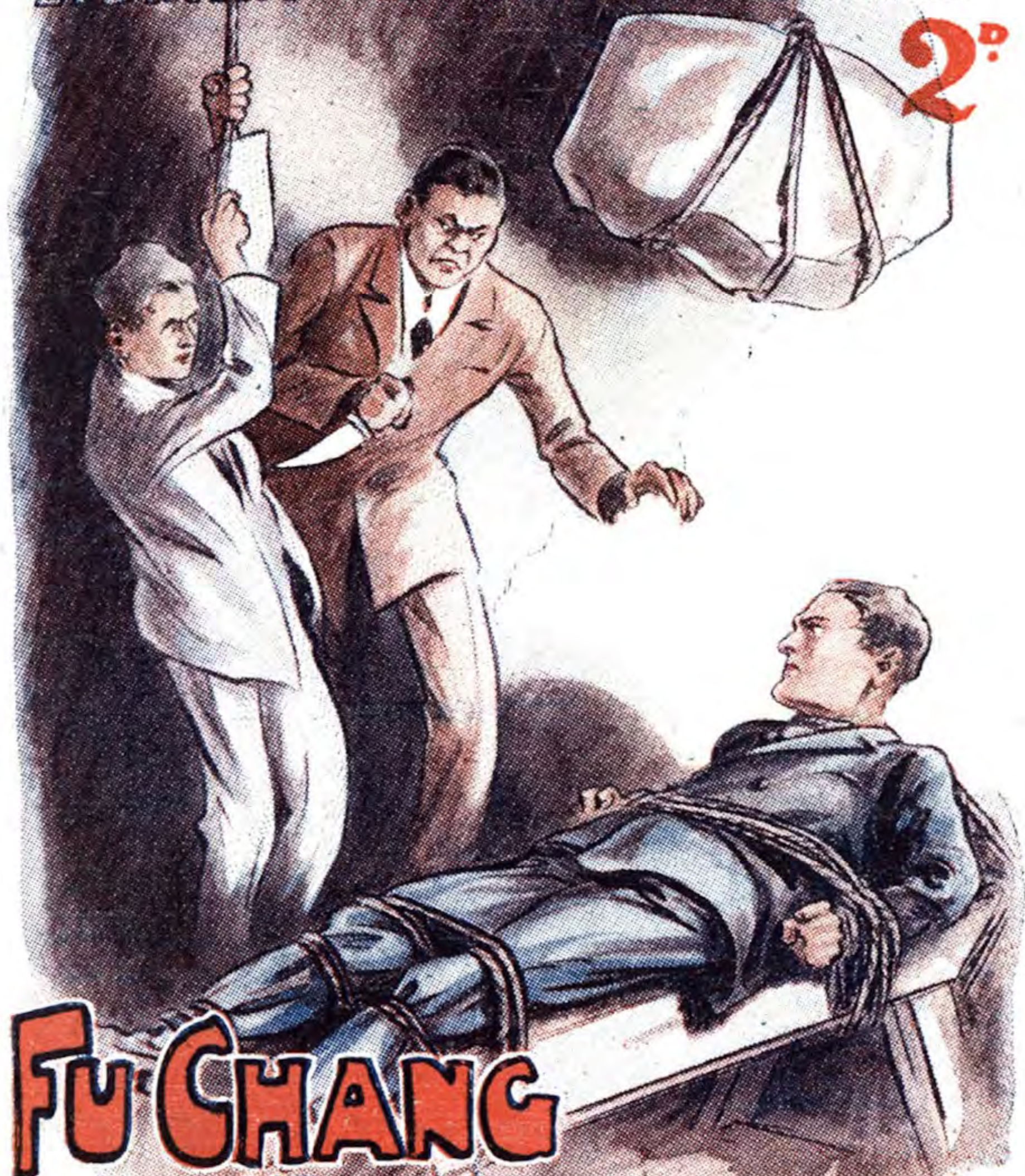


THE NELSON LEE

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FU-CHANG THE TERRIBLE!

"I'M DONE, GUVNOR —
I'M DONE" SOBBED
NIPPER "LET GO
YOUNG 'UN!"

This is only one of the many thrilling incidents from the magnificent long complete yarn of schoolboy mystery and adventure, featuring the Chums of St. Frank's, which is contained in this issue.

New Series No. 185.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

November 16th, 1929.

FUCHANG THE TERRIBLE!



CHAPTER 1.

Anxious Days!

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH licked his lips.

"You wait until you see it, my sons!" he said hungrily. "I know my mater's hampers! It'll be a whacking big one, with heaps of plum cake and home-made pastries and gingerbread, and scores of other good things. We're going to have a feed this evening that'll make the rest of the chaps green with envy."

"Well, I hope you haven't made a mistake," said Church, in an uneasy voice. "How do you know it's a tuck hamper, anyhow? You're such a chap for jumping to conclusions, Handy!"

The famous chums of Study D at St. Frank's were bowling down towards the village in Handforth's Austin Seven. It was a bright November afternoon—a half-holiday—and the countryside was looking fresh in the wintry sunshine.

START READING THIS STUNNING YARN NOW, CHUMS !



By EDWY
SEARLES BROOKS

The Fu Chang Tong! Already Nelson Lee and Nipper have felt the "claws" of this dreaded Chinese society. And this week the Tong strikes again; swiftly, dramatically; plunging the popular St. Frank's Housemaster-detective and his assistant into the adventure of their lives.

"Don't be an ass!" said Handforth. "Didn't I get a letter from my mater this morning? Didn't she say that she'd sent off a big hamper yesterday? And didn't I 'phone to the booking-office, and didn't the clerk tell me that the hamper was waiting? No mistake about all that, is there?"

"It sounds all right," admitted Church.

"But you've been bragging about your giddy hamper for so long that somebody may have bagged it," put in McClure, the Scottish junior. "That's the worst of you, Handy—you can't keep quiet about anything."

But Handforth wasn't listening. The Austin Seven had just turned a bend in the lane, and now Handforth was applying his brakes and setting his tie straight at the same moment.

A group of cheery-looking young girls were in sight. They were Irene & Co., of the Moor View School, and it was naturally impossible for Handforth to drive straight past. A halt was distinctly necessary.

"Hallo, girls!" said Handforth, as he raised his cap. "How's things?"

Irene Manners smiled. She was Handforth's particular girl chum, and he always amused her. The other girls were Doris Berkeley, Marjorie Temple, Mary Summers, and Phyllis Palmer.

"Going to the station?" asked Mary, who was looking a little worried.

"Yes. How did you guess?" asked Handforth, in surprise.

"We met Nipper in the village," replied Mary. "He was with Mr. Lee."

"But how did that tell you that I'm going to the station?"

"Mr. Lee is waiting for a train, isn't he?" asked Irene. "We thought perhaps that you were going to the station to see him off."

"I didn't know he was going away," replied Handforth indignantly. "Well I'm jiggered! Fancy not telling me!"

"An oversight, no doubt," murmured Doris, with much gravity.

"I'm worried about Nipper—and Mr. Lee, too, if it comes to that," said Mary Summers. "Nipper tells me that everything is all right, but I'm not so sure."

"You mean those giddy Chinese rotters?" asked Handforth.

"Yes," replied Mary. "Nothing has happened for over a week, and there hasn't been a solitary sign of a Chinese in the district. The police think that they have been scared off, and that they won't come again. But when I asked Nipper point-blank, he evaded any direct answer."

"Well, it seems to me that the danger is pretty well over," said Handforth, shaking his head. "It's a pity, because I wanted to investigate the affair on my own. Mr. Lee is himself again now—he's got over that whack on the head—and everything is normal."

"He seemed all right when we saw him just now," remarked Phyllis Palmer.

"Well, I'm going down to the station—to collect a big tuck-hamper," explained Handforth.

"Oh!" said Irene, with mild interest.

"The sooner I can collect it, the better," continued Handforth. "There's never any telling with those River House chaps. Hal Brewster and his crowd would nab that hamper like a shot if they knew anything about it."

"I'll bet they would," agreed Doris. "It's too bad, the way you boys raid one another's hampers."

Handforth laughed.

"We raid theirs when we get the chance, so we can't grumble if they raid ours," he replied. "It's a sort of give-and-take game. On the whole, I think the St. Frank's chaps are the winners. Anyhow, Brewster & Co. aren't going to get my hamper!"

"Is it a specially good one?" asked Irene.

"A tip-topper," replied Edward Oswald. "Cakes and pastries and jam and biscuits and chocolates, and all sorts of things. My mater's hampers are always first-class."

"Don't," said Mary, pained, "you're making my mouth water!"

IN the meantime, there were two figures on the platform at Bellton Station. They were pacing slowly up and down, waiting for the train to come in. Both were in overcoats, and Nelson Lee was smoking his pipe.

"Think it's safe, sir, for us to be out in the open like this?" Nipper was asking.

"Safe? My dear Nipper, there's no danger in the daylight," replied Nelson Lee. "These infernal Tong men are creatures of the dark. They take no risks. Since that dramatic affair of last week we have taken due precautions at night, and we have moved about freely in the day-

time. No, there is practically no danger now."

"Why are you going to London, guv'nor?"

"I intend to make some inquiries at Scotland Yard," replied Nelson Lee. "Down here, at St. Franks, I feel somewhat out of things. I enjoy the school life—I am happy to be the Housemaster of the Ancient House—but when an affair of this kind crops up, Nipper, I feel that I must get back to the hub of things."

"But you won't be gone long, guv'nor?"

"I expect to be back by the late train this evening."

"That means that you'll come back in the dark," replied Nipper anxiously. "I don't like it, sir. Will you mind if I bring a crowd of fellows to the station, so that we can form an escort for you—"

"I require no escort!" interrupted Lee. "Quite apart from that, you juniors will be in bed. Don't you think I am capable of taking care of myself, young 'un?"

"Ordinarily, yes, sir—but not now," replied Nipper bluntly. "These men of the Fu Chang Tong are devils. Look at the way they murdered that man last week—thinking that he was you. That was done in broad daylight, too."

"During a fog, Nipper," said Lee. "And fog is almost the same as darkness, since it conceals. In bright weather such as this there is no danger."

But Nipper remained anxious and uneasy. He could not forget those exciting events of the previous week.

Nelson Lee had been knocked on the head by a desperate criminal, and the man had changed clothes with him—only to be shot down by the men of the Fu Chang Tong. Nipper himself had been seized, too, and only through the shrewdness of Waldo, of the Remove, had he been saved.

Since then the Tong men had disappeared. But there was never any telling. Perhaps they would become active again. Evidently they were now lying low, waiting for the scare to blow over.

The Fu Chang Tong was a grim, relentless Chinese secret society. Years earlier, Nelson Lee had incurred its enmity, and both he and Nipper had been sentenced to death by the Tong.

But the old Tong leader had allowed that sentence to lapse, and Nelson Lee and Nipper had been safe. Now, however, there was a new leader, and this man was making a determined attack upon all the Tong's known enemies. The fact that Nelson Lee had not moved a finger against the Tong during the past few years made no difference. This new leader was set upon wiping him out.

"You really mustn't look so scared, Nipper," smiled Lee. "I can assure you that I shall be safe enough. Here comes the train, anyhow, and before I go I want you to promise me that you won't venture out after dark this evening."

Nipper grunted.

"There you are, guv'nor!" he said. "In one breath you tell me that there isn't any danger, and in the next you warn me not to go out after dark! That proves that you do think there's danger."

"It is always as well to be cautious," replied Lee. "As I said before, in daylight we are safe. Even if these men are still in the district—which I doubt—they will certainly keep to their hiding-place during the daylight hours."

The train came rattling in, and at the same time Handforth & Co. appeared on the platform. They had come to bid Nelson Lee good-bye as he got into the train.

"We didn't know you were going to London, sir," said Handforth.

"I really didn't think it necessary to give you the information, young man," smiled Lee. "I shall be back this evening, so you needn't worry. I dare say you'll be able to exist until I get back."

"You're only kidding, sir," growled Handforth. "I don't like you going away like this. You never know what might happen. Those Chinese rotters will be after you, perhaps."

"Well, Handforth, I'm afraid I can't stand here arguing," interrupted Nelson Lee.

"This railway company is courteous and obliging in most things, but it strongly objects to having its trains kept waiting by schoolboys."

Lee found an empty compartment, got into it, and sat down.

There was a sound of commotion in the next compartment, and there was a loud, gruff voice. Handforth & Co. and Nipper on the platform recognised the two men who had emerged from the next compartment.

Nipper was about to make some remark to Nelson Lee concerning them when he was startled to see one of the window panes on the opposite side of the carriage shatter itself to fragments.

Crash!

The glass flew in all directions, and Nelson Lee at the same second heard something hiss past his head. It fairly hummed, and it struck the metal heat-regulator just behind him.

WHO'S WHO AT ST. FRANK'S.



MR. JAMES CROWELL.

The Remove Form-master. A severe man, as a rule, but generally just and fair. Respected by all his boys.

All in the same second another crash of glass sounded, for the missile—a bullet—had ricocheted from the heat-regulator and had then crashed through the opposite window, missing Handforth by only a foot.

Just behind him there was a wizened little man, and this man suddenly sagged at the knees and collapsed on the platform. Blood was spurting from his head, and he lay there motionless.

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Lee, leaping to his feet.

In that one flash he had seen what had happened—he knew that the bullet had glanced off and had hit this other man. The whole thing had taken him by surprise.

Another narrow escape!

Before leaping on to the

platform Lee took a swift look out of the opposite window. There was not a living soul within sight. There was some thick trees beyond the other platform, and it was possible that the would-be murderer had been hidden amongst these.

Nelson Lee was filled with anger—anger against himself. He had made a blunder. He had taken it for granted that no attack would be made in the daylight. It was obvious that his assailant had used a gun fitted with a silencer.

And this perfectly innocent old man on the platform had received the bullet—perhaps a fatal one!

CHAPTER 2.

Rough on Mr. Jiggs!

A BIG, burly man, attired in a blue reefer jacket and a peaked cap, leapt from the next compartment.

"Sink my anchor!" he roared. "What's this? Avast there, you lubbers! Jiggs is sunk! Throw a line, blame ye!"

He rushed to the side of the fallen man before any of the juniors could recover their breath. Only Nipper, in fact, knew what had happened; Handforth & Co. were completely bewildered. They had heard the crashing of the glass, but they did not know as yet that it had been caused by a bullet.

"Let me come!" shouted Nelson Lee.

Mr. Spence, the stationmaster, came running up—and the guard, too. There was quite a commotion.

"Great Scott!" gasped Handforth. "What happened?"

"It was a bullet!" snapped Nipper. "Meant for the guv'nor, too!"

"My only sainted aunt!" breathed Handforth.

Nelson Lee was kneeling beside the wizened old man. He wasn't so old, either, when one looked at him closely. He was all bones and sinew. And he, too, was dressed in a fashion that smacked of the sea.

"May I look like a barnacle!" said the big man hoarsely. "He ain't scuttled, is he, mister?"

"No; he is only stunned," replied Nelson Lee, with relief. "This cut on the head is not serious. The bullet merely grazed him and bruised the skull. He will recover soon. Here, boys, help me carry him into the waiting-room. And one of you fetch me some water."

"I'll get some bandages," said the stationmaster, hurrying away.

The big man refused to let any of the boys carry his injured companion. He took the little man in his own arms and took him to the waiting-room.

The juniors had recognised these two bluff men as Captain Phineas Boom and Peter Jiggs. They were both servants of Commander Sampson Rudd, who lived on the other side of Caistowe. On one famous occasion Captain Boom had come to St. Frank's and had attempted to quell a barring-out rebellion.

Captain Boom was an old merchant skipper—a man who had sailed the seas in every type of craft afloat. In spite of his sixty years he was as active as a man half his age. His head was adorned with a mass of curly red hair, with scarcely a grey one amongst them. His face was ruddy and weather-beaten, and there was an aggressive tuft of red beard at the end of his chin. Over his fierce-looking eyes there were immense bushy brows.

"By grog!" he said in a deep, rumbling voice. "I thought old Jiggs was sunk! I thought he'd gone on his last voyage!"

"Fortunately the bullet had spent its force," said Nelson Lee. "It was intended for me, but it happened to hit some metal-work on the back of the compartment, and it ricocheted through the other window and struck this man."

"He's a cantankerous little lubber, but I wouldn't like to lose him," said Captain Boom, as he looked down upon Mr. Jiggs. "Settin' up house together, we are. It would be a pity if Jiggs went to the bottom before we got into harbour."

"He won't go to the bottom," replied Lee. "This is only a minor injury. Ah, that's better, Mr. Spence! Thank you!"

Water and bandages had been brought, and the rapid flow of blood was soon staunched. Mr. Peter Jiggs' head was bound up, and then Nelson Lee pulled out his brandy-flask.

"Avast, there!" said the skipper. "What's that you've got?"

"Brandy."

"Might as well give him babies' food," said Captain Boom, with contempt. "Grog is what he wants—rum!"

He produced a huge flask of his own, and forced a quantity down Jiggs' throat. That raw spirit was potent, for within a minute the wizened little man was half sitting up, looking about him in bewilderment out of his keen, deeply-sunken eyes.

"What happened, cap'n?" he asked dazedly.

"You lie back on your bunk and don't ask any questions," replied Captain Boom gruffly. "You ain't hurt much, Jiggs."

By this time the train had steamed out of the station, the guard having satisfied himself that there was no danger from those broken windows, and he had carefully locked the compartment door. Mr. Spence had promised to make a report on the incident.

"You've missed your train, guv'nor," said Nipper.

"I know, and it doesn't matter now," replied Lee. "I feel that an explanation is due to Captain Boom—and to his companion, too."

"An accident, wasn't it, sir?" asked Captain Boom. "Why, sink my rum rations! It's Mr. Lee, from the big school, isn't it? I was so took by Jiggs' injury that I hadn't had time to look at your riggin'!"

"Yes, I'm Lee," replied the famous schoolmaster-detective. "And you are Captain Boom. I'm afraid that somebody tried to murder me, captain, and that the bullet struck your friend by mistake."

"As long as he ain't scuttled it won't matter so much," replied Captain Boom. "He don't seem much hurt now. How d'ye feel, Jiggs?"

The wizened man groaned.

"I don't feel none too well, and it's no good sayin' I do," he replied gloomily. "Feels like my head is busted."

"You wasn't holed below the water-line," replied Captain Boom. "Lucky thing for you, too. That bullet might have capsized you."

"Bullet?" repeated Mr. Jiggs. "Was I hit by a bullet? Who did it?"

"Some swab who meant to hit Mr. Lee."

"It wasn't a nice thing to do—and it's no good saying it was," muttered Mr. Jiggs. "Specially as I was hit instead o' Mr. Lee. But there, I was allus an unlucky one."

"I don't know about being unlucky," said Handforth. "It seems to me that you were lucky. That bullet might easily have killed you."

"Mebbe I won't recover," groaned Mr. Jiggs. "I'm all shook up, and it's no good sayin' I ain't!"

BUT before long Mr. Jiggs was able to get on his feet, and Nelson Lee was quite satisfied that his injury was superficial. He would probably have a headache for some hours, and he would carry a scar; but there was no danger of him suffering any permanent injury.

"My Austin Seven's outside," said Handforth eagerly. "If you'd like us to take Mr. Jiggs anywhere, Captain Boom, just say the word. It wouldn't be fair to make him walk."

The bluff old skipper looked doubtful.

"What do ye say, Jiggs?" he asked. "Tain't far, an' you'd be safer walkin', I reckon."

"I leave it to you, cap'n," said Mr. Jiggs resignedly.

"Then ye'd best walk, ye wizened lump o' tarpaulin," replied the skipper. "I don't hold with these noisy craft, with their blamed injines. They no sooner have ye on than you fall off."

"It's not a motor-bicycle," said Handforth indignantly. "My Austin Seven is a car!"

"Reckon I'd better ride, cap'n," said Mr. Jiggs. "My legs ain't none too steady. Not that I trust these schoolboys," he added suspiciously. "Young terrors, that's what they are. No good sayin' they ain't! Still, seein' as I'm a sick man——"

"How far do you have to go?" inquired Nelson Lee.

"Out through the village on the Caistowe road," replied Captain Boom. "That's our course, mister. Bellton Chase is the name o' the house."

"Bellton Chase?" said Nipper. "That's Mr. Hewitt's place."

"Mr. Hewitt and his mother have gone away," said Nelson Lee. "I understood that Bellton Chase had been purchased by somebody else."

"That's me," nodded Captain Boom. "Me and Jiggs are goin' to live there."

"You have left Commander Rudd's service, then?" inquired Lee.

"Sink me fer a shark! Didn't you know, mister?" asked Captain Boom. "Commander Rudd is safe in Davy Jones' locker. Old David's got him at last. Died four

weeks ago. It sort o' left me an' Jiggs at a loose end, driftin' about like a couple o' derelicts. So we've bought Bellton Chase, and I reckon we shall live there until it's time for our last voyage, too. It's all fixed up, an' ready for us to go into."

"Then you must allow us to escort you home," said Nelson Lee. "Handforth, you had better take Mr. Jiggs in your car. Captain Boom and I will walk."

MR. JIGGS was really feeling very groggy, and he was grateful enough for the ride. He was placed in the seat next to the driver, and Church and McClure got in the rear.

Nipper decided to walk with Nelson Lee and Captain Boom.

