

THE NELSON LEE

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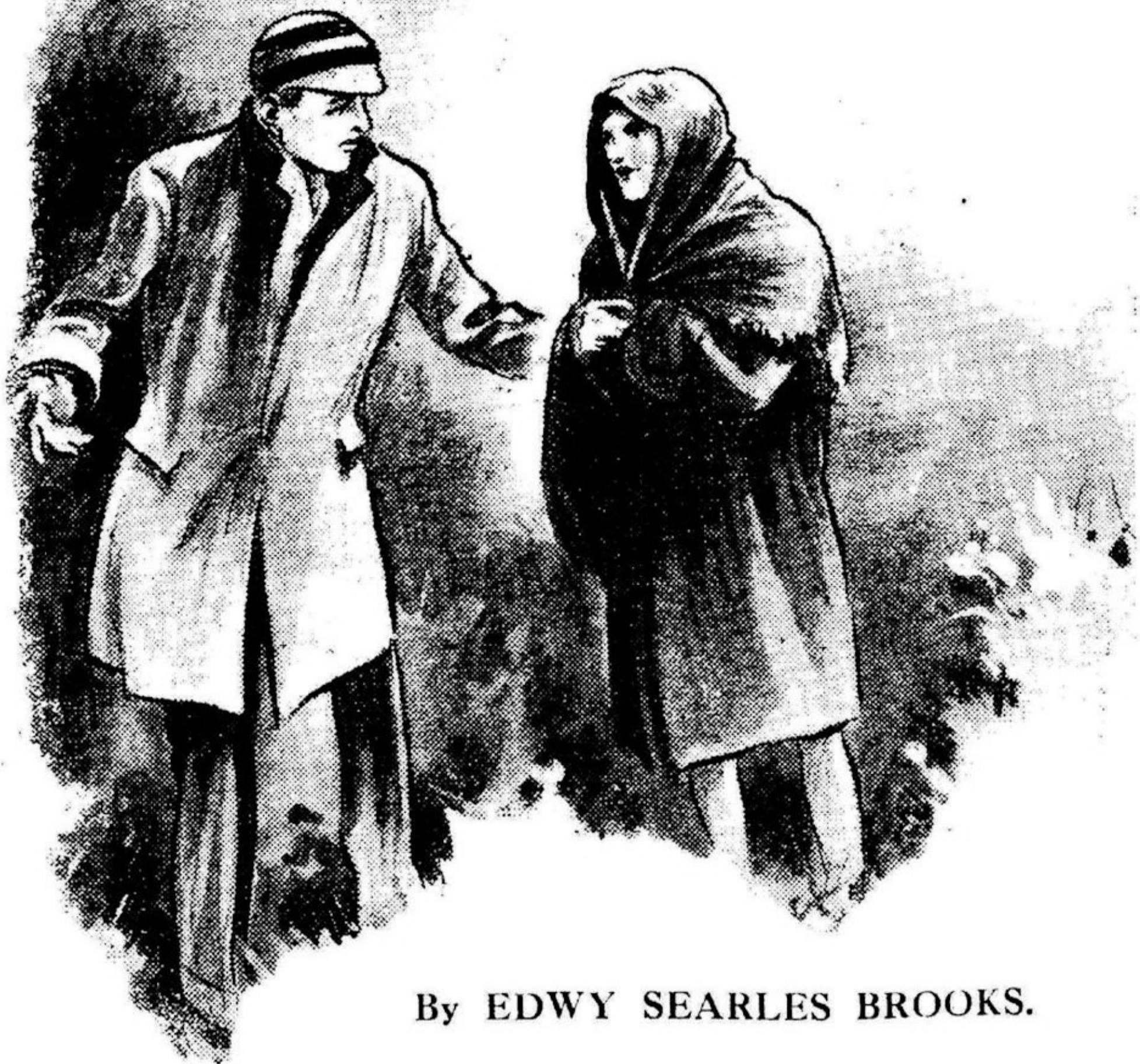


BOUND BY A PROMISE!

This is only one of many dramatic incidents contained in the magnificent long school yarn, featuring the cheery chums of St. Frank's, complete in this issue.

MEET THE CHEERY CHUMS OF ST. FRANK'S—

BOUND BY A PROMISE!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

CHAPTER 1.

Sticking Up For Fenton!

EDGAR FENTON, of the Sixth Form at St. Frank's, went to his study window in the Ancient House and peered out.

"Fog!" he muttered. "Thick fog, too!"

It swirled against the window panes, a yellow, silent pall. Fenton allowed the curtain to drop into place, and he went away from the window.

"There'll be something doing to-night!" he said grimly.

He flung himself into an armchair before the fire, and a bitter expression came into his handsome face. During the last few days Fenton had changed. His old cheery smile had gone. Now he was haggard, drawn and pale.

—IN THIS STUNNING LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL YARN!

Sneered at by the school! Regarded as a fellow who "breaks bounds" to visit a night club! The fall of Edgar Fenton, captain of St. Frank's, is swift and dramatic.

After a while he rose to his feet and paced up and down his cosy study. It was only a little after tea-time, and it was Monday evening. Fenton was glad that he had no particular duties for an hour or two; he wanted to think. He wanted to be alone. There was not much chance that any of the other prefects would come along for a chat.

Nowadays Edgar Fenton was left very much to himself.

"Monday night," he muttered, "and foggy! Oh, yes! There'll be plenty of fellows breaking bounds after lights-out, and sneaking off to that confounded night club! I'll guarantee there are many chuckles over this fog. The fools couldn't have better conditions for their folly!"

He caught sight of himself in the mirror and he halted, staring accusingly at his own reflection.

"What do you think of yourself?" he demanded, glaring. "What of your duty?"



The hidden watcher, crouched behind the bushes, listened intently to the conversation between Edgar Fenton and Olive Clegg.

What of your pledges? You're the captain of St. Frank's, and yet you allow these irregularities to go on!"

He thought of the discoveries he had recently made. A fully-fledged night club—here, in Bellton! Nobody had believed those rumours at first, but gradually they had become so persistent that Fenton himself had made some personal investigations. He had been constrained to do this because his own uncle was openly spoken of as the instigator.

Uncle Robert—of the Remove! It was a strange state of affairs for a big Sixth-Former—and the school skipper at that—to have an uncle in the Remove. Yet it was perfectly

true. Robert Chester, of Study A, was comparatively a new boy. He was the youngest brother of Fenton's mother—and therefore Fenton's uncle.

In many ways "Uncle Robert" was an unmitigated young rascal. Ever since he had arrived at St. Frank's he had stirred up trouble. None of the decent fellows in the Remove would have anything to do with him. Not that Uncle Robert cared. He had made heaps of friends—of the sort he liked. Gore-Pearce and Gulliver and Bell were his closest chums; and he was on the best of terms with Grayson and Shaw, of the Fifth—with Sinclair, of the Sixth—and, in fact, with all the "gay dogs" of the school.

Fenton knew—now—that it was his Uncle Robert who had introduced all these juniors and seniors to the night club. Uncle Robert had an arrangement with Mr. Simon Clegg, the man who ran the place. Fenton was fully aware of the fact, too, that the club was held in Moat Hollow, the gloomy old house on the edge of the village.

Ostensibly, Mr. Clegg was a retired gentleman, and not many people in the district, or in the village, suspected that the cellars of Moat Hollow were converted, three times a week, into a place of music and dancing and laughter.

Fenton was not so much concerned with the night club; he was satisfied that the place was well conducted and more or less harmless. Grown-ups could go there without the slightest fear, and there was no reason why they should not enjoy themselves.

But it was a very different matter for the boys of St. Frank's.

They could only attend these revels by breaking bounds after lights-out; and this was a very serious breach of the school discipline. It would have been bad enough even if only three or four fellows had risked the game, but there were dozens of them doing it—juniors and seniors from every House.

And Fenton knew it—he knew most of their names!

Yet his hands were tied—he was unable to take the action that his position, as skipper, called for.

He remembered how he had gone to the night club personally—in order to make sure, with his own eyes. All the "bloods" had seen him there, and had been alarmed. Then, just as Fenton was about to order them all back to the school, telling them that they would be reported to the headmaster, the unexpected had happened.

Mr. Clegg's stepdaughter had altered the whole course of Fenton's programme. In the village she was believed to be Clegg's real daughter, and she was known everywhere by the name of Olive Clegg. She had been ill, and her stepfather had been bullying her. He did not believe in her illness; he thought that it was a sham.

It was perfectly true that Olive Clegg disliked the night club. Until recently she had been in a boarding school, and the whole atmosphere of her stepfather's club grated on her susceptibilities. Her mother was a famous actress, now touring with a big show. And the girl inherited her mother's talent. She was an extraordinarily clever singer and dancer; and Mr. Clegg did not see any reason why he should not avail himself of her cleverness. But she had so often protested that, when she was really ill, he did not believe it. He thought she was merely making an excuse, and in his temper he had acted brutally.

Fenton remembered how he had intervened. He went back to the easy-chair and sat down, staring into the fire. He could see Olive's face now, looking at him with those big, eloquent eyes of hers. She had pleaded with him to go away.

She had begged of him, with tears in those eyes, to stay his hand. For if the night club was exposed—as it certainly would be exposed if Fenton made any report to the headmaster—then she would suffer more than anybody.

The publicity would cause her pain and anguish; she would be spoken of everywhere as the "the night-club girl." The good people of Bellton would look at her suspiciously. Her former school chums would have nothing more to do with her when they read that dramatic account. It would be almost impossible to keep the facts out of the newspapers. It was bound to create a big sensation—if only because of the novelty of the whole wretched business.

And Edgar Fenton—the strong, good-natured captain of St. Frank's—had succumbed to Olive's pleadings. At the moment he had been under the spell of her sweetness. She had cast a glamour over him, and he had given that promise.

Even now, when he thought of her, he did not regret. It wasn't fair that she should suffer! And as for what the fellows thought—well, they could think what they pleased! Fenton was conscious of his own innocence. He had done nothing wrong.

Yet, in another mood, he would tell himself that he had failed miserably in his duty. And his only solution to the problem now was to work single-handed, and to get that night club closed down.

Once the place was shut up, there would be no more temptation for the fellows; no more breaking bounds after lights-out. And Fenton was wrestling with this problem.

He must take action! But when—and how?

AN outburst of derisive laughter attracted Nipper's attention as he entered the Junior Common-room.

He frowned as he beheld Claude Gore-Pearce sitting in one of the lounges, surrounded by Gulliver, Bell, Hubbard, Long, and one or two others. Harry Gresham gave Nipper a meaning glance.

"Still at it!" grunted Gresham.

"It's about time they got hold of a new subject for conversation," said Nipper impatiently. "Why can't they leave Fenton alone?"

The Junior captain was looking rather grim. For a day or two now, Edgar Fenton had been the subject of much gossip and slander. Yet, at this time a week ago, nobody would have dared to breathe a word against Fenton's name. Fenton was the school captain, a very fine fellow, with an unsullied record. He was one of the best—true blue from his toes to his crown.

But now—what a difference!

The cads were openly sneering at him; not merely whispering their taunts, but voicing them aloud.

Such fellows as Nipper and Fullwood and Handforth were exasperated beyond measure because no steps were taken to put a stop to it. Fenton himself did not seem to care; he was the head prefect of this House, yet he seldom appeared. He kept to his own study; and a good many of his duties were performed by other prefects. And it looked very significant. It was not long before the cads were saying that Fenton was ashamed to show his face.

Nipper stood in the Common-room for some moments, frowning deeply. Shouts of greeting went up from Gore-Pearce & Co. as the door opened and Chester strolled in. Uncle Robert was as cool and as immaculate as ever.

"The fog's thicker than ever," he announced cheerily. "Rather good for us."

Archie Glenthorne, who was lounging near the fireplace, adjusted his eyeglass and gazed distastefully at Uncle Robert.

"Good gad!" he ejaculated frigidly. "That is to say, odds rashness and folly! These blighters are openly talking about their frightful doings, don't you know! Absoluting boasting about breaking bounds, and all that rot!"

"We can do as we like, can't we?" asked Uncle Robert coolly.

"Oh, rather!" replied Archie, with a sniff. "It's your own dashed business, dash you! But you'll do it once too often, my pippin!"

Absolutely! One of these days, old cheese, you'll find yourself in the soup!"

"Oh, I don't mind taking a bit of risk now and again," said Fenton's youthful uncle. "You see, we're pretty safe, Archie."

"Dash you!" snapped Archie. "I'm Glenthorne to you, you blighting blighter!"

"With my charming nephew well on our side, I don't think there's much to worry about," proceeded Uncle Robert sweetly. "As you all know, the aforementioned charming nephew is one of us. One of the boys! One of the nuts!"

"You're a dashed liar!" said Archie hotly. "Good gad! I don't believe it! Absolutely not!"

"No?" murmured Uncle

Robert. "Well, it doesn't matter to me!"

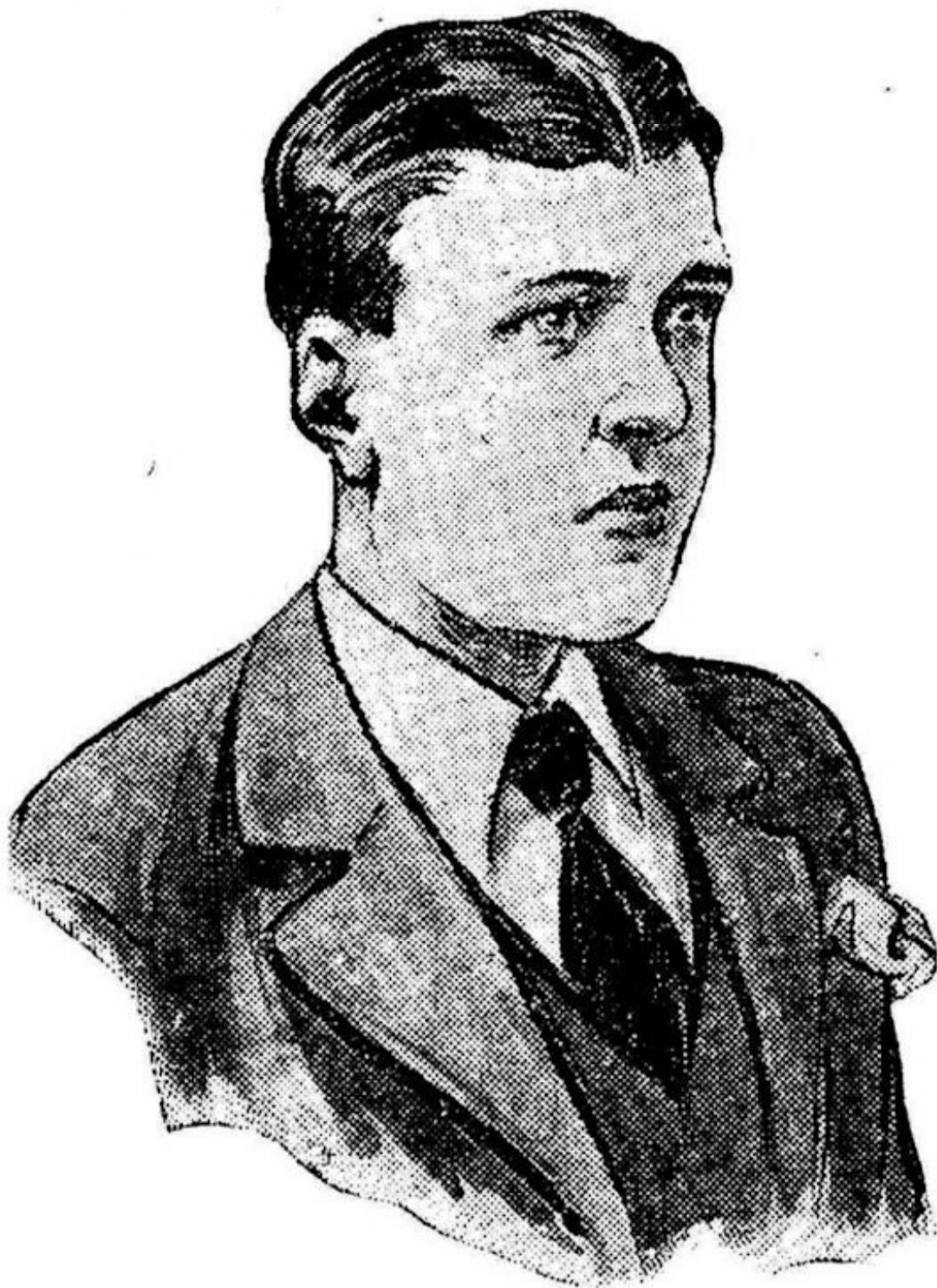
Gore-Pearce grinned.

"Fenton is no longer on his perch," he said. "That's what you've got to understand, Glenthorne. Until last week, Fenton made everybody believe that he was a kind of saint. But since he visited that night club, and had a thundering good time, we know him for what he really is."

"A humbug!" said Gulliver, nodding.

"Exactly!" said Gore-Pearce. "A dashed humbug! And with the head prefect of this

WHO'S WHO AT ST. FRANK'S.



CUTHBERT CHAMBERS.

A Fifth-Former who has a great idea of his own importance. Really a "nobody," and several kinds of an ass!

House an admitted 'blood.' we can do very much as we please."

Nipper stepped forward.

"Look here, you fellows!" he said curtly. "I've got something to say."

"Oh, have you?" sneered Gore-Pearce.

"Sorry, but we don't want to hear it!"

Nipper's eyes flashed dangerously.

"You'll hear it, all the same—and you'll heed it, too!" he retorted. "You can all do as you like as far as I'm concerned. If you break bounds, it's your own look-out. And if you're collared you'll suffer the consequences. I don't propose to interfere."

"How good of you!" said Uncle Robert mockingly.

"I'm not your keeper!" went on Nipper in a contemptuous tone. "It's not my business to keep watch over you and to see that you don't make fools of yourselves. But there's one thing I can do—and one thing I will do. I'll punch the head of the first fellow who makes another insulting remark about Fenton."

"It all depends upon what you call an insulting remark," said De Valerie. "After the way Fenton has given himself away——"

"You'd better dry up, Val!" growled Nipper. "I'm very sorry to see that you have been drawn into this idiotic bound-breaking. Still, that's your affair."

"Hang it, there's no risk!" protested De Valerie. "And that night club is jolly. Plenty of dancing and life and laughter. There's nothing rotten about it——"

"You can only attend it by breaking the school rules!" snapped Nipper. "That's rotten about it!"

"Well, it's our own risk," said De Valerie coolly. "And as for Fenton, he's tarred with the same brush."

"Remember what I just said!" Nipper reminded him.

"Oh, hang! Don't be an idiot!" snapped Val. "You know as well as I do that Fenton has forfeited all right to our respect. He's in a position of authority, and yet he attends this night club in order to enjoy himself. He's a rank hypocrite—— Here, what the—— Look out, confound you——"

Crash!

