lonely "haunted coast."

"No wonder some of the local fisher-lads have seen spooks this way!" grunted a coastguard. "We fellows have always laughed at 'em, but it strikes me that it was they who were right and we were wrong. We'd better get along to the

coastguard station, and set out in the launch to have a look at that craft, and see what she's up to."

"That's a dickens of a way," pointed out Jack. "The ship may be gone by then."

The coastguard said that they would have to risk that, and quickly made some arrangements. The man with the spade was to remain in the hope of being able to locate some sign of that flagstone that Jack had reported. Other men would be sent as soon as possible to help with the work of locating it and digging. Of course, Jack and Ginger wanted to go with the other coastguards and Teak to get the launch, but the petty officer, who felt himself responsible for their welfare, ordered them to remain and look after the bikes pending their return.

"This is men's work to-night, me lads," concluded Teak, "and you'll be safer here than with us, if there are smugglers about."

"Anyway," groaned Jack, "I bet you'll be too late. By the time all of you have hoofed it along the shore to the station and put out, that ship will be on a course for France, or somewhere."

"As we haven't got wings to fly there like gulls," snapped Teak, "we've got to take our chance about that."

Leaving the discomfited chums, he went along the beach with the coastguards.

"Those giddy bikes don't want looking after," remarked Ginger. "I wouldn't have thought Teak could be such a beastly spoil-sport!"

"Oh, he was only thinking about keeping us out of trouble," retorted Jack; "but I'm still afraid, old son, that by the time they've got that boat, and get out to sea, that trawler, or whatever it is, will have up-anchored and pushed off. I vote you

IF YOU'RE AT THE SEASIDE—

make sure you prominently display your copy of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY. Representatives of the Old Paper will be strolling along the beaches of all the principal seaside resorts this week, and if they see you are a reader of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY you will receive a

HANDSOME FREE GIFT!

and I go out there, anyway, and take a closer look at her."

"How?" demanded Ginger, looking at a beach deserted of boats. "As old Teak suggested, d'you think we can fly?"

"No, ass," retorted Jack; "swim!"

Smuggler's Anchorage!

"**J**ACK!" whooped Ginger delightedly.

"You're a giddy masterpiece!"

"It'll be as easy as pie," grinned Jack. "We'll swim out and take a dekko at that vessel that's lying off-shore, and if Petty Officer Teak and the coastguards miss it, we may be able to supply her name and address, so to speak."

So wet had they got in the storm that they made no bones about retaining some of their uniform for the swim. The coastguard who had been left behind was out of sight in the darkness of the night, and the two young bluejackets quickly got out of their sou'-westers, jumpers, and boots. Then, wearing only their bell-bottomed serge trousers, blue-ribbed vests and socks, they waded into the surf.

It was much rougher than when they had swum before, but both were excellent swimmers, and quickly battled their way through the "white horses." Then, keeping near together, they swam with a powerful side-stroke through the rolling black hills and valleys towards where they judged the mysterious trawler to be lying.

Gradually, as they swam farther out, they saw her—black and gaunt, like a phantom ship in the aftermath of the storm.

"Drop astern of her on the tide, Ginger," gurgled Jack. "Then we'll swim up under the lee of her quarter."

They had little fear of being seen in the night, but they kept their faces averted and made no splashing as they drew nearer.

Undoubtedly the vessel was a trawler, with a French cut about her. Not a light did she show from stem to stern, but the chums, during a period of treading water, could hear slight noises as though some stealthy work was in progress. What this was they saw as they swam under the stern of the anchored vessel.

A heavy wooden chute extended from a scuttle on the port side at an angle into the sea, and small bales and boxes were being shoved down this by some deck-hands, to enter the water more or less noiselessly.

Jack and Ginger gripped the rudder and rose and fell with the motion of the ship. Sometimes the upper part of the rudder to which they clung was entirely submerged, but when they came up between

their duckings, they chatted breathlessly together.

"My hat! I believe I'm wise to the whole game, old son," muttered Jack. "These lubbers are sinking weighted contraband to the sea-bed, and, by some means, the gang under Gavin get the stuff into that house I lighted upon last time we were out this way."

After a rest, they shifted their position, and Jack caught a hanging rope and swarmed up it to get a close view of the trawler's name, which was difficult to distinguish in the darkness. There, under her quarter, he read the name—"Dominique—Dieppe."

For a moment or two he clung there in breathless silence, hearing heavy footsteps on the poop-deck and voices in conversation; and one of them he immediately recognised as that of his dissolute uncle, Lew Bonner!

"I have had ze skiff taken along ze starboard side, M'sieu Bonner," said one of the voices. "In but five leetle meenutes ze job will be done and ze stuff safe in what you call ze lockaire of Davy Jones. Zen our good friend and master, M'sieu Gavin, can collect all wiz his diver."