He was not particularly interested in the fact that Commander Rudd was dead, and that his two old servants had bought Bellton Chase and had decided to settle down there. Nipper was thinking of that attack upon Nelson Lee.

It renewed all his old fears; and Nelson Lee himself, too, was startled. He knew that he had miscalculated. He had not believed that the Tong men would dare to do anything in the open. They were getting bolder, it seemed.

"I hope that Jiggs will allow me to make some sort of compensation," Nelson Lee was saying, as they walked along. "He has had a nasty jolt——"

"Avast there!" broke in the captain. "It was an accident, wasn't it?"

"An accident that Jiggs was hit, yes."

"Then he won't want no compensation, mister," growled Captain Boom. "Or, if



he wants it, I won't let him have it. He's salvaged, and he ain't come to any particular harm. What I'm wonderin' is how the bullet 'it him at all. Then, again, who'd fire at you, Mr. Lee?"

Nelson Lee explained how the mishap had occurred, and after that he thought it advisable to give Captain Phineas Boom a few details concerning the present situation. He told him of the enmity of the Fu Chang Tong. Captain Boom rumbled deeply in his throat when he had finished and nodded.

"I know 'em!" he said. "Didn't I sail the China seas for nigh on fifteen years? Cunning, dangerous devils, them Chinks! An' I know what them Tongs are, too. Once they've marked ye down there ain't much chance. No good sinking these agents,

either. The only way is to wipe out the organisation altogether. You want to get at the man in command—the skipper of the whole fleet.”

“That was why I was going to London—to have a conference with the big men of Scotland Yard,” said Nelson Lee. “I shall have to go by the next train now, and that leaves me plenty of time to accompany you home.”

WHEN they arrived at Bellton Chase they found that Handforth’s Austin Seven was outside.

The Chase was a comfortable, old-fashioned house, some distance up the Caistowe road, and standing quite by itself. It was interesting to know that Captain Boom and Mr. Jiggs had decided to settle down here.

Handforth & Co. were in the hall when the others walked in.

“He’s all right, sir,” said Handforth, referring to Mr. Jiggs. “We took him into one of the rooms and laid him on a couch. He said he wanted some more grog.”

“Best not give him too much, or he won’t be able to steer straight,” said Captain Boom. “I’ll go an’ look at him.”

Nelson Lee turned to the chums of Study D.

“Thanks for your services, Handforth,” he said. “Your little car has come in very useful. But I don’t think we need bother you any further. You might as well be getting along with your own business.”

“Sure we can’t be of any more help, sir?” asked Edward Oswald.

“Quite sure,” replied Lee. “And there’s another thing, boys. Don’t say anything about that attack. We don’t want the whole school to be talking about it. It would only cause another sensation—and that’s the last thing I require.”

“All right sir—you can rely upon us,” said Handforth. “What about you, Nipper? Coming? Plenty of room for you in the bus.”

“Thanks all the same, but I’d rather stay with the guv’nor,” replied Nipper. “If you happen to meet Tommy Watson or Tregellis-West tell them that everything’s all serene, and that I’ll see them later.”

“Right-ho!” said Handforth. “You wouldn’t like me to investigate, sir?” he added, looking at Lee. “I thought about going to the other side of the station so that I could look for footprints. There’s just a chance that I might get on the track of the rotter who fired at you.”

Nelson Lee managed to keep his face straight.

“It’s very good of you, Handforth, but I wouldn’t dream of bothering you,” he said gravely. “If there are any investigations to be made, I will make them. You boys had better carry on with your usual affairs, just as though nothing had happened.”

And the chums of Study D went—Handforth feeling disappointed.

CHAPTER 3.

The Vanished Tuck Hamper!

BETTER go and collect that hamper, I suppose?” said Church casually.

“Not a bad idea,” nodded McClure.

They were sitting in the Austin Seven, waiting for Handforth to drive off. But Handforth had not yet even started the engine. He was sitting back in the driving-seat, looking thoughtful and worried.

“Blow the hamper!” he grunted. “There’s been another attack on Mr. Lee’s life—and he won’t let me investigate! What rot! I might be able to get on the track!”

“Too bad,” said Church, shaking his head.

“I might find a clue!”

“Hard luck, old man!”

“And all Mr. Lee does is to pack me off!” said Handforth indignantly. “He doesn’t seem to realise that he’s in terrible danger!”

“Of course not,” said Mac. “When a man has a bullet fired at him he doesn’t think of anything at all. How can he possibly imagine that he is in danger?”

“You silly ass! Are you trying to be funny?” asked Handforth, frowning.

“Oh, let’s go and get that hamper,” said McClure. “Mr. Lee says he doesn’t want you to investigate or to take any notice of what has happened, and it’s up to you to respect his wishes.”

“It doesn’t always do to take people at their word,” replied Handforth. “Mr. Lee is obstinate—that’s one of his faults. Many a time I’ve suggested that I should help him, and he refuses. Don’t you call that being obstinate?”

“I call it being sensible,” said Church tartly. “My only hat! Isn’t it bad enough for these Chinese Tong men to be up against Mr. Lee and Nipper? Do you want them to mark you down, too?”

Handforth started.

“Me?” he said, staring. “Mark me down?”

“Yes.”

“Why should they mark me?”

“If you help Mr. Lee and Nipper—at least, if you do it openly—they will recognise you as a new enemy,” replied Church.

“And then, before you know where you are, you’ll find yourself dead!”

“How can I find myself if I’m dead, ass?”

“Well, somebody else will find you, then.”

“Great Scott!”

“It wouldn’t be fair to us, Handy,” said McClure. “You mustn’t leave us in the lurch like that. What should we do in Study D without you? Think of the peace we should have—”

“Eh?”

“I—I mean, think of the misery,” said Mac hastily. “It wouldn’t be any consolation to you if we made a practice of going to your grave and putting flowers on it.”

“My—my grave?” gasped Handforth.

“Well, I suppose you’ll have a grave if you’re murdered,” said Church thoughtfully.



Crash ! The window of the compartment shattered itself into fragments, and at the same moment Nelson Lee felt something hiss past his head !

"Dead people generally have graves, you know."

"Not always," argued Mac. "These Tong men might take Handy out to sea somewhere, and drop him in sixty fathoms of water. And even Handy couldn't expect us to take a boat out every time and put flowers in the sea over the fatal spot."

Handforth shivered.

"Haven't you chaps talked enough about my being killed?" he asked coldly. "Anybody might think that you were keen on it—just for the novelty. As for these Tong men, I don't care a snap about them!"

"You're safe now, but you won't be safe if you do anything to thwart them," said Church. "They'll be down on you like a ton of bricks. For goodness' sake, Handy, be sensible! This isn't an ordinary case—it's fearfully exceptional. Mr. Lee and Nipper are in deadly danger, and if you butt in you'll do a lot more harm than good. Let's go and collect that hamper."

"I've lost interest in that hamper now," said Handforth tartly.

"We haven't," said Church. "It's practically tea-time, and we shall only get back to St. Frank's—"

"Oh, all right!" grunted Handforth. "We'd better go, I suppose. All the same, it's pretty rotten!"

He started his engine, engaged the gear, and let in the clutch. The Austin Seven bowled off towards the station. When it

arrived, Handforth jumped out, leaving the engine running.

"You chaps stay here," he said. "I'll be out with that hamper in a couple of jiffies."

Church and McClure waited. They knew that the hamper was there, because they had seen it earlier. Handforth had been about to collect it when he had spotted Nelson Lee and Nipper on the platform. And after that, somehow, the hamper was overlooked.

"I've come for that hamper," said Handforth, as he went to the half-door of the parcels office.

"Hamper?" said the clerk, looking round. "Which hamper?"

"Somebody's shifted it," said Handforth, looking on the floor. "It was lying over there, in that corner, about half an hour ago. Don't you remember? I was going to sign for it when I was called away."

"That's right," said the clerk. "Just before that rummy business when the carriage window was smashed? The hamper's gone now."

"I can see that, can't I?" said Handforth. "What have you done with it?"

"It was collected by those girls," said the clerk. "Didn't you know?"

"Girls!" yelled Handforth. "My hamper!"

"They signed for it and took it away," said the clerk, grinning. "Said that you'd

understand, and that it was quite all serene. I naturally thought that you knew all about it."

Church and McClure came running in, attracted by Handforth's shouts.

"What's happened?" asked Church breathlessly.

"The hamper's gone—bagged—boned—raided!"

"My hat! Then those River House chaps have done us in the eye, after all!" said McClure indignantly. "Is it too late for us to chase them—"

"River House chaps be blowed!" said Handforth. "The girls did this!"

"Four of them, there were," said the clerk. "One of them was Miss Manners, and the others—"

"Don't trouble—we know who they were!" said Handforth bitterly. "They came here and boned my hamper, you chaps!"

"Good luck to them!" said McClure.

"Eh?"

"They've got just as much sense as I always supposed them to have," went on the Scotch junior. "You asked them to raid your hamper, Handy—you absolutely put the idea into their heads!"

"You fathead! I didn't tell them to burgle my hamper!" roared Handforth.

"Perhaps not. But you told them that the hamper was at the station, and that you were afraid of the River House chaps bagging it," said Mac. "When they found that we didn't come back they must have known that there was some delay, and so they trotted here and calmly grabbed the hamper for themselves."

"It's all your fault for gassing," said Church tartly. "It ought to be a lesson to you, Handy, not to open your mouth too wide. There's an old saying that silence is golden."

Handforth could hardly believe it. He went to the parcels office again, gazed forlornly at the various packages on the floor, and asked the clerk to show him the book. And there, sure enough, was Irene's signature.

"It's the last straw!" said Edward Oswald, taking a deep breath. "Irene, you know! I could understand some of the other girls bagging my hamper—but Irene!"

"You've got to realise, old man, that those Moor View girls are even more dangerous than the River House chaps," said Church, shaking his head. "They're getting worse and worse! They're becoming more daring every day, and before long they'll be raiding us in other ways, probably. We know that they can play japes on us, but this is the first time they've 'jumped' any of our hampers."

THEY went outside, climbed into the Austin Seven, and drove forlornly back to St. Frank's. They had counted on such a fine spread for tea, too. Church and McClure were voluble, but Handforth was silent. He seemed to realise, now, that he had been very unwise in talking so much.

"Well, I suppose we shall have something else for tea?" asked Church, after the little Austin had been put away. "You've got some money, Handy, haven't you?"

"I don't want any tea now," grumbled Handforth. "My appetite's gone. What with that shooting affair at the station, and the burgling of my tuck hamper—"

"There you go again—gassing, as usual!" said Church. "Didn't Mr. Lee warn you not to talk about that shooting business?"

"By George! I'd forgotten!" said Handforth. "All right! Let's go along to the tuck-shop."

But before they got to the school shop, Harry Gresham hailed them, and sang out that Handforth was wanted on the telephone.

"My only hat!" breathed Handforth excitedly. "It must be Mr. Lee! He wants me to help in an investigation."

"A sweet, feminine voice," grinned Gresham. "I rather think it's Irene on the phone, Handy."

"Oh, Irene!" said Handforth.

"Disappointed?" asked Harry. "By Jove! Are you sweet on some other damsel? Who is it this time? The new waitress at the Japanese Cafe?"

"Idiot!" snapped Handforth.

He went indoors, and Church and McClure followed him. The telephone-box in the Junior Common-room was standing open, and Handforth dived in and lifted up the receiver.

"Hallo!" he growled suspiciously.

"Oh, is that you, Ted?" came Irene's voice, singularly sweet and innocent. "You got back from the village all right, then?"

"Look here, Renie—" began Handforth.

"We girls thought that you and your chums might like to come to our school for tea," said Irene blandly.

"Wha-a-a-at!"

"How about it?" went on the girl. "We've got a really ripping spread here, you know—plum cakes, gingerbread, home-made pastries, and all sorts of nice things."

"Help!" breathed Handforth faintly.

"So we thought that you might like to join us," suggested Irene. "You know, Ted, that you are perfectly welcome, and a number of your friends, too. Will you come?"

"Thanks awfully," said Handforth feebly.

CHAPTER 4.

The Mysterious Ali!

"WELL?" asked Church and McClure, in one voice, as Handforth emerged from the telephone-box.

"She's invited us to tea," said Handforth sheepishly.

"Well, that's not so bad," said Church. "We shall have some of your tuck, anyhow, Handy."

"Think of it!" said Handforth, with a gulp. "My own grub, you know! Inviting us to a special spread—and it's all mine!"

"No, it isn't," said McClure. "Those girls raided the hamper, and it's theirs. That's

one of the rules of the game. And it gives us the right, by the way, to bag any of their hampers if we happen to spot them!"

"Yes, rather!" said Handforth, recovering his spirits. "They've started this business, and we'll carry it on. I told Renie that we would go, so I suppose we'd better get upstairs and change."

"Change?" asked Church. "What for? Don't we look all right as we are? And didn't you say anything to Irene about her boning your hamper?"

"What was the good?" retorted Handforth. "She knew I knew it, and I knew that she knew I knew it."

"Eh?"

"And, of course, we've got to change," said Handforth.

"We can't go to the girls' school like this. We've got to get into our best togs."

As they went through the lobby they were confronted by Tommy Watson and Sir Lancelot Montgomery Tregellis-West. Both of Nipper's chums were looking anxious.

"I say, Handy," said Watson. "Have you seen Nipper anywhere about?"

"Oh, yes, that reminds me," said Handforth. "Nipper's at the Chase."

"Where?"

"Bellton Chase—that old place where Mr. Hewitt used to live," said Handforth. "It's been taken by Captain Boom now."

"But what's Nipper doing there, dear old boy?" asked Sir Montie, in surprise.

"Mr. Lee's there, too," said Handforth.

"He can't be," put in Watson. "Mr. Lee went to London by the afternoon train."

"He didn't go," said Handforth vaguely. "There was a bit of a mishap. Mr. Lee went to the Chase with Captain Boom and that old pal of his, named Jiggs. Nipper went, too."

"A mishap?" repeated Watson, with a start. "Do—do you mean that there was another attempt on Mr. Lee's life? Or on Nipper's life?"

"You shouldn't ask so many questions," replied Handforth, who badly wanted to blurt out the whole story. "Nipper asked

me to tell you that he's quite O.K., and that you mustn't worry. Won't that satisfy you?"

"Did he say when he'll be back?"

"No, but I don't suppose he'll be long," replied Edward Oswald. "By the way, how about coming along to the MoorView School? Irene's invited us to a big feed there. As a matter of fact, it's my feed, because the girls burgled my big tuck-hamper from the station."

"Thanks all the same, but I don't think we'll go," said Watson.

Handforth & Co. went upstairs to change, and Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West looked at one another.

"There's something funny about this," said Tommy grimly. "Didn't you notice how

queer Handforth was looking just now? He knows a lot more than he'd say."

"I believe you're right, Tommy boy—I do, really," said Sir Montie. "It wouldn't be such a bad idea for us to pop along to the Chase and make some inquiries. What do you say?"

"I say yes," replied Watson promptly.

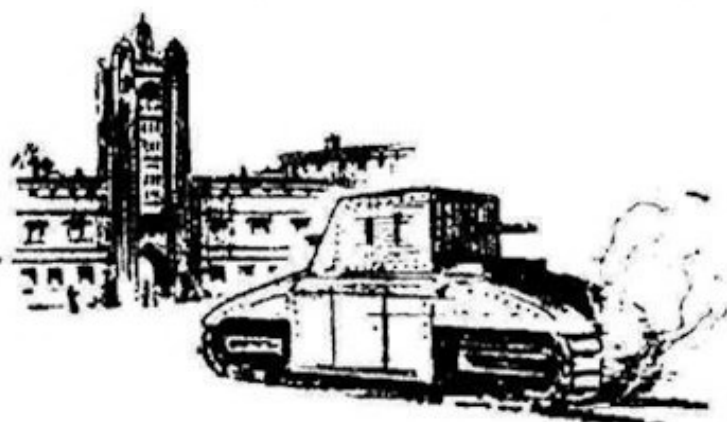
It was getting dusk when Watson and Tregellis-West went down the lane on their way to Bellton Chase.

The short November afternoon was drawing to a close, and there was a damp, chilly mist rising from the river.

In spite of themselves, the juniors could not help feeling nervous as they went past the gloomy expanse of Bellton Wood. There was little or no danger, but they could not help remembering the exciting events of the previous week.

At first the headmaster of St. Frank's had thought about confining everybody to gates after dark, but Nelson Lee had persuaded him not to make this drastic order. The ordinary run of seniors and juniors had nothing to fear. The Tong men, relentless as they were, would not menace the ordinary schoolboys.

"Nipper's dotty!" said Watson gruffly. "He ought to have got back by daylight. He must be off his rocker to stay at the



Armoured Car at St. Frank's!

What a sensation its appearance causes. And what a sensation, too, when it becomes known that the armoured car has come to take away Nelson Lee and Nipper!

For the popular Housemaster-detective and his assistant are leaving St. Frank's. The Menace of the dreaded Fu Chang Tong has become so acute that it is not safe for them to remain at the school.

Nelson Lee v. the Tong! The next episode in this grim battle is vividly told in next Wednesday's enthralling yarn, entitled:

"THE PERIL OF THE YELLOW MEN!"

Chase until after dark. Anything might happen to him on the way home. Lots of fellows are saying that there's no danger now, but I don't believe it. Those rotten Chinese are lying low on purpose, and they might do something awful at any hour."

"Perhaps we can persuade him to come back with us?" suggested Montie.

THE two juniors arrived at Bellton Chase, and they were not impressed by the look of the old house.

In the deep gloom of the wintry evening it looked menacing and sinister. Hardly a light was showing, and, although there was a fanlight over the door, it was quite dark.

"I don't like the look of this place," muttered Watson, as they waited after ringing the bell. "I wonder if Handy is right? And how do we know that Captain Boom is really here? Perhaps Mr. Lee and Nipper have been murdered by this time!"

"Really, old boy, there's no need to be so frightfully pessimistic," whispered Sir Montie. "Hallo! Somebody appears to be coming— Begad!"

The door had opened, and the two juniors found themselves confronted by a strange figure. There was a light in the hall now—a soft glimmer from a small oil-lamp—and dimly Tregellis-West and Watson could see a slim, lithe figure attired in a quaint Oriental garb. His skin was deep brown, and he was smiling at them, showing two lines of pearly teeth.

"The young sahibs require something?" he asked, in a soft voice.

The two juniors were very startled. They had hardly expected the door to be opened by an Indian coolie. For apparently that was what this man was. A Hindu of some kind, or, at least, a native of India.

"We want to know if Nipper is here," said Watson bluntly.

"Nipper?" repeated the other. "Alas, I fear I do not understand! Ah, perhaps you mean the white sahib boy who came with my master and Sahib Lee?"

"Yes; we want to speak to him," replied Watson.

"No longer is he here," replied the coolie. "But here is my master. He will speak with you better."

"All right, Ali," came Captain Boom's deep voice. "More St. Frank's boys, eh? Sink my anchor! What is it now? Come in, you young lubbers—come in!"

Watson and Tregellis-West recognised Captain Boom at once, and they felt reassured when he ushered them into a very comfortable living-room, which was strangely reminiscent of a ship's cabin. There were padded lockers round the walls, and there were low beams overhead, reminding one of a deck.

Nelson Lee was in there—and so was Mr. Peter Jiggs, looking rather ill and weak, with a bandage round his head.

"Sink my rum-rations!" growled the skipper. "There's no need for you youngsters to look at Ali in that way. Suspicious of him, ain't you?"

"Nun-no, sir!" stammered Watson. "At least, not now."

"But you were, eh?" continued Captain Boom. "Ali is all right. He's trustworthy and he's faithful. Ain't he, Jiggs, you old land crab?"

"There's nothin' wrong with Ali, an' I ain't sayin' there is," replied Mr. Jiggs.

"I'm afraid that you boys are suspicious of anything unusual," put in Nelson Lee dryly. "But Captain Boom is not quite the same as any other man; he does not have the same kind of servants. Why are you here, my boys?"

"We came to see Nipper, sir."

"Then I am afraid you will be disappointed," replied Lee. "I am making some special plan, and Nipper has been placed in a position of safety. I do not want anybody to know where he is—not even you."

"But we're his chums, sir," protested Watson.

"Begad, yes! He's never had any secrets from us, sir," said Sir Montie.

"In this instance, however, I must insist," replied Nelson Lee quietly. "Nipper, no doubt, would be only too willing to communicate with you, but the danger is so great that I cannot take any chances. His whereabouts must not be whispered—must not be known to anybody at the school. Not even to you. And the same remarks apply to myself. In a very short time I shall have vanished, just the same as Nipper. But you may be sure that we shall both be safe."

"Is the danger so great, then, sir?" asked Watson.

"The danger is very grave, indeed," replied the detective. "This afternoon there was another attempt upon my life."

"Begad!"

"I can see that this comes as a surprise to you," nodded Lee. "Good for Handforth! He has not been talking. I am telling you this in strict confidence, boys, and I hope you will respect it. These Chinese enemies of mine have become active—during the daytime now. It is therefore necessary for me to be extra careful, and to safeguard Nipper's life as well as my own."

"Won't you tell us what you're going to do, sir?" asked Watson eagerly.

"I am afraid I cannot do that," said Lee. "You must trust to me, and you must now go back to the school and wait with what patience you possess until I am in a position to come back, bringing Nipper with me."