Before Cecil de Valerie could put up his hands, Nipper advanced upon him and knocked him down. De Valerie went clean over, Nipper's fist crashing into his face. There was a minor uproar, and when De Valerie picked himself up, his nose was streaming.

"I warned you!" said Nipper grimly. "And the same thing will happen to anybody else—if he says an insulting word against Fenton! I'm sick of it!"

"And so are the rest of us!" said Fullwood hotly. "Good for you, Nipper! We'll back you up!"

"Rather!" said Gresham.

"Absolutely!" put in Archie Glenthorne, clenching his fists. "What-ho! Keep it up, Nipper, old horse, and we'll rally round like anything!"

There were glares from Uncle Robert and Gore-Pearce and the other outsiders.

"This is all rot!" said Uncle Robert sourly. "I don't see why we should be gagged like this——"

"Keep your insults to yourselves, then!" broke in Nipper. "You can all break bounds as much as you like—and it'll serve you right if you all get sacked from the school! That's your own silly affair! But we're not going to stand any more of this slander; we're not going to hear a fine chap like Fenton insulted behind his back."

"Good man!" said Jerry Dodd, the Australian junior. "We're with you, Nipper! All we want to hear now is a few insulting remarks about Fenton! Come along!—let's have them!"

But the cads took one look at the crowd of angry Removites, and thought better of it. And from that minute onwards Fenton's name was not heard in the Common-room.

CHAPTER 2.

Handforth Wants Action!

ONE would have thought that Edward Oswald Handforth, the redoubtable leader of Study D, would have been prominent in that little scene in the Common-room. He would have enjoyed Nipper's firm stand on Fenton's behalf; he would, indeed, have punched a few noses on his own account.

But Handforth, as it happened, was in Study D, talking earnestly with Church and McClure, his inseparable chums. The tea things were still on the table, and Handforth was pacing up and down, thumping a clenched fist into his open palm.

"Something's got to be done—this evening, too!" he declared, for the twentieth time. "It's no good beating about the bush, you chaps! We've got to get busy! Action—action! That's what we want!"

"But we shall only get ourselves into trouble if we interfere!" protested Church wearily. "We've told you that until we're tired, Handy."

"We'd better keep out of it!" said McClure. "It's always a safe policy to mind one's own business."

Handforth halted in his tracks, and glared.

"Say that again, Arnold McClure!" he snorted. "You rotter! Are you suggesting that I'm not minding my own business?"

"Well, this Moat Hollow affair——"

"It is my business!" roared Handforth, thumping the table so violently that the cups and saucers jumped. "Lots of Remove fellows are breaking bounds at night and going to this beastly club! Well, we've got the interests of the Form at heart—so it's up to us to do something! And we're in a better position than the other chaps, too. We know where this night club is held."

"So do the others!" said McClure, with a sigh. "Or, if they don't actually know,

they guess. There are lots of whispers going round that Moat Hollow is the actual place."

"Whispers don't count!" said Handforth, with a wave of his hand. "And it's no good taking any notice of rumours. We know! We saw the cads coming out of Moat Hollow, and, what's more, Olive Clegg lives at Moat Hollow! And I'm not going to believe that that girl is mixed up with any beastly night club!"

"Now we're getting at it!" murmured Church.

Ever since Handforth had first met Olive Clegg, he had been "soft" about the girl. By sheer chance he had saved her from a bullock in Bellton High Street, and although his effort had been most praiseworthy, neither Church nor McClure could see why he should have gone dotty about Olive. She was a nice girl, by the look of her, but Handforth ought to have had more sense. He hadn't any right to go about falling in love with every girl he met! Naturally, Handforth's chums did not put it as crudely as this when they spoke to him on the subject. To have done so would have been inviting trouble.

"We know jolly well that Olive Clegg is a nice girl!" continued Handforth argumentatively. "That's the rummiest part of it! She lives at Moat Hollow, and she's a stunner!"

"Yet this night club is held at Moat Hollow," said McClure.

"That's what I can't understand!" frowned Handforth. "She must know all about it—she must know that her father is running the place. And I'll bet she disapproves."

He made a move towards the door.

"Well, come on!" he added abruptly. "We're going!"

"Going?" said Church. "This is the first we've heard of it! Where are we going to?"

"To Moat Hollow!" replied Handforth.

"Eh?"

"To Moat Hollow!" repeated Handforth impatiently. "Deaf? It's early yet, so we can easily get back before locking-up. Before we do anything else, we've got to see Olive Clegg!"

His chums were startled, and they showed it. Handforth was always springing these surprises. It was one of his favourite habits to make up his mind on a thing, assuming that his chums were thought readers.

"Here, hold on!" ejaculated Church, in alarm. "What the dickens do you mean, Handy?" "We don't want to go to Moat Hollow—asking to see Olive Clegg! Why, it's—it's ridiculous!"

"Have you forgotten Fenton?" demanded Handforth sternly.

"Fenton!" gasped his chums, bewildered.

"Yes, Fenton!" repeated Handforth.

"All the cads are saying that Fenton is a humbug and a hypocrite. They're saying that he went to that night club to have a good time. Well, I don't believe it."

"Neither do we, Handy," said Church.

"But I can't follow! A minute ago you were talking about Olive Clegg——"

"Oh, my hat!" sighed Handforth. "Can't you understand? Are your brains made of india-rubber, or what? By going to Moat Hollow, and seeing that girl, we can discover the truth."

"Yes, but——"

"We're friendly with Olive!" continued Handforth softly. "My idea in seeing her is to have a little chat. Being at Moat Hollow, she'll know all the facts. And she can tell us about Fenton."

Church and McClure opened their eyes wider; they had not looked for such shrewdness in their leader.

"Don't you see?" asked Handforth. "Can't you understand the wheeze?"

And Church and McClure could.

They understood that Handforth was using Edgar Fenton as an excuse for seeing Olive. He was soft on the girl, and he had wanted to call at Moat Hollow several times during



the past few days. Now he had a legitimate reason!

But in justice to Edward Oswald Handforth, it must be stated that he was really and truly concerned about the worried skipper; he wanted to find out, at first hand, whether those unsavoury stories were true or untrue.

"MY only hat!" said Handforth, in astonishment.

He had just opened the big door of the Ancient House, and the lights of the lobby were gleaming out upon the thick pall of swirling, eddying fog. Wreaths of it came pouring into the lobby, cold, clammy, and with a touch like that of an icy hand.

"What are you surprised about?" asked Church. "You knew it was foggy, didn't you?"

"I'd forgotten," said Handforth. "Well, never mind! It doesn't make any difference."

They went outside, closing the door after them, and a moment later they were swallowed up in the denseness of the fog. It was unusually thick this evening, and the whole countryside was stilled. The fog had a deadening effect, and scarcely any sounds came to the ears of the three juniors as they

went blindly across the Triangle towards the gates.

They had some little difficulty in finding the gates, for they went blundering across to the school wall, past the gymnasium. In the fog, they had lost their bearings; and they only found out where they were by seeing the gleaming light from Josh Cuttle's lodge. And even then they failed to see the light until they were practically upon it.

They felt their way round the porter's lodge, and, guided by the familiar walls, they arrived at the gates and passed out. They could hardly see their hands in front of their faces. The fog caught in their throats and set them coughing. And the chill of it caused them to wrap their overcoats tightly about them and to turn up their collars.

"We'd better stick close together!" said Handforth. "If we don't, we shall lose each other. I'll lead the way, and I'll keep close to the grass border. Then we can't go wrong."

His chums were not quite so sure. Fortunately, there were no important side turnings in the lane, and as long as they kept straight on they were bound to reach the village sooner or later.

Once or twice Handforth stumbled, but, on the whole, he did fairly well. And although the ground was so familiar, everything seemed different in this dense fog. They did not pass another soul on their way down to the village.

As they walked, Handforth enlarged upon the simplicity of his little scheme. In his opinion, it couldn't fail. A few words with Olive Clegg, and they would be in possession of the facts. They would know whether Edgar Fenton was really a "blood," or whether he was the victim of idle, slanderous gossip. It was a point they badly wanted to settle, for they held Fenton in high esteem. Handforth, indeed, refused to believe anything evil against the popular captain.

"We ought to be getting near now," said Church, as he peered forward into the fog. "Better go easy, Handy. We shall go past the place unless we're careful!"

"Rats!" said Handforth. "I'm leading the way, don't forget! I don't make mistakes of that sort! I've trained myself as an investigator——"

"Then there must have been something wrong with your training, old man," murmured McClure. "Unless I'm very much mistaken, we're nearly on the bridge."

"Eh?" said Handforth, cautiously feeling his way to the side, and then coming to a halt. "Well, I'm jiggered! It is the bridge! We've gone right past Moat Hollow!"

They retraced their steps, and Church refrained from chuckling aloud. But he grinned to himself in the fog, and gave McClure a nudge.

Within a few minutes they had found their way down the little side turning, and they

were at the big entrance of Moat Hollow. The old house was entirely surrounded by an enormously high wall, and the big double gates overlooked the river, which was just on the other side of the road. The gates were standing wide open, and there was a short drive leading direct to the front door of the house.

"Better than I thought!" murmured Church. "I was expecting the gates to be closed!"

"Why?" demanded Handforth. "The place isn't a prison."

As they drew near to the front door they could faintly see a shadowy gleam coming from one of the windows. It looked friendly and comforting in the swirling fog. There was something warm about it—something companionable. And yet, ordinarily, Moat Hollow was a grim, sinister sort of place. The fog concealed the forbidding lines of the old building.

The three juniors stumbled into the porch. Handforth felt for the knocker and then rapped hard. They waited, and after a few moments the door was opened, and they beheld a middle-aged lady, who regarded them without favour. There was only a small light in the hall, and while it served to show up the three juniors, they, for their part, could not see much of the lady.

"What is it?" she asked, shivering. "Gracious! The fog is thicker than ever! Do you think the trains will be late?"

Handforth, who hadn't been expecting this question, looked surprised.

"The trains?" he repeated. "Oh, rather! Awfully late, I suppose."

"I was afraid of it!" said the lady, frowning. "Well, what do you want?"

The three juniors realised that they were talking to Mr. Simon Clegg's sister. She was his housekeeper, but this was the first time they had seen her.

"Well, the fact is, we want to see Oliver—I mean, Miss Clegg—if you don't mind," said Handforth. "We shan't keep her very long——"

"You certainly will not!" interrupted the lady. "I'm sorry, but you cannot see Oliver this evening."

"But we're from St. Frank's——"

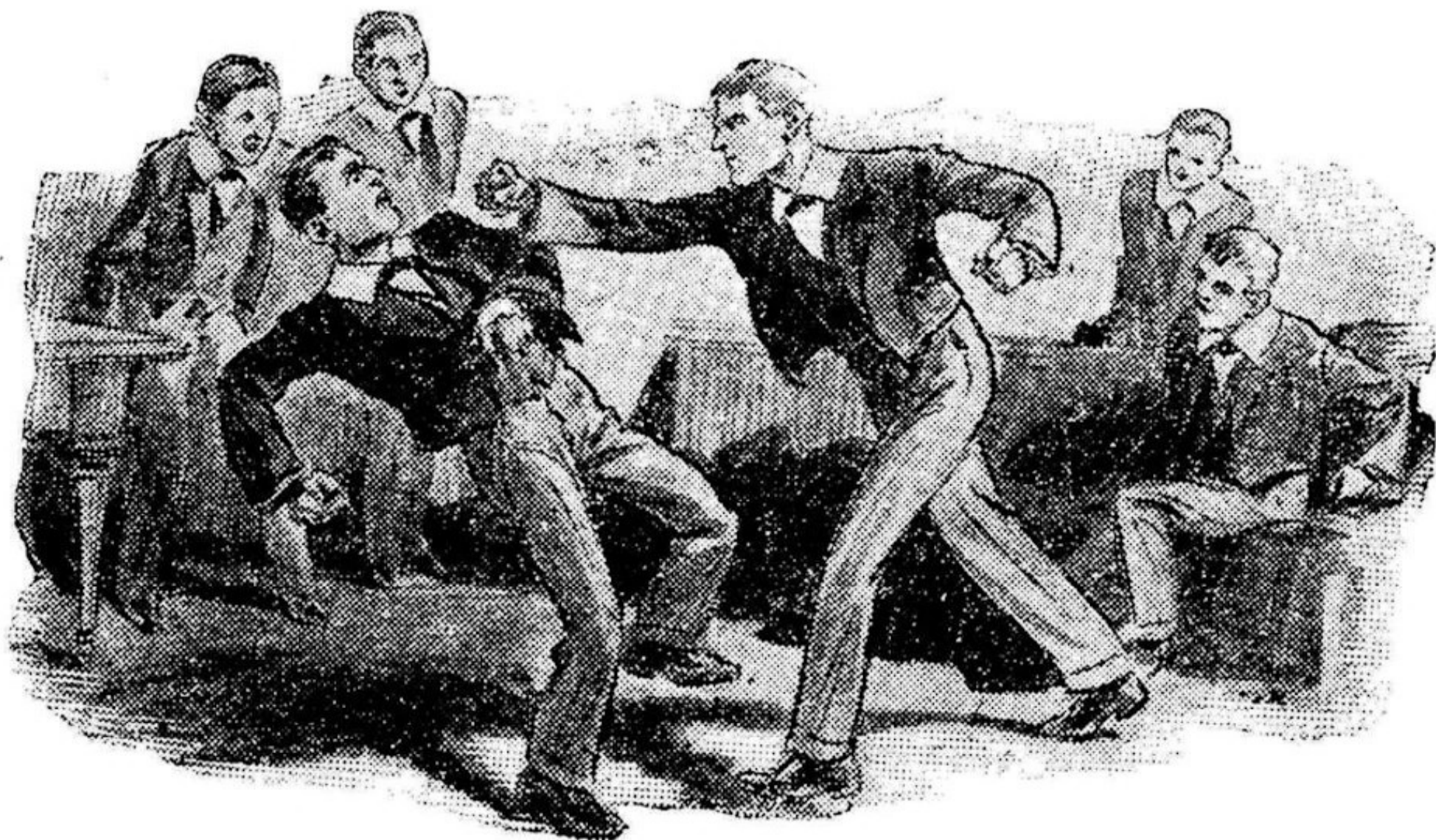
"I cannot help that!" interrupted Mr. Clegg's sister. "The idea! Certainly not! You ought not to be out of school in this fog!"

Handforth was taken aback.

"Here, I say!" he protested. "We're not strangers, you know! Please tell Miss Clegg that Handforth wants to speak to her. She'll know who I am. I met her in the village the other day——"

"My niece is not well," said the lady briefly. "She is confined to her room with a severe cold. She cannot see anybody."

"Oh, I say!" ejaculated Handforth. "A cold, eh? I'm awfully sorry! Then perhaps we can see Mr. Clegg?"



"Fenton's a rank hypocrite——" began De Valerie, but he wasn't allowed to say any more. Nipper's fist crashed into his face, and the junior went staggering backwards.

"You cannot see Mr. Clegg, either!" she replied. "Mr. Clegg is away. He won't be back until later on this evening—and, as the trains are running so late because of this fog, there's no telling when we shall see him!"

And the good lady, feeling chilly, bade the juniors a curt "good-night," and closed the door. They found themselves stranded on the step, in the porch.

"Hey! Wait a minute!" gasped Handforth. "Perhaps you can tell us—— Well, I'm blowed! Where's that giddy knocker?"

"Don't be an ass, Handy!" protested Church. "What's the good of knocking again? She's told us that we can't see Olive, and there's an end of it. We'd better go away."

"It's the only thing to do," murmured McClure.

But Edward Oswald Handforth was not the kind of fellow to take "No" for an answer.

THERE had been something very final about the quiet slamming of the door. Even Handforth, after a moment's thought, was not rash enough to operate the knocker again.

"Well, we're done," said Church. "Better go back, Handy."

"Not likely!" said Handforth in an anxious voice. "Didn't you hear what she said? Olive is ill! By George! I wonder what's the matter with her?"

"Got the measles, perhaps," said Church comfortingly.

"You silly idiot!" frowned Handforth. "You don't seem to realise how serious it is. Perhaps we ought to fetch a doctor——"

"If anybody's an idiot, it's you!" broke in Church. "Can't these people fetch a doctor, if they need one? There's no need for us to butt in."

They walked slowly out of the porch, and started off down the short drive towards the big gates. But suddenly Handforth checked in the fog, and a little exclamation escaped his lips.

"What are you waiting for, Handy?" asked Church.

"I just thought of something!" said Handforth. "Later on in the evening this place is locked up like a prison! The big gates are closed, and there's no way of getting in. But we're in now, aren't we?"

"Yes, but——"

"And there's this fog, too!" continued Handforth. "By George, what a chance to have a prowling round! Come on! Let's go round the grounds and see if we can discover something."

His chums were not so enthusiastic.

"We can't do that, Handy!" protested McClure. "It's trespassing! This is private property, and we've no right in Mr. Clegg's garden."

"Garden?" repeated Handforth disdainfully. "It's only a wilderness! I want to find out how all the chaps get in here to go to that night club! They get in somehow, but we've never discovered the way."

"Yes, we have!" grunted Church. "There's a little door in the wall at the back."

"We know that, of course," said Handforth. "But how do they get to the night club? And where is the night club? Some of the chaps say that it's held down in the

cellar, but I'm not so sure. Anyhow, we'll have a look round."

Before his chums could protest further, he had left the drive and was picking his way through the thick laurel bushes which grew along the borders. Lest they should lose him altogether, Church and McClure closely followed.

They soon found themselves on a rough path, at the side of the house, which bordered the wall. Handforth crept along, tense and expectant. Church and McClure came close behind, thoroughly uneasy. They couldn't see what good could come of this so-called investigation. Even if strange things went on here after midnight there was no hope of discovering anything now, at this early hour of the evening.

Church plucked at Handforth's coat from the rear.

"Look here, Handy, we've got to chuck it!" he murmured. "We shall only get ourselves into trouble——"

"Quiet, you ass!" hissed Handforth. "There's a lighted window here."

They had nearly got to the back of the house by this time, and they were still hemmed in by the smother of fog. It pressed closely against them, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that they could detect the side of the house close by.

And now, as Handforth had said, a lighted window was looming up. It came suddenly into their range of vision. They were within a couple of yards of it before they knew it was there. Handforth crept forward until his fingers were on the stone sill.

"Easy, you chaps!" he murmured. "The blind isn't fully drawn!"

Ordinarily, Handforth would never have dreamed of peeping into a lighted window like this, but when he was on some "detective work," as he chose to call it, he felt that he had an excuse for anything. All good detectives peeped into lighted windows; he had read it scores of times in thrillers. Moat Hollow was a suspected house, therefore he was justified.