"It is well, Cap'n Michel," responded Lew Bonner. "Since Gavin and Sparling went into the tunnel there's been a landslide ashore. They can get out easily enough, though, by the emergency exit near the groyne."

The voices and footsteps died away as the skipper of the trawler and Lew Bonner went forward again, and Jack slithered down the rope towards Ginger, who was still clinging to the rudder.

Quickly he told his pal what he had overheard.

"Teak and the coastguards can't possibly get out here to this vessel in time, Ginger," he finished hurriedly, "and you can hear by the faint clatter that they're hauling in the anchor chain—got it jolly-well greased, I should say! Let's nip aboard and try to prevent her putting to sea!"

"How do you propose to do that, matey?" asked Ginger wonderingly.

"I thought perhaps we might manage an 'accident' of some kind, old son," returned Jack; "perhaps heave a crow-bar or something into the engine."

A grin came into Ginger's pinched face.

"I'm game!" he agreed. "Lead on, Horatio!"

(Don't miss reading next week's concluding instalment of this serial, chums. And look out for full details of a wonderful new yarn which is starting in a fortnight's time.)

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.*

Wanted—A Football Ground!

THE next football season is fast approaching.

I was reminded of this fact by a letter received from one of my Manchester chums who, unfortunately, omitted to give me his full name.

"S. B. G." is the energetic secretary of the Deepdale Swifts Football Club, and, like

many other junior club secretaries, is experiencing difficulty with the ground question. So my correspondent has written asking me to help him through the medium of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY.

He wants to get on the track of another footer club in the Pendleton, Manchester, district which, lucky enough to have a ground of their own, is willing to share it with his own team.

S. B. G.'s club is ready to pay a suitable price for the use of the ground, and would only require it when the owners themselves are not playing.

Secretaries who can assist my chum in this direction should write to him at 15, Carlton Road, Pendleton, Manchester.

I expect S. B. G. is also on the look-out for fixtures for his team—especially away fixtures, in view of the circumstances—and so club secretaries who want matches would

be well advised to write to the same address.

A Reminder!

WITH cricket nearing the close of its season—we shall be loath to part with the grand old game—I am tempted to remind secretaries of footer clubs to get ahead with their preparations. Football will soon be upon us.

Now is the time to make sure that you have got all your players; to attend to the fixture list; to see if the club football is in good condition, and, if not, to get a new one and well "dubbin" it. It is never a wise policy to leave these duties until the last moment.

And don't any of you secretary chaps forget that I am always willing to help you in every way possible.

Thin Legs!

A CHUM from Torquay tells me he is worried. He has thin legs. What's a remedy for this?

Cycling, walking or running are excellent means of developing the muscles and the calves. Another good idea is to stand erect, heels together, and then to bend the knees until you are sitting on your heels. Do this twenty times every morning and evening for a period.

THE CHIEF OFFICER.

THIS WEEK'S WINNING LETTER

DEAR CHIEF OFFICER,

I feel I must write and tell you how I became a reader of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY, and was thus able to join and enjoy the privileges of the St. Frank's League.

It happened on a rainy day. I was running round a corner to get a copy of my then favourite book—its name does not matter—when I crashed into a chap of about my own age. He went staggering, and dropped the paper he was carrying right into a big muddy puddle. Of course, I apologised profusely, especially when I discovered that the book was now quite useless. It was a copy of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY, and I offered to buy him a new one. He wouldn't hear of it. What he did was to advise me to buy a copy and to read it for myself. I said I would—and since then I've never missed reading a single issue.

I joined the St. Frank's League and sent in a paragraph for the "Correspondents Wanted" column. To my amazement—and satisfaction—I received fifteen letters in reply. Three of the writers have since dropped out, but I still regularly correspond with the remaining twelve—five of whom are in England, one in Ireland, three in Australia, one in New Zealand, and two in South Africa.

Wishing the NELSON LEE LIBRARY every success.

Yours enthusiastically,

(Signed) A. S. SMITH.

For this letter A. S. Smith (Birmingham), will receive a useful pocket-knife.

the muscles and the calves. Another good idea is to stand erect, heels together, and then to bend the knees until you are sitting on your heels. Do this twenty times every morning and evening for a period.

All members of the 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, look out for the entry form which will appear next week—and then join immediately.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED

L. Jefferson, 12, Alliance Avenue, Cliftonville, Belfast, wants N.L.L. Nos. 1-11, and No. 34 new series. Must be in good condition.

J. F. McNamara, 36, Lang Street, North Carlton, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wants correspondents interested in outdoor games, etc.

H. C. Liney, 13a, Old Town, Peebles, wants correspondents in London and U.S.A.; age 24.

Miss Theresa Galvin, 15, The Grange, East Malvern, Victoria, Australia, wants to hear from girl readers.