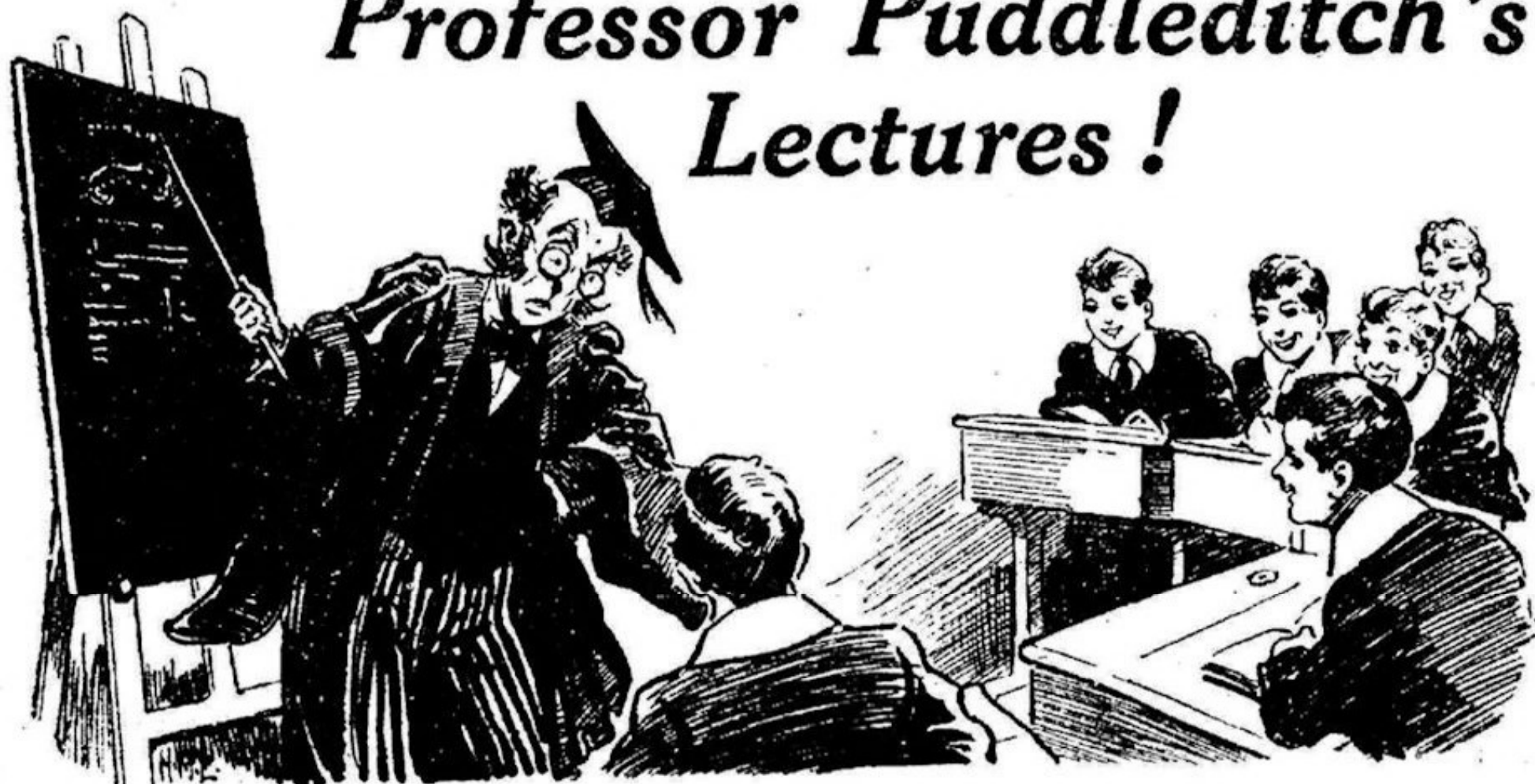
"I suppose you're going on a ship or something, sir?" asked Watson, with a shrewd glance at Captain Boom. "Is that it?"

"Avast, there!" growled the skipper. "None of your questions, my lad! Sink me, but you're too inquisitive!"

Nelson Lee would not give the two boys any satisfaction; at least, he wouldn't tell

(Continued on page 14.)

Professor Puddleditch's Lectures!



The subject of the professor's lecture on "unnatural history" this week is the onion. And when you read it you'll all cry—with laughter!

By Reggie Pitt

LECTURE 6—THE ONION

PROFESSOR PUDDLEDITCH was already stationed on the rostrum when the Fourth-Formers of St. Sycamore's trooped in for their weekly hour of boredom. The lecturer's table resembled a greengrocer's stall, being liberally sprinkled with onions of assorted shapes and sizes.

The boys having seated themselves, Professor Puddleditch coughed slightly, puffed out his cheeks, slung his wobbly spectacles astride his nose, and commenced his discourse.

"This morning, gentlemen," he quavered, "we are going to speak of the lesser-known facts in connection with a common fruit, to wit, the onion. The onion," he repeated, turning over the pages of his encyclopedic dictionary, "the onion—a noun; a federation or coalition of things; a—tcha!—I beg your pardon—that's 'union.' Let us try again. O-N; O-N-I; here we are, Onion, or Tear Flower (*lacrimosus flora*); fruit of the Onion Tree. A comestible much esteemed in Italy, but severely sent to Coventry in Mayfair.

"I shall speak at some length on the matter," stated the professor in a twittering squeak which always heralded a professorial witticism, "for, if we cut the subject, it would only lead to tears. Now, boys! Come, come! You must not be too hilarious!"

Pain rather than hilarity was the general expression of his audience, but the professor continued joyfully.

"We find that the onion was first mentioned in fable by Haroun-al-Raschid, I believe, in his ancient book of Potty Persian Poems.

The particular poem I am thinking of was about a lady, the Princess Al Pop-Khorn, who was so cold and stony-hearted that she never shed a tear.

"Her old dad, the Caliph of Kings Kross, offered a prize to anybody who could make the lady cry, by fair means, of course. Banging her on the head with a brick and other like contrivances conducive to tears were barred.

"After sundry minor poets had failed to move her (although their efforts at rhyming would have made a cab-horse sob bitterly), a cobbler thought he would like to have a shot.

"Making a list of all the funny stories he knew—and he had a memory exceedingly elastic—he sat before the Princess Al Pop-Khorn and rattled off these alleged comic tales in never-ending succession. For forty-one days the Princess stuck it like a martyr, but when the cobbler, having exhausted his stock of jokes, began all over again, she threw up her hands and cried for mercy.

"Her copious tears fell into a piece of Dead Sea fruit, which, as you all know, is hollow, and the cobbler, hastily screwing on the top half of the said fruit, thus bottled the tears for ever, and planted them in the palace grounds. The fruit grew and spread, and the Caliph, after scratching his head thoughtfully, said: 'We will call this fruit an onion, that he who cuts it may shed tears in memory of the Princess Al Pop-Khorn.'

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FU CHANG THE TERRIBLE!

(Continued from page 12.)

them where Nipper was, or where he intended going himself. Tregellis-West and Watson were invited to leave at once, and although they were relieved they were still anxious.

They were escorted out by the coolie, and they could not help looking curiously at that grinning brown man. He was such a quaint character to find in this little village house that they regarded him with vague distrust.

"I wonder if that Indian chap is really all right?" muttered Watson, as they trudged along the road back to St. Frank's. "Captain Boom may trust him, but I'm not so sure! Supposing he's in the pay of those Chinese Tong men?"

"If he was, Mr. Lee would know it," replied Sir Montie. "Begad! We needn't bother ourselves about that coolie chap. I'm worrying about Nipper. I wonder where Mr. Lee can have sent him to?"

WHEN they arrived at St. Frank's they were questioned by a crowd of fellows in the Ancient House lobby.

It seemed that some rumours had been getting about. Handforth hadn't been talking, because Handforth had gone off to the Moor View School with a number of other juniors.

"Mr. Lee and Nipper won't be back for a while," said Watson. "They've gone away."

"Gone away?" repeated Hubbard. "Well, perhaps it's the best thing."

"When will they be back?" asked De Valerie.

"We don't know, but it may not be for some days," replied Watson. "I expect Mr. Lee thinks there's too much danger here, so he's taking precautions."

"Scared, eh?" asked Bernard Forrest, with a sneer in his voice.

"You can't help being unpleasant, can you?" asked Sir Montie, adjusting his pince-nez and eyeing Forrest with disfavour. "I suppose it comes natural to you."

"Unpleasant be hanged!" retorted Forrest. "The thing's obvious, isn't it? Mr. Lee and Nipper have cleared off, and they're going into hiding somewhere. Scared stiff."

"And you'd be scared stiff, too, if you had a gang of Chinese scoundrels after you," said Hubbard, with a sniff. "Come to think of it, Mr. Lee's jolly wise. Now that he has gone, perhaps those rotten Chinks will clear out of the district."

"Let's hope so," said Teddy Long nervously. "It makes a chap afraid to go out in the dark."

Forrest laughed.

"You're afraid to go out in the dark, anyhow—Chinks or no Chinks," he said. "But it's just as well to have an excuse, Long, isn't it?"

Tregellis-West and Watson moved on, not wishing to be questioned further. Bernard Forrest, it seemed, was unchanged.

He had come out of the sanatorium only a few days earlier with his arm in a sling. That arm had been broken in a fall from the top of the Ancient House some weeks since. Forrest had had a close call then, and because he had met with his accident when performing a genuine deed of bravery, Dr. Nicholls had forgiven him his sins.

Forrest was having another chance; but, according to all the signs, he was the same cool, sneering, insufferable cad as of old.

CHAPTER 5.

An Unexpected Capture!

WELL, cheerio!" said Irene Manners brightly.

"We're glad that you chaps have had such a nice feed," added Doris, with a chuckle. "One of these days, perhaps, we'll invite you to another."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The other girls chuckled delightedly. The joke was on Handforth, and Handforth had sufficient sense to take it all in good part. He grinned as cheerfully as any of the others.

They were standing in a little crowd outside the main doorway of the Moor View School, and Irene & Co. were gathered in the lighted hallway.

Handforth had taken a number of fellows with him in addition to Church and McClure; for Irene had told him that he could take all his friends, and he saw no reason why they should not share in the contents of his hamper. In a way, he had had a bit of his own back on the girls.

Vivian Travers and Jimmy Potts, and Fullwood and Russell, and Waldo and Archie Glenthorne were there. Now they were faced with the walk back in the dark to St. Frank's. Not that this was much of an ordeal, for the distance was only three or four hundred yards. However, since the dramatic happenings of late the juniors were becoming reluctant to be out in the quiet lanes after darkness had fallen.

"Well, it was a jolly good feed," said Jimmy Potts comfortably.

"Oh, absolutely," agreed Archie. "I mean to say, a priceless dip into the good old nosebag, what?"

"You'll have to let us know, Ted, when you're expecting your next hamper," said Irene demurely.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can chuckle!" grinned Handforth. "When I get another hamper I'll keep it to myself!"

"You greedy thing!" said Irene indignantly.

"I don't mean the hamper—but the facts about it," said Edward Oswald. "Anyhow, I won't let you girls get your hands on it! I never dreamed that it was in any danger from you!"

"It only shows, Ted, that you can never tell," said Doris, wagging her finger. "We girls aren't half as harmless as we look."

"And you don't look very harmless, either," remarked Travers.

There were many chuckles, and then they all bade one another good-night.

On the whole, Edward Oswald Handforth was feeling fairly satisfied. It was like the cheek of these girls, of course, to appropriate his tuck-hamper; but it was some consolation, at least, to know that he and his chums had had a goodly share of the nice things. In addition, they had had the added enjoyment of Irene & Co.'s company.

"Pretty good, taking it all round," remarked Jimmy Potts, as they commenced walking home. "By jingo! It's dark to-night!"

"Cold, too," said Travers, pulling his coat more tightly about him. "Hope we don't meet any mysterious blighters with yellow faces!"

"Cheese it!" protested Church. "Those men haven't any grudge against us."

"All the same, they may be lurking about," said Travers. "You never know—and mistakes are always possible."

He was speaking jocularly, however, and nobody took much notice of him. The majority of the fellows were level-headed, and they did not allow their imaginations to run away with them. On a dark night like this it would have been easy enough for some of the other St. Frank's juniors to get into a highly nervous state.

"The more tuck-hampers you get, Handy, the better," said Harry Gresham lightly. "And I hope that Irene & Co. repeat their performance of to-day. That feed was first-class!"

"The cakes and the pastries were particularly good," remarked Fullwood reminiscently. "It wouldn't be so dusty if Brewster & Co. invited us to a feed after they had bagged one of our hampers."

"I dare say the girls felt rather guilty," said Russell, with a grin. "So they invited us—"

"Just a minute!" interrupted Waldo, in a low voice. "I thought I spotted—"

With a lightning-like movement he darted to the side of the road, leaping upwards at the same time. He caught hold of a tree branch which was a considerable height above the road. The others watched him in amazement.

Not one of them could have leapt up in that cat-like manner. But Stanley Waldo was the son of the famous Wonder Man—his senses were abnormally acute. His strength

was astonishing; his agility a thing to marvel at. And when he acted he invariably acted with the swiftness of a panther.

Swinging on that branch, he suddenly released his hold, and he vanished clean over the top of the neighbouring hedge, alighting in the meadow beyond. It had all been done within the space of two seconds.

"No, you don't!" said Waldo grimly.

He had been right. There was a figure behind that hedge. He had caught the merest glimpse, and he had heard the faintest of sounds. Only his eyesight and his hearing could have detected these significant signs.

"Who are you, and what are you doing behind this hedge?" demanded Waldo suspiciously.

His grip was like iron, and his captive had no chance of getting away. For the first moment or two he struggled, then he gave it up.

Waldo, peering forward, was astonished to find himself looking into a brown, clean-shaven face. It was the face of Ali, Captain Boom's queer Indian coolie servant!

"I DO no harm," muttered Ali sullenly. "Let me go, sahib."

"I want to know who you are, and what you are doing here," replied Waldo. "Come along, we'll go through this gap. Any of you fellows got a light? I've got a rummy sort of capture."

"I do no harm," said Ali again. "Only out for a walk. I go for walk without getting in trouble, eh? Please let me go, sahib."

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Handforth, as he struck a match and held it aloft. "Who's this? By George! A yellow man!"

"Ali not yellow!" protested the coolie indignantly. "Ali brown."

He looked different now. He was dressed in a thick, heavy overcoat, and an ordinary tweed cap. The juniors gathered round, marvelling at

Waldo's remarkable swiftness of action, and they stared with suspicion at the captive.

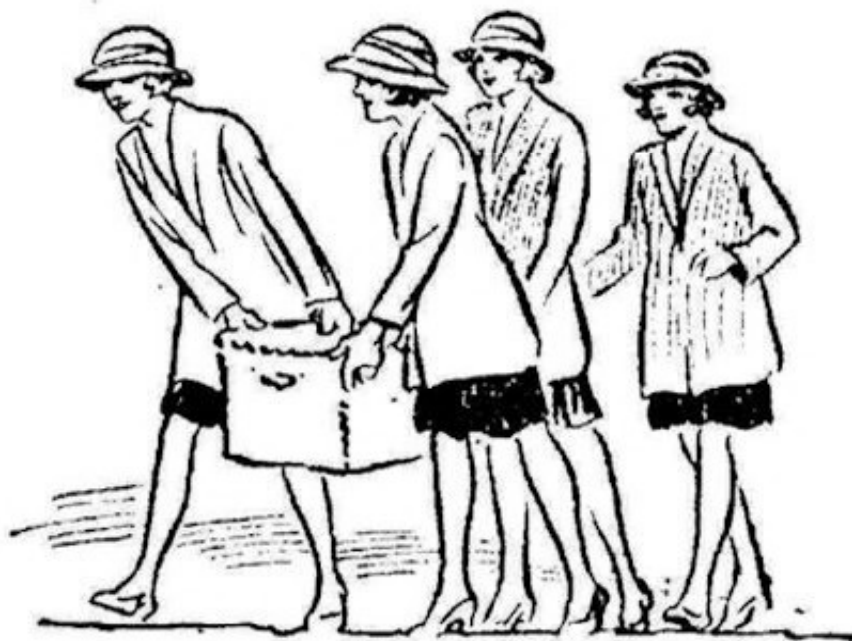
"We'd better hold this man and take him to the police," said Handforth excitedly. "I'll bet a term's pocket-money that he's in league with those Tong men! He's one of their agents—spying on the school!"

"Looks like it," said Fullwood.

"In a word, a pretty foul sort of blister." Ali struggled.

"I do no harm," he repeated. "I servant of Captain Boom."

"And is it usual for Captain Boom to keep servants who crawl out in the blackness of the night?" asked Travers. "And



do Captain Boom's servants wear rubber-soled shoes?"

"By George!" said Handforth. "Rubber-soled shoes, eh? That proves that he's up to no good! He's out on the prowl—spying! And I happen to know that he's not one of Captain Boom's servants."

"How do you know?" asked Gresham.

"Captain Boom has come to live in the district—he's bought Bellton Chase," replied Handforth. "I went there this afternoon with Churchy and Mac. This Indian rotter wasn't there then."

Ali breathed hard.

"Because you not see me, sahib, you think I not there," he said. "I Captain Boom's servant. No harm. You let me go, young sahibs?"

"No fear!" replied Handforth. "We're going to hand you over to the police, my lad—on suspicion of being a desperate character. Loitering with felonious intent, by George!"

Heavy footsteps sounded on the road, and the juniors turned, startled.

"Belay, there!" came a gruff voice. "Sink me for a wall-eyed porpoise! What's all this?"

Captain Phineas Boom himself appeared, truculent and aggressive.

"It's Captain Boom!" went up a general shout.

"And I want to know what ye're doing, ye young lubbers!" said Captain Boom. "Take your grappling-irons off that servant o' mine! Set him adrift, durn ye!"

Handforth was rather taken aback.

"Is this—this man your servant, Captain Boom?" he asked, disappointed.

"By grog! Haven't I just said so?" rumbled the old skipper. "Ali is as trustworthy as my own right hand. Can't he go out for a little cruise without you young landcrabs gettin' your claws into him?"

"Young sahibs not understand," muttered Ali.

He was released, and he went nearer to Captain Boom, who placed a protecting hand upon his shoulder.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Handforth. "We thought that this Indian chap was a member of the Tong, sir!"

"Tong?" repeated Captain Boom. "May I be mistook for a bargee! What's all this about a Tong? Don't I tell ye that Ali is my servant, and that he's honest? Ali knows nothing about any Tong. You'd best get them ideas out o' your heads."

"Where were you, sir?" asked Travers suddenly.

"I? Why, I was standing at anchor twenty fathoms along the channel," said Captain Boom, jerking a thumb over his shoulder. "But, by all the hurricanes, what's it got to do with you? Can't a trim craft be abroad at night without a lot of young pirates holdin' him up and asking him questions?"

"Well, it seemed a bit rummy, that's all, Captain," said Travers. "I mean, you weren't on the road in the ordinary way—and neither was this servant of yours. Were

you waiting for somebody? Were you watching something?"

"Avast!" growled the old sea dog. "You'd better up anchor and set sail for harbour, durn ye! And no more silly ideas about this coolie boy o' mine bein' a wrong 'un."

He marched off, taking Ali with him; and the juniors watched them go, mystified and puzzled.

"Queer old bird," murmured Travers. "Do you know, dear old fellows, there's something rummy about this. I'm not actually suspicious of Captain Boom, but he wasn't particularly informative, was he?"

"There may be nothing in it, but it certainly seems funny," said Fullwood slowly. "Still, we mustn't make mountains out of molehills, you chaps."

"Well, it's strange that Captain Boom should have such a servant—and more than strange that they should both be out in the dark like this," said Handforth, with deep suspicion in his voice. "If you ask me, there's something queer going on."

Fullwood laughed.

"If it hadn't been for those Tong men, and the fact that Mr. Lee and Nipper are in danger, we shouldn't have thought anything of this affair," he said. "Captain Boom is an old merchant skipper, and surely he can come for a walk in the evening if he likes? And if he chooses to bring a servant with him, what does it matter?"

"An Indian!" said Handforth darkly.

"Well, that's nothing," said Gresham. "Lots of old sea-dogs like Captain Boom have Oriental servants. They get used to them in foreign parts, and they bring them home. Perhaps Captain Boom has had this coolie for years. I think we'd better forget the incident altogether, otherwise we might make too much of it."

"Good idea," said Jimmy Potts. "Come on! Let's get back! We've all got passes to be out a bit later than usual, but unless we're careful we shall overdo it—and that'll mean lines."

They got to St. Frank's without any further incident, and it wasn't long before Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West heard of the strange encounter with Captain Boom and his coolie servant. Lots of fellows were still discussing the matter in the Junior Common-room—in spite of the fact that they had almost decided to drop the subject.