Church and McClure hung back, knowing full well that if they argued Handforth would raise his voice, and then they would be heard, and that might lead to all sorts of awkward complications.

Bending down, Handforth found that he could peep under the blind, which was not fully drawn. He found himself looking into a comparatively small room, where a cheerful fire was flickering and blazing in the grate. There was a shaded lamp on the table, and at first Handforth thought that the room was empty. Then, with a start, he saw a figure in an easy-chair in front of the fire.

"Great Scott!" he breathed. "It's—it's Olive!"

"Here, I say!" protested Church. "It's not fair to spy——"

"She's reading!" said Handforth. "And, by George, she looks ill, too!"

It was certainly Olive Clegg who was sitting in the big armchair. She had a shawl

round her shoulders, and there was a book in her hands; but even as Handforth watched her she allowed the book to fall listlessly into her lap. She shifted her feet into a more comfortable position on the fender. As far as Handforth could see, there was nobody else in the room.

Impulsively, Handforth raised his hand and tapped on the glass.

"Handy!" gasped Church. "You're mad! What the dickens——"

Tap-tap-tap!

Handforth repeated the manoeuvre, and he drew his breath in sharply as he saw the girl open her eyes and then sit forward in the chair. She was looking in a startled way at the window. The book fell out of her lap.

"Who—who is that?" she asked in a low voice.

"It's all right—only me!" called Handforth softly. "Just a minute, Miss Clegg, if you don't mind!"

It was obvious that Olive had no idea who the voice belonged to. She looked bewildered and alarmed. But she rose from the chair, glancing rather hastily towards the door as she did so. Handforth himself looked round, and found the faces of Church and McClure near him.

"There you are!" he murmured triumphantly. "Aunt or no aunt, I'm not going to be diddled! We came here to have a word with Miss Clegg, and we're going to have it!"

"You've got an awful nerve!" said Church gruffly.

"You can't get on in this world without a nerve!" retorted Handforth. "And no detective can be successful unless he's ready to act on the instant."

The window was softly opened, after the blind had been pulled aside.

"Who is it?" came the girl's cautious voice.

"Awfully sorry to disturb you, Miss Clegg—but it's me!" said Handforth. "Don't you remember? Handforth's my name. These other two chaps are Church and McClure. You met us the other day, in the village."

"Oh!" came a murmur from the girl. "You mean—the bullock?"

"That's it!" said Handforth. "We went to the front door, but your aunt wouldn't let us see you. And I'm rather anxious to have a few words——"

"I mustn't stand here at the window!" came the girl's voice. "It's dreadfully cold. If you can slip inside, I dare say it'll be safe. But you mustn't talk loudly, or auntie will hear."

This permission was quite sufficient, and a moment later Handforth had scrambled through into the little sitting-room. Church and McClure followed, and they were careful to close the window quietly after them. Olive had gone back to her easy-chair, and she was now sitting forward, her eyes wide open, her expression one of astonishment and wonder.

"Is it anything serious?" she asked, with a touch of weariness in her voice. "Oh, you gave me such a turn! I—I wondered whatever it could be!"

"You needn't be scared of us, Miss Clegg!" said Handforth, looking at her with admiring eyes. "And it is serious, too—jolly serious. Otherwise we wouldn't have barged in. I say, you're looking pretty ill, you know!"

She smiled rather wanly.

"It's nothing!" she said. "I shall soon be better, thank you. Please tell me why you have come in this strange way."

But Handforth now seemed to be tongue-tied; he could only look at her with a sort of surprised wonder.

CHAPTER 3.

The Truth!

OLIVE CLEGG was undoubtedly an exceptionally pretty girl.

She was about sixteen, slim, dainty, and very charming. As Handforth had said, it was impossible to picture her as the sort of girl who liked to frequent night clubs—even if the night clubs were thoroughly respectable. She was too studious, too retiring, too timid.

And just at present her beauty was even enhanced by her obvious indisposition. She was pale, although there were little spots of colour in her cheeks. In some peculiar way, her illness seemed to make her prettier.

"I don't believe it!" said Handforth impulsively.

"I beg your pardon?" asked the girl. "You don't believe what?"

"Eh?" gasped Handforth. "Oh, I'm sorry! I—I didn't mean to say that! I—I was thinking, you know."

"But what is that you don't believe?"

"Well, I might as well tell you!" said Handforth, giving himself a shake. "I don't believe that you've had anything to do with the night club!"

Olive started.

"Then—then you don't think I'm that sort?" she asked softly.

"I'm jolly sure you're not!" replied Handforth. "Anybody with half an eye can see it!"

Olive could not help smiling; but it was a wistful kind of smile. She glanced round at the door.

"Please don't talk too loudly," she murmured. "I don't think auntie will come, but we had better be on the safe side. She would be awfully cross if she found you here after telling you that you couldn't see me. Besides, father will be in soon."

"I don't think so," said Handforth. "It'll be a long time before he's in."

"But it won't!" she insisted. "He's coming back by the evening train from London, and it'll be in within half an hour."

"Not in this fog, Miss Clegg!" said Handforth confidently. "If the train is only an hour late, your father will be lucky. It probably won't get here until about nine o'clock."

"I'd forgotten the fog," admitted the girl.

"Well, anyway, we're safe for a bit!" continued Handforth.

"These chaps didn't want me to come, but I insisted. The fact is, Miss Clegg, we want to clear up a few points. As far as we know at present, there's a night club held here—in this house. Lots of our chaps are coming to it—all the cads and the rotters. They're breaking bounds after lights-out, and they're taking all sorts of idiotic risks. And if it goes on there'll be an unholy bust-up one of these days, and then St. Frank's will be involved in a scandal."

The girl looked distressed.

"Please don't take any notice of Handy, miss!" said Church

quickly. "He always speaks bluntly like this. You are ill, and I think we ought to be going—"

"No, please don't go just yet!" said Olive quietly. "I don't feel quite well—I've caught a chill—but as long as I keep in front of the fire, well wrapped up, I shall be all right. Besides, I'm afraid that your friend is quite right. I've worried a lot about the boys who come here at night."

"Then you don't approve of the night club?" asked Handforth quickly.

"No; I don't like it," murmured Olive.

"I knew it!" said Handforth, flashing a triumphant glance at his chums. "I knew jolly well that you were against it, Miss Olive! It's a rotten place!" he continued tensely. "It ought to be closed up! Why, there's all sorts of gossip going about! Some of the chaps say that you dance in the place. It's scandalous!"

"No; unhappily, it's true," whispered the girl.

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Handforth stared.

"True?" he ejaculated. "True that you dance in the night club?"

"Yes."

"But—but I thought it was all a yarn!" protested Handforth, aghast.

"Cheese it, Handy!" said Church uncomfortably. "By the way you're talking, anybody might think that dancing was a crime! Nearly everybody who comes to the club dances."

"But not in the same way," put in the girl quietly. "I—I'm in the cabaret. I dance on the stage. I'm supposed to be the star turn!" she added bitterly.

"Oh, I—I see!" mumbled Church.

"Then it's a shame!" burst out Handforth. "You can't mean to tell me, Miss Olive, that you like it!"

"I hate it!" she admitted. "But my father wants me to do it, and I don't suppose there's anything wrong in it. Only—only it doesn't appeal to me. I don't like that sort of thing."

"But if you don't like it, why does your father make you do it?" asked Handforth fiercely.

"He doesn't understand," she replied. "I really don't know why I am telling you all this, but— Well, you seem so interested. Still, my father isn't quite so black as you paint him," she added, with a little smile. "It's only that he doesn't realise how I hate it all."

"Then he ought to realise it!" said Handforth sternly. "What's more, he ought to be boiled!"

She smiled again at his frankness.

"I don't think I've ever met a boy like you before," she said, looking at him curiously. "You're very much against this night club, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am!" replied Handforth, squaring his jaw. "What's more, I'm going to wait until your father comes home and I'm going to have a word with him! I'm going to ask him what he means by forcing you to—"

"Please!" she interrupted earnestly. "You mustn't do anything so foolish as that!"

"But he might listen to me—"

"It is far more likely that he will get very angry, and take you by the scruff of the neck and turn you off the premises," said the girl. "You must remember that this is his house, and that he doesn't like being dictated to by a schoolboy. Besides, you needn't worry yourself about me. I don't think I shall do any more dancing in the night club."

"If he's forced you once, he might force you again!" argued Handforth.

"I have a cold and I can't dance," said the girl. "My voice has gone, too, and I don't think I shall be able to sing for a week or two. So father has gone to London to bring down a fresh artist. He knows a clever revue girl who will be glad of the chance—and he's gone to fetch her. They'll be down by the evening train."

Handforth looked relieved.

"Well, that's one load off my mind," he said. "But what you say only makes things worse in another way. It shows that Mr. Clegg is determined to carry on with the night club. And it's jolly bad for St. Frank's. The rotters will keep coming down here, and there might be awful trouble if the Head gets to know about it."

"There's Fenton, too," said Church, thinking it about time that Handforth remembered his mission. "Fenton's getting a bad name in the school."

Olive suddenly looked at him intently.

"Fenton?" she repeated. "Is—is that the tall, fine-looking young man with curly, brown hair? He's the school captain, isn't he?"

"Yes," said Handforth in a gruff whisper. "I was going to ask you about Fenton, you know. A lot of the chaps are saying that he came here the other night—that he openly visited the place. They're calling him a humbug, Miss Olive. They're laughing at him and jeering at him."

"Do you think he deserves it?" asked the girl quickly.

"No, I don't!" replied Handforth, even more quickly. "I think it's all a lot of scandal! Fenton isn't the kind of fellow to enjoy visiting a night club! Personally, I don't think he ever came here at all!"

"He did come," said Olive slowly.

She remembered Fenton's visit vividly; she had been thinking of little else ever since Fenton had gone. For he had given her his promise; he had gone away, his duty neglected. And all for her sake. Olive remembered it, and her heart warmed whenever she thought of that fine, upright young fellow. And now she was freshly concerned—she was gravely worried.

On her account Fenton was in trouble—he was being misunderstood. With a guilty pang, she realised that it was all her fault.

HANDFORTH looked anxious and alarmed.

"You don't mean it, Miss Olive!" he said bluntly. "You can't mean it! I may be several kinds of an ass, but I know jolly well that Fenton isn't the sort of fellow to do the things that those cads are doing."

"I don't believe it, either!" put in McClure. "Fenton's too decent—his sense of duty is too strong. If he came to the club, he had a good reason for coming."

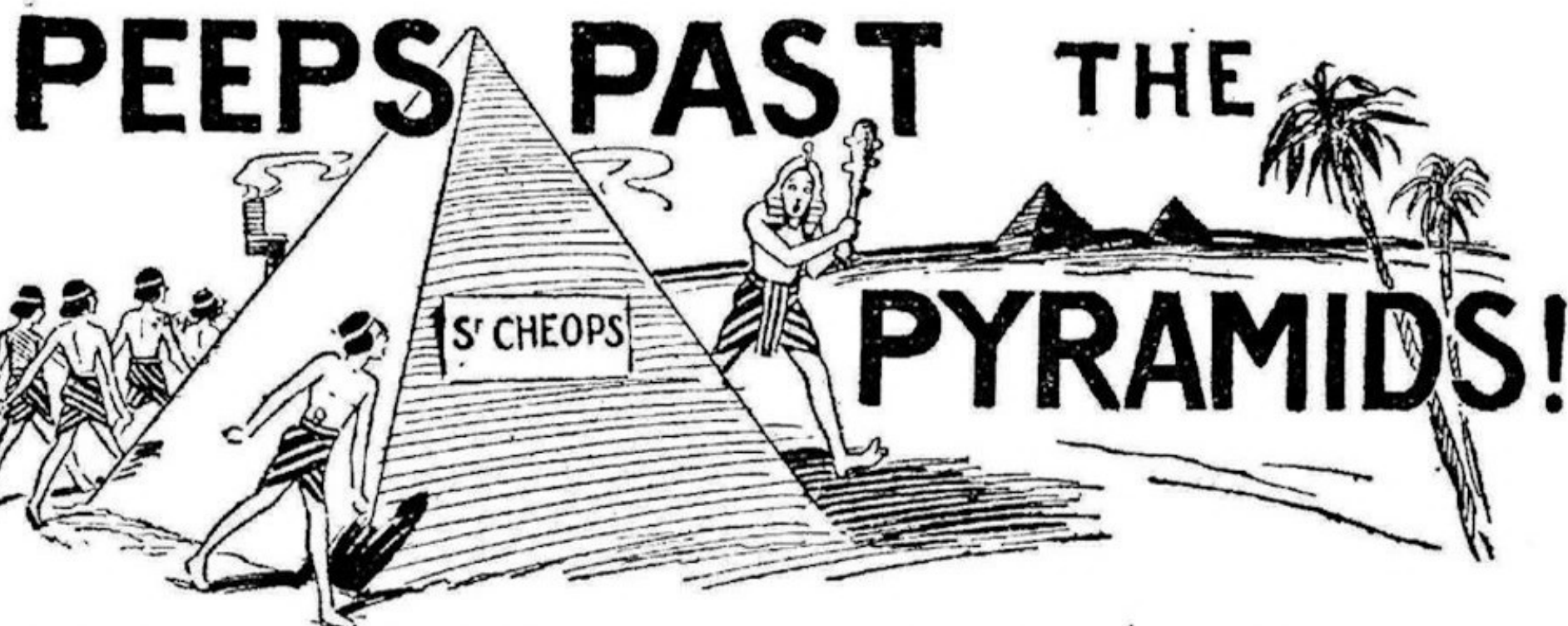
The girl looked at them warmly.

"I'm ever so glad to find that you have faith in him," she said simply. "You are quite right, of course. Fenton is splendid—he's true blue. He hasn't done a single thing that anybody can reproach him for."

"And yet you say he came here—right into the night club?"

"Yes, but he only came in his capacity as head prefect of the school," replied the girl. "He came here because it was his duty,

(Continued on page 14.)



AND lo! all the boys of the Fourth Form of St. Cheops School were in their places in the class-room, which was of the shape of an inverted pyramid, this being architecturally the vogue in those days. Tier upon tier sat the boys in their places, each on his own block of stone.

And, the master not yet being present, there was noise in abundance; yea! even much noise was there in the class-room. For the boys lifted up their voices and chivvied one the other with high spirits and chunks of rock, chipped from off their desks.

There came, however, a sudden silence; a drying-up of the abundant noise. A voice of one of the youths shouted: "Cave! Here cometh old Potty!" And it was seen that the trapdoor entrance to the room was being raised, and the Form was hushed, for they expected the master, Dr. Potiphar.

And, verily, up came his head, also his body, and he looked round, astonished, and great surprise showed itself upon his countenance.

"Two ello!" he exclaimed, working his eyebrows with much overtime. "And what are ye all gathered here in this place so early for, my lads? By the beard of my ancestor, Rhatz Tael! Not for many moons have I beheld the class assembled before I have arrived. Wherefore, and why art thou so early?"

And one boy answered and said unto Dr. Potiphar:

"It is not we who are early, O master! It is thou who art late!"

"Late, O boy! Late! I am never late! Fie! and likewise two fies!"

And he even rummaged in the folds of his outer garment and produced his hour-glass, to see the time, what it was. And the hour-glass was broken! Then spake Dr. Potiphar, annoyance passing over his visage:

"Behold! My blooming hour-glass is even bus-tedd" (which, being interpreted, meaneth "come apart") "and verily, the sand runneth out of its proper channels.

*Being fragmentary records of
School Days in the time of the
Ancient Egyptians as collected by*

VIVIAN TRAVERS,
of the St. Frank's Remove.

"Thus am I even a little behind time."

"That is the worst of these cheap hour-glasses," said one of the boys behind his hand; but what he spake reached even the ears of the master, for he was keen of hearing.

"Cheap hour-glasses, eh? and oh?" repeated Dr. Potiphar, furrows appearing in his brow. "By Okum! god of cheesemites! My hour-glass is as good as thine, O camel's face!"

"I don't sphinx!" said the boy, trying to jest. "My hour-glass, O master, hath real gold dust instead of sand; for my father, Bhonzo, is rich, and giveth me of the best."

"Giveth thee of the best, does he, thy father, O son of Bhonzo? And, verily, I will also give thee of the best—of my rodds. Come out!"

And the master chose his best rodd. Yea! even the thickest of the rodds, chose he it (and he had some hefty ones, too!), and the son of Bhonzo was walloped for his cheek, so that, until the setting of the Sun, he stood up in his place, preferring that posture to any other. And Dr. Potiphar, being wroth, said to the Form:

"Form," said he, "take fifty lines apiece for being too early. I have spoken!"

HIS anger thus being appeased, Dr. Potiphar set the Form the morning's task. Then did he say:

"This morning, O Form, we will deal with Stresses and Strains. Harken ye, therefore!

"One man, and his dog, went forth to mow a meadow, and the man had even two hired servants to assist him. Therefore, O Form, what personnel would be required to mow two meadows, one being smaller than the first?"

And Rik me-Nek, who was of the Chaldeans, and a mathematician to boot, at once flung up his hand; he having arrived at the answer before the problem was almost

(Continued on page 43.)

BOUND BY A PROMISE!

(Continued from page 12.)

because he wanted to find out the names of the boys who were breaking bounds so that he could report them to the headmaster."

"But he hasn't reported them!" said Handforth wonderingly. "That's just the point! That's why everybody is talking! He came here, and he hasn't done a single thing since! Why didn't he make his report? Why didn't he do his duty?"

"Because I made him promise not to!" replied Olive wretchedly. "Oh, perhaps it was wrong of me, but—but I didn't realise that I should get him into trouble. It was splendid of him—it was noble."

Edward Oswald looked at her with a sudden coldness in his gaze. In spite of the fact that he thought so much of her, those last words had chilled him.

"So that's it!" he said sternly. "By George! I can understand his coming here to get the names of all the rotters. He had to have evidence before he could make any report to the Head. And you made him promise not to carry on with it?"

"Oh, can't you understand?" she whispered. "If he had made his report to your headmaster there would have been a complete exposure. It's just possible that the police might have come. The night club would have been spoken of in all the newspapers, and my father would get a dreadful name. And—and what about me? Can't you see? People would think all sorts of things, and say——"

"My only hat!" broke in Handforth breathlessly. "Of course! I hadn't looked at it like that before! So—so Fenton promised to keep mum so that you wouldn't suffer?"

The girl was bending forward in her chair, and the colour had come into her cheeks.

"I oughtn't to have made him promise!" she said falteringly. "But I didn't realise that I should get him into any serious trouble. Please tell me! Is he in serious trouble?"