Anstey E. Treweneck, 88, King William Road, Hyde Park, Adelaide, South Australia, wants correspondents anywhere.

Edward J. Green, 41, Hamburg Street, Richmond, E.1, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wants to hear from readers in Japan.

A. Stewart, Bakers' Hall, Belmore Street, Arncliffe, N.S.W., Australia, wants correspondents in South Africa and Scotland.

R. Wilson, Armstrong Road, Bayswater, Victoria, Australia, wants correspondents in Canada and U.S.A.

Patrick Joseph Roche, "Dublin," 14, Mary Street, Coburg, N.13, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wants to correspond with readers in the Services.

S. G. Bigg, 148, Gwydyr Street, Cambridge, offers N.L.L. old and new series.

Bert Tyne, 100, Derwent Street, Glebe, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia, wants correspondents—ages 16-18—in England, France, and U.S.A.

Alfred J. Patterson, c/o Messrs. F. W. Heritage & Co., Collins Street, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia, wants correspondents anywhere.

Harold Jarman, 2, Cowper Street, Marrickville, N.S.W., Australia, wants correspondents anywhere, especially Egypt and Britain.

H. Wilkinson, 33, Ocean Road, South Shields, wants N.L.L.'s 122-138, new series.

E. Brown, Post Office Cottage, Soho Street, Smethwick, wants to hear from stamp collectors.

W. Matthews, 77, Mayford Road, Balham, London, S.W.12, wants correspondents anywhere.

T. R. Barnett, 5, Baruhill, Larne, Co. Antrim, Ireland, wants correspondents in Great Britain.

John Richard Milnes, 29, Marlboro' Road, Woodthorpe, Nottingham, wants correspondents anywhere.

XMAS CHOCOLATE CLUBS

AGENTS WANTED to form Clubs—Chocolates, Jewellery, Toys, Fancy Goods, Crackers. Big Variety of Leading Makes.

HUGE PRIZE SCHEME. Write at once. WALKER & HANNAM, LTD., (317), KENT STREET, BRADFORD

HEIGHT INCREASED 5' - Complete Course.

3-5 inches in ONE MONTH. Without appliances—drugs—or dieting. The Famous Clive System Never Fails. Complete Course, 5/- P.O. p. l., or further particulars, stamp.—P. A. Clive, Harroch House, COLWYN BAY, North Wales.



MAGIC TRICKS, etc.—Parels, 2/6, 5/6. Ventriloquist's Instrument. Invisible. Imitate Birds. Price 6d. each. 4 for 1/—T. W. HARRISON, 239, Pentonville Road, London, N.1.

GROW TALLER ADD INCHES to your height. Details free.—JEDISON, 39, BOND STREET, BLACKPOOL.

AGENTS WANTED to sell Private Christmas Cards. Sample Book free. Magnificent collection of exquisite cards. Highest Commission. Valuable Prizes. Apply Denton & Co., Ltd., Dept. D.29, Accrington.

FREE PASSAGES to Ontario, Canada, for approved boy farm learners, aged 15 to 19. —Apply Ontario Government, 163 Strand, London.

BE TALLER! Increased my own height to 6ft. 3ins. STAMP brings FREE DETAILS.—ROSS, Height Specialist, Scarborough.

BE TALL!

Your Height Increased in 14 days, or money back? 3-5 inches soon gained. Health improved. Amazing Complete Course sent for 5/- P.O. or 1/6 stamp brings valuable Free Book and wonderful testimonials in sealed envelope. Write NOW.—Stebbing System, 28, Dean Road, London, N.W.2.

GROSE'S, LUDGATE CIRCUS, LONDON



FOOTBALL JERSEYS

12/- per doz.

All Colours and Designs. SEND FOR ILLUSTRATED LIST, POST FREE.



GEO. GROSE & CO., 8, New Bridge St., London, E.C.4.

BOYS (Ages 14-19) WANTED

for CANADA, AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND. Farm training, outfit, assisted passages provided. The Salvation Army keeps in touch with boys after settlement in the Dominions. S.S. Vedic chartered for third time, sailing October 19, 1929, from Liverpool to Australia. Make immediate application to the Branch Manager, 3, Upper Thames Street, London, E.C.4

All applications for Advertisement spaces in this publication should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, "The Nelson Lee Library," The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Printed and published every Wednesday by the Proprietors, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Advertisement Offices: The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, E.C.4. Registered for transmission by Canadian magazine post. Subscription Rates: Inland and Abroad, 11/- per annum; 5/6 for six months. Sole Agents for South Africa: Central News Agency, Limited. Sole Agents for Australia and New Zealand: Messrs. Gordon & Gotch, Limited.