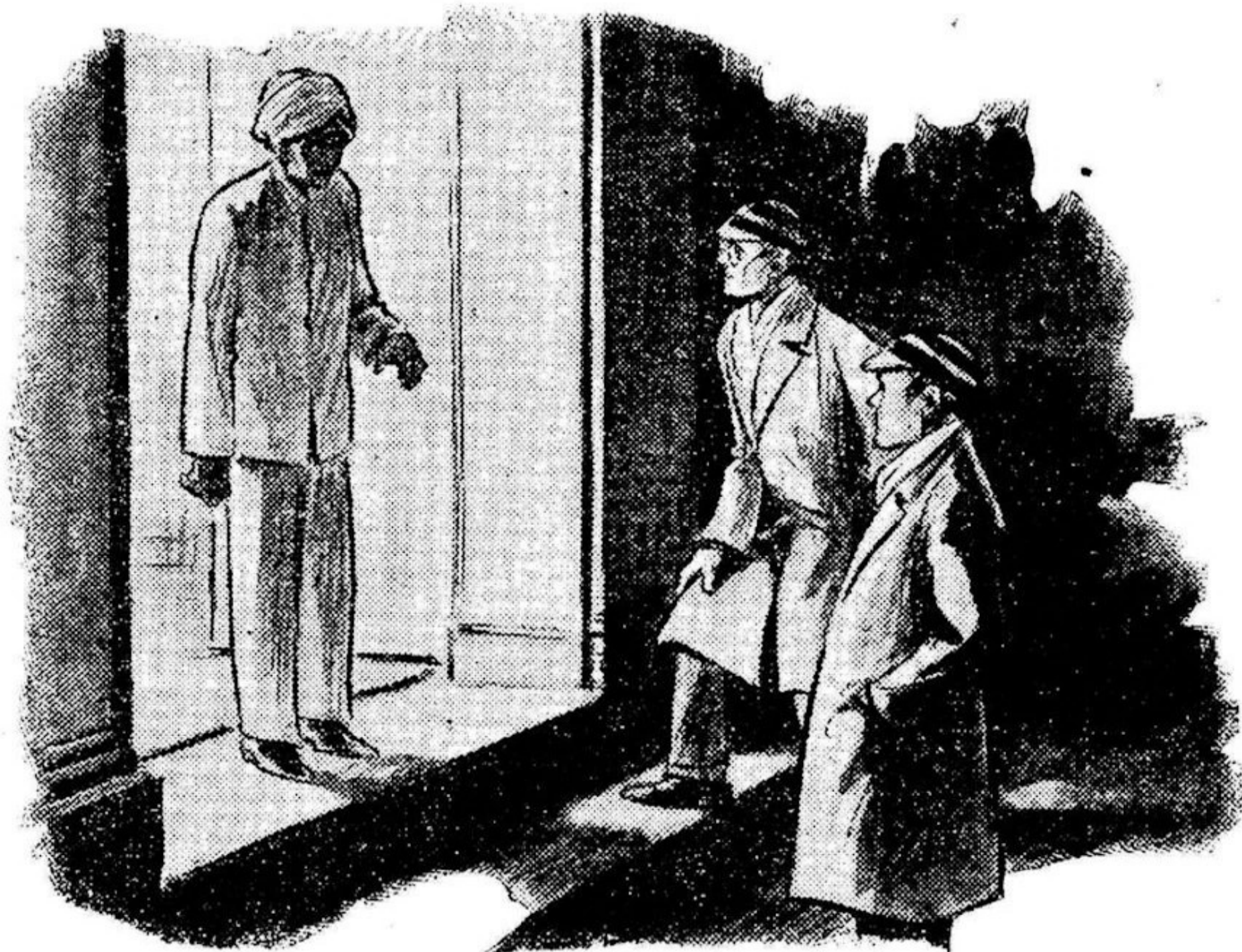
"We saw that Indian merchant, too," said Watson, frowning. "We went down to the Chase to find out about Nipper, and the door was answered by that brown-faced fellow."

"If you ask me," said Handforth, "there's something wonky about it. I'm not so sure of Captain Boom. How do we know that he isn't up to something squiffy?"

"Begad! A ridiculous idea, Handy, old boy," said Sir Montie. "Mr. Lee was with Captain Boom—and that fact alone proves that the captain is all right."

"H'm! I suppose it does," admitted Handforth reluctantly.

"Where's Nipper now?" asked Gresham.



Sinister and eerie looked Bellton Chase in the wintry evening as Sir Montie Tregellis-West and Tommy Watson rang the bell. The door suddenly opened and on the threshold stood a slim, lithe man attired in quaint oriental garb. "The young sahibs require anything?" he asked in a soft voice.

"Goodness only knows," replied Tommy Watson gloomily.

"Hasn't he come back?"

"He and our gallant Mr. Lee have gone into hiding," explained Bernard Forrest, who was standing by the fireplace. "Didn't you know? The Remove is skipperless—until Nipper chooses to come out into the open again. These Chinese rib-ticklers, it seems, have put a proper scare into—"

"You rotter!" grunted Handforth, glaring. "It's all very well for you to sneer, but it's a good idea for Mr. Lee to lie low. You wouldn't like to see him done to death by these beastly Chinks, would you?"

"Perish the thought!" replied Forrest. "I entirely agree with Mr. Lee's policy; only I'm a bit disappointed. I thought that he was made of sterner stuff."

Nobody took much notice of Bernard Forrest. Now that he had revealed himself in his true colours, now that he was known to be the old, insolent Forrest of former days, everybody knew how to treat him.

The telephone-bell rang, and all eyes were turned upon the box. Each Common-room at St. Frank's was provided with its own telephone, and each telephone was in a sound-proof booth.

"Wonder who that can be?" asked Handforth.

"Better go and answer it," suggested Church.

Handforth went into the box and lifted the receiver. A moment later his eyes lighted up.

"You boulder!" he ejaculated. "Where the dickens are you, Nipper?"

"Nipper!" shouted Watson, running up.

"Sorry, Handy, but I can't tell you exactly where I am," came Nipper's cheery voice over the phone. "Guv'nor's orders. Is Watson anywhere about—or Tregellis-West?"

"They're both here."

"You might bring one of them to the phone."

"What's the matter with me?" demanded Handforth.

"You don't expect me to go over a long list of your defects on the telephone, do you?" asked Nipper, with a chuckle. "There's so much the matter with you, Handy, that—"

"Ass!" interrupted Handforth. "I mean, why can't you speak to me?"

"It's too strenuous," replied Nipper. "Be a sport, and bring Tommy to the phone."

Handforth grunted, and came out of the box.

"He wants you, Watson," he said. "No secrets, mind! If Nipper has made any discoveries, I shall expect you to pass them on to me."

Tommy Watson wasn't listening. He entered the box, and grabbed the receiver.

"Hallo, Nipper!" said Tommy. "It's jolly good to hear your voice, old man! Montie and I wondered what had happened to you."

"Nothing much has happened," came Nipper's voice. "I'm only ringing up now just to have a friendly chat, and to bid you good-night!"

"Where are you?"

"Not very far off," replied Nipper. "The fact is, the gov'nor has decided that he and I had better lie low for a bit. Things are getting too hot."

"It's a good idea," replied Watson. "But, dash it, I'm your pal, aren't I? Surely you can let Montie and me know where you are?"

"Sorry, old son, but it's impossible," replied Nipper earnestly. "I'd let you know like a shot, but Mr. Lee has forbidden me to tell you anything. I don't suppose I shall be at the school again to-night, but it's possible that Mr. Lee will be there."

"We've seen nothing of him."

"All the same, he may be there," said Nipper. "I can't tell you exactly when I shall come back, but it won't be very long. Don't worry, and don't expect me until you see me."

"It's too bad," complained Watson. "All this secretiveness, I mean. Has Mr. Lee discovered something about those rotten Tong men?"

"I'll tell you this much," replied Nipper. "Mr. Lee has a plan—a plan for trapping those enemies of ours," continued Nipper. "If it comes off all right, we shall soon be back."

"I say," ejaculated Tommy eagerly, "did you know that that coolie servant of Captain Boom's has been round the school this evening?"

"You mean that fellow Ali?"

"Yes."

"You say he's been round the school?"

"Well, he was dodging behind a hedge up the lane," said Watson. "Waldo spotted him and grabbed him. Captain Boom was there, too. What does it mean?"

"Oh, nothing much," replied Nipper. "I expect Captain Boom was out for a walk, and he was taking that Indian servant of his with him."

"Does that Indian chap usually go for walks behind hedges?"

"Perhaps he was scared of showing himself to you," said Nipper. "You see, Captain Boom must have known that you fellows were in a state of tension, and he thought it advisable to hide Ali out of the way—until you had passed. I shouldn't make any mystery of it if I were you."

Presently Nipper rang off, leaving his chums still puzzled and worried.

And everybody in the Remove felt that there was some secret game afoot!

CHAPTER 6.

After Midnight!

CAPTAIN PHINEAS BOOM listened stolidly and impassively as the big clock of St. Frank's chimed out the solemn hour of midnight.

He was standing about a quarter of a mile from the school, on a little rising point of ground which was surrounded by bushes. He was hidden completely. And yet, by parting the bushes, he was able to see a lighted window of the Ancient House.

The old skipper had chosen his place well. It was so situated that he could get precisely the angle he needed. And the window he was watching was the window of Nelson Lee's bed-room. There was a light in it—a soft, subdued light which was a mere blur at this distance.

The rest of the school was in complete darkness. Everybody had gone to sleep. There was only that one lighted window.

Overhead, the sky was overcast, and the darkness of the November night was well-nigh impenetrable. It was cold, too, for there was a keen, biting wind blowing from the north.

Not that Captain Boom minded. He was well wrapped up in a great overcoat, with a thick muffler round his neck. His vigil apparently had been a long one. But he was evidently a man of much patience; he stood there, motionless and silent.

Every now and again he bent forward, applying his eye to the end of a long object which was securely perched in the bush which stood in front of him. The long object was a big telescope.

And whilst that lighted window was only a blur to the naked eye, it stood out in sharp relief when Captain Boom looked through the telescope. He could not only see the outline of the window, but he could easily distinguish the objects within the bed-room itself.

He took another careful survey now.

He could see a corner of the bed, and just a tiny section of the fireplace. Between them a big easy-chair was placed, with its back half towards the window. There was a table next to the chair, and a reading-lamp was standing on the table, shaded and softly glowing.

"Nothing doing yet," muttered Captain Boom, under his breath.

With his eye applied to the telescope, he watched the figure in that easy-chair. It was the figure of Nelson Lee, and he was apparently reading; for occasionally a page of a book would be turned. It was a peaceful enough scene—the kind of scene that anybody might have expected to see.

Yet, remembering the circumstances, there seemed to be something rash in Nelson Lee's behaviour. Not only was his back to the window, but the blind was fully up. Surely



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he was being extraordinarily careless. Surely he was asking for trouble!

The quarter-hour struck, and the situation remained precisely the same.

The minutes dragged by, and then the half-hour sounded. Still Nelson Lee sat in that chair, still he occasionally turned a page of his book, and still Captain Phineas Boom remained at his telescope, watching with never a sign of impatience.

IT was getting on towards one o'clock when Captain Boom suddenly stiffened.

There was something else for him to see now, and he gazed intently and eagerly. A black shadow had appeared for a second above the level of that bed-room window-sill. It hovered, became tangible again, and then revealed itself as the shadowy figure of a man. Another followed, so that there were two forms perched on the window-sill of Nelson Lee's bed-room.

"I knew it!" breathed Captain Boom exultantly. "I knew they'd come!"

He was impressed by the remarkable patience of the two figures on the window-sill. They were evidently working with extreme caution, and fully three minutes had elapsed before they got through into the bed-room. Then Captain Boom watched them as they advanced upon that unsuspecting figure in the armchair.

"Ah!" breathed the old captain.

Through the telescope he could distinctly—horribly distinctly—see what was happening. One of those figures had raised his arm, and in his grip there was a big, ugly knife!

Down it came—down into the back of Nelson Lee's sitting figure!

A low, soft chuckle sounded in Captain Boom's throat. He had watched the tragedy without turning a hair; indeed, it almost appeared that he was pleased. He took a delight in seeing that ugly knife stuck into the back of Nelson Lee!

He continued to watch, and he chuckled again. The intruders were emerging—hur-

riedly, almost as though panic-stricken. They came through the window, lowered themselves, and vanished into the blackness.

And in Nelson Lee's bed-room the reading-lamp still glowed, the fire still flickered, and everything was quiet. But there was no longer that figure in the chair now. It had toppled forward out of sight. The intruders, apparently, had accomplished their deadly mission.

Captain Boom removed his telescope from its perch, slid it closed, and put it into one of his overcoat pockets. Then he turned, and a soft, low whistle escaped from his lips. It was like the whistle of some night bird.

A figure materialised out of the surrounding darkness. And before Captain Boom stood the little brown shape of Ali, the Indian coolie.

"Well, guv'nor?" breathed Ali.

"Just as we expected, young 'un," whispered Captain Boom. "They've been—they've had their little surprise. And now, I think, it will be our turn."

"By Jove!" whispered Ali. "It was a great stunt, guv'nor!"

And, strangely enough, the voices of Captain Phineas Boom and the Indian coolie were the voices of Nelson Lee and Nipper!

SO the "disappearance" of Nelson Lee and Nipper was not very mysterious, after all! Lee, as a matter of fact, had made a special arrangement with the bluff old Captain Boom.

Nelson Lee had decided that it was time for him to act on his own initiative. No longer would he be content to wait, and to see what the Tong men would do. He was determined to carry the attack into the enemy's camp.

The unexpected arrival of Captain Boom had given Lee an idea, and with his usual briskness Lee had lost no time in putting it into operation.

To begin with, it was necessary that he and Nipper should temporarily vanish. Therefore, Nipper had become Ali, the Indian coolie, and Lee had become Captain Phineas Boom. If, by chance, they were seen in the neighbourhood by the ever-watchful Chinese, the latter would not associate them with the pair who had been marked down.

It had been comparatively easy for Nelson Lee to impersonate the genial old merchant captain. For that bluff individual had many characteristic features—his red hair, his goatee beard, his lined, weather-beaten face, his blue reefers and peaked cap. Lee, with his skill in make-up, and with Captain Boom in front of him, had accomplished a clever impersonation. By the time he had

finished, Mr. Peter Jiggs gazed at him in awe, and had vouchsafed the opinion that he was blown, and that it was no good saying he wasn't.

There was no such impersonation in the case of Nipper. Lee had merely given Nipper a bronzed appearance, and had put him into different clothing. Nipper himself had done the rest—he had assumed the character of the fictitious Indian with much cleverness.

So, in spite of appearances, neither Lee nor Nipper were lying low. They were very active—they were pressing the battle into the enemy's territory. It was Captain Boom who was actually lying low. He had promised to remain hidden until Lee had no further use for his identity.

HOW did the wheeze work, guv'nor?" breathed Nipper eagerly.

"Splendidly," murmured Lee. "Our genial Chinese friends rammed a wicked knife into the back of my unfortunate effigy."

"I'll bet they got a shock," chuckled Nipper.

"No doubt—and by now they are well on their way back to their lair, wherever that happens to be," replied the detective. "With luck, young 'un, we shall locate it later on."

Secretly, Nelson Lee had fixed a dummy figure in his bed-room, seating it in the arm-chair so that it resembled a real human being. There was even a clockwork arm, so arranged that it would turn the pages

of a book over at regular intervals. Thus, in the event of a watcher being on the alert, he would take it for granted that the figure was really alive.

"What are we going to do now, guv'nor?" whispered Nipper.

"We must wait."

"Haven't we waited long enough? Those men have gone—"

"We must wait for a full hour—and if we wait two hours, all the better."

"My only hat! Is that necessary?" asked Nipper

wonderingly.

"I want to be absolutely certain that those Chinamen have gone back to their hiding-place," replied Lee. "We cannot afford to take any chances, Nipper—and, strictly speaking, we should not be talking now."

They squatted down in the shelter of one of the thick bushes, Nelson Lee's ears on the alert—ready to catch the slightest suspicious sound.

"It's a pity we haven't got cars like Waldo, guv'nor," breathed Nipper.



THE ST. FRANK'S QUESTIONNAIRE!

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

1. What is the name of the housekeeper at the Moor View School?
2. What was the Moor View building before it became a girls' school?
3. What is the name of the stationmaster at Bellton Station?
4. Where is the original site of the River House School?
5. Who are the occupants of Study No. 1 in the St. Frank's Modern House?
6. Who is the Welsh boy in the Sixth Form?
7. How are the St. Frank's studies heated?
8. What is the name of Willy Handforth's pet ferret?
9. Which junior at St. Frank's is the son of an old sea captain?
10. Who is the Lancashire junior in the Remove?
11. What is the name of the Chemistry Master at St. Frank's?
12. Where is the lighthouse, the beams from which can be seen on a dark night at St. Frank's, situated?

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S QUESTIONS:

1. Cornelius Trotwood. 2. John Bustlefield Boots, Percy Bray, and Walter Denny. 3. Mr. James Crowell. 4. Pelton's Bend is a row of cottages, occupied by farm-workers, up the lane which leads from Bellton to Holt's Farm. 5. At the junction of the Bannington and Caistowe roads, at the end of Bellton village. 6. The Plaza. 7. Morgan Evans. 8. Rupert Waldo, the Peril Expert. 9. Stephen Parry is a Fifth-Former boarding in the Modern House. 10. Thomas George Parry. 11. Handforth; Church, McClure; Gresham, Boots, Goodwin; Tregellis-West, Fullwood, Nipper, Travers, Pitt. This is the latest formation. 12. Priscilla.

CORRECTION.—In Sept. 28th issue the West House Junior Common-room Telephone No. was given by mistake as Bannington 78. This should be Bannington 76. The East House Junior Telephone No. is Ban. 78—not 79 as stated in Oct. 5th issue.

Lee nodded.

"An extraordinary boy," he said. "How on earth he detected you this evening is more than I can understand. You didn't make any definite sound, did you?"

"I didn't even move," replied Nipper. "Yet he must have spotted me—or heard me. He was over the hedge like a flash, and he jumped on me before I could dodge. After that, of course, I had to keep up the game and pretend to be Ali. Thank goodness, those chaps didn't spot me through the disguise."

"Yes; that would rather have upset matters," agreed Lee. "It was a good thing that I was on the spot. The boys were puzzled, but they were not unduly suspicious. And if our plans go well, Nipper, we shall be able to resume our normal identities in a short time."

"Do you really think that we shall get on the track of the Tong men to-night, sir?"

"I fancy we shall!" replied Nelson Lee grimly.

CHAPTER 7.

The Lair of the Tong!

BOOM—BOOM!
The school clock chimed out the hour of two. The November night had become more windy now, and overhead there were masses of swift-moving clouds.

Nelson Lee and Nipper were still in that thicket—still waiting. They had scarcely

moved, or exchanged a remark, for a solid hour. And nothing had happened to arouse their suspicions. They seemed to have the night completely to themselves.

"Well, young 'un, I think we can make a move now," murmured Lee, as he rose to his feet.

"Good egg!" breathed Nipper.

Their first task was a curious one. Instead of making straight for the school, they worked their way round, getting through gaps in the hedges, and finally coming to a halt at the long shed which was used as a bicycle house—and also as a pets' headquarters.

Nipper squeezed through a window, and within a minute he was out again, bringing an excited little spaniel dog with him on a leash.

"Steady, old man—steady!" whispered Nipper. "No barking, mind! There's work for you to do to-night, and you've got to keep your wits about you."

It wasn't often that Nipper had an occasion to put his little dog to any use. Boz, the spaniel, was as keen a tracker as any bloodhound—he was certainly a far easier dog to handle—and he was remarkably intelligent.

"Now for the big test, guv'nor," said Nipper softly. "I'll bet that Boz will turn up trumps."

"Everything depends upon his ability," said Lee.

Very cautiously they made their way towards the Ancient House. Lee, knowing



Intently the captain gazed through his telescope at the lighted window at St. Frank's. "Ah!" He tensed suddenly. For he had seen a sinister figure approaching the unsuspecting Nelson Lee as he sat in his armchair; saw the gleaming knife; saw it flash downwards!

the dangers that beset him, carried his revolver ready, with the safety-catch slid back. He was prepared for any sudden emergency.

They came to a halt underneath the window of Lee's bedroom. There was ivy on the wall here, and it was easy to guess how the scoundrelly Chinaman had climbed up to the window. But Lee did not waste any time in looking for footprints. He had another plan in mind.

He took a small metal box from his pocket, opened it, and removed a small piece of rag. As he did so, a strong odour of stale tobacco wafted to his own and Nipper's nostrils.

"Here, Boz, try this, old man," whispered Nelson Lee. "That's right! Take a good sniff. You don't like it, eh? I didn't expect you to. Now then, see what you can do!"

He replaced the pungent rag into the box, and Nipper, pulling at the leash, directed Boz over the ground immediately beneath the bedroom window.

The little spaniel knew what was expected of him, and he sniffed the ground eagerly, excitedly. After a few seconds he pulled at the leash with all his strength, whining in his throat.

"He's got it, guv'nor!" muttered Nipper tensely.

"So it appears," nodded Lee. "Let him go ahead, Nipper."

Boz was evidently on a very strong scent, for never once did he falter. He set off round the Ancient House, still whining eagerly in his throat; and he almost barked when he reached the high stone wall and could go no farther. He stood on his hind legs, pawing at the wall impatiently.

Lee leapt up, got astride the wall, and Boz was handed to him. A moment later all three were on the other side of the wall, in the little private lane which nearly surrounds the St. Frank's property.

Once again Boz went off, after sniffing about for a mere second or two. Lee and Nipper found it necessary to climb the gate which led into Little Side, and here, on the damp grass, Boz made good progress, fairly pulling Nipper along.