"Trouble enough!" replied Handforth bluntly. "All the cads are sneering at him. He's shunned by half the school. He's lost his prestige. Until now he was respected by everybody—even by the outsiders. And now, all within a day or two, it's changed. They know that he visited the night club, and because he doesn't take any action they think that he went there for his own pleasure. Naturally, he can't give all those chaps away if it means a scandal. He's got to think of you——"

"But only because he gave me his promise!" the girl pointed out. "Tell me! Is it too late?"

"Too late for what?"

"Is it too late for Fenton to take the action he should have taken at first?" she asked, her eyes burning with a new light.

"I mean, supposing he made his report to

the headmaster this evening, so that none of the boys could visit the club to-night?"

"Well, then everything would be all right, I suppose," said Handforth slowly. "Fenton is still head prefect—all this talk about him hasn't spread to the masters yet."

"I'm glad to know that Fenton is still safe from the authorities," the girl said gently. "It means that it isn't too late for him to recover his good name. Oh, what shall I do?"

She sat there, looking searchingly into the fire, and for a minute or two there was silence in the room. Handforth & Co. felt uncomfortable; they felt that they ought to be going, and yet they did not like to leave things in this unsettled condition.

The girl suddenly looked up.

"Do you mind taking a note for me?" she asked.

"A note?"

"Yes—to Fenton."

"We'll take a note, if you like," replied Handforth. "But why trouble? We can give him a verbal message——"

"It won't be the same thing," said Olive. "I think I had better write it."

She rose from the easy-chair, went to a little table near the wall, and for a minute or two Handforth & Co. sat silent as they heard her pen busily at work.

Handforth was feeling thrilled. His visit to Moat Hollow had borne fruit. He had a shrewd idea that something good would come of this little adventure.

CHAPTER 4.

The Message!

OLIVE was looking strangely calm and determined as she handed Handforth a little sealed envelope.

"I think this will do," she said steadily. "Do you mind letting Fenton have this as quickly as possible? I'm ever so grateful to you for——"

"Here, cheese it, you know!" protested Handforth. "We've done nothing. Only too pleased to lend a hand, anyhow."

"I was wondering if you could let Fenton have it—well, secretly," said the girl. "Perhaps he had better not know that you three boys are aware of anything. It might make him uncomfortable."

"Yes, by George!" said Handforth, with a start. "I hadn't thought of that! Old Fenton will probably have a fit if he discovers that we know about that promise he gave you. All right! We don't want to embarrass him, so we'll deliver this letter on the strict Q.T."

"You mean—slip it under his door?"

"Something like that," replied Handforth.

"Nothing so crude, of course, but——"

"Thank you!" murmured Olive dryly.

"Oh, I say! I—I didn't mean that!" ejaculated Handforth. "But I'm a bit of a detective, you know—as you've probably found out—and when I do a thing I do it properly. Fenton won't know how this letter

got to St. Frank's. Leave it to me, Miss Olive! He'll only know that it is in his hands, and you can rely upon us to keep mum!"

Church and McClure said nothing; but they knew how Handforth kept secrets and they were pessimistic. However, there was no need to worry the girl.

They quickly bade her good-night, and a minute later they crept through the window and out into the fog again. They felt glad that they had seen the girl and had got away without anybody else being aware of the fact. The three juniors kept silent until they were once more in the lane and on their way back to St. Frank's. Cautious going was the order, for the fog was still as thick as ever.

"Well, Handy, I must say that you've done pretty well, for once," remarked Church generously. "A lot better than I expected, anyhow."

"And now we know that Fenton is true blue," said McClure. "Of course, he was an ass to give any promise to that girl."

"If I had been in Fenton's position I should have done just the same!" interrupted Handforth coldly.

"You're impulsive enough for anything!" agreed Church. "But I thought Fenton was more level-headed."

Handforth came to a halt in the fog.

"Are you suggesting, Walter Church, that I'm not level-headed?" he demanded ominously.

"Well, old man, you do some rummy things, you know," said Church. "And you're so soft-hearted and so chivalrous that you wouldn't dream of denying a girl a favour. It's not in you—you're too much of a sportsman."

The soft answer turned away Handforth's wrath.

"Oh, well, if you put it like that, perhaps you're right," he admitted. "What I'm puzzling about is this letter. I'll bet all my term's pocket-money that she has released Fenton from that promise."

"That's what I've been thinking, too," put in Mac.

"Well, she's dotty!" grunted Handforth. "By doing that she has simply let herself in the cart. Fenton will make his report, there'll be an unholy bust-up, and old Clegg will be arrested. Olive will be the butt of all sorts of scandalmongers. It's rotten!"

"Well, we can't help it, can we?" asked Church.

"There ought to be some other way!" said Handforth worriedly. "It isn't fair that she should be made to suffer. She's not the kind of girl that likes the gay life. She's only just come from a decent boarding school, and everybody respects her in Bellton. I hear that some of the Moor View girls have

been making friends with her. What are they going to think when they hear that she has been mixed up with this rotten night club?"

"Girls like Irene Manners and Winnie Pitt and Mary Summers will be just as friendly as ever," replied McClure promptly. "The other kind don't matter."

"H'm! Something in that, I suppose," admitted Handforth.

They arrived at St. Frank's and found everything quiet and still. The gates were open and they passed through into the Triangle and felt their way towards the Ancient House. As yet they could not even see the gleaming lights from the windows. Fog clung round them like something solid.

"What about that note, Handy?" asked Church. "How are you going to let Fenton have it?"

"Easy enough," replied Handforth. "I've already thought of a way. Come on! We'll deliver it at once."

They did not enter the Ancient House, but skirted round until they came to a spot where they could see a number of lighted windows looming up out of the murk. One of these windows belonged to Fenton's study, and it was only a moment's work to identify the particular window they wanted.

It was safe enough to creep up in the fog. No curtains were drawn, and when Handforth pressed his face close to the glass, peering in, he could see Edgar Fenton sitting at his desk, surrounded by books. Nobody else was in the study, and Handforth grinned. This was jolly easy!

For a moment or two he watched Fenton's worried expression. The school captain was apparently trying to work; but he was meeting with little success. He would pick up his pen, write a few words in the exercise-book before him, and then with a muttered exclamation throw down the pen again.

Handforth saw no reason why he should not repeat his Moat Hollow manoeuvre, with a little variation. He stood back from the window, bent down, and picked up a handy brick.

CHURCH grasped Handforth's arm in alarm.

"Here, steady!" he whispered.

"Don't be an ass, Handy!"

"Eh? What do you mean?"

"You mustn't chuck that brick through Fenton's window—"

"Idiot!" broke in Handforth coldly. "What do you take me for?"

He pulled some string out of his pocket and then fastened Olive's letter to the brick. It seemed to his chums that he was about to throw the thing through one of the panes of glass—he was quite capable of it.



But Handforth had another idea; a better one. He crept forward, and then tapped loudly and peremptorily on the window pane. Before Fenton could even glance round, Handforth had sprung back, vanishing into the fog.

"Not a word, you chaps!" he whispered. "Leave this to me!"

Dimly, they saw a shadowy figure come to the window. They had all the advantage of the position; they could see the lighted window, but Fenton, within, could only see a pall of fog outside. As Handforth had anticipated, the window was flung open, and Fenton half-leaned out.

"Who's there?" he asked sharply.

Handforth took aim, and he flung the brick, with the letter fastened to it, towards the window. It went right past Fenton, struck the desk and collided with the inkstand.

"What on earth——" began Fenton, in amazement. "Here! What are you doing out there? What's the game?"

Not a sound came from out of the fog. Fenton found himself staring into the blackness. A cold, grim look came into his eyes. He turned, strode to his desk, and picked up the letter. He suspected that this was some trick perpetrated by his persecutors. He untied the string, took the letter and tore it open.

One glance at the sheet of notepaper was enough, however. His expression changed; a new light came into his eyes. He only waited to glance at the neat handwriting and the bold signature, then he sprang to the window again.

"Hallo!" he called softly. "Who is it?"

Obviously, he wanted to find out who had brought this message from Olive Clegg. But Handforth & Co., now thoroughly satisfied that their mission was accomplished, had disappeared into the fog. They did not speak until they had reached the Ancient House and were on the main steps.

"Come on—let's get indoors as quickly as we can!" said Handforth briskly. "Fenton might come charging out, and if he spots us he'll suspect things. We'll bunk into our study."

"That was jolly neat, Handy," said Church approvingly.

"When I do a thing, I do it thoroughly!" retorted Handforth. "Come on! Sharp's the word!"

But they need not have worried. Fenton, receiving no reply to his call, had closed the window again, and was now eagerly reading the letter.

It was very brief:

"Will you please come to the little gate, near the river bridge, at half-past seven this evening? I shall be waiting there. It is very urgent.—OLIVE CLEGG."

Fenton's first action was to pull out his watch. It was nearly a quarter-past seven now! In order to keep the appointment, he

would have to be off at once. Ordinarily, he could get to the bridge within five minutes; but the fog would delay him.

"What can it mean?" he muttered, as he read the message again. "Why does she want to see me? I've got to go, of course! I can't let her wait there——"

He checked himself. A new idea had come to him. What if this was merely a trick? He was suspicious of everything. Perhaps one of his persecutors had concocted this letter, and when he got to the bridge he would find a crowd of yelling, idiotic juniors!

And, certainly, the circumstances were suspicious. He had no actual evidence that this letter had been written by Olive. He did not know her handwriting, and he had not seen the messenger. It had been delivered in a very strange manner.

Fenton frowned in perplexity. He examined the letter again, but this only increased his uncertainty. Without doubt, it was a girl's handwriting. It was a little shaky, as though it had been hurriedly written, but none of the St. Frank's juniors could have faked that handwriting. It had certainly been written by a girl.

This meant little, however. Fenton knew that lots of the St. Frank's fellows were on friendly terms with the Moor View school-girls; they could easily have taken one of them into their confidence. Fenton had a horror of keeping this appointment, and then finding an ambush. He was sensitive to a degree on the subject; and he almost decided, then and there, to ignore the thing completely. He wasn't going to let anybody have a laugh over him!

But then, in the next moment, he knew that he couldn't leave it to chance. He couldn't risk it. There was always the possibility that the letter really had come from Olive. And what would she think—what would she say—if he failed to turn up?

"No, I can't leave it like this!" muttered Fenton, as he stuffed the letter into his pocket. "I've got to find out for certain! I must know!"

He made up his mind. He would go—and chance it. In the corridor he passed Morrow and Wilson, of the Sixth; but he did not seem to be aware of their existence. He walked straight past, and they looked at him curiously.

In the lobby, Fenton only paused to get his overcoat and cap, and then he plunged out into the fog.

CHAPTER 5.

The Figure in the Fog!

AS Fenton strode blindly down the lane, keeping well to the side, so that he should not lose his bearings, he felt glad that he had decided to make the journey.

If the whole thing was a practical joke, he would obtain some sort of satisfaction by

smashing into the tricksters. He was a prefect, and the skipper of St. Frank's, but for once he would let himself go. He grimly told himself that he would make mincemeat of the malicious young rotters.

Half-past seven had just struck when Fenton reached the bridge. Very cautiously he edged his way to the small gate which the note had mentioned. He knew that gate well; it led into a narrow meadow, with the placid waters of the River Stowe just beyond.

He stumbled once or twice on the tufts of grass, and then, unexpectedly, he caught sight of a dim, indistinct figure just ahead of him. He had reached the gate.

"Hallo, there!" he murmured, instinctively clenching his fists.

He expected to hear a chorus of loud chuckles, succeeded by sarcastic, insulting cat-calls. Instead, he heard a soft, low voice.

"Thank you for coming!" said the voice.

"Miss Clegg!" ejaculated Fenton, jumping forward.

With one stride he was beside her, and now, in the dimness of the fog, he could just see her. She was wearing a big overcoat, and there was a shawl right over her head, which she held tightly round her throat. He could just see her small face, with her expressive eyes gazing fully at him.

"Why are you so surprised?" she murmured. "Aren't you here in answer to my note?"

"Yes, of course," breathed Fenton. "But—but—I'm awfully sorry, Miss Clegg! I confess that I suspected a trick. I did not think the note had come from you at all. You see, your handwriting is strange to me, and there was no actual proof—"

"Yes, I understand," she interrupted. "I had to see you this evening, Fenton. I—I mean, Mr. Fenton—"

"I'm Fenton to everybody, Miss Clegg," said the senior, with a faint smile. "Still, it sounds a bit formal, doesn't it? My other name is Edgar."

"Thank you—Edgar!" she whispered. "I am so worried about you—"

"Worried about me?" echoed Fenton. "Why? And look here! Before you say anything else I want to know why you have come out in this fog? Your voice is hoarse, and I know you've got a cold. You ought not to expose yourself like this."

"Oh, it doesn't matter!" she said impatiently. "I'm wearing a thick coat, and this shawl is very warm. I am well wrapped



Holding Olive Clegg in his arms, Fenton waited impatiently for somebody to answer his summons. The window opened, and out peered a very startled face. "This girl is very ill. I want you to give her shelter!" called Fenton.

up. I'm terribly worried about you, Edgar. It's dreadful that you should be in such trouble because of that promise you gave me."

"But I'm not in any trouble!" said Fenton quickly.

"You are! Don't deny it!" she insisted. "Everybody is sneering at you. Even your own friends are shunning you—"

"How did you know?" broke in Fenton, in surprise. "Who told you this?"

"It doesn't matter," she said quickly. "I do know, and I am more grieved than I can say. I asked you to come down here because I want to release you from that promise."

"Oh, but that's impossible—"

"It is not impossible," said the girl quietly. "I release you from it—now. You mustn't let yourself be misunderstood, Edgar; you mustn't allow all the boys to believe such wrong things of you. So please regard that promise as though it had never been made. You can go to your headmaster and make your report, and give your list of names——"

"Steady—steady!" interrupted Fenton. "If I do this, what about you?"

She touched his arm, pressing tightly upon it; and in a moment all Fenton's fears and misgivings left him. Once again he was under the spell of this sweet girl. He laughed softly at the suggestion she had made; and now there was no question of weakness in him. He had decided upon his course of action, and he was determined to go through with it.

"What's going to happen to you?" he asked.

"Never mind me!" she said. "I must chance it. It's not fair that you should be getting into all this trouble on my account. It was wrong of me to make you neglect your duty, and I want you to forget——"

"I am very sorry, Olive—if you call me Edgar, I shall call you Olive—but there's nothing doing!" said Fenton calmly. "I'm glad that I gave you that promise—because I have made up my mind to go to work in another way. And it will be the better way. I am going through with this thing on my own. I'm going to win the game off my own bat."

"But—but how?" asked the girl, staring at Fenton wonderingly.

"Does it matter how?" he said. "I'm not going to let you suffer because of your father's foolishness. I'm perfectly frank, you see; I regard this night club as a particularly wretched piece of folly. And one day, perhaps, Mr. Clegg will be of the same opinion. As for what the school thinks in the meantime—well, I don't care. I should hope I'm above the tittle-tattle and scandal of the rotters."

"You are making light of it—for my sake," said Olive falteringly. "And it won't do, Edgar! You mustn't be so rash."

"I'm not rash," he replied. "There's one thing that I must do at once, though. I've got to see Mr. Clegg. That's what I have decided; I've got to see your father and reason with him. In fact, I've a good mind to see him now. I'll take you home, and then I can——"

"But father isn't at home," Olive interrupted. "He went to London to-day—to engage a new artiste for the cabaret. All the trains are late because of the fog, and he hasn't arrived back yet."

Edgar Fenton hardly heard that; he was thinking only of that other thing she had said. Mr. Simon Clegg had gone to London to engage a new artiste! Fenton felt his heart beating faster as he realised the inner meaning of that statement.

"SO your father has gone to London to engage a new artiste!" he said quickly. "In your place, eh? It means that you won't do any more dancing and singing in the night club?"

"Yes!" she whispered.

"Well, thank goodness!" said Fenton.

"Are you pleased that I'm not going to appear in the night club again?" asked the girl.

"I am more pleased than I can say," said Fenton quietly. "And yet, at the same time, another thought strikes me. The very fact that Mr. Clegg has gone to London proves that he means to carry on with the club. He looks upon it as a permanent fixture. And that's bad—confoundedly bad!"

"I'm afraid he won't pay much attention to your objections, Edgar," she said, holding the shawl more closely round her mouth. "And I'm afraid of his tempers, too. Father is a good man as a rule—quite kindly and generous—but when he's in a temper he hardly knows what he is doing."

"Yes—I've found that out for myself," said Fenton grimly. "But he's just got to listen to reason. Prevention is always better than cure, Olive! And this night club must be closed down! Once it is shut up there will be no more breaking of bounds. And my duty will be done, too! I shall be able to hold up my head again. As long as this night club remains here it will be a menace to the discipline of St. Frank's. And I must get it closed. I want to do it off my own bat—without the Head knowing anything about it, or without even the police butting in."

"Oh, I do hope you succeed!" said Olive fervently. "I hate the night club, Edgar! If you can only succeed, it will be too wonderful for words."

"I can only succeed if Mr. Clegg is reasonable," replied Fenton thoughtfully. "That's just the trouble. I don't know how he will take my suggestion—but I am pretty sure that he will refuse. In that case I shall keep pegging away at him until I win. I must win—there's nothing else to think!"

In the fog they seemed to be in a world apart—isolated from everything and everybody. They could see nothing except the dim shapes of their own figures, and the hazy, vague outlines of the gate and the hedges. Everything beyond that was merged into the fog.

Owing to their false isolation—for it was certainly false, seeing that the road was only a yard or two away from them—they were perhaps a little careless. They did not take the trouble to speak in whispers; and the fog itself deadened the sounds of everything that went on beyond the range of a mere yard or two. Thus they were unaware of footsteps over the bridge; and this could be easily understood, for the solitary figure that approached was wearing rubber-soled shoes. The figure passed on and would have gone straight by, only a few words came out of the fog. The figure paused, tense, listening.

"I must have a long talk with your father," Fenton was saying. "I can't hope to be successful unless I put all the facts before him clearly and concisely. If we argue it out, I might be able to make him see reason."

"Hadn't you better come to-night?" asked Olive eagerly. "Come late—and you can talk to my father while the night club is on. You needn't show yourself—you can keep out of sight easily enough. My father will take you into his sitting-room; and there you can talk quietly."

"It means breaking bounds again," said Fenton uncomfortably. "Yet it doesn't matter, I suppose. And I don't want to come here in the open daylight, considering all the rumours that are going about. It will be better if I come in secret."

"Then come to-night—please!" she urged. "Oh, you don't know how anxious I am for everything to be settled. If only you can persuade him, it will be a big relief for us both."

"And you?" asked Fenton. "You ought to be in bed, you know; it's very rash of you to be out in this fog. It's my fault for keeping you here—"

"Don't be silly!" interrupted the girl. "It was I who asked you to come, and I'm very, very glad. And please remember that if you fail to persuade my father you can always take direct action. You are released from your promise."