"He's on it, guv'nor!" muttered Nipper. "He's got it, for a cert!"

"Well, we've always known that Boz has an excellent scent," replied Lee. "And this particular trail ought to be quite easy for him to follow."

"It was a ripping idea of yours, sir, to trick the Chinks like that," said Nipper admiringly.

"I wanted Boz to have a good strong scent," said Lee grimly. "It was easy enough for me to sprinkle the carpet all round the arm-



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chair with nicotine solution. I put some under the window, too, so the intruders had to walk over it. Although the carpet was dampened, there was nothing noticeably different, and it is natural that a bachelor's bedroom should smell of stale tobacco. This scent ought to last for quite a while, and I haven't any doubt that Boz will prove himself equal to the occasion. And once we have discovered the lair of the Tong men, we shall be in a position to trap them!"

Nipper was aware of a thrill as he followed behind the straining spaniel. Action! He and his guv'nor were going after the Tong men—instead of the Tong men being after them! It was an exhilarating experience. The lust of the hunt was in Nipper's blood, and there is no hunt quite so exciting as a man-hunt.

There might be danger, too—frightful danger. If the trackers made any blunder, they would pay dearly for it. These Chinamen were relentless and cunning. They would not fail to seize their opportunity if Nelson Lee and Nipper walked into their hands.

Nelson Lee was not the kind of man to sit still and wait for something to happen. As for admitting that these Tong men had beaten him, the very idea of it was ridiculous. His only course was to take the offensive, and he was doing so.

"Going towards Edgemore, by the look of it, sir," whispered Nipper, after a while.



"So it seems," said Lee. "I am beginning to wonder what likely spot there is in Edgemore. It's only a tiny hamlet, Nipper, yet there has been no talk of Chinamen there. Our enemies have never once allowed themselves to be seen. Where can they be hiding? I confess I am filled with an overwhelming curiosity."

"Same here, sir," breathed Nipper. "Hallo, we're going off at a tangent now. It must be the trail, though—Boz is pulling as strongly as ever."

Having crossed two meadows, they soon came out upon a country lane. It was the road which led from Bellton to Edgemore.

Boz did not seem to be so certain here, for he hesitated once or twice.

However, he soon settled down again, and continued on his way along the lane, pulling eagerly at the stout leash. But within three hundred yards he was off the road once more, padding along over the turf of a neighbouring meadow. Some distance ahead loomed dark, menacing clumps of trees, with ghostly, jagged ruins in their midst.

"The Priory!" muttered Nipper. "By Jove! I wonder!"

Those old walls were the ruins of Edgemore Priory. It was a picturesque place in the bright sunlight, but gloomy and eerie by night. The country people avoided it like a plague, for it had the reputation of being haunted. As a secret hiding-place, too, it had many advantages.

As Lee and Nipper knew, there were dungeons far beneath the ruins—quaint old vaults, too. Down there it would be possible for a dozen men to live in secret—to hide during the daylight hours, and to steal forth in the darkness. And none would know of their presence—none would suspect.

But if they never appeared in the daylight, who was the man who had fired the silent pistol at Lee when he was in the train at Bellton Station? Lee strongly suspected that that man had not been a Chinese, but perhaps an agent. It was difficult to know anything definite. At all events, something concrete was now being established.

Boz led the way straight towards the ruins, but even now Nelson Lee did not take anything for granted. Perhaps the trail would lead past the ruins—perhaps it would lead towards some other place. This was only a bare possibility, but it had to be tested.

"Shall we carry on, guv'nor?" breathed Nipper.

"Sssssh!" hissed Lee. "No talking! Our lives may depend upon silence!"

With extreme caution they followed Boz into the ruins. It was now obvious that this was, indeed, the end of the trail. They halted, and Lee took the leash.

He went back some little distance, and tied the leash to a sapling which grew close to the ruins. He bent down near the ground, and fondled the little spaniel's head.

"Quiet, Boz—quiet!" he whispered. "Stay here, old boy!"

Boz wagged his tail understandingly.

"No barking, Boz!" warned Lee.

The little dog wagged his tail again, and the faintest of whines sounded in his throat.

"No whining, either," whispered Lee. "Stay here, Boz—and be quiet!"

He went back to the ruins; to where Nipper was waiting. And for some moments the pair stood there, listening intently, their eyes busy meanwhile.

Lee still held his revolver, and he was grimly determined to shoot without a second's hesitation. Yet, notwithstanding his precautions, he had an idea that he and Nipper were fairly safe. The Tong men, having failed, had gone back to their hiding-place. The trail which Boz had followed proved this.

And now, perhaps, the yellow men were sleeping, or planning some further move.

Lee could not see that any good purpose would be served by staying on this spot. He had made the discovery he desired; it would be better to leave. There was no violent hurry. Precipitancy might lead to disaster.

Far better to go back to the Chase, snatch some hours of sleep, and then return to the Priory with a powerful body of police. The Tong men would be trapped—they would have no chance of bolting.

And this, in fact, was what Lee decided to do.

He placed his mouth close to Nipper's ear, and when he spoke he hardly did more than form the words with his lips.

"Come," he breathed. "We have done enough for to-night. Home!"

Nipper experienced a sensation of disappointment. He had been hoping that he and Lee would continue their investigations—that they might discover something more definite than this. However, he did not question Lee's orders. All he did was to move forward a pace or two over the old stone slabs which stretched away at his feet. A few steps away were some old stone stairs, leading downwards towards the dungeons. He wanted to listen there.

But he had hardly taken three tip-toed steps forward when he experienced an overwhelming shock. One of those two great solid slabs sagged away beneath his feet. A gasping cry came into his throat, and he tried to recover his balance.

Lee leapt forward, and at the same second another of those stone slabs gave way.

It was impossible to avoid the trap.

Nelson Lee and Nipper went plunging down into the unknown darkness!

CHAPTER 8.

In the Hands of the Tong!

CRASH!

The two stone slabs, falling together, splintered on the floor of a dungeon which was only just below the surface. Lee and Nipper, mercifully, fell clear of those masses of stone, and except for a bruise or two were unharmed. They were both sprawling on the floor of the dungeon, and above them was a big square hole, just out of their reach.

"Guv'nor," panted Nipper, "I—I wondered what was happening!"

"It's a trap, Nipper—and if we're to escape we must move quickly," said Lee, leaping to his feet.

"It's all my fault!" said Nipper, in dismay. "I shouldn't have moved forward like that. But how was I to guess that the floor wasn't solid? I've been in the Priory hundreds of times, and I've always thought that that floor was safe."

"Come—quickly!" said Lee urgently.

He knew that that floor had been safe until now. The Chinese, without question, had faked it up; probably they had loosened the supports.

Perhaps they had only taken this step as a precaution—not because they expected Nelson Lee or the police to track them, but to warn them in case any chance wayfarer should wander into their hiding-place.

Nelson Lee did not blame Nipper for the disaster. It was pure misadventure—something which could not possibly have been foreseen. Yet it was a fact that Lee himself had decided to retreat, and if Nipper had only refrained from moving into the ruins there would have been no mishap.

But even now there was a chance for them. If only they could get away quickly the Chinese might assume that a passing tramp had caused the collapse of the stone slabs.

Nelson Lee leapt upwards, caught the edge of the stone flooring above and prepared to haul himself up. Nipper did exactly the same thing at the same moment.

As events turned out, they could have done nothing worse. It would have been better to have stood their ground, and to have waited. For hands came out of the darkness, and gripped them as they swung—seized them as they were helpless.

Nelson Lee was pulled down, and he found himself struggling with at least three lithe, powerful men. He had no chance to use his automatic pistol. It was knocked out of his hand in the first second, and it went clattering over the floor. He was held down. Nipper was dealt with in the same way, two men handling him easily.

"Do not struggle, my friends," came a voice out of the darkness. "You have nothing to fear; I have ordered my men to capture you alive and unharmed."

"Guv'nor," gasped Nipper, "they've got us!"

(Continued on page 26.)

The POPULAR
Every Tuesday 2d



Edward Oswald 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.

"CHARLIE" (Walthamstow) asks me some questions, and as he's been good enough to say that I'm the most amazing chap he's ever heard of, I propose to answer them. The first one is: How do I know when the dinner-bell is ringing when I'm on the playing-fields? Easy! I just keep an eye on Fatty Little. When I see him scooting into the school like a barrel shot out of a gun I soon know that it's grub time. I am afraid I can't tell you how many miles round the Triangle is in square yards. If it's a triangle, how can I? Ha, ha! That's caught you, hasn't it? Still, I know what you mean. And I also know someone whose foot measures exactly a foot (no pun intended), so I'll get him to walk along the edges of the Triangle, and then I'll let you know the distance in feet.

"CURLEY" (London). Yes, I have been to Switzerland, and I thought it a fine place. Here's a tip if you're thinking of going there. It's rather hilly, so be sure to take a walking-stick with you. I passed on your tie suggestion to Archie Glenthorne as requested. And I regret to say that Archie fainted on the spot!

"AUGUSTAV" (Edinburgh). My lucky colour is blue with pink spots. I've never found my lucky number yet; although last week, when I just missed a horse and cart as I turned a corner in my Austin Seven, I thanked my lucky stars.

PHILIP CONROY (Twickenham) writes me a half-page letter and then says he must close because it's tea-time. You'll never be a success in life like me if you can't think of anything except your tummy, Philip. You're about the fiftieth correspondent who has asked me to kick Gore-Pearce & Co., and I'm afraid my foot is getting rather sore by this time. Still, by George, who am I to shirk such an obvious duty? I'll go and do the deed right now. Sorry I can't send you my photograph. It will be an awful shock to you, I know.

"PETER PAN" (Southport). Thanks for your extremely charming letter. I agree with your brother when he says that Irene is the

best and prettiest name for a girl. I consider Dora is the second best. That IS your name, isn't it?

"A GIRL READER" (Margate). Christopher Columbus discovered Australia. I'm not quite sure of the date, so I won't give it. I don't want to make a silly mistake. I'm sure I don't know whether Mr. Pycraft is aware of the fact that he has a female admirer. Who is this extraordinary person, anyway? You said you'd send me twopence for some chocolate if I answered those two questions, so now I'm waiting for my reward. And if it's all the same to you, I'd rather you sent the box of chocolates than the money. My birthday is on the 18th of April. By the way, what's the meaning of those twenty-two crosses you put under your signature?

W. K. BROWN (Morpeth). There's something wrong with your think-box, old man. Nipper is not the best boxer in the Remove. How ridiculous! You've slighted me and I feel hurt. Yes, I was very sorry when the School Train trip came to an end. We ought to have visited Morpeth, and then I could have come and treated you to a bath-bun—providing you'd lent me a penny. Stanley Waldo is one of the best, and I like him. Only one thing worries me where he's concerned, in fact. I'm always afraid he'll pick up my Austin Seven and hurl it at Gore-Pearce or Forrest.

"BULLDOG BREED" (Crewe). Here's another reader who puts a lot of crosses under his or her name—twenty-eight of 'em this time. What DO they stand for? I'm sure they don't mean anything complimentary or affectionate, because this reader calls me Pie-Face, and says he or she has a weed growing in his or her cabbage patch which looks exactly like my hair. The cheek! I certainly will not give your kind regards to Irene.

EDWARD OSWALD.

FU CHANG THE TERRIBLE!

(Continued from page 24.)

The next moment he could have bitten off his tongue, for he remembered that there was still half a chance that they might be mistaken for the grizzled old Captain Boom and his coolie servant. As it happened, however, Nipper had done very little harm, for Lee's own voice sounded at the same time, drowning Nipper's words.

"Sink me for a slab-sided landlubber!" he bellowed. "Avast, there! What's the game, durn ye?"

"Very clever, Mr. Nelson Lee—but quite useless," said the silky voice from the darkness.

He gave some rapid orders in another language—apparently Chinese. Lee and Nipper were dragged through the darkness, and, having passed along a dank-smelling passage, they came out into a wide vault. There was some illumination here—queer lamps were perched on little ledges in the walls.

Nipper recognised the figure of Yen Sing, the man who had captured him once before. Yen Sing was the leader of these Tong men, and his English was as perfect as it could be. He was rather a distinguished-looking Chinaman, but his eyes were evil and sinister.

The two prisoners were quickly rendered helpless. Their arms and legs were bound. Nelson Lee's wig was removed, his beard was pulled away, and his eyebrows torn off.

"It was good of you, Mr. Nelson Lee, to pay us a visit," said Yen Sing smoothly. "I shall never cease to be grateful to you for this favour. And you brought your young companion with you, too. He appears to need a wash, but we will let that pass."

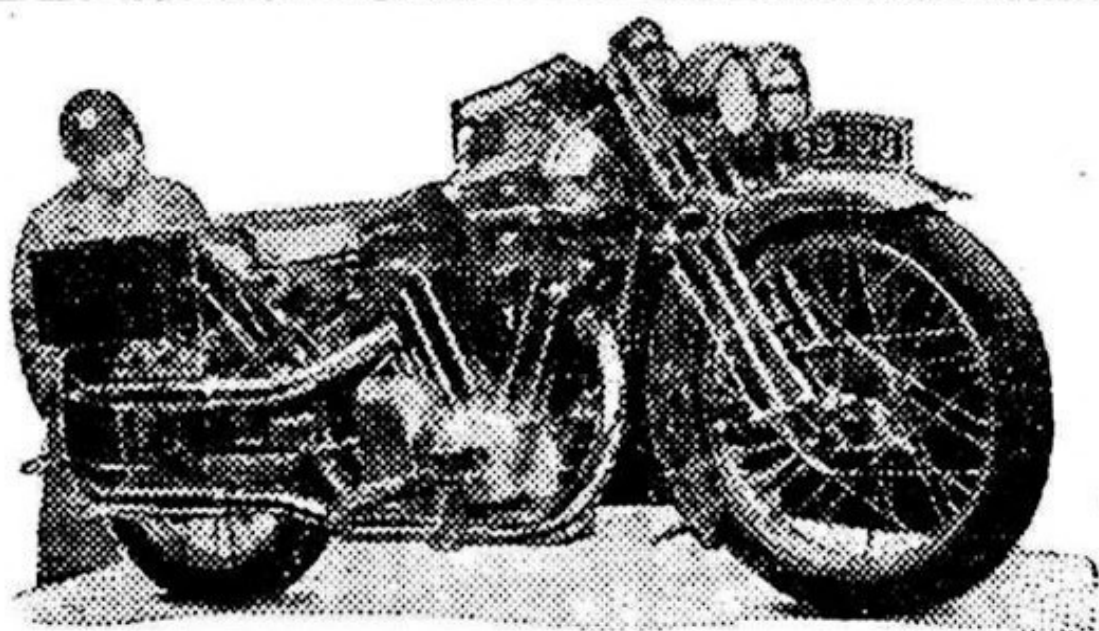
Nipper groaned. They were recognised—they were exposed. These Tong men had got them, and there was now no possibility of escape.

"This call is very unexpected," continued the Chinaman, in his silky voice. "I suspected that you were indulging in some trickery when I learned of the dummy figure in your bed-room. But for you to come to me here is indeed obliging of you. My little trap was not set in the expectation of snaring two such distinguished victims."

"It was my fault!" said Nipper hoarsely. "You can gloat all you like, you devil! Mr. Lee wouldn't have fallen into your rotten trap!"

"Hush, Nipper!" said Lee quietly. "No good purpose will be served by wrangling with this man. Fortune has gone against us, and we must accept the position. You are no more to blame than I am."

There were six Chinamen altogether—Yen Sing and five evil-looking companions. These five men now stood back, silent and impassive.



SOME BIKE!

Something like a motor-cycle, isn't it? It's the famous Brough S.S. 100. If you are interested in motor-cycles you will revel in the 1930 HOBBY ANNUAL, from which the above illustration is taken. Motor-cycling, woodwork, railways, model-making, fretwork, aeroplanes, wireless, these are just a few subjects chosen at random from this better book for boys.

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sive. They appeared to be waiting for orders. They soon received them, for Yen Sing spoke rapidly and at some length. Then, with a wave of his hand, he dismissed all but two.

"I have given orders for your graves to be dug," he said smoothly, as he turned back to Lee and Nipper. "I hate being melodramatic in this fashion, Mr. Lee, but you must forgive me this time. You have been kind enough to visit us, and we must now do our best to entertain you. It would indeed be a pity to kill you at once. The opportunity is too good to be missed."

"Torture me if you will, but spare this boy," said Lee earnestly. "He is not your enemy, and never has been."

"I regret that there can be no distinction," replied Yen Sing evilly. "You have both given me a very great deal of trouble, and you must not now attempt to deny me a trifling hour of diversion. While your graves are being dug, I shall amuse myself—and for you, perhaps, it will be an entertainment, too."

Lee had no doubt that torture was to be practised upon him, but he writhed at the thought of Nipper suffering, too. These Tong men would not be satisfied with merely ending the lives of their victims with one swift knife-thrust.

Yen Sing was speaking to the other two men, and they left without any delay. The leader was now alone with the two prisoners, and for some time he paced slowly up and down the vault without speaking. His evil eyes were upon them, however, and he allowed an expression of gloating triumph to show in his face.

This development had come unexpectedly. No doubt he had feared that Lee and Nipper had escaped him, and now, in this unlooked-for fashion, they were in his hands.

"You must excuse this delay," said Yen Sing presently. "Certain preparations are being made, and I am afraid they will entail a wait."

Lee made no reply, and though Nipper wanted to shout out some fierce words, he held himself in check. Of what use to rave at this mocking Chinaman?

Yen Sing continued to pace up and down, and he amused himself by explaining to Lee and Nipper that their execution was inevitable. The Fu Chang Tong had decided that they must die—and the orders of the Tong were relentless and inevitable.

After about ten minutes the figure of a man appeared in the low arched doorway.

"Splendid!" said Yen Sing. "We are ready. Come, my young friend, I need you first."

He motioned to the man in the doorway, who came forward and seized hold of Nipper. The junior was dragged out of the vault.

"If you are going to torture that boy—" began Lee hoarsely.

"Have no fear," interrupted Yen Sing. "The boy will suffer no torture."

He clapped his hands and in came another of the Chinamen. Yen Sing spoke to him, and this man squatted down beside Lee. In one of his hands he gripped a knife.

"Merely a little precaution," explained Yen Sing. "This faithful fellow will watch over you until I return. Be patient, Mr. Lee. I shall not be long."

NIPPER found himself in another vault, and this one was lighted by sundry candles, dotted about here and there.

The vault was bare except for a heavy wooden trestle which stood in the centre.



Overhead, however, there was a kind of pulley arrangement, with ropes. And Nipper saw that these ropes connected with a huge chunk of stone, or granite, which rested on the trestle.

Nipper's bonds were removed, and he looked round wildly. There was some idea in his head of making a sudden dash. But Yen Sing, having come up behind him, gripped his arms and led him across to a farther corner of the vault.

Here a rope was hanging down from the roof, where there was another pulley.

"Now, my young friend, haul on this rope," said the Chinaman. "Do as you are told, or you will be persuaded—and my methods of persuasion will not be nice."

Nipper gulped, and pulled on the rope. It required nearly all his strength to lift that great boulder from the trestle, but he managed it. He hauled until the boulder was high up against the ceiling.

"Good!" said Yen Sing approvingly. "Wait! Just one moment!"

He reached up, and with one slash of a knife he cut the rope below Nipper's grip—so that Nipper had no spare length. He could only just hold the rope by having his hands above his head, and the strain was enormous. If he released his hold the stone boulder would crash down.

"How long do you think you can stand this strain?" asked Yen Sing.

"It's too much for me," panted Nipper. "I can't hold on to this for more than a minute or two."

"A pity," said the Chinaman. "I had hoped for a longer spell of amusement. However, perhaps your calculation is wrong."

He snapped his fingers, and two Chinamen ran forward, took the rope, and Nipper was pulled back.

"There will be very little delay now," said Yen Sing. "We are ready for our entertainment."

Nelson Lee was brought in—carried by two of the Chinamen. Nipper stood against the wall, horrified. He could not move, for Yen Sing was by his side, gripping his arm and holding, too, the point of a knife against his breast. If Nipper attempted to move forward he would be impaled.

"Guv'nor," he gasped, "can't we do something?"

"Keep your nerve, young 'un," replied Lee steadily. "If we have to die, we will at least die without making a fuss."

He was placed on the trestle, right beneath that great boulder. It swung gently to and fro on its rope, immediately above Nelson Lee's head. His feet were bound to the trestle, his shoulders were bound, and a further rope was tightened round his neck, so that it was quite impossible for him to move his head to and fro.

"Excellent!" said Yen Sing. "I sincerely trust that my men will not allow that rope to slip, Mr. Lee. It would be a pity to spoil the effect by——"

"You devils—you devils!" shouted Nipper hoarsely. "Guv'nor! They're going to let that weight drop on you, and it'll kill you on the spot."

"Not so fast, boy," said Yen Sing. "It will rest with you whether your companion dies quickly. Come! Reach up—seize this rope. Good! Are you gripping tightly?"

Nipper nearly choked with horror.

He had been forced to grasp the end of that rope, which was almost out of his reach. He was holding on for dear life now, and the Chinamen had released their own grip.

Nelson Lee understood, and Nipper was sickened when he realised the fiendish, foul nature of this diabolical plan.

There was no spare on that rope, so if Nipper allowed it to slip it would immediately escape his grasp. And that stone, suspended above Nelson Lee's head, would thud down—to crush the life out of him.

The great detective's life depended upon Nipper's strength.

It was a ghastly situation. This fiendish plan was simplicity itself, and yet a more demoniac form of torture could hardly have been devised. Already the perspiration was forming in beads on Nipper's face, and his arms felt as though they were being pulled out of their sockets. It required every ounce of his strength to hold that stone in position. The knowledge that Nelson Lee would die if he failed now gave him an added strength, but how long would it last?

Yen Sing spoke to his assistants, and they vanished silently from the vault. Yen Sing

himself stood within a few feet of Nipper, his bared knife still in his hands.

"So!" he said silkily. "An interesting situation, Mr. Lee. I think you will agree with me, eh? It will be amusing to discover how long this boy can muster the necessary strength to hold that boulder above your head!"

"Guv'nor," panted Nipper, "I can't hold it long! They're going to make me kill you. Can't you arrange something with him? Agree to anything he wants—anything! If you don't, I shall be the cause of your death!"

"You had far better save your breath, young 'un," replied Lee steadily. "The Fu Chang Tong has decreed that we shall die. They have us in their grip, and there is no escape. Indeed, it might be better from every point of view for you to release that stone at once!"

"No, no!" sobbed Nipper. "I'll hang on until the end!"

"And I dare say you will find a little more strength," murmured Yen Sing mockingly. "Let me inform you that the very instant you release that rope my knife will bury itself in your heart. So you will both die together. Your graves are being dug even now, and none will know of your fate!"

It was no ordinary torture, this. It was the refinement of cruelty. Nelson Lee knew that death would come to him sooner or later. And if his agony was great, what of Nipper's? Nipper had the fearful knowledge that when his strength gave out he would be the direct cause of Lee's death.

And Yen Sing stood by, amused, entertained!

CHAPTER 9.

The Surprise!

BUT there was one living creature which Nelson Lee had forgotten, and which Nipper had forgotten.

Boz!

The Tong men knew absolutely nothing of Boz, and so they could not take any precautions. Yen Sing had sent a man out into the open immediately after the capture of Lee and Nipper, but there had been no sign of Boz then. There had been nothing. And the Tong men had arrived at the obvious conclusion that Lee and Nipper had penetrated to this trap alone.

In a way, this was true—since Boz had escaped.

The spaniel, upon hearing the crashing of the falling slabs, had instinctively known that something was amiss. At any rate, he gave a wild leap, and the leash broke. He arrived at the gap in the floor just as Lee and Nipper were fighting desperately against their captors. If Boz barked, nobody noticed it; the little dog was wildly excited, mainly because it was impossible for him to get down to the scrap. Then, almost immediately afterwards, the combatants had gone. Nelson Lee and Nipper were carried away, and silence reigned.



Led by Nipper's pet, Boz, the St. Frank's party went on through the night. Would they be in time to save Nelson Lee and Nipper, who were in the hands of the deadly Fu Chang Tong?

Boz was a sagacious little beggar, and in his canine mind he must have known that he could do nothing singlehanded. He turned tail and ran. He streaked off towards St. Frank's.

Thus it was that the Tong man, prowling about the ruins, saw nothing of the spaniel. Boz was on his way home!

But he did nothing silly. He didn't skulk into a corner and hide himself away. He did something which was really brilliantly clever—considering that he was only a dog.

He went straight to the wall of the Ancient House, and commenced jumping up and down underneath the window of the Third-Form dormitory. He created a considerable din, too—barking wildly, and in a higher-pitched key than usual, sure evidence of his excited state of mind.

Boz, it must be remembered, had lost no time over this business. He had gone back to St. Frank's from Edgemore Priory as fast as his nimble legs would carry him. And now he awoke the echoes of the night with his frantic barking.

IT was natural, perhaps, that Willy Handforth should be the first one to awaken. Willy was extraordinarily fond of animals—and he had a special soft spot for Boz, although Boz wasn't one of his own pets. He sat up in bed, shook the sleep from his wits, and listened.

"My only hat!" he muttered. "That's Boz! He's outside this window, too! I wonder what's up?"

He got out of bed, ran to the window, and flung it open. He leaned out. It was so

dark that he could see nothing at first.

"What's wrong, Boz, old son?" he called.

Boz barked more frantically than ever. He set up a terrific series of urgent barks, and the more Willy called to him to stop, the more he carried on—until there was a cracked note in his voice.

"There must be something wrong!" said Willy decidedly. "Hallo, Chubby! You awake? You, too, Owen minor? Come on, my sons! Nipper's dog is outside, as excited as the dickens. Must be something badly amiss."

"Why should we bother?" asked Chubby Heath sleepily. "One of the prefects will go down and quieten the little beggar."

"You silly ass!" said Willy coldly. "It's something different from that. Did you ever hear a dog bark so frantically before? I believe that something bad has happened to Mr. Lee or Nipper. Boz has come along to warn us!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Owen minor. "You only see things like that in films."

"It's no good trying to make you understand," sighed Willy, rapidly dressing.

EDGAR FENTON, of the Sixth, was hurrying downstairs with Biggleswade and Wilson when Willy & Co. streaked out of the Third-Form dormitory. Handforth and Travers and Tommy Watson and many other Removites were on their way down, too. In fact, half the Ancient House was aroused.

Boz had set up such a din that he had awakened the greater part of the school. Lights had sprung up in dozens of windows, and people were coming out of the West House and the Modern House and the East

House, too. There was no doubt about it—Boz knew how to do the thing properly.

Mr. Beverley Stokes, the Housemaster of the West House, was one of the first to reach the dog's side. Boz was running up and down in a strange manner. He would dart off at high speed, pause for a moment, and when he found that nobody was following he would come back. Then he would bark, leap about, and repeat the whole procedure.

"The poor little beggar must have gone mad!" said Fenton sharply. "He might be dangerous."

"We'll go up to him and coax him," said Mr. Stokes.

"Hold on, sir!" shouted Willy, rushing forward. "He's not mad! Don't you understand? He's trying to make us follow him. He wants us to go—and I'll bet that Mr. Lee and Nipper are in trouble. Boz has come back—after some sort of mishap—to fetch help."

"By George! I believe he's right, you chaps!" ejaculated Handforth, startled. "I once saw Rin Tin Tin——"

"Bother Rin Tin Tin!" interrupted Tommy Watson breathlessly. "Perhaps Willy is right! Why not phone up Captain Boom, sir?"

"What do you mean, Watson?" asked Mr. Stokes.

"Why, Mr. Lee and Nipper were at the Chase—Captain Boom's new place," replied Watson excitedly. "Perhaps Captain Boom will know whether Mr. Lee is out or not——"

"Half a tick!" said Willy grimly. "Mr. Lee is out! No need to ring up Captain Boom—and to waste time like that! Boz has got more sense than all of us put together! He's come back for help, and we've got to look sharp! Have a look at this, sir!"

"What is it, Handforth minor?"

"Why, here's the leash—still fixed to his collar," said Willy. "It's broken at the end—as though Boz had torn himself away. This proves that he couldn't have escaped from the pets' quarters, doesn't it? And it proves, too, that he must have been taken out by somebody. And as he was on a leash, it looks pretty certain he was used for tracking purposes."

"I think you are right, young 'un," said Mr. Stokes shrewdly. "Good boy! That's very sound reasoning of yours. We won't waste any further time."

Just then a great shouting sounded from one of the upper windows, and the crowd rushed to the corner of the building. They found Hitchin, of the Fifth, leaning out of the window of Nelson Lee's bed-room.

"What is it, Hitchin?" called Fenton.

"There's something wrong up here!" yelled the Fifth-former. "There's a dummy on the floor with a knife sticking in its back!"

"What!"

"I nearly had a fit when I came in!" went on Hitchin. "I wanted to see if Mr.

Lee was here, and I found this thing! The window was wide open, too."

"Mr. Lee isn't there?" asked Barry Stokes.

"No, sir—only this dummy!"

"Come!" said Mr. Stokes grimly. "We'll see what Boz can do. This dummy looks significant—it proves that Mr. Lee has been active in the night."

More and more fellows had come down by now, the majority of them only half-dressed. Many of them were wearing slippers on their feet, and these were somewhat dismayed when the others started streaming off in the darkness. But the

COMING NEXT WEEK!



crowd that went was sufficiently large; and Mr. Stokes, realising that the position might be serious, did not send any of the eager fellows back. They might be needed.

Boz was as excited as ever. As soon as he found that the crowd was prepared to follow, he ran out and sped up the road. When he was well ahead he stopped, and then waited. He had ceased his barking now, and this was significant. It clearly indicated that he had gained his end.

When the crowd got up to him, he would whine impatiently, then run on again, to pause a little farther on.

"By George! He's clever, that dog!" said Handforth breathlessly. "He's leading us to the place where Mr. Lee and Nipper met with trouble. I'll bet they were dropped on by the Chinese, and Boz bolted!"

"Perhaps they're both dead by this time," said Tommy Watson, in anguish.

"Don't you believe it," replied Handforth. "It wouldn't surprise me to find out that that Indian coolie chap has had something to do with it. He may be Captain Boom's servant, but I don't trust him."

"It's no good theorising, dear old fellow," said Travers. "Boz is leading us to the scene, and we shall soon know the facts. Why waste breath in a lot of guesswork?"

And so they went on through the night, Boz leading the way. But not one of those rescuers had the faintest suspicion of the true situation!

"THE PERIL OF THE YELLOW MEN!"

Relentlessly the dreaded Fu Chang Tong wages its fight against Nelson Lee and Nipper. Its ruthlessness knows no limit—with the result that the safety of St. Frank's becomes involved.

And so the Housemaster-detective and his assistant leave the school—in an armoured car. But even then they are not safe. Once more they find themselves in the clutches of the Tong. And this time. . . .

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CHAPTER 10.

The Torture!

NIPPER'S agony was supreme. It was an agony of mind—an agony which gripped him, which clutched him, and which filled him with untold horror. He knew that if his fingers slipped, that if he made the slightest move, that fatal rope would elude his grasp. And down would come the great boulder, to crush the life out of Nelson Lee!

And if Nipper was in agony, what of Lee himself?

The great detective felt far more for Nipper than for himself. When the worst came, the end would be mercifully swift.

But, during the interval, what of Nipper's feelings?

Nelson Lee was suffering the most acute tortures now—knowing, as he did, that Nipper must be in a state of appalling anguish. These fiendish Tong men could not have thought of a more cruel torture than this. There was nothing crude about it—nothing which involved hot irons and similar contrivances. The Tong men were torturing their victims in a subtle, cunning way.

It seemed to Nipper that he must have been hanging on to the end of that rope for hours. Yet, so far, he had not been suffering for more than five or six minutes. The dreadful ache had gone out of his arms now, to be replaced by a dull pain. He was gritting his teeth, and he was holding desperately, despairingly.

Yen Sing stood by, just as before. He said very little during those tense minutes. He was watching, and he was enjoying himself. He was rather surprised that Nipper had managed to hold on for so long. Privately, he had not given Nipper more than four minutes at the outside. But Nipper was made of sterner stuff.

The perspiration was streaming down his face, dripping from his eyebrows, from his nose and from his chin. He felt at times that the weight would lift him completely off his feet. And there was no relief.

What was the good of it all? Nelson Lee almost wished that Nipper would come to the end of his tether and succumb. If he did that, the end would at least be swift.

Yen Sing was standing by, and Lee did not doubt that when Nipper released his grip on the rope the moment would be the boy's last. For Yen Sing would use that deadly knife of his. No use to keep Nipper alive after Lee had gone.

Even in this dire extremity Nelson Lee had not given up all hope. At least, his spirit was indomitable whilst his wits told him that there could be no escape. He tried to loosen his bonds, having a vague idea that he might be able to roll away if he could only free himself.

But how was it possible to free himself—with the eyes of Yen Sing constantly on him?

It even occurred to Lee that he might find it possible, by using every ounce of his strength, to fling the trestle over. And once, when Nipper gave an agonised gasp of despair, Lee made an attempt.

He thought that the end had come. Gathering his strength, he made one desperate effort to topple the trestle over—but nothing happened. A soft, silky laugh came from the Tong man.

"An absurd assumption on your part, Mr. Lee," he murmured. "The trestle is secured solidly to the ground. It cannot be toppled over in that fashion."

"You devil!" said Lee harshly. "Haven't you had enough of this torture? I am thinking of the boy—not of myself. Release

him! Set him free from this ghastly ordeal!"

Yen Sing shrugged his shoulders.

"The matter is in the boy's own hands," he said. "He has but to release the rope and he will be at the end of his troubles. Why should I interfere?"

He would have interfered quickly enough if he could have known that rescue was even then on its way!

But this fiendish Chinaman was certain, in his own mind, that there would be no interruption. Thus he was indulging in this "enjoyment." He might just as well spend the time in this way. His men were digging the double grave for the victims, and while this work was proceeding Yen Sing felt that he could dally.

This very dalliance, perhaps, would mean rescue for that sorely tried pair. Yet, if succour was to come, it must come quickly. Nipper was gasping hoarsely. His breath was coming and going in gulps. He felt convinced that his arms had been half pulled out of their sockets. He hung on with the desperation of the doomed. He knew that he would be killed as soon as he released his hold, and that merciful oblivion would come to him as well as to his guv'nor; but while there was life there was hope—and the instinct of self-preservation is paramount in us all. It was sheerly impossible for Nipper to release his grip deliberately.

So he clung on, his fingers becoming slippery, his gaze fixed fascinatedly upon the pulley over his head. Fraction by fraction the rope was slipping over the wheel—and, with a gulp of horror, he saw that it had slipped for nearly an inch through his fingers. There was not another inch of rope to spare!

He gripped harder, and he prayed that a merciful Providence might send aid.

OUTSIDE, in the night, Mr. Stokes called a halt.

"We don't know what lays ahead of us, boys," he was saying, in an earnest voice. "Mr. Lee and Nipper may be in dire peril. We don't know—we cannot even guess. But it is imperative that we should go forward silently. Let there be no shouting—no conversation of any kind."

"Just what I was thinking, sir," said Willy. "If those rotten Chinamen have got hold of Mr. Lee, it may be an advantage for us to spring on them by surprise."

"See!" said Mr. Stokes, pointing. "There can be little doubt that Boz is leading us towards the Priory ruins. We must go cautiously now, and I will lead the way with you, Fenton. The others can come behind in twos or threes."

"Go ahead, sir!"

"Yes, yes—let's hurry!"

"Do you all understand?" asked the Housemaster.

"Yes, sir!"

The seniors and the juniors were eager and tense. Somehow, they felt that this

affair was indeed vital. It was impossible to believe that they could have been brought here on a fool's errand by that shrewd little spaniel. And they were all gripped by the tension of the whole situation.

"I'M done, guv'nor—I'm done!" sobbed Nipper.

"Let go, young 'un," advised Lee, his voice as steady as a rock. "There is no help for us now. Far better that the end should come swiftly."

"You are a brave man, Mr. Lee," said Yen Sing, with a note of reluctant admiration in his voice. "I had expected you to plead for mercy."

"I plead for the boy—not for myself."

"Alas! I am not in a position to grant you any favour," said Yen Sing. "I am but a servant of the Tong, and it is for me to carry out orders. You are right in assuming that no help can come to you. Indeed, if you are to be rescued from this interesting situation help must come within one minute. For this boy is at the end of his strength. You have only a few more seconds to live, my friend."

"It's a lie—a lie!" panted Nipper. "I'll hang on here for an hour yet! I'm not at the end of my strength! I'll show you, you foul heathen demon!"

There was almost a tone of exultation in Nipper's voice. His hands were numb, and he could scarcely feel his arms; yet he knew that he had got his second wind, so to speak. He was good for another five minutes, at least. The rope was no longer slipping. He was holding it firmly.

A great triumph surged through him. It was good to know that he was so far victorious.

Yen Sing looked at him curiously. He saw Nipper's strained expression, the glow in his eyes, the defiance in his glance, and the Chinaman felt his inferiority. It suddenly drove him into a temper. Until now he had been impassive—calm, immobile. But he was irritated by the continued stubbornness of this boy.

"Enough!" he snarled. "I am tired of this farce! Release your grip!"

"Never!" shouted Nipper. "I'm not afraid of you! You hound! You beast! You'll have to kill me before I let go of this rope!"

"Then I shall kill you!" grated Yen Sing. "I am tired of waiting!"

Nelson Lee, watching, saw the Chinaman raise his dagger. Lee instinctively closed his eyes. That weight was suspended above his head, and he expected it to come smashing down at that moment.

But just then—at this crucial second—a sound came from one of the ancient stone passages outside.

It was the low, impatient whine of a dog! Boz!

Nipper heard that sound, too. He and Nelson Lee remembered, in that flash, that they had left Boz inside. Not that there

could be the slightest hope of rescue. The faithful little spaniel could do nothing.

They hardly realised that Boz actually saved their lives then. For Yen Sing held his hand; he spun round, his face alight with sudden alarm. If Boz had not whined, that knife would have been thrust into Nipper's heart!

With two leaps the Chinaman was across the vault, and he ran out into the dark tunnel. His men, as he knew, were some distance away—farther along in the dungeons, where they were digging a grave for the two victims.

AND it was here that the rescuers had all the advantage.

The tunnel was dark, and there was a stream of light slanting out from that open vault doorway.

Mr. Stokes, with Willy and Fenton and Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West, were advancing cautiously. They had crept down the old crumbling stairs, and they had seen that light far down the tunnel—they had heard the voice of Yen Sing.

Now they saw the figure of the Chinaman as he came out—they saw the knife in his grip. And Boz gave vent to a savage, threatening snarl.

"Come on!" yelled Mr. Stokes, making a sudden decision, and he ran forward swiftly, with the others at his heels.

In the vault Nelson Lee and Nipper could hardly believe the evidence of their senses. They heard that shout—they heard the thudding of feet.

(Continued on next page.)

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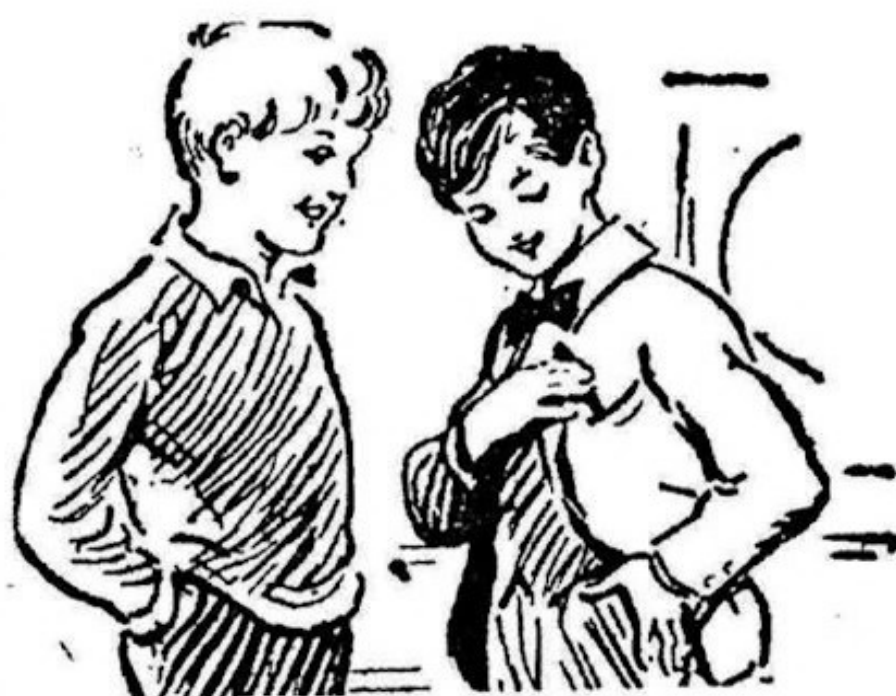
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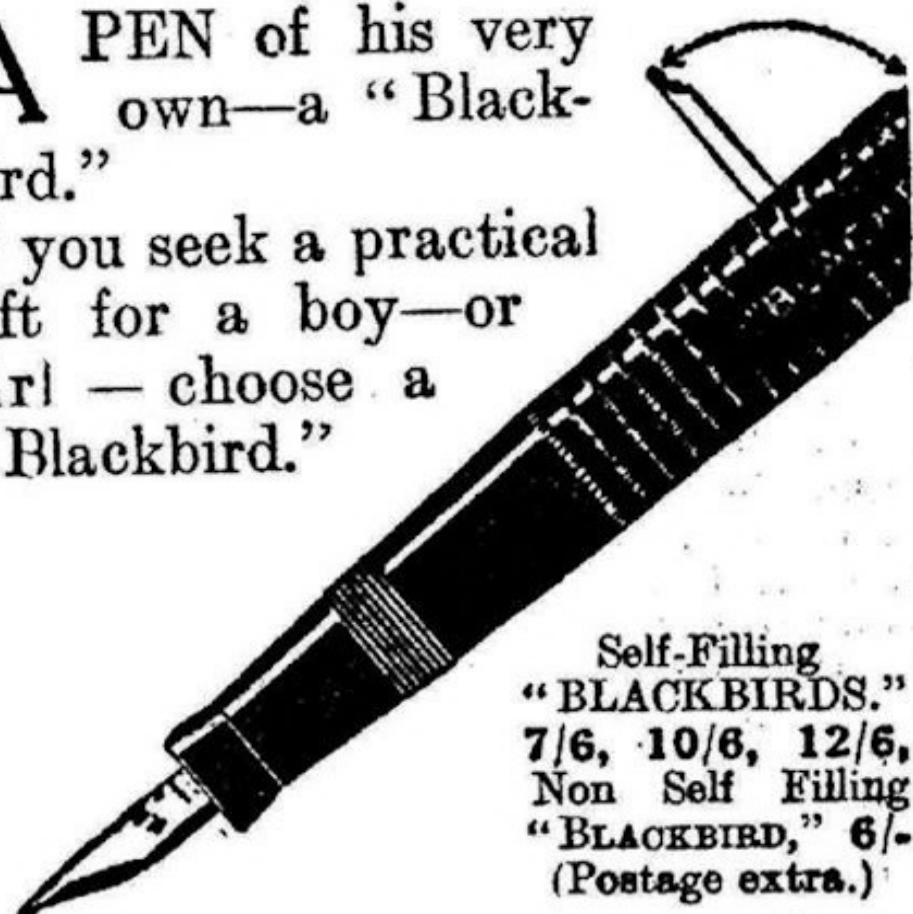
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"Courage!" panted Lee. "Only one more minute, Nipper! Can you do it, young 'un?"