"I don't accept the freedom," replied Fenton promptly. "Oh, no, Olive! I can't do that! I shall complete this task single-handed, or I shall admit myself to be a failure. But you are not going to appear in the club any more, are you?" he added suddenly. "That's what I want to be certain of."

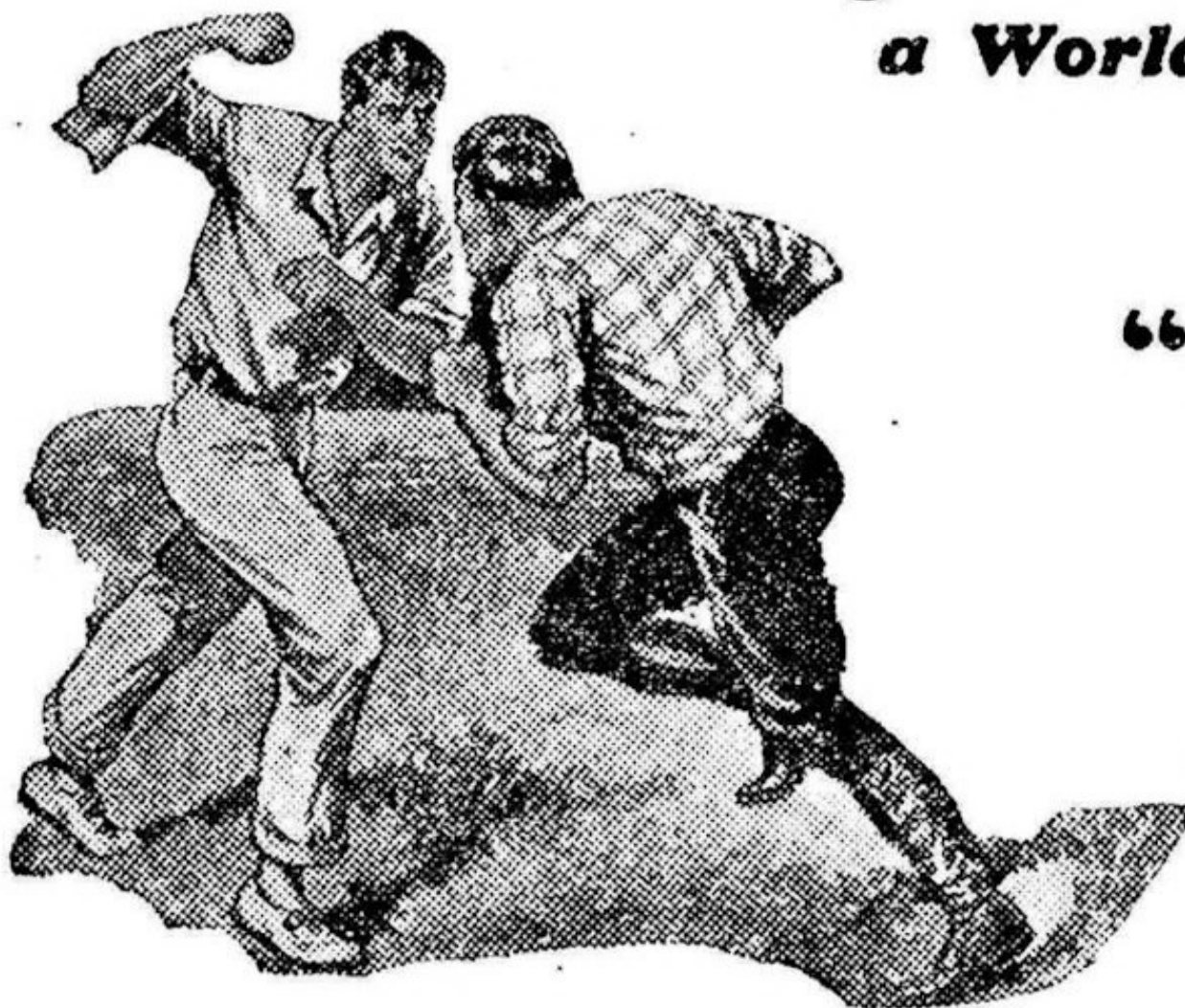
"You can be satisfied that I will never dance or sing in the club again," replied the girl earnestly. "I give you my word, Edgar. I promise you—faithfully."

He caught her hand and clasped it.

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"That's settled, then!" he said with keen satisfaction. "You don't know how much better I'm feeling now! I have an idea that everything will soon come right. And after the club is closed and all this wretched breaking of bounds is over, the school will realise that it has done me an injustice. All the sensible fellows, at least, will know that I have acted for the best. And it is better for the night club to be closed quietly, without any publicity—without scandal."

"It will all depend upon my father," said Olive anxiously.

"Leave him to me!" replied Fenton, his voice full of confidence. "I am getting more and more optimistic. And now, Olive, you really must go indoors. I'm a brute for having kept you out here so long. You'll let me take you to the gate, won't you?"

And as they moved off towards Moat Hollow neither of them had the faintest suspicion of the figure which lurked, unseen, unheard, in the fog nearby.

AFTER Fenton had parted with the girl at the gate of Moat Hollow, she did not go to the front door, as he might have supposed. She did not even go to the back door. She crept round the side of the old house until she reached that window—where Handforth & Co. had been, earlier.

A peep inside satisfied her. Quickly she opened the window, pulled herself nimbly up, and climbed through. For a moment she stood listening, her expression tense, her cheeks glowing—partly from the exertion and partly because of her feverish condition. Then, breathing hard, she shed her overcoat, took off her shoes, and donned slippers instead. After that she went to the big chair in front of the fire and sat down.

"Oh, thank goodness!" she murmured. "Auntie doesn't know! Well, it wasn't wicked," she added defensively. "There was no need for me to have told anybody."

She had a fit of coughing, brought on, perhaps, by the sudden warmth on the room. She fell back in the chair, her eyes closed.

"I like him immensely!" she whispered to herself. "I do hope he succeeds in convincing father! We could be so happy and comfortable here if it wasn't for the wretched night club! Oh, I can't understand why father ever started it!"

Suddenly the girl sat up in the chair, her expression startled. She could hear voices outside in the passage—and one of them was the voice of her stepfather! She breathed rapidly as she realised how narrow the margin of time had been. Quickly she picked up her book and pretended to read.

The door opened and Mr. Clegg half entered. He was apparently talking to his sister, in the hall.

"Splendid!" he was saying. "So Olive has been indoors all the evening? The best thing for her, with that nasty cold on her chest. Yes, I'm just going to have a look at her now."

He entered, and Olive glanced up, giving him a smile. It was not returned. Mr. Clegg was looking grim and tired and grimy.

"You're late, dad!" said Olive, trying to speak brightly.

"And who wouldn't be late in this infernal fog?" snapped Mr. Clegg, as he closely inspected her. "H'm! You seem better, girlie."

"I'm still a little feverish, I think, dad," said Olive, pulling her shawl more closely round her.

"Feverish, eh?" said Mr. Clegg, in a curious tone. "I'm not surprised! Well, I've had a disappointment. I couldn't get hold of that girl!"

"Oh, dad!" said Olive, opening her eyes wider, and becoming aware that her heart was beating more rapidly. "Do—do you mean that you haven't engaged anybody as a substitute for me?"

"Yes, that's what I mean!" retorted her stepfather, with a harsh note in his voice. "The girl had got an engagement two days ago. I tried elsewhere, but I couldn't find anybody suitable. It's not an ordinary job, this. Confound the luck!"

Mr. Clegg was evidently in a very peevish mood. His non-success in London, and the prolonged train journey in the fog, had evidently played havoc with his nerves and his temper. He gave Olive another close look, nodded, and then went out.

And, somehow, the girl was aware of a peculiar strained tension in the air. She couldn't quite understand it. As a rule, her father was genial and kindly to her, particularly after he had arrived back from a journey. This evening he not only

looked strangely grim, but appeared to be consumed with an inward rage.

It had seemed to Olive that her stepfather had had some more words on the tip of his tongue, but he had pulled himself up short, and had walked out of the room, closing the door with unnecessary violence. What had he been about to say? Olive became uneasy. She was getting just a little frightened of her stepfather.

In the meantime, Fenton, trudging slowly back towards St. Frank's, felt himself in a much calmer mood. He was heartened by his little talk with the girl; his nerves were



THE ST. FRANK'S QUESTIONNAIRE!

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

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the name of Willy Handforth's pet snake? 2. Where is Ulysses Spencer Adams' home town in America? 3. Who are the occupants of Study O in the West House? 4. What is the name of the East House page-boy? 5. How many Fourth Form studies are there in the East House? 6. When is Handforth's birthday? 7. Who is the red-headed junior at St. Frank's? 8. Who is the Editor of the St. Frank's Junior Magazine? 9. What is the full name of Wellborne of the River House School? 10. What is the name of Sir Edward Handforth's country house? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Who is Archie's father, and where is his home? 12. Who is Handforth's uncle, and where does he live? |
|--|---|

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S QUESTIONS:

1. *Ralph Leslie Fullwood, Clive Russell, and Stanley Waldo.* 2. *December 25th.* 3. *"The Coming of Archie"—No. 352, Old Series.* 4. *Bobby Dexter, of the Ancient House.* 5. *The Duke of Somerton, of Study G in the Ancient House.* 6. *Archibald Winston Derek Glenthorne.* 7. *Billy Nation, of Study 3 in the Modern House.* 8. *A monastery.* 9. *Doris Berkeley.* 10. *On the left, past the West House.* 11. *George Fullerton, of the East House.* 12. *Jack Mason.*

steadied, and he told himself that he had been worrying himself over nothing.

It was very sporting of her to release him from that promise, but, of course, he couldn't possibly take advantage of it. For, if he made his report to the headmaster, there could be only one result. Dr. Nicholls would at once inform the police of the night club, and then the authorities would swoop down. The place would be raided, Mr. Simon Clegg exposed, and in the general scandal Olive would be one of the chief sufferers. And it wasn't fair to her, since she had made it quite plain to Fenton that she hated the night club, and that she would be glad when it was closed down. Besides, there was no need for any publicity—now. If Fenton could only force Mr. Clegg's hand, everything would be all right.

The school captain, walking more upright and more steadily than of late, approached the Ancient House. He opened the big door, and he encountered Handforth & Co. in the lobby. The chums of Study D glanced round, saw Fenton, and then stared hard for a moment.

"Hallo, Fenton!" said Handforth cheerily. "Still foggy?"

"Thick as pudding!" said Fenton, with a smile. "Getting worse, too, by the look of it. Jove! It's nice and warm in here!"

He nodded and walked on. And Handforth & Co. exchanged meaning glances. They had not failed to detect the old cheery

note in Fenton's voice. He had seemed himself again. His eyes were brighter, his head was held higher. Altogether, it seemed that he had had a great load taken off his shoulders.

"By George!" breathed Handforth. "It's that note, my lads! Fenton must have been down, and he's seen Miss Olive! Did you notice the difference in him?"

"Who couldn't help noticing it?" asked Church. "I'm jolly glad! It's fine to see Fenton like his old self again!"

Edward Oswald grinned.

"And it's our doing, my lads!" he said softly. "Don't forget that! Or, to be more exact—my doing!"

Church and McClure were not likely to forget it, since their leader would undoubtedly din it into their heads until they were fed up with the very subject.

CHAPTER 6.

Mr. Clegg Springs a Surprise!

ELEVEN-THIRTY was just striking when the door of Olive Clegg's bedroom softly opened, and her aunt entered. There was a small light burning on the table, and Olive was fast asleep. With a little sigh, her aunt moved across the floor and took the girl by the shoulder.



The blind wasn't fully drawn and, peering into the room, Edward Oswald Handforth saw Olive Clegg sitting in front of the fire. The junior tapped softly on the window ; he wanted to see Olive—urgently.

"Wake up, Olive!" she murmured. "Your father wants you."

The girl turned over in bed, and then, with a little start, she sat up. Her face was looking very flushed.

"What is it?" she asked, her voice husky.

"There, child, I didn't mean to scare you!" said Mr. Clegg's sister. "You had better get out of bed and dress yourself. Your father wants you."

Olive, freshly awakened from a heavy sleep, gazed in wonder. Her aunt was a faded woman, unimaginative, and somewhat mechanical in her actions and her thoughts.

"But—but what's the time?" asked Olive, in wonder.

"Just half-past eleven."

"I don't understand!" said the girl wearily. "Are you sure you're right, auntie? Father wouldn't wake me like this, knowing that I have such a cold——"

"I tried to argue with him, child, but it was no good," interrupted her aunt. "He told me to come here and wake you up. You've got to dress, and you must go down to him. He's in a very strange mood to-night. I'm sure I don't know what's the matter with him."

"Where is he?" asked Olive.

"In his sitting-room, dressed in all his finery for the club," replied Olive's aunt. "Well, you're awake now, aren't you? Don't forget, child, your father is waiting for you. I'm going off to my own bed-room—and thankful to get there. It's a good thing he doesn't need me for his silly midnight tomfoolery."

She went out of the bed-room, and Olive, rather bewildered and anxious, quickly dressed herself.

The girl was a little bewildered at this curt and peremptory summons. It was so unlike her stepfather—for he knew that she was worse. Her temperature was higher, and her voice was so hoarse that it was only with difficulty that she controlled it.

She went downstairs into the sitting-room and found Mr. Simon Clegg pacing up and down, his hands clasped behind his back. He was in full evening dress, very smart, very imposing. He stopped abruptly as the girl entered, and there was something in his eyes which made the girl shiver.

"Shut the door!" said Mr. Clegg curtly.

"Whatever is the matter, father?" cried the girl, closing the door, and then turning round to face him. "Why do you look at me so strangely?"

"You were asleep, eh?"

"Yes."



The blind wasn't fully drawn and, peering in in front of the fire. The junior tapped

"I got you out of bed," nodded Mr. Clegg. "That's what I intended, my girl! Now you'll go upstairs again and put on your cabaret clothes!"

She looked at him in amazement.

"My—my cabaret clothes!" she repeated breathlessly. "Oh, dad, you can't mean it!"

"You're going to dance to-night!" said Mr. Clegg harshly. "Yes, and you're going to sing, too! My patrons must be satisfied! Now, go on! Do as I order!"

Her bewilderment was intensified, and she was frightened, too. The expression in her stepfather's eyes was so hard, so charged with anger.

She could hardly believe the evidence of her eyes—or ears. She was, indeed, dumb-founded. She was worse, much worse this evening. It was no longer a cold she was suffering from, but a real touch of influenza.



ard Oswald Handforth saw Olive Clegg sitting
ow ; he wanted to see Olive—urgently.

with a rapid pulse and a high temperature. It was difficult for her to see clearly, for everything seemed to swim and sway in front of her eyes.

Yet here was her father, telling her to go upstairs and get ready to dance in the cabaret show. And then Olive remembered something else. Her promise to Edgar Fenton! She had told Fenton before he had left that she would never again dance in the night club!

"What are you waiting for?" demanded Mr. Clegg coldly. "You know what you've got to do. And, by hokey, if I have any of your nonsense, Olive, I'll—I'll——"

"Dad!" she cried, frightened. "Please don't!"

She looked at the short, thick-set figure of her stepfather. As a rule his face was good-natured and genial; but now it was set in hard lines. Never before had she seen him looking so dangerous.

"That's enough!" he said, his voice becoming thick. "Do as I tell you!"

"But, dad, I can't!" she panted. "You know that I'm ill! My voice has nearly gone, and my chest is so bad. I can't sing to-night——"

"Can't!" thundered Mr. Clegg, with sudden violence.

She backed away before that storm. In a flash her stepfather had flared out. His suppressed rage had found full outlet, and he advanced upon her threateningly, his face purple with fury.

"Can't!" he repeated in a roar. "I'll soon tell you whether you can or whether you can't! If you can sneak out into the fog while pretending to sit in front of the fire and meet a St. Frank's boy, you can dance in my night club!"

In a flash the explanation of her stepfather's fury came to the startled girl. He knew! Her little talk with Fenton had not been so secretive, after all!

"But, father," she breathed, "I was well wrapped up—and I didn't get cold. Perhaps it was foolish of me——"

"All along you've jibbed at the idea of dancing in the cabaret!" broke in Mr. Clegg fiercely. "You've made all sorts of excuses, all manner of subterfuges. And now, at last, you pretend to be ill—— Yes, pretend!" he thundered, as she tried to interrupt. "Do you think I believe all this put-on nonsense?"

You've got a simple cold, and it won't do you any harm to sing, as usual. And, by hokey, you're going to do it!"

MR. SIMON CLEGG was a changed man. His customary mood was one of geniality, with occasional outburst of sudden temper. Yet seldom had he been in such a violent rage as this. All kindness and compassion had gone out of his nature.

Olive, her thoughts confused, backed still farther away from him. She almost put up her hands, as though to ward him off. She was becoming terrified.

"Please, dad!" she whispered. "Don't—don't look at me like that! You're not yourself—you don't know what you're saying!"

"I know perfectly well what I'm saying!" shouted Mr. Clegg. "And I know that your stories of being ill are all false—utterly false! You've lied to me——"

"I haven't—I haven't!" she burst out. "Oh, can't you see that I'm ill?"

"You were well enough to go out into the fog this evening!" retorted her stepfather. "You were well enough to deceive your aunt, and to sneak out of the window. And what for? To meet this infernal St. Frank's boy!"



Handforth undertakes to answer, in his own unique fashion, any question "N.L." readers care to submit to him. But, although of a certainly 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). Nipper is the editor of the "St. Frank's Magazine." It's all wrong, of course—I ought to be the editor—but then, this world is full of mistakes. Yes, I have often thought about getting a dog to help me with my detective work, but so far I haven't come across a pekinese to my liking. Do you happen to know of any really sagacious specimens of this type of dog going for about ninepence? If you do, write and let me know, and I'll send you a cheque. Concerning your query about Travis Dene, the ancestral home of the Handforths, the "a" in Travis is pronounced as in "cat." So I'm afraid you were wrong, old man. Still, don't let your sister crow over you too much.

N. ARMES (Norwich). How many goals have I had scored against me this season? As many again as half.

C. E. MACKIE offers to send me a box of powder, a lipstick and a jar of face cream if I will tell him the date of my birthday. I will, providing you agree to bring the stuff along to me personally, so that I can ram it all down your cheeky throat. Are you willing?

A. RYDBERG (Victoria, Australia) tells me to stop snoring at night. Surely you can't hear me in far-away Australia?

"FIGHTING MAD" (Bayswater) is a girl, although from her letter one wouldn't think so. She threatens to knock off my head, and says she makes a habit of doing this to any boy she meets. In that case, I don't think I shall ever visit Bayswater. "Fighting Mad" also shows signs of originality. She starts her letter thus: "Dear fat-headed chump of a mongrelleconion." Well, I've been called some names in my life, but I don't think I've ever been called a "mongrelleconion" before. Of course, it may be

complimentary, but somehow I don't think it is. However, I don't want to get in the bad books of this girl Carnera, so I won't say anything more.