"Yes, sir," gasped Nipper with an effort. "I'm game!"

He had felt the rope slipping in that very vital second, but now, with a last despairing effort, he held tightly.

Rescue!

And they had never believed that any kind of rescue could come! It was almost too good to be believed. But would it arrive in time? It was a matter of seconds now—seconds only!

Yen Sing, in the doorway, knew that he was to be thwarted—unless he acted on the instant. That shout, and that rush of feet, could mean only one thing. He turned on his heel, raced towards the spot where Nipper was standing. One thrust of that dagger, and both Lee and Nipper would die.

Yen Sing raised his arm as he ran, and Nelson Lee felt himself stiffen. He knew, without the slightest shadow of a doubt, that the Chinaman would reach Nipper before any of the rescuers could get into the vault!

At least, any of the human rescuers.

Once again Lee had forgotten Boz! The little spaniel came dashing through the doorway. He fairly skidded round, and then, with one tremendous leap, he rose in the air!

Lee had never believed any spaniel to be capable of such a leap. Boz flew through space, and his bared fangs dug into the throat of Yen Sing. With a wild, despairing cry the Chinaman staggered over, dropped his knife, and at the same second the vault became alive with humanity.

"Lee!" shouted Mr. Stokes hoarsely.

"Never mind me—help Nipper!" said Lee, his voice cutting like a whip-lash. "Stokes! Don't you understand? Go to Nipper!"

In one glance Barry Stokes took in the appalling situation. He leapt across the vault, and even as he reached up for the rope Nipper's last ounce of strength left him. Mr. Stokes' fingers closed round the rope and he held tightly!

At the same moment Nipper sagged down, his knees failing to support his weight. He rolled over and collapsed to the floor.

WITHIN a minute Nelson Lee's bonds were cut and he was removed from the trestle. The rope was released, and the stone crashed down. And now that it was all over, Lee was looking

pale and haggard—a strange figure, indeed, in Captain Boom's uniform and still with some traces of the disguise on his face.

"The Chinaman?" he asked. "Where is that Chinaman?"

"He escaped, sir!" panted Handforth. "Boz gripped him in the throat, but he somehow got away in the confusion. We were only thinking of you and Nipper."

"It is a pity," said Lee. "Yen Sing was the leader of these devils. There are other Chinamen—farther down in the dungeons. If possible, we must capture them."

"You stay here, Lee—remain with Nipper," said Mr. Stokes. "You, too, you juniors. There are sufficient of us to tackle these Chinese hounds!"

Mr. Stokes led a crowd of seniors out, and Handforth looked dizzy.

"I don't understand!" he said. "Nipper's all brown! He—he looks like that coolie chap—Ali."

"There was never any coolie," said Nelson Lee. "Ali was merely Nipper in disguise—and I impersonated Captain Boom. Our plan was partially successful, but it nearly met with disaster in the end."

"Well, you'll have to thank Boz for your rescue, sir," said Willy. "It was he who led us here."

Nipper was surrounded by sympathetic helpers. He struggled to his feet, then went over to Nelson Lee and feebly gripped the great detective's hand.

"Guv'nor," he breathed, "I never thought I should see you alive again!"

"It was a dreadful ordeal, Nipper, and you behaved just as I expected you to behave," replied Lee quietly. "You were splendid! Your strength and your determination and your iron will saved the lives of us both!"

THE five Chinamen in the dungeon were surprised and trapped. They hardly put up any fight, and Mr. Stokes and his helpers had little or no difficulty in making a complete capture. These men were roped together, and then they were marched off to the police-station.

The adventure had ended in an absolute orgy of excitement. The only regrettable feature was the escape of Yen Sing.

And Nelson Lee knew in his heart that the battle against the Fu Chang Tong was not yet over!

THE END.

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GOSSIP ABOUT ST. FRANK'S



Things Heard and Seen By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

ST. FRANK'S, as I have many times stated, is quite a few centuries old, but the Moor View School has never been described by me as a place of any great antiquity. G. F. Bramley, of Hucknall, wants to know if St. Frank's was built before Moor View. It was. Moor View is quite a modern place. Not many years ago it was merely a private residence known as the Mount. Then Miss Charlotte Bond arrived, and the old house was converted into a girls' school. Since then there have been many additions, until now the whole place has been transformed. Moor View, of course, is entirely independent of St. Frank's. The St. Frank's authorities have no control whatever over the girls' school.

* * *

IF a reader wants an advertisement put in our paper, he must, of course, belong to the St. Frank's League, and he must apply to the Chief Officer. This is in answer to G. Ratcliffe, of Putney. It wouldn't be any good his writing to me, as such matters are attended to by the C.O., who keeps all the League records. G. Ratcliffe also asks me if Willy has still got his pet greyhound. I can assure "G" that "Lightning" is as lively as ever, and he is often seen trotting about St. Frank's with his young master.

* * *

VG. B. HILL, of High Barnet, asks me a difficult question. Who is my favourite character? I have been through all the St. Frank's chaps in my mind, and I have come to the conclusion that I have no actual favourite. Two or three fellows are outstanding—fellows that I thoroughly enjoy writing about, which makes them, I suppose, favourites. Willy Handforth, that cheeky young rascal, seems to spring to my mind first, closely followed by Vivian Travers and William Napoleon

Browne and Archie Glenthorne. I expect Master Hill will shout in triumph when he reads this, and ask me what the dickens I mean by missing out Nipper and Handy, especially—as he says—I use them in practically every story. If they're not my favourites, why do I bring them in so much? Well, Nipper is the junior captain, and he must be in, and Handforth is—well, he's Handforth, and he simply won't be left out. It's all very well for readers to write to me and say that I ought to bring in the lesser characters more often. I have been accused of making a feature of a new chap, and then dropping him completely. There's a certain amount of truth in this. I'm not denying it.

It's one of those things that has to be. A new chap comes to St. Frank's—like Stanley Waldo, for example—and for a time he is quite a novelty. Being a novelty, he occupies the centre of the stage. When this novelty is worn off, he automatically drifts into obscurity. But now and again something will happen to bring him out of it, when he will again claim the lime-light. On the other hand, the fellow may never do anything particularly noteworthy, or be mixed up in anything sufficiently interesting to record, and so he remains a

mere memory. Yet he's at St. Frank's all the time. Just one of the crowd. Nipper and Handforth and all the other prominent juniors are always to the front because they don't allow themselves to be eclipsed.

* * *

IRECEIVE many letters from readers on that very controversial subject of their being too old or otherwise to read the St. Frank's stories. Personally, I say: What has age got to do with it? If my stories continue to entertain, that's the only thing that matters. Lots of readers, I believe, are chipped into discontinuing the Old Paper. They drop it, not because they have

OUR READERS' PORTRAIT GALLERY



M. Aye Maung

outgrown" school stories, but because their friends chaff them. I was therefore interested in one particular letter I received this week. It comes from an old lady of 68, and in one paragraph of her letter she remarks: "I have been rather amused at some of your readers thinking they are too old at about 18 to read the Old Paper. I am 68 this month, and I am sure I enjoy the tales as well as ever the younger ones do."

* * *

REGGIE PITT was such a rotter when he first came to St. Frank's (I hope he'll forgive me for raking up his past when he reads this) that the first story concerning him was called "The Coming of the Serpent." It was No. 170, old series. Stanley Chenery, of Biggleswade, has asked me to give him the above information. He must either be a new reader, or else a careless old one, for I have given this information more than once since this "Gossip" was started. He also wants to know if Merrell and Marriott, of the East House, are still up to their old tricks. I couldn't say exactly. I haven't heard anything about them lately. Just a minute, though! When I was at St. Frank's a few days ago I happened to spot that precious pair, now I come to think of it, in a corner of the East Square. They were both more or less doubled up, and they were hugging their hands under their arms. I expect they'd just had a swishing. And this, after all, is significant. I rather think they're just as bad as ever.

* * *

FRANCIS H. BURROW, of Tooting, wonders if Rupert Waldo could be introduced into a Blue Crusaders story. Well, there are two reasons why this can't be done. Although the peril expert's son is at St. Frank's, Rupert Waldo himself is far too busy to turn his mind to football. Besides, the Blue Crusaders wouldn't have him. He'd be too much of a good thing. With his extraordinary powers he'd overshadow everybody else on the football field, and transform the game into a one-man entertainment. I have never heard of Stanley's father playing football, but I am sure that if he turned his mind to it he would score goals at the rate of about one a minute. And a man like this would be harmful to the game. There's such a thing as being too good. The Blues would win all their matches, but this fact in itself would soon ruin them, as the sporting spirit would be completely taken from the game. Nobody wants to watch a match, the end of which is a foregone conclusion. It is for this very reason that Nipper has decided that Stanley Waldo is not to be included in any permanent St. Frank's Junior Eleven. He's altogether too much of a stunt artist. And stunts on the football field are not good for the great game.

TALKING about Waldo reminds me of a letter from Dennis Bland, of Nottingham. He has asked me a question that has probably occurred to many hundreds of readers. Who, and where, is Mrs. Waldo? I tackled this ticklish subject when I saw Stanley last week. He tells me that he has no recollection of his mother. She died when he was about two years old. In his earlier days Rupert Waldo was a circus artist, and his wife was also connected with the circus. No, she didn't meet with an accident, or anything like that, but died from an attack of pneumonia, due to appearing one day in the ring just after a bad cold. Stanley was placed in a home, and it was many years before he even knew the identity of his father. For it wasn't until Rupert Waldo threw over his old crooked ways that he made himself known to his son.

* * *

THERE is really no need for the details concerning study and Form to be included under the portraits in our "Who's Who." Charles Knight, of Kettering, deplures the fact that this information has been left out, but he needn't worry, for such details are given in the Questionnaire.

* * *

IT gives me great pleasure to introduce to you the subject of this week's photograph—M. Aye Maung. This reader hails from Rangoon, in far-away Burma—this only goes to prove the widespread popularity of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY—and he has been a staunch and satisfied supporter of the Old Paper for a long time now.

* * *

LEOARD HILL, of Tottenham, is obviously a football enthusiast. He asks me the formation of the St. Frank's Junior Eleven, and whom I consider to be the best junior footballer. Regarding the first question, I cannot do better than refer him to this week's "Questionnaire," where he will find the answer. The second question is a real poser. Nipper and Reggie Pitt are both very capable forwards; Buster Boots is a tower of strength in the half-back line; and then, what about Edward Oswald Handforth in goal? It is extremely difficult to pick out the most brilliant player. After all, each one specialises in his own particular position, and therefore, taking that fact into consideration, I do not think it would be fair to say that one member of the Junior Eleven is better than another. Leonard informs me that he plays the saxophone, and that he would like to see Edward Oswald Handforth possessing one of these instruments. I'm afraid you'd be the only one, old man. The mere thought of Handy playing the saxophone makes me shudder.

EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

Don't Miss the Concluding Chapters of this Popular Serial, Chums!

The ISLAND CASTAWAYS!

by ARTHUR S. HARDY



The Search!

THE coral reef on which the castaways had found the wreck of the yacht and which Tom Perry had christened Esmeralda for the same reason, was sighted in the middle of the afternoon, and before the day closed they had reached it.

So strong had been the hurricane that it had altered the configuration of the island. Of the wreck there was no sign. Thousands upon thousands of tons of coral rock and sand had been heaped over the spot where Kemish lay buried, so that when Tom went ashore with the party that explored the island he was no longer able to find the place.

Everywhere the island was strewn with timber and metal and debris from the broken-up yacht. But they could find nothing worth taking away with them, so, after they had searched the place thoroughly, they returned to the Patamac and steamed slowly away.

For days after that they cruised the seas, visiting island after island in the hope that they might strike lucky and come upon the survivors of the Esmeralda. Tom had never known exactly where the yacht had lain at anchor on the day before Eva's birthday. He always looked upon navigation as the skipper's

business. Besides, South Sea islands look very similar from a distance.

Yet by a great stroke of luck they found the island. And, having sighted it, they steamed close in and round it.

Eva and Tom were leaning on the deck rail admiring the beauties of the tropical foliage. Then, in a moment, as the ship sped on, they came abreast of the spot where the yacht had lain at anchor on that never-to-be-

forgotten birthday. Just a change of the panorama as the ship steamed on, and they saw the place where Tom had run the outboard boat ashore, with the hilltop showing above the trees.

"Oh, Tom!" exclaimed the girl.

"That's it!" laughed Tom, pointing, and then he ran shouting to the bridge.

The signal to stop was telegraphed to the engine-room, the anchor chain ran out, and the Patamac came to rest almost where the Esmeralda had cast her anchor. The motor pinnace took a party ashore, and Eva and Tom climbed to the summit of the hill whence they had watched the fog creeping up over the sea after the Esmeralda had fired her warning gun.

Nothing was changed, save that the Pata-

Re-united! At long last Tom Perry and his girl chum, Eva Hanway, find their shipwrecked parents—but only after a series of the most amazing adventures which will leave readers gasping from sheer excitement!

mac rested where the beautiful yacht had been.

That night there was a lengthy discussion in the captain's cabin, and very carefully those present threshed out the probable course Captain Stanton had steered after he had started upon his vain search for Tom and Eva.

Was it a day after they had been thrown up on Sellwood Island that they had sighted the glow upon the sea which must have been the burning of the *Esmeralda*? Was it two days, or three? Neither Tom nor Eva could say. Even when they tried to strike the date by using the finding of David Sellwood as a guide, they could not be sure.

They had lost count of time, so much had happened, and Tom could only venture the opinion that it must have been on the second night.

Captain Ibbotson marked the position.

"She must have burned just around here," he said, pointing to the map. "But how far the boats sailed before they struck an island is a problem. We'll be nearer solving it this time to-morrow, I reckon."

They sailed to the position Captain Ibbotson had marked. They were now within reasonable distance of a dozen charted islands, all of which were known to be inhabited. The barometer was high and steady; the weather was hot.

"Pilot," said the captain to Dickson after dinner that night, "there'll be some more flying for you to do to-morrow. I'll sail to the first of the islands we have marked, and make that our base. You can visit half a dozen others in the seaplane, and if you and Ameson haven't something to report before dinner to-morrow I shall feel sore."

Tom leant eagerly forward.

"Look here," he cried, "if there's any chance of dad and Mr. and Mrs. Thornton Hanway and my mater being found, I want to be up in the seaplane, and I'm sure Eva does."

"You can't fly a seaplane, boy," said the captain, with a laugh. "Leave it to Dickson to report, and if there's any news he can fly you and Miss Hanway over after he's located the castaways, and the ship can follow. That's sound common-sense."

Tom's face lengthened.

"Let's all go up," he ventured.

"The plane could never carry you. It might manage three, but not four. And dual control is safest."

"I want to go up," growled Tom.

They steamed to the selected island, arriving early in the morning, and firing a signal-gun as they approached the land. There was no answering signal, no sign of any castaways.

In the far distance could be seen the smudge of another island.

There were plenty of islands dotted about here, like jewels set in an azure sea. The seaplane could roam from one to another of them in no time, and since she was equipped with reliable and working wireless, signals could be flashed to the ship and messages picked up in a moment.

Viewing the distant land, Captain Ibbotson conceded a point.

"Mr. Perry, he said, "it should be my duty to keep you and Miss Hanway safely aboard my ship. But the sea is calm, the weather is perfect, and I know I can trust Dickson; so if you're bent on flying there with him, Ameson shall stand down, and you and the young lady can crowd into the vacant cockpit."

The seaplane was ready, and immediately after lunch was safely launched upon the gently heaving ocean. Eva and Tom climbed aboard and settled themselves in the cockpit.

"Don't you wish you were coming, Dave?" called Tom, as he leant over the side.

David Sellwood was standing up in the boat which had carried Eva and Tom to the seaplane. The ship's barber had shorn his locks, and given him what Tom termed a gaol crop. His straggly moustache and beard had been properly cut and trimmed. He wore the roughest suit of clothes that could be picked out of the store aboard the *Patamac*.

Every now and then Dave would lift his hand to feel for the locks that had gone, and he complained that the loss of his hair and beard "made him feel draughty." He wore no boots, hating intensely the discomfort of them after going without for so long.

"No, I don't, Master Tom," he called. "I'll see more of those new-fangled craft than I want when I get back to New York, I warrant."

Ameson set the propeller whirling, and, to the cheers of all aboard the ship, the seaplane taxied against the breeze till Dickson felt her lift. A moment later she was soaring upward and rocking gently as she banked, and then sped straight away for that distant smudge, which was an island.

Up and up they rose. Soon the smudge took shape, and raced to meet the fast-moving seaplane.

The occupants could see everything on the island distinctly—but there was never a sign of life, save for the shore birds which screamed and circled madly.

The flyers came down and waited for a while to make sure that the island was indeed uninhabited. Nothing happened, so Pilot Dickson took the seaplane up again and sought out another smudge.

And this time, long before they could make out detail, they knew that the island was inhabited. Someone must have seen and heard the approaching plane, for smoke was rising up from among the trees and spreading far over the sea in a dense, black widening cloud that gave a goodly imitation of the burning of the bonfire on Sellwood Island.

"Eve, I believe we are going to find your dad!" shouted Tom.

"And mamma!" cried the girl excitedly.

Tom's lips sought the speaking-tube.

"I say, Dickson," he almost shouted, "they're there! They've seen us. They must have lit that fire as a signal! Let the old bus out, boy!"

"Steady, Mr. Perry," answered Dickson through the tube. "Just throttle down. It may be only a false alarm."

"It can't be. They've fired a signal, I tell you. They saw us coming!"

Pilot Dickson's gaze was fixed ahead. As they neared the island he saw something which made him draw in his breath sharply.

"Mr. Perry," he called through the tube, "they've done more than that. They've set the island on fire!"

Leaning sideways, Tom could see the island lying far below them with a line of foam ringing the beach. It might have measured, he calculated, about two and a half to three miles across—a verdant and jewelled gem set in a turquoise sea. From some distance inland smoke was rising in a cloud that ever thickened, and even from 1,500 feet up Tom could see red tongues of flame leaping madly. The sight fascinated him. Who had lit the fire, and by what mischance had it set light to the dense growth of shrubs and trees?

Pilot Dickson planed downward to meet the sea, whilst the island grew bigger, came swiftly nearer.

And then Tom could see red flames run-

ning up the trunks of the trees and burning great gaps in the woodland. Spreading with alarming rapidity, the fire, fanned by a steady breeze, ate its way towards the shore in a remorseless advance which threatened to reach the sea itself.