"ROMA" (Stockport). I'm all of a tremble as I reply to this reader. She—I believe "Roma" is a girl—says that I shall die if I don't reply to her letter within three days. More like thirty-three days have passed. I'm still alive, it is true, but—It's all the silly Editor's fault. I told him the position, I asked him to stop the printing machine or have an extra number of the Old Paper published for my especial benefit, but—would you believe it?—he refused; absolutely refused to do anything of the such-which. He even laughed like a hard-hearted hen! So it's not my fault, "Roma." I shall have to throw myself upon your mercy.

"DAPHNE" (Whetstone) wants to know if my chin ever aches. Why should it ache? You don't think I biff people with my chin, do you? I have passed on your congratters to Travis re Phyllis Palmer, and he sends his thanks. Yes, that was a jolly good riddle of yours. Of course, I should have known the answer, even if you hadn't told me.

"POPPY" (Catford) is in distress. Her pet cat has been poisoned, and she wants me to give her some advice on detective work so that she can track down the foul miscreant who has perpetrated this dastardly deed. You've set me a poser, "Poppy." How can I help you when you don't give me any clues? Your drawing of a skull and crossbones at the foot of your letter is very pretty, but it's not at all enlightening on the subject in hand. Please send me some helpful information—what kind of a cat it was, how many legs it had, if its eyes were pink, and so on.

EDWARD OSWALD.

BOUND BY A PROMISE!*(Continued from page 24.)***CHAPTER 7.****Into the Fog!**

SUDDENLY sobered, Mr. Clegg stood in the open doorway, staring out into the pall of thick fog. It struck against him like something solid, and he knew, in that moment, that he would never find the girl unless he cooled down. A blind chase would be utterly useless.

"Olive!" he shouted huskily. "Come back, girlic!"

Faintly, through the mist, he heard the crackling of twigs, and then silence.

"Olive—Olive!" he called sharply. "Do you hear me? You mustn't stay out there in this fog! Have you gone mad? Come back at once!"

But not a sound came to his ears now. He bit his lip, cooled as effectively as though a bucket of icy water had been poured over his head. But his anger still remained. He turned away from the door, leaving it wide open.

"She'll soon come in!" he told himself, breathing hard. "The little fool! Heavens! There's never any telling with these girls! Who would have thought that she would run out like that? I wasn't going to hurt her!"

He tried to gain full control of himself.

"Yes, she'll soon come in!" he muttered. "The night air will cool her down. If she can go out in the fog to meet that fool of a boy, she can go out again now. And when she comes back she'll be more ready to listen to reason!"

A footstep sounded down the passage.

"Mr. Clegg!" called a voice.

He turned round and found a young fellow in evening dress approaching. He was one of the bandsmen, and he had just come up from the cellars—where the night club was held. Mr. Clegg found that he was wanted down below, to attend to some final details. Within a minute or two the guests would be arriving. Mr. Clegg pulled himself together. He told himself again and again that Olive would soon come back. He would probably find her up in her bed-room, sobbing her eyes out.

But the girl did not come back.

She hardly knew what she was doing. Her terror was like something tangible—something which followed her and clutched at her. It was only by chance that she found herself near the little door which was set in the back wall of the big garden. Within a minute or two a man would come on duty—a doorkeeper. But as yet nobody was here. It wasn't quite twelve o'clock.

Afterwards Olive did not remember opening that door and getting out. She was



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obsessed with one thought. She had to get away—to escape the demon that chased her. To her disordered mind it seemed that her stepfather had changed into a horrid sort of menace. She had to flee—to flee!

So she passed through that doorway, and then found herself amid the trees of Bellton Wood. She plunged on, walking blindly, unseeingly. The fog made no difference; she had no objective, she merely wanted to get farther and farther away.

The unhappy girl was in the grip of hysteria. And she was in no way clothed for this sudden exposure. She was wearing nothing but a comparatively light frock; no hat—no shawl.

Back in the old house, Mr. Clegg attended to the details he was called upon to supervise, and then he made an excuse and quickly went upstairs again. He found the door still open, just as he had left it. A man loomed into sight out of the fog.

"Just going on duty, sir," he remarked, as he caught sight of Mr. Clegg.

"Is it twelve?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right—go ahead!" said the night club proprietor. "You haven't seen my daughter anywhere, I suppose?"

The man paused as he was about to move off, and he stared.

"Miss Olive, sir?" he said. "Why, no. She wouldn't be out here, would she, sir?"

"I—I suppose not," said Mr. Clegg hastily. "No, of course not. Don't stare, man! Go to your door, and be careful about whom you admit."

The man went off, puzzled. And Mr. Clegg, biting his lip harder than ever, looked out uneasily into the fog. Then he suddenly turned, went upstairs, and tapped on the door of the girl's bed-room. He felt almost sure that she had come in, and that she was now upstairs.

There came no answer to his tap. He opened the door and looked in. The bed was disordered and the light was burning, but Olive was not there. He strode in, in order to make sure. He looked in every corner, half suspecting that she was hiding from him. Dimly, at the back of his consciousness, he was beginning to realise that she had every reason to hide from him.

"Olive!" he called tensely.

But there was no reply. He walked out of the room, went slowly downstairs, and stood for some minutes at the door, gazing out into the fog again. Why didn't she return? Was she mad, to stay out there, in the cold?

He tried to recall what had actually happened in the sitting-room. He had been angry, yes—but he had had every reason to be angry. Perhaps he had been rather too violent. She was a sensitive girl, and he recalled, with something of a shock, that he had shouted very harshly at her. Still, that

was no reason why she should have fled in such terror—

"Hallo, Mr. Clegg!" said a cheery voice. "First to arrive, eh?"

Mr. Simon Clegg pulled himself together. Two young people had just appeared in front of him—a young fellow, overcoated and muffled, and a laughing girl.

"We're going to have some rare fun to-night, Mr. Clegg!" said the girl gaily. "We've brought you a lot of new customers, too!"

"A whole gang of us!" grinned the young man.



They began to pile in—youngsters whose ages were twenty or over. The majority of them had come from Bannington, and they all thought that it was fine sport to venture out in the fog, and to locate this rural night club, where they would spend a happy hour or two in that warm, stuffy cellar.

Mr. Clegg found his hands full now; people were arriving every minute, and there was no time for him to look for his stepdaughter. Yet she was never out of his thoughts. He thought it possible that she had crept through a window somewhere. Perhaps she was in one of the other rooms, crouching on a sofa or in a big chair. He resolved that as soon as he got the opportunity he would go round, making a close search.

Of course she was indoors—that was positive. She couldn't be outside in the fog all this time. Somehow or other she had got back. There was nothing else to think.

And thus Mr. Clegg consoled himself as he put on a false smile and greeted the patrons of his night club.

"EASY as winking!" grinned Uncle Robert, of the Remove.

"Gad, rather!" chuckled Grayson, of the Fifth. "Let's hope there's a fog like this three times a week! What do we care for prefects or masters? We're as safe as houses!"

"Particularly with Fenton on our side!" said Claude Gore-Pearce. "I wonder if we shall see him in the club to-night?"

"Who cares?" said Uncle Robert. "My precious nephew can go and eat coke! He's

a charming fellow, but I don't care a snap of the fingers for him!"

The St. Frank's fellows had set out for Moat Hollow in twos and threes, but, owing to the fog, they had joined forces. It was safe enough to do so on a night like this.

There were more of these youthful visitors than ever for Mr. Clegg's night club. Not only the usual band of rotters had planned to foregather at Moat Hollow, but a number of ordinarily decent fellows, too. They had been carried away by the excitement of it all—by the novelty. And it seemed so safe, too.

De Valerie and Singleton and one or two others had been to the club, and they had thought it good fun. To-night, therefore, a number of other new recruits had been roped in. So Uncle Robert was feeling very pleased with himself—for he pocketed a commission on all patrons from St. Frank's. Every one of these fellows was obliged to pay ten shillings admission before he could get into the club.

They reached Moat Hollow and were duly admitted by the keen-eyed doorkeeper. This man would not allow any stranger to pass; although it was quite all right if they were accompanied by a recognised member of the club.

There was plenty of noise as the "gang" crowded into the old house and went down into the cellar. Other people were arriving at the same time—visitors from Caistowe and from Edgemore and from other surrounding villages. The young people of the districts were enthusiastic about Mr. Clegg's new venture. It provided them with some excellent entertainment.

Mr. Simon Clegg was as suave and as smooth as ever when he greeted his youthful patrons. Perhaps there was an anxious light lurking at the back of his eyes, but, if so, none of the St. Frank's fellows noticed it.

"Better than ever, eh, Mr. Clegg?" smiled Uncle Robert, referring to the extra visitors he had brought to-night.

"Yes, Bob—yes!" said the proprietor absently.

"Seen anything of my charming nephew this evening?" went on the junior, with a grin.

Mr. Clegg suddenly frowned.

"Is he coming down?" he asked sharply.

"I don't know," replied the junior, with a stare. "What's wrong, Mr. Clegg? You don't look any too pleased."

"Nothing—nothing!" said Mr. Clegg, with a wave of his hand. "I don't care whether he comes down or not!"

He moved away, and presently he went upstairs. The brightness and the gaiety of the night club irritated him. Most of the visitors had arrived by now, and the first dance was in progress. But Mr. Clegg felt that he could leave everybody to look after themselves. As soon as he reached the stone-floored passage he paused, irresolute. There was a deep frown on his face.

"She must have come back by now!" he muttered tensely. "By hokey, she can't be out of doors all this time! It's unthinkable! I don't know what could have possessed the girl!"

He went to the sitting-room and had a look inside. It was empty, and the fire was dying down in the grate. He came out, hurried upstairs, and went to Olive's bedroom. He tapped on the panel and, receiving no answer, looked in. Nothing was changed; the room was as empty as before.

"Why hasn't she come back?" he muttered, in a fever of anxiety.

He went downstairs again; he ran this time. And he went from one room to another, searching, searching. Everywhere it was the same. Dark, cold, deserted rooms. No sign of Olive! He assured himself, in fact, that the girl was not in the house.

And that left only one possibility—only one answer. She was still outside in the fog! She had run out there in her terror, and had not returned.

Mr. Clegg flung open the back door and strode out into the night. The fog was still thick—it clung round him with an icy grip. He felt extraordinarily helpless. What could he do? It was impossible to search the grounds, for this fog obliterated everything. It was possible, of course, to obtain a number of flares and to make a systematic search of the entire property, but this would entail a good deal of publicity. Other people would have to know—and then they would make inquiries.

"Olive—Olive!" called Mr. Clegg cautiously.

Then he realised the futility of shouting in this way. But a second later a figure loomed up out of the fog, and Mr. Clegg felt his heart give a jump. It was only the doorkeeper, however.

"Were you calling, sir?" he asked, staring curiously.

"No—no!" muttered Mr. Clegg.

"I thought I heard you calling your daughter, sir."

"Er—as a matter of fact, she came out for a breath of fresh air," said Mr. Clegg harshly. "Foolish thing to do! If I had known I would have stopped her—"

"It's a rare bad night, sir!" said the man anxiously. "And Miss Olive isn't any too well, is she?"

"You've seen nothing of her?" asked Mr. Clegg bluntly.

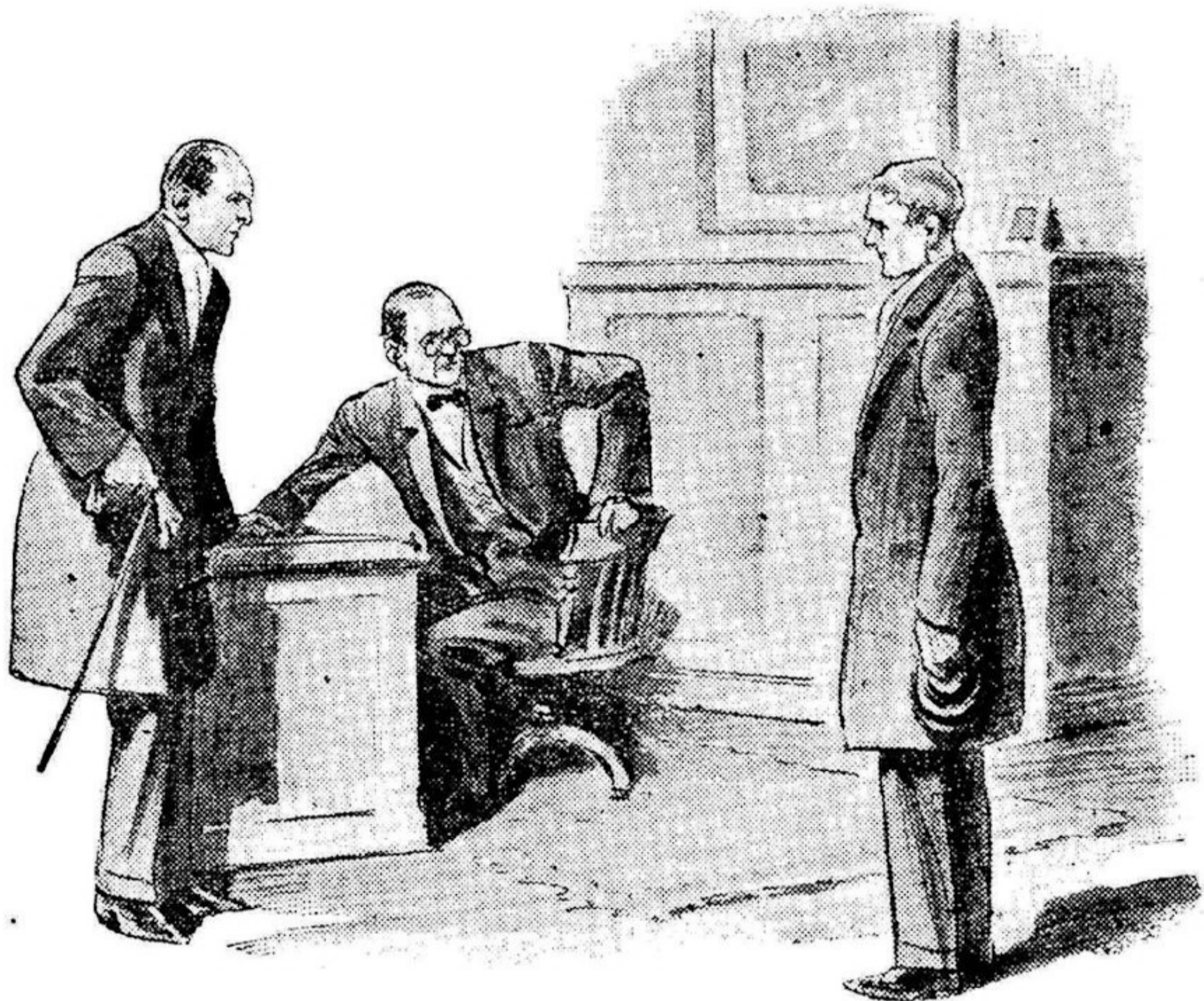
"Nothing at all, sir," replied the man. "Maybe she went out. I noticed that the door was not properly shut when I came on duty. Somebody had been monkeying with it, anyhow."

Mr. Clegg felt his blood run cold through his veins.

"Went out!" he repeated in a mutter. "Are you sure of this, man? You say that the door was not properly secured? What do you mean?"

"Well, it's true, sir—"

"All right—all right!" interrupted Mr. Clegg. "Don't worry yourself about it. I



"What were you doing out of your bed after lights out?" asked the Head, eyeing Fenton sternly.
 "Why were you breaking bounds?" "I cannot tell you, sir!" said Fenton steadily.

dare say Miss Olive has returned indoors by now. And look here—don't say anything about this to anybody else. You understand?"

Mr. Clegg turned abruptly and walked indoors. He stood in the passage, his fists clenched. His anger had gone, to be replaced by remorse.

So he had driven her out—right out of the Moat Hollow grounds! In her terror she had fled. And now—where was she now? Somewhere out in the countryside, perhaps wandering about hysterically, a victim of his fiendish temper.

"What have I done?" groaned Mr. Clegg, pressing his hands to his throbbing head. "Heavens above! What have I done?"

CHAPTER 8.

Mr. Clegg in a Rage!

MR. CLEGG was almost stunned. He tried to convince himself that he was not to blame; and yet he knew perfectly well that it was his temper, and his temper alone, which had caused the frightened girl to flee. There was something horrifying in the whole situation.

In his heart he knew perfectly well that Olive was ill. He had pretended otherwise during his rage; but he had been fooling himself. And when he thought of her stumbling over the countryside, exposed to the fog, with insufficient covering—In the morning, perhaps, somebody would find her, stiff and cold and—

"No, no!" panted Mr. Clegg hoarsely. "Not that! I can't bear to think of it!"

And just then, at that crucial moment, Fenton arrived.

The captain of St. Frank's was feeling optimistic; his brief interview with Olive had given him heart. He had spent the evening in a hopeful mood. If only Mr. Clegg would prove reasonable, everything would be all right. And here, by a lucky chance, he had encountered Mr. Clegg without finding it necessary to show himself in the night club.

"Good-evening, Mr. Clegg!" said Fenton, as he loosened his woollen scarf.

Mr. Clegg turned, and for a moment he looked at Fenton unseeingly. Then, in a flash, his mood changed. His face became suffused with a sudden rage.

"You!" he snarled, with such ferocity that Fenton took a step backwards.

"Really——" began the school captain.

"You interfering young jackanapes!" shouted Mr. Clegg thickly. "It's your fault! But for you she would never have——"

He seemed to choke, and he managed to pull himself together. He must control these rages! They led nowhere—except into trouble. But although Mr. Clegg controlled himself, it was only with the greatest difficulty, and he stood looking at Fenton with glowering, burning eyes.

"Well?" he grated out. "What do you want with me?"

Fenton was astonished; he had not expected such a reception as this. So far as he could understand, he had only done Mr. Clegg a good turn. He had refrained from making any report to the headmaster, and one would have supposed that Mr. Clegg would be grateful. What could be the reason for his present attitude? Fenton, knowing nothing of what had occurred, was frankly amazed.

But the very sight of the senior made Mr. Clegg go into this unreasoning state of fury. It was Fenton who had met Olive near the bridge that evening—and but for that incident Mr. Clegg would never have treated his stepdaughter as he had done. Therefore he placed the blame on Fenton's shoulders. It was weak—it was unjust. But Mr. Clegg was not in the mood to be reasonable.

Perhaps it was a pity; for if he had taken Fenton into his confidence openly he might have found a friend in the St. Frank's captain.

"What do you want?" he repeated, his voice thick and harsh.

"I don't see why you should talk to me in this fashion, Mr. Clegg," replied Fenton. "I was rather anxious to have a quiet chat with you—not in the passage here, but in your own private room."

"I want no talk with you!" snapped Mr. Clegg.

"I am sorry you should treat me like this," said Fenton quietly. "This evening I had a little chat with your daughter, sir. She advised me to come to-night to talk to you. And so I am here. I was hoping that you would be reasonable."

Mr. Clegg breathed hard. Fenton's frankness took him by surprise. He had not believed that Fenton would openly refer to that meeting with Olive.

"I know perfectly well that you are at liberty to do as you please in your own house," said Fenton earnestly. "And if it suits you to run this night club, it is no concern of mine. But what is my concern is the grave irregularity that is going on at St. Frank's. I am the school captain, and it is my duty to put a stop to the whole business."

"Oh, indeed!"

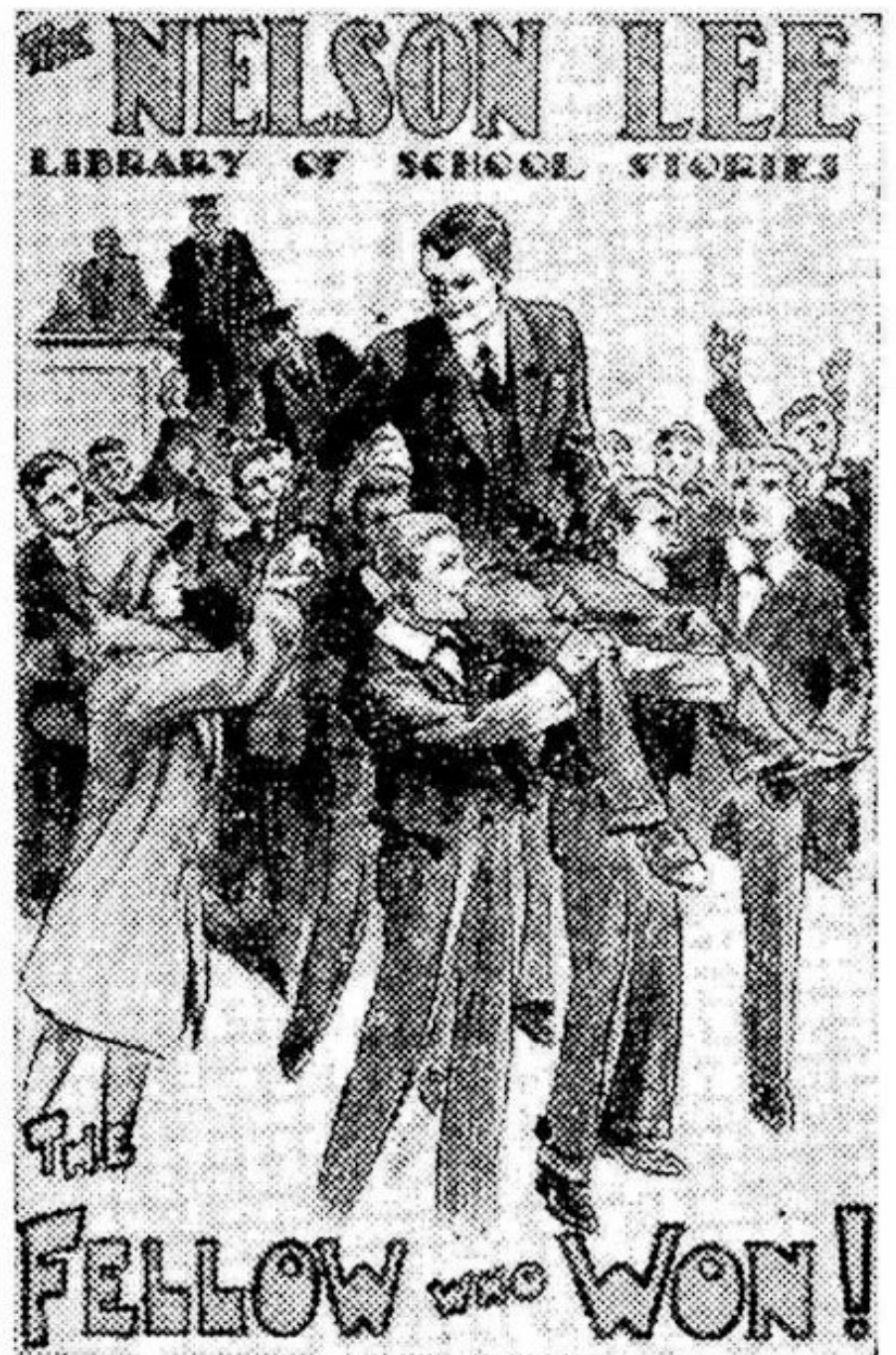
"You know as well as I do, Mr. Clegg, that all these St. Frank's boys are breaking bounds by coming here," continued Fenton. "My hands are tied; I have promised that I will make no report to the headmaster. And I will keep that promise, too. But won't you consider my position? Something has got to be done—and unless you consent to

close your night club to the St. Frank's boys there will be the gravest possible trouble."

Mr. Clegg said nothing; but his anger was rising. He resented Fenton's arguments.

"It will be simple enough for you, sir," urged Fenton. "It is only necessary for you to tell these fellows that they cannot attend the club, and all the breaking of bounds will cease. They won't come out unless they have somewhere to come to. It would be better still to close the club altogether—but, as I have said, that is not my business. But if you will take steps with regard to the St. Frank's boys——"

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"I shall do nothing—nothing!" broke in Mr. Clegg. "I do not compel them to come! If they do come, it is their own concern."

"But it is the presence of your club that is undermining the school discipline!" said Fenton quickly. "Why can't you understand that point, Mr. Clegg? In any case, your success is only temporary; sooner or later there is bound to be a big exposure. And then, not only will you pay the penalty, but St. Frank's will be involved in an unsavoury scandal——"

"I don't care a hang for St. Frank's!" snarled Mr. Clegg, suddenly pacing up and down. "Confound St. Frank's! You, too! Get out of this house! It's your fault—all your fault! But for you the girl would

never have run off! Do you think I can stand here, talking to you about trivialities while—while——Heavens!" he added, clapping his hands to his head. "Will you leave me alone, boy? Can't you see that I'm worried to death?"

Mr. Clegg was distracted; he hardly knew what he was saying. And Edgar Fenton, feeling cold all over, gripped Mr. Clegg by the arm, and shook him violently.

"What do you mean?" he demanded. "Are you telling me that Miss Olive has run away?"

Mr. Clegg went limp; he seemed to shrivel under Fenton's grip.

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"Yes!" he muttered brokenly. "She is out in the fog! She has run away!"

THE captain of St. Frank's was aghast. For a few seconds he stared at Mr. Clegg like a fellow in a dream. He could not believe it. It was too ghastly. Until this moment he had been sorely puzzled by Mr. Clegg's attitude; but now, in a flash, he began to understand.

"Tell me!" he said, shaking his companion's arm. "When did she run off? We've got to find her, Mr. Clegg!"

"Don't I know it?" snarled Mr. Clegg, his anger getting the better of his anguish. "You young busybody! I tell you, it's all your fault! You come here and you induce

my daughter to meet you in secret, and——"

"That's wrong!" broke in Fenton hotly. "It was she who arranged the meeting. I knew nothing about it until I got——"

"Silence!" broke in Mr. Clegg. "What does it matter? She defied me and she ran out, without any coat on——"

"You drove her out, you mean!" said Fenton hotly. "You frightened her into running away! You hound!"

Mr. Clegg raised both his clenched fists.

"Don't you dare to talk to me like that!" he shouted harshly. "What if she did run away from my temper? She's my daughter! And it is her duty to obey me! I do not look for such defiance in a young girl! How was I to know that she would bolt like a scared rabbit?"

"When did she go?" demanded Fenton.

"When? I don't know—I can't remember!" panted the other. "An hour ago—yes, fully an hour ago! Perhaps longer. Why bother me with such ridiculous question?" he added petulantly.

"Over an hour ago!" ejaculated Fenton, staring. "And haven't you searched for her, Mr. Clegg? Haven't you taken any steps to find her and bring her back?"

"No! What steps could I take? The fog——"

"The fog is the very reason why you should have searched for her!" said Fenton, in a fever of anxiety. "Good heavens, Mr. Clegg, don't you realise that your daughter was feverish? She had no right to be out in the fog earlier in the evening, but she was well wrapped up then."

"I tell you I've been too busy!" said Mr. Clegg distractedly. "The people started coming, and I had to be in the club. I thought she would come back—I was certain that I should find her in her bed-room."

But Mr. Simon Clegg had been talking to himself.

Fenton, realising that the man was incapable of any action, had dashed out into the night. There was only one thought in his mind; he had to find Olive Clegg and bring her back. And, within him, Fenton felt enraged. It was all the result of Simon Clegg's harshness. He had treated his daughter brutally and cruelly, and so she had run away.

"The man's a fiend!" Fenton told himself, as he ran blindly through the Moat Hollow grounds. "He might do this sort of thing again! He's not to be trusted! Even now he tries to blame me. The brute—the brute!"

He steadied himself, and found that he was near the little private door. A figure loomed up out of the darkness and fog.

"Who's that?" came a voice.

"Let me out!" panted Fenton.

"All right, young man—no need to get into a flurry!" said the doorkeeper. "What's the matter with you? Had a row with somebody, or what?"

The door opened, and Fenton found himself outside. He heard a click as the door closed. He ran on along the little footpath. It led through a section of Bellton Wood, joining with the lane higher up.

Suddenly Fenton stumbled over a root, collided with a tree, and came up with a jarring thud. His whole frame was shaken, and he tried to pull himself together.

The fog hemmed him in. He could hardly see the tree with which he had collided; it rose up near him, shadowy and vague. And now that he had paused he could almost hear his heart thumping within him. Everything else was dead silence. There was not a breath of wind, and the fog muffled and deadened all the usual sounds of the night.

"How can I find her?" muttered Fenton desperately.

He went on again, wandering aimlessly. Occasionally he paused, and called Olive's name. He found himself coming back on his own tracks, and before long he stumbled into the lane. And it was then that he realised the hopelessness of his quest.

What was the good of it?

A hundred and one wild ideas came into his head. He would go to the police and get them to help—No, that was no good! There weren't any police in Bellton—at least, only one constable.

No; he would go to St. Frank's and arouse the whole school. He would organise search parties, and have the whole countryside scoured.

Yes! That was it! With scores and scores of fellows searching about, armed with torches, they would probably be successful.

He forced the wild, fantastic ideas out of his head. He stood there, thinking deeply. And, as soon as Edgar Fenton had obtained this firm hold on himself, the problem seemed less difficult.

CHAPTER 9.

Found!

NOW, let me try to reconstruct what might have happened," he muttered. "Clegg got into a temper, and in the middle of it Olive ran out of the house. She was probably a bit hysterical, and she was terrified. But I know, also, that she was fairly weak. That seems to argue that she couldn't have run very far."

The fog, too, would probably have a rapid effect, his thoughts ran on. She had come out of a warm room—straight into the rawness of the night. No matter how terrified she had been, the exposure would soon cause her to cool down—mentally as well as physically. And after she had cooled down, what then?

Either she was too weak to get back, or else she wandered to a neighbouring cottage and got somebody to give her shelter.

But in this case the "somebody" would almost certainly have communicated with

Mr. Clegg. That seemed to argue that the girl had not been seen or found by anybody. Fenton was satisfied that she could not have gone very far. Therefore, it was a waste of time to scour a wide circle of the countryside.

He thought even more deeply. Coming out of that little gate, she could either run along the footpath towards the lane, or else she could have skirted the wall of Moat Hollow, and gone towards the meadows. And Fenton had a sudden idea.

"If she had taken the footpath she would have met some of the fellows coming down to the night club!" he told himself shrewdly. "They couldn't have missed her even in the fog. Yet they saw nobody! That proves clearly enough that she must have gone along the wall, towards the meadows. She couldn't have gone the other way, because there's a tangle of undergrowth there, and she would never have forced her way through it."

So, by this cool reasoning, Fenton had arrived at some sort of definite possibility. Nothing was certain, of course. But it seemed to him that he couldn't do better than search the meadows, to begin with. There was more chance that she would be in that direction than anywhere else.

Fenton retraced his steps towards that door in the rear wall of Moat Hollow. Arrived there, he forced himself to act slowly and deliberately. He struck a match and looked at the ground; but he learned nothing.

He turned away along the high wall and after a while he struck another match. Again it was the same. Nothing but the wet grass underfoot, the undergrowth growing closely to the wall, and the dark mass of Bellton Wood towering menacingly near at hand.

Just as the match was about to go out Fenton caught a glimpse of something different. He ran a few steps farther on, and struck another match. And now he gave a little gulp. There, clinging to a bush, was a scrap of dress material! It was hardly damp, and the edges were ragged.

"Then she did come this way!" muttered Fenton exultantly. "This proves it! Her dress must have caught on this twig and—Olive! Olive!" he called, as he blundered on.

Within a few moments he was in the meadow, well clear of the Moat Hollow grounds. And now, indeed, his difficulties were manifold. The ground was rough, and on all sides it extended blackly into the fog.

And so Fenton searched the meadow, calling softly every now and again.

It seemed to him that hours must have passed. His feet were wet and his eyes were aching. Yet Fenton kept doggedly on, hoping against hope that he would find Olive. Something loomed up in front of him, and he saw a tiny shed with a sloping thatched roof. It was only a kind of shelter with three sides. Fenton did not know what it was used for, but he seemed to remember having seen the shed by daylight. He made

his way round it, until he found himself peering into the open end.

As he moved cautiously forward in the darkness his foot caught against something—something which yielded. He bent down, and then dropped on to his knees in some damp straw. He felt before him. His fingers encountered some soft material—a dress! With his heart leaping, he felt again. A hand this time—cold and chill. A small, neat hand which did not respond to his touch.

"Olive!" he choked. "Thank Heaven! I've found her!"

With trembling hands he struck a match. And as the light flared up, dispersing the fog within a tiny radius, he beheld Olive Clegg.

She was a pitiful figure. She was huddled up, her face half-concealed in her arm. Her hair was untidy and scattered over her white forehead. Her knees were drawn up, and Fenton could see that one of her shoes was missing.

And she was very still.

FOR one dreadful moment Fenton thought that she was dead.

He slid a hand under her shoulders and gently raised her forward; and as he did so, a little sigh escaped her lips, and Fenton breathed more freely.

"Olive!" he murmured. "Wake up—wake up! You're safe now!"

She stirred slightly, and her eyelids fluttered. Then suddenly she opened her eyes wide and stared wildly.

"Don't—don't!" she panted, her voice the faintest of whispers. "Oh, dad! Don't look at me like that!"

"It's all right!" urged Fenton. "It's I—Fenton of St. Frank's! You're quite safe now—"

"You're hurting me!" cried Olive, her voice rising to a thin scream. "Don't, dad! Oh, you brute! Oh, my arms—my arms—"

Her voice trailed away, and she sank limply back. As Fenton held her, a tremendous rage welled up within him. The girl was delirious; she did not know where she was, or who had raised her.

But her words were eloquent enough! It was perfectly clear to Fenton that Mr. Simon Clegg had ill-treated the girl; there had been something more than a mere quarrel. She had been driven out because he had bullied her; she had fled in a state of uttermost fear.

"The hound!" muttered Fenton hoarsely. "The contemptible brute! If I take her back to Moat Hollow he will probably bully her again. I won't take her back there! He's not fit to be left in charge of her!"

The St. Frank's captain gently placed the girl down again. Then he whipped off his overcoat, spread it on the straw, and lifted Olive on to it. He wrapped his coat well round her and buttoned it up. Then he took her in his arms and cautiously felt his way out of the shed.

He was astonished at the smallness of her—at the ease with which he carried her. Not a sound came from the girl now; she seemed quite unconscious. And Fenton, having decided that he would not take her back to Moat Hollow, was faced with a problem.

Where should he take her?

And while he was thinking he remembered an old couple who lived in a little cottage, not more than half a mile away. Old Joe White and his wife. An elderly, peaceful couple; Fenton knew them well and was on friendly terms with them.

"Yes!" muttered Fenton. "Old Joe! He wouldn't mind—and his wife is a kindly soul. Besides, it's nearer; now that I can get my bearings, I know just where I am. There's a little footbridge farther along, and once I'm over that I shall be at the cottage within five minutes. And there she'll be safe! Clegg will never be able to find her!"

Having made up his mind, he lost no time—in setting forth.

The period of suspense and anxiety was over. He had found her, and he swore, again and again, that he would keep his vow. Never would he let Mr. Clegg know where Olive was! He had forfeited all right to take care of the girl.

Fenton found the bridge without much difficulty. He was not wandering about at random now; he knew his bearings, and in spite of the fog he did not lose himself. He was familiar with every inch of ground all round St. Frank's, and presently he came upon a kind of footpath. It was rather bigger than a footpath—a cattle track which wandered aimlessly and idly across the meadows.

And then, out of the gloom, a cottage appeared. Fenton pushed open the gate, walked up the short garden path, and breathed a sigh of relief when he found himself in the porch. He knocked heavily upon the door.

It was a very small cottage, and it was isolated from any other dwelling. Round at the back there were one or two sheds, where Mr. White kept his materials and where he did most of his work. At this hour of the night, of course, the good people were sound asleep.

Fenton knocked again, and then, just when he was getting impatient, he heard a window opening, and a voice came down to him out of the fog.

"Who's that?" it demanded nervously. "Is there anybody down there?"

Fenton came out of the porch and looked up.

"Is that you, Mr. White?" he asked.

"Why, ay, it's me!" said the old man. "Who is it?"

"I'm Fenton—of St. Frank's!" said the school skipper. "You know me, Mr. White. I want you to let me in. It's urgent! Somebody is very ill, and she needs immediate attention. I want you to give her shelter."

"Lor' save us!" ejaculated Mr. White, startled. "Just a minute, young gent—just a

minute! I'll be down! I s'pose I'd better wake the missus, too?"

"Yes; she'll be needed," said Fenton.

There was another brief wait and then the door opened. Old Mr. White stood there, dressed only in his nightshirt and trousers, and he was holding a candle in his hand. He was a grizzled, bewhiskered old fellow, stumpy and gnarled.

"Come ye in, Mr. Fenton, sir!" he said. "My! But what have ye here?"

Fenton walked in and laid the girl gently on an old-fashioned sofa. The front door opened straight into the parlour, and the old man closed the door and then came back to the middle of the room.

Before Fenton could say anything Mrs. White appeared, startled.

"Whatever's the matter?" she asked breathlessly.

"Mrs. White, I want you to take this girl, undress her and put her into bed," said Fenton quickly. "She—she got lost in the fog and she had a bad cold before she started out. I'm afraid she has now got a very serious chill. I'll pay you for all the trouble——"

"Ye don't need to say that, Mr. Fenton!" put in the old man. "It's a pity if we can't do something to help the poor creature. But who is she, sir? And why did ye bring her here? Begging your pardon, sir, but it seems a bit queer to me."

"It is queer, too!" said Fenton quickly. "But I can't stop to explain everything now—I've got to rush for the doctor. Please see that she is put straight into bed. By the time you've made her comfortable I hope to be back with the doctor."

But Mr. and Mrs. White were looking at him wonderingly—awkwardly. And, after all, they had every excuse for being bewildered.

CHAPTER 10.

The Doctor's Verdict!

FENTON realised that it would be necessary, to a certain extent, to take the old couple into his confidence. It was not reasonable to suppose that they would take the girl in otherwise.

"I can't explain all the details," he said quietly. "But this girl is Miss Clegg, of Moat Hollow. Perhaps you've heard——"

"Why, yes, sir!" interrupted Mr. White. "Mr. Clegg is the new gent that's come to live there, ain't he? Some queer stories going about him, too!" he added darkly. "Rummy goings on at night, by what I can hear."

"Mr. Clegg has a sort of club—a night club," explained Fenton. "The man's a brute! He deserves to be horsewhipped! He quarrelled with his daughter to-night, and practically drove her out of the house. I found her in a little shed, in the lower meadow, near the river. She must have wandered there and then dropped, exhausted. And I'm not going to take her back to Moat Hollow! That's why I've brought her here—so that she can be cared

for properly. Look here, can't you take my word? I tell you that everything is all right!" he added earnestly. "I only want to be sure that the girl will have every chance to recover."

"Come, Joe—move yourself!" said Mrs. White urgently. "We can take the young gent's word! We know him well enough, don't we? Poor thing—poor thing!" she added, as she bent over the unconscious girl. "She's very ill, by the look of her! And if her father turned her out like that, he don't deserve to get her back. We'll look after her, Mr. Fenton."

"Thanks awfully!" said Fenton gratefully. "And now I'll rush for the doctor."

He was off before they could question him further, and he knew that she was in perfectly safe hands. Mrs. White would soon have her upstairs, and she would be comfortable enough when she was placed between warm blankets.

Fenton hurried down the track, and it seemed ages before he reached the road—the side lane which led from Bellton to Edgemoor. By following this lane, Fenton presently passed the front of Moat Hollow, and then he crossed the bridge, ran through the High Street, and ultimately he arrived at Dr. Brett's house on the Bannington road.

He was breathless when he arrived. He pulled the night bell and waited anxiously.

Within a couple of minutes Dr. Brett was at the door.

"Why—hallo, Fenton!" he said in astonishment. "What one earth are you doing here in the small hours?"

"You're wanted, doctor—at old Joe White's cottage!" said Fenton. "Miss Clegg is there, ill! Please come at once!"

"What is it—an accident?"

"No—she's caught a terrible chill," replied Fenton. "But you must come and look at her, doctor. For all I know, she may be dying!"

Dr. Brett did not waste any time. Within five minutes he and Fenton were striding along through the fog.

Arrived at the cottage, Fenton waited impatiently with Mr. White in the parlour while Dr. Brett made his inspection of Olive Clegg. At last the doctor came downstairs again, looking very grave.

"Well?" asked Fenton.

"She's very ill—pneumonia, I'm afraid," said the doctor slowly.

"But—but you don't mean——"

"No, she's not dying," finished the doctor. "She's got a very strong constitution, and I think she'll pull through all right."

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Fenton.

He remained chatting with the doctor for a short while, and then with a start suddenly realised the time.

"By Jove!" exclaimed the St. Frank's skipper. "I must be getting back to the school!"

A few minutes later Fenton and Dr. Brett departed. Outside they shook hands and went their respective ways.

FENTON crossed the meadows, and was just approaching St. Frank's when he became aware of footsteps ahead of him. He was so engrossed with his thoughts about Olive that he did not even heed. He walked on, unconscious of the fact that the other footsteps had ceased.

But a moment later he was suddenly brought to his senses.

"Good gracious!" ejaculated a familiar voice. "Is—is that you, Fenton?"

The school captain jumped.

"Mr. Pagett!" he ejaculated, startled.

"Oh, Fenton, I've had a terrible time!" said the Fifth Form master plaintively. "I've had a most appalling time!"

"Yes, sir?"

"I went to see some friends in Helmford," said Mr. Pagett. "I started home by bus. And then the fog came down, and—would you believe it?—the bus ran into the ditch, and we were nearly all killed!"

"That was bad, sir," said Fenton mechanically.

"Bad!" snorted Mr. Pagett. "It was nearly a tragedy. We had to walk. Can you appreciate that, Fenton? We had to walk! And even when I got to Bannington I could obtain no conveyance. The fog was too thick. And rather than remain in a hotel, I decided to walk all the way."

He paused, realising, perhaps, that it was most unusual to find Fenton out here at this hour. For the moment he forgot his own troubles.

"By the way, Fenton," he said, with a curiously suspicious note in his voice. "Where have you been to? Why are you breaking bounds?"

"I am sorry, sir, but I cannot tell you," replied Fenton steadily.

He had been expecting this cross-examination. And he had already decided that he would keep silent. Lying was foreign to his nature, and it was obviously impossible to tell the truth. Therefore, his only alternative was to keep a still tongue in his head.

"Well, this is very extraordinary, Fenton!" said Mr. Pagett acidly. "I find you outside the school grounds in the small hours of the morning, and you cannot even give an account of your movements! I might even say that it is exceedingly suspicious."

Fenton was silent.

"I shall, of course, be compelled to report you to the headmaster," continued Mr. Pagett. "You understand that, don't you?"

"I suppose so, sir."

"Rubbish! You suppose nothing of the sort!" snapped Mr. Pagett. "It is my duty—and you know it well enough! I might as well inform you, Fenton, that I am not entirely stupid. I have heard quite a few rumours lately, and they were not very palatable rumours. If you will confess, at once, that you have been visiting this—er—questionable resort that I have heard about, the headmaster may—"

"I am sorry, sir, but I can't tell you where

I've been, or why I am out," interrupted Fenton gruffly. "I can only assure you that I have done nothing wrong."

Mr. Pagett snorted.

"That is not very satisfactory, Fenton," he replied. "Come! I will let you in through the private gateway."

They passed through into the Triangle, and when they arrived at the West House—where Mr. Pagett lived—they found a light burning in the lobby, and there was a sleepy-eyed pageboy waiting.

"The Head's still up, sir," he said. "Told me to wait here, and see you when you came in. The Head's been anxious about you, sir."

Mr. Pagett started.

"I do not wonder at it!" he said wearily. "I have had a terrible time, boy. H'm! Well, as Dr. Nicholls is still up, I think perhaps I had better go and have a word with him. And you, Fenton, will come with me!" he added, with a hard note in his voice.

And so they went across the Triangle, into Inner Court, and to the headmaster's house. Dr. Nicholls looked very relieved when he saw Mr. Pagett—but his expression changed after that gentlemen had given a brief account of his adventures, and then went on to explain how he had met Fenton.

"This is very remarkable, Fenton," said the Head, eyeing the school captain closely. "What were you doing out of your bed—out of the very school grounds?"

"I cannot tell you, sir," said Fenton.

"Come! That won't do!" replied the Head sharply. "You must tell me, Fenton. I order you to tell me."

Fenton was silent.

"Am I to understand, Fenton, that you positively refuse to give any account of your movements?" demanded the Head sternly.

"Yes, sir."

"You decline to say why you were breaking bounds?"

"Yes, sir."

"I am amazed!" said the Head. "You seem to forget, Fenton, that you are the captain of the school. You, of all people, should know perfectly well that I cannot allow you to wander about in the middle of the night in this—this startling fashion!"

"I am very sorry, sir," said Fenton.

Dr. Nicholls compressed his lips.

"Well, Fenton, you had better go!" he said coldly. "To-morrow I will question you again—and until I have made some very careful inquiries you are suspended from the captaincy. That will be all for to-night. You may go!"

And Edgar Fenton went—with bitterness in his heart. He had done no wrong, and yet he could now see that a perfect morass of trouble lay ahead of him!

(Fenton's fight for his honour; his efforts to help Olive Clegg and get the night club closed—all are told in next week's stirring yarn which is entitled: "The Fellow Who Won!" Order your copy of the Old Paper now, chums!)

GOSSIP ABOUT ST. FRANK'S

Things Heard and Seen By
EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

BASIL TALBOT, of Streatham, has asked me if I'm the author of the Waldo stories in the "Union Jack." I might just as well confess. Until recently the "Union Jack" authors were anonymous, myself included. But now our names are being tacked on to the stories—no doubt so that we shall be able to accept full responsibility. I should hardly have introduced Young Waldo into the St. Frank's yarns if I had not been the originator of the elder Waldo.

GORDON TAUDEVIN, of Albion, Brisbane, has written me such a long, interesting letter that I feel I must give him a few lines, although there's really nothing concerning St. Frank's that I can deal with. However, he raises an interesting point. Here's a sentence of his letter: "Would you, please, answer and tell me something of the following: On the back of every, or nearly every, paper from the 'Old Country' are the words, 'Printed and Published by the Amalgamated Press, Limited, The Fleetway House,' etc. Could you supply me with some information regarding The Fleetway House?" Well, I can only tell this Australian reader that the Fleetway House is a very fine, imposing building in Farringdon Street, and that it is the headquarters of the greatest publishing firm in the world. The Fleetway House produces more weekly, fortnightly, and monthly periodicals than any other publishing house on the globe. That's why most of the papers that reach Australia bear the familiar imprint on the back page to which Gordon has referred. I'm afraid I can't go into details regarding the various offices and Editorial departments of the many publications. The Fleetway House is a teeming hive of industry, in which you could easily get lost—and in which, in fact, I have got lost on more than one occasion.

RICHARD GRANT, of Winnipeg, wants more detective stuff in the stories. Here we are again—another reader wants more thrills. Well, we've had a few recently, and just now we're dealing with Edgar Fenton's adventures in the local

Night Club. Perhaps this series isn't thrilling enough, eh? But, according to a few rumours I have recently heard, there'll be no lack of thrills presently. I believe that Nelson Lee is going to be kept very busy again on some real detective work.

RONALD S. BROWN, of Clapton, wants me to introduce Dirt Track Racing into the stories. Well, I could do so, because there has been some racing of this type in the St. Frank's district. But I have an idea that Dirt Track Racing is losing popular favour, and I really don't think such a subject would now be of universal interest.

THIS is a new one! Frank James, of Chiswick, wonders if Nelson Lee has any relatives knocking around. Frank wants to know, too, where Nelson Lee was born, and what his father's business was! In case any other readers display a similar curiosity, I'd better say at once that I really can't pry into Nelson Lee's private affairs to such an extent as this. He has never told me anything about his family, and I am certainly not going to be rude enough to ask him questions on these personal matters. I might sound him with regard to Nipper, but that's different. If he ever volunteers any information about himself, however, and does not bind me to secrecy, I'll "tell the world" on some future occasion.

OUR READERS' PORTRAIT GALLERY



Ralph Clarry.

ARTHUR SMITH, of 10, Trafalgar Place, Stoke, Devonport, wants to get hold of the double series of stories, including "The Cannibal Horde." The first one was "The Schoolboy Crusoes," and was No. 366, Old Series. So our Devonport reader wants Nos. 366 to 380 inclusive—fifteen numbers in all. If anybody has these copies, and is willing to dispose of them, perhaps he'll drop Arthur a line.

OUR photograph this week is of a Canadian reader—Ralph Clarry, of Toronto. Don't forget. I shall always be pleased to hear from you,
EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

This Fine Mystery and Detective Story Gets More Exciting Each Week!

THE FOUR-LEGGED EAGLE!

(Opening chapters are re-told on page 39.)



Carlos Tries Bribery!

THE woman seemed almost on the verge of fainting as she found herself staring at Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake. Then she clutched at her husband's arm. Isaac Mossman turned, followed the direction of her gaze, and his fat face was ghastly when he saw Locke. The Duke of Silene slumped back in his chair in an attitude of sheer bewilderment. Even the imperturbable Prince Carlos was plainly dismayed. He had thought he was rid of Ferrers Locke for good; it came as a great shock to discover that the famous detective was still alive—still on the trail.

The conspirators were obviously in a state of consternation; obvious, too, that they did not know what move to make next, for they argued, one against the other, frantically, frenziedly. Locke tipped one of the waiters handsomely, but the man could not find out what the traitors were talking about, because, he explained, they used a tongue unknown

to him. Obviously, they were speaking in the Abronian language.

Then Prince Carlos rose and strode across the restaurant. Locke guessed what the next move would be, and waited. The prince came direct to his table, pulled up a chair and sat down.

"Good-evening, Excellency," said Locke grimly.

"M'sieur," said the prince coldly, "you must have been born under a lucky star, or you would not be here now."

"Your Excellency is misinformed," retorted the detective. "Luck does not enter into it at all, but merely a good capacity for taking care of myself. After all, it was so easy to turn the water off at the main."

The prince looked furious, but he con-

trolled himself.

"M'sieur is to be congratulated," he said calmly. "But, even then, why did the so-famous detective choose this restaurant on this particular evening?"

This Week's Sensation!

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Attempted Assassination of Famous Detective!

:: ::

Amazing Developments Likely to Result!

Locke smiled mysteriously.

"Things are so simple when you know how they are done," he remarked. "How does one find a hornets' nest?"

"I understand," replied the prince angrily. "One follows the hornets."

"Exactly!" agreed Locke.

"But this is not your affair," said the prince curtly. "Whatever happens in the future, whatever happens in Abronia, you, m'sieur, will not be any the worse off for that."

"Possibly not," said Locke.

"I work for my people and for my country," continued the prince.

"It is a matter of opinion," declared Locke.

"And you render my task harder than need be."

"I have been engaged to render it utterly impossible!" retorted Locke.

"Peste!" snarled the prince. "Have done with bandying words! Let us strike a bargain. You drop this case and I will pay you ten thousand English pounds!"

"I refuse!" snapped Locke.

"Twenty thousand!" cried the prince.

"No!" exclaimed Locke. "Not for a million pounds!" He was well aware that the Duke of Silene, Isaac Mossman and his wife had left their table and were waiting close by the door for the prince.

"You see," added Locke very deliberately, "I am on my way to Riverwell Court!"

It was a shot at random, but the prince blinked in surprise, whereby Locke knew that King Ferdinand was at Mossman's riverside house—for the time being, at any rate.

"I will pay whatever you ask," suggested the prince.

"It is useless trying to bribe me," retorted Locke. "I never undertake a case unless I am sure I am working for justice and the right. And once I am on the trail I never leave it unless—but I have not been killed yet, your Excellency."

"But you will be!" snarled Prince Carlos. "In future I will show no mercy! Your blood be on your own head!" he finished dramatically.

He seized the edge of the table and lifted it. Obviously, he meant to overturn the table on top of Locke, and so gain time in which to bolt from the restaurant, board a taxi and get away. But Jack was on the premises. Before the prince could carry out his idea Jack leapt up from his chair and butted Carlos in the stomach. Involuntarily his Excellency gasped and released his hold of the table. He had lost the advantage he had hoped to gain.

He spun round on his heel and strode to the door, his face convulsed with fury. His accomplices were already outside, with a taxi waiting. As their vehicle drove away, Locke and Jack came dashing out after them. A wave of his arm and Locke had

another taxi, and he and Jack tumbled into this.

"Out to Thames Ditton," snapped Locke, "and get there before that other taxi. Understand? It'll pay you well if you succeed. My name is Locke—Ferrers Locke!"

And the chase began. Prince Carlos had an idea that Locke was following, but he was wrong. Locke's idea was to get to Mossman's house up the river before Prince Carlos and his party. That would then leave him with only Major Patens and the Grand Seigneur of Perilla to master, and the rescue of King Ferdinand of Abronia might become an accomplished fact.

But luck was with the prince. His taxi had a slight lead, and it retained this all along the Mall, through St. James' Park, up Constitution Hill to Hyde Park Corner, then along by way of Knightsbridge.

In the neighbourhood of the Albert Hall the traffic began to thin out somewhat. Locke's taxi careered along a few yards behind the vehicle which contained the prince and his party.

Jack was excited, and leant forward eagerly. Locke sat back, waiting and taking what rest he could while he had the chance. Suddenly the arm of Prince Carlos was thrust out of the window of the other taxi. He seemed to hurl something that dropped in front of Locke's vehicle, and then followed a terrific explosion. A sheet of flame shot up before Locke's taxi, and the vehicle heeled over and crashed on its side, as if overturned by an unseen hand!

Carlos Comes a Cropper!

THE famous detective was smothered with dust and dirt as he crawled out from the debris of the wrecked taxi. A fragment of broken glass had cut his forehead, and the blood was streaming down his face; but he was perfectly calm and collected.

A crowd had gathered, and everyone seemed to be talking and gesticulating wildly, jostling and swaying to get a better view, arguing as to what had actually happened. Only Ferrers Locke was really doing anything worth while. He lifted the remains of the splintered door, and Jack, who had been held down by the door-post, crawled free, comparatively unhurt.

Then the police arrived and the crowd was thrust back out of the way. Locke made himself known to the sergeant.

"What happened?" queried the sergeant.

"I don't know," said Locke, "and I haven't had time yet to find out."

Jack was helping the police to extricate the driver, who was wedged behind the wheel of the capsized taxi. Locke and the sergeant went out to investigate the hole in the road where the explosion had taken place.

"Sounded to me like another of these gas explosions," said the sergeant.

Just then Locke stooped and picked up a fragment of jagged metal.

"A bomb!" he said shortly.

The sergeant's eyes bulged.

"A bomb!" he repeated, amazed.

"Or a hand grenade," suggested Locke.

"But, hang it all, sir, why should anyone throw bombs about here?"

Ferrers Locke smiled faintly.

"Some people don't like me dogging them," he said. And the sergeant understood.

"A near one for you, sir," he commented.

"Who were you after?"

"No police allowed in this case," said Locke.

"You'll have to give me some information as a matter of duty, sir," said the sergeant.

"And while I am giving information the culprits are getting away," retorted Locke.

"No, it isn't good enough, sergeant. Give my card to the inspector, and tell him I'll call and explain the first chance I get. I can't hang about here any longer."

By the time Locke returned to the wrecked taxi they had got the driver out. He was injured, but not seriously, although it was deemed advisable to call the ambulance and have him conveyed to the nearest hospital. Locke made it quite clear to the injured man that he would compensate him for the damage done, then he motioned to Jack, and, heedless of his own minor injuries, he hastened to a nearby garage. Ten minutes later he was at the wheel of