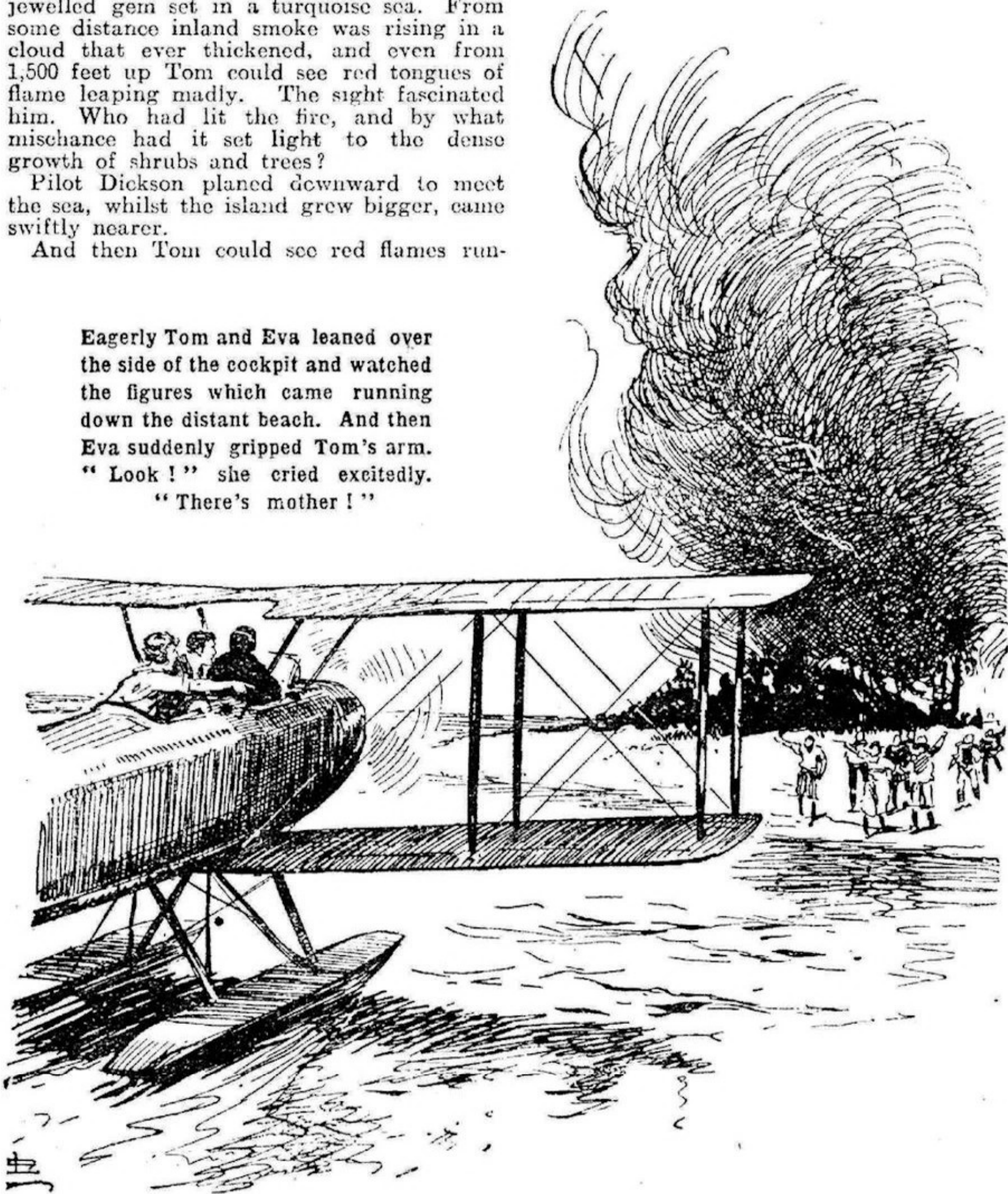
A fog of smoke obliterated half the island and rolled over the ocean.

Eva also had been looking over the side.

"Tom," she gasped, "if there are people on the island, surely they will be burnt alive?"

"They would be safe to windward of the blaze," he answered, "and then there is the beach. They should be safe enough unless they lose their heads."

Eagerly Tom and Eva leaned over the side of the cockpit and watched the figures which came running down the distant beach. And then Eva suddenly gripped Tom's arm. "Look!" she cried excitedly. "There's mother!"



He knew what the girl was thinking, and lightly though he spoke, he himself was anxious for the safety of the islanders.

Re-United!

PILOT DICKSON brought the seaplane down with masterly skill, the gentle heave of the sea scarcely interfering with his landing, and under the pull of the quietly revolving propeller he drew as near to the reef as he dared.

Tom loosened the safety strap, and, freeing himself, stood erect, stretching far over the side. Dickson swung out and fixed the little ladder. Eva rose and peeped over, standing in front of Tom.

And as they scanned the beach they saw some men and women come down from the fringe of palms to the sea, waving their arms and shouting as they ran. They were bearded men, and women with hair that touched the shoulder. The sun had burnt them a rich copper brown, but Tom knew that they were whites.

Some of the men wore trousers, some weird garments made of grass—loose coats that hung like over large macintoshes from their shoulders, giving them a laughable appearance.

Some wore wide-brimmed home-made hats, built out of dried leaves. The women, almost without exception, were clad in shapeless dresses made of grass.

They were shouting in English, cheering madly. And back of them Tom could see the advance of the ruddy glow, eating its way towards the palm-fringed beach. The heat of the fire was stifling. Even at that distance Tom could feel the perspiration trickling down his spine.

The men and women formed a line on the edge of the lapping sea, shouting a wild yet happy chorus.

"Tom," shouted Eva excitedly, "there's mother!"

She was pointing at a woman who had waded almost knee deep into the sea. Eva was right. The woman was Mrs. Thornton Hanway, and one of those bearded men in outsize garments must be Thornton Hanway himself, Tom supposed, and another he dared to hope would be his father.

The women were easy to identify, having no disguising hair upon their sunburnt faces, and Tom swiftly singled out his mother.

Disdaining the ladder, he opened the door of the cockpit, and, throwing up his arms, leapt in a wide arc clear of the floats to the sea. Coming up deftly from the dive, he raced with swinging arms and flashing hands towards the shore. Breathless, he scrambled out of the sea, raced up the beach and threw his arms around the neck of his mother.

"Mater, dear old mater!" he cried huskily. "You're safe—and we're safe! Where's the dear old dad?"

Holding his mother away at arm's length, he saw tears streaming down her cheeks.

"Tom!" she shrieked. "You're alive! Oh, Tom!" And, toppling forward, she fell fainting into his arms.

The miracle of his coming by seaplane, bringing with him the promise of rescue, had been too much. But the primitive life upon the island had hardened her, and by the time George Perry had come up, his lips set tight and his eyes moist, to grip the boy by the hand, she had almost recovered.

The man and the boy gripped hands convulsively.

"Hallo, pater!"

"Hallo, son!"

George Perry, whose appearance was grotesquely suitable to the 5th of November, cleared his throat and forced a grin, hiding his heartfelt emotion with difficulty. For a few moments there was silence—a tense, emotional silence as the three sought fully to grasp the meaning of this wonderful reunion. Then:

"Tom," cried Mr. Perry, "where's Eve?"

Tom laughed happily.

"Eva's aboard the seaplane, dad," he cried.

But Eva was not. Following Tom's example, and heedless of any man-eating shark that might have been scouring the island waters, she, too, had dived from the seaplane into the sea and followed Tom ashore in a masterly crawl that must have put up a world's record time at home.

Dripping as she ran, she dashed into her mother's arms. Then, after a few moments, Eva looked around for her father. He had recognised her, and his face was white beneath the copper tan as he came up.

"How are you, darling?" he cried as he hugged her to him and kissed her fondly, then stepped back to gaze upon her adoringly and admiringly. The girl's lips twitched as she looked at her stalwart father, who had grown bigger and broader. His long, lank hair and the straggly beard and moustache that marred the strength of his ordinarily clean-shaven face, tickled her sense of the ridiculous, and she laughed uproariously.

"Oh, dad, darling," she cried, "what wouldn't I give to see you strolling along Broadway looking just like that?"

"Eve," he answered, waving a finger at her, "it isn't fair to make fun of your old dad. As for Broadway and Wall Street, see me wake 'em up when I get back."

The 'plane floated close in shore. Pilot Dickson called out from the float as he clung on.

"You folk all from the wreck of the Esmeralda?"

"All," replied Captain Stanton, still wearing the remains of his uniform, "save the darn skunks who left us stranded here."

"Don't worry, cap'n," shouted the pilot. "Barber, Cribb and the whole gang are under arrest and awaiting trial."

In the excitement of the appearance of the rescue party and the reunion everybody

seemed to have forgotten the raging fire. But now they all realised their danger.

The heat was growing in intensity. Up above the beach the coco-nut palms were flaming like torches, and one came crashing down. The forest behind was a roaring inferno.

Perforce the castaways had to wade into the sea up to the middle and plunge to cool themselves.

"How are we going to get away from here?" asked Thornton Hanway.

"I'm flying back to fetch the rescue ship now," called out Dickson.

Less than half an hour later the seaplane was a speck in the far distance, racing back to the liner, whilst Eva and Tom and the castaways were marching along the sandy beach to get as far away from the fire as was possible.

The Patamac steamed up in the cool of the waning day, and her boats took the castaways aboard. Before hair-cutting and shaving and dressing was finished, and whilst a special dinner fit for the civilised was being prepared, the Patamac was heading for home under full steam, the sparks that crackled at the wireless heads flashing the story of the rescue of the castaways to all the world.

The story of the island castaways is ended. You will, of course, remember the stir the story made when David Sellwood and Tom Perry told it in the "Saturday Evening Post," and how the sensational talkie film founded upon their adventures was made.

Sellwood and Tom became dollar million-

aires over that, and Eva has since made her fame as a film star.

The day Tom and Eva were married, and before they started for their honeymoon, Tom drove the girl to the Jolly Sailor inn. And there, in a sanded and rafted bar-parlour which was filled with smoke, he found David Sellwood, well groomed but wearing a pilot suit, looking no more than fifty, and as strong as a British oak.

He was yarning to a group of seafaring men who had gathered around him, and who were hanging intently on his every word.

With a joyful wave of the pipe he was smoking, David leapt to meet them.

"Good luck go with you and Master Tom always, missy," said the old whaler as he bared his head. "You must forgive me for not being at the wedding, but I'm shy of company, as you know."

"What yarn was Dave spinning you?" asked Tom, as he looked round at the grinning faces.

"I was giving them a crack about my shipmate, Daniel Kemish, the staunchest, best-hearted, most loyal pal a man ever had," boomed David.

"Eve," said Tom a while later as he helped the girl into their car, "you heard what David said about Kemish? I am more than ever glad I never showed him Daniel's letter."

He steered the car through the maze of narrow streets to more open ways, his blue eyes fixed upon the ribbon of the road ahead. And as the girl's hand crept to his arm and rested gently there, he smiled happily.

THE END.

AMAZING NEW MYSTERY AND DETECTIVE SERIAL STARTING NEXT WEEK!

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gasping. Full of swift action and thrilling situations, readers will simply revel in this magnificent mystery and detective yarn. On no account must you miss the opening chapters of

THE FOUR-LEGGED EAGLE!

which will appear next Wednesday, ehums!

PROFESSOR PUDDLEDITCH'S LECTURES

(Continued from page 13.)

"No, Thompkins minor," said the professor, "the cobbler did not marry the princess. He was promoted to be the Caliph's jester, but the Caliph, soon becoming fed up with the man's jokes, one day kicked him down the seven hundred steps leading to the front door of the palace, so that the cobbler, taking the last gross of steps on his left ear, died from earache."

The professor absent-mindedly placed his spectacles in the tumbler of water and tried to drink an onion. Discovering his error, he picked up the tumbler and nearly swallowed his spectacles. After drying them on his beard, he stroked his handkerchief and continued:

"One of the several known species of onion is termed the Spanish onion. Sir Walter Raleigh is said to have first introduced this into England, having captured a cargo from a galleon sailing on the Spanish Main.

"Spring onions, another species, are migratory, and, like birds, appear to move about in flocks or bunches. You never see a spring onion all on its own. They appear in this country in early spring as the name implies.

"During summer they go south to Italy where they are no doubt called summer onions, or, in the vernacular, 'garlic da sostenuto,' because of the long time the taste is left in the mouth of those who eat them.

"These somewhat fragile flowers then winter in the tropics at a place called Depot

(pronounced de-pot). This is nigger language for cauldron, and you will note there is no circumflex accent over the letter 'c'; therefore the final 't' is sounded as in banana.

"The queer thing about these onions is that they all have whiskers; even the smallest baby onion has this hirsute appendage. Most peculiar!

"Then there is the leek, which seems to be a giant spring onion. The leek's chief claim to fame is that it was the national emblem of Wales whateffer. But now, look you, they have discarded the leek and adopted the daffodil. Indeed, and to goodness, I do not know why then, and wherefore.

"It is recorded by the Welsh bard, Taffy ap Pull, in his 'Songs of the Celtic Crusaders,' that leeks were grown in those days to such a size that they were used as weapons by the warriors of Wales, and in the year Eleven-hundred-dot-and-carry-one many a slain Saracen was found with a mashed leek bedaubing his dusky phiz.

"A leek may be used for a buttonhole—but is not.

"And now," said the professor, lapsing into the Anglo-Welsh tongue, "you may all dismiss, look you, indeed and for shame, why not?"

On the last word he barged against the table and sent his collection of onions rolling all over the platform. Needless to say, he trod on one and slipped with one foot; trod on another and slipped with both feet, and then gave as astonishing an exhibition of imitation roller skating as you could wish to see. The last roll sent him crashing over the edge, and he made his exit followed by showers of Tear Flowers.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED

A. A. Gavin, 100, Swanston Street, Geelong, Victoria, **Australia**, offers N.L.L., old and new series.

Norman S. Wilson, Jr., 29, Monomeeth Street, Bexley, N.S.W., **Australia**, wishes to exchange back numbers of the N.L.L.

F. Harden Codd, "St. Ronan's," 24, MacLeay Street, Potts Point, Sydney, **Australia**, wants correspondents interested in stamps.

Eddie Paine, 118, Plymouth Grove, Montreal, **Canada**, wants to hear from stamp collectors.

J. W. Pendry, Dursley, Dunsdon Avenue, **Guildford**, wants N.L.L. old series 100-105, and new series 120-148.

Leonard Saunders, 71, Manners Road, **Southsea**, wants correspondents.

Edward Greasley, 82, Chapel Street, **Ipsstock**, Leicester, wants correspondents; interested in woodwork.

William Philp, 15, Leeds Street, Linwood, Christchurch, **New Zealand**, desires correspondents in the Empire.

Sidney Raymond Harris, Wearside, Stacey Street, Bankstown, Sydney, N.S.W., **Australia**, would like to hear from stamp collectors.

A. Barnard, The Downs Hospital for Children, C. Block, **Sutton**, Surrey, wants to hear from stamp collectors.

Nelson Fairhurst, 1, School Lane, Standish, **Wigan**, Lanes., wants readers in British Columbia—Vancouver.

A. Gotham, 48, Bernard Road, Edgbaston, **Birmingham**, desires football correspondents in his district.

W. Warner, 56, East Grove Road, St. Leonard's, **Exeter**, Devon, wants to hear from readers in his district.

Leslie A. W. Bowden, "St. Audries," Little John's Cross, Ide, **Exeter**, wants to hear from readers in his district. He is forming a club.

Members urgently desired for the World-Wide Correspondence Club, which aims to foster International Fellowship. Apply: Alan R. Lambourn, Hon. Sec. World-Wide Correspondence Club, The Corner Stores, Shinfield, **Reading**, Berks, England. Specially suitable for stamp collectors.

G. Sithabaram, Treasury, Singapore, **Straits Settlements**, wants correspondents in United Kingdom, Australia, America, and Africa.

Arthur Thomas, 40, Searl Street, Petersham, Sydney, N.S.W., **Australia**, desires back numbers of the N.L.L.

Miss Irene Eastland, 77, Radnor Park Road, **Folkestone**, wants correspondents.

A. W. Kerry, The Green, Stowupland, **Stowmarket**, Suffolk, desires correspondents.

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.*

A New Correspondence Club!

THIS week I am pleased to announce that I have had a letter from Sidney James Humphrey, of Leyton, London, who tells me that he wishes to form a correspondence club.

That's just splendid. There's not a better means of cementing friendship among members of the St. Frank's League than by a really successful correspondence club.

Sidney goes on to say that he proposes to call this club the Greater London International Correspondence Club. Anybody who is interested in the scheme—and Sidney hopes there'll be plenty!—should write to him at 132, Farmer Road, Leyton, London, E.10, enclosing a stamped and addressed envelope, and he will be pleased to send all inquirers full particulars of the club and how to join it.

Here's a chance for those of you who do not belong to a correspondence club at the moment, but who are keen to do so. And I take this opportunity of wishing Sidney the best of luck!

She wants to be a Stewardess!

ALICE DERRIMAN, of West Norwood, who has only just joined the St. Frank's League—although she confesses that she has been a reader of the Old Paper for over ten years—writes asking for advice. She is keen to become a stewardess on board a liner. This is a subject that might possibly interest many other readers—including boys who have ideas of becoming ship's stewards, for the principles

are the same. I have replied by post, but I propose to deal briefly with the question here: My chum should write or apply personally to the head offices or agents of any of the shipping companies, the addresses of which will be found in the telephone directory. By the way, Alice, do you know that you have to be twenty-eight years of age before you can become a stewardess? This is a fact; and many of the companies have big waiting lists, so you will be well advised to write now with the idea of getting your name on their books.

THIS WEEK'S WINNING LETTER

DEAR CHIEF,—I am sure you will be interested to hear that through my two advertisements which appeared in the "Nelson Lee Library," my pen-friends have increased in number to such an extent that I have found it necessary to fix up a filing system. Hardly a mail goes by without bringing me in a letter from a new correspondent. Last week I received a letter for the first time from France.

I find that the Australians are exceptionally keen on corresponding—more than twenty-five per cent of my letters are from them.

Your staunch League-ite,
(Signed) S. NEVILLE G. KIRKMAN,
S.F.L. No. 7547.

(For this interesting letter, S. Neville G. Kirkman, Natal, South Africa, has been awarded a useful pocket wallet.)

Harry Williams—
Please Note!

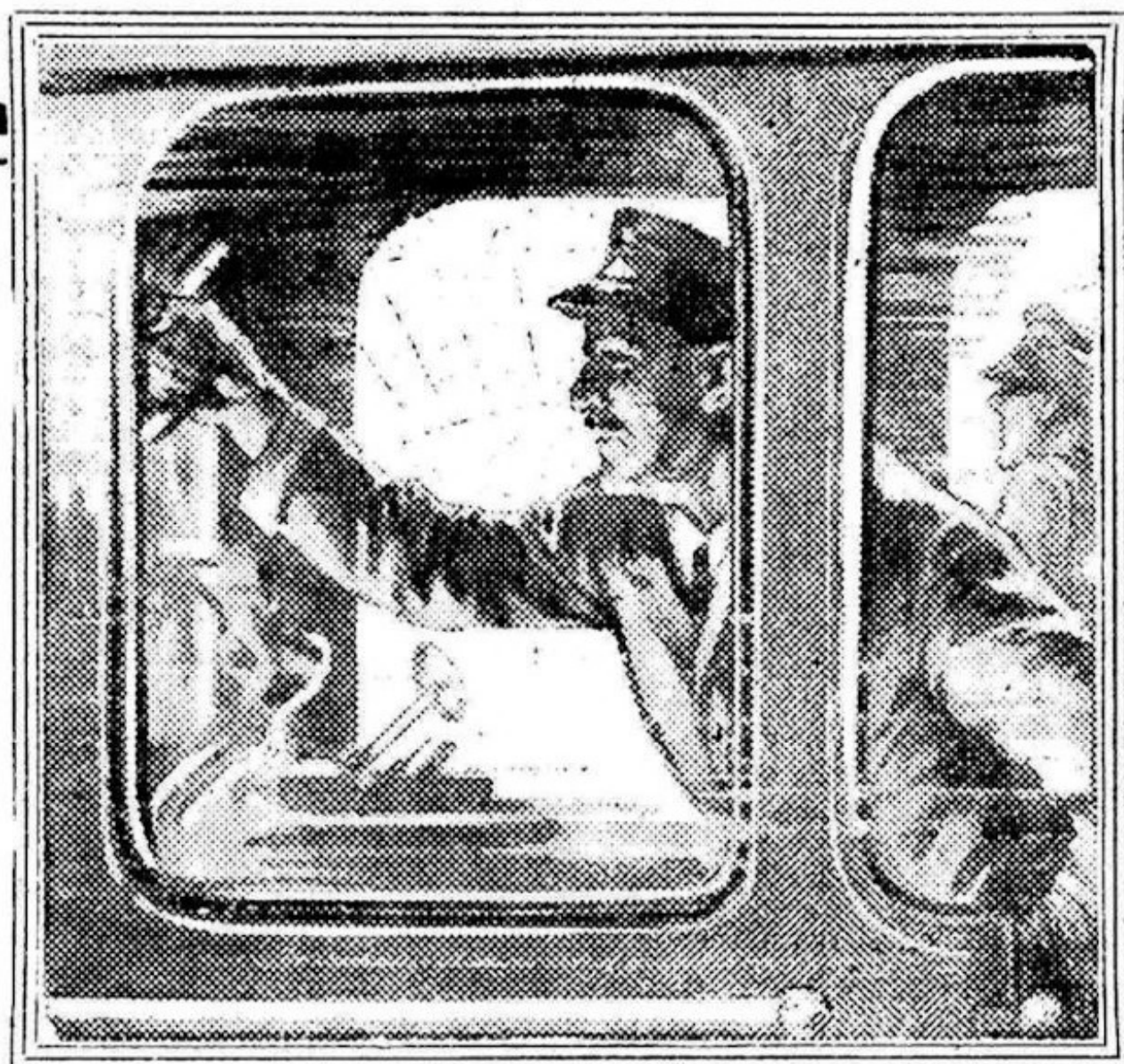
THOMAS WILLIAM HUET, of 58, Union Street, West Kogarah, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, has written telling me that about eighteen months ago he heard from a reader named Harry Williams, of Stamford Bridge or Stamford Hill, but has, unfortunately, lost the latter's address. He is desirous of hearing from this reader again, so if Harry Williams is reading this Chat—

well, Thomas' address is mentioned above.

Concerning Manchester!

HERE'S an item which will interest secretaries of football clubs in the Manchester district. The Mossville F.C. has a few open dates, and will be pleased to play any local junior club; age 14½-15. Secretaries should write to: Manager, 94, Crosscliffe Street, Moss Side, Manchester.

THE CHIEF OFFICER.



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D.R.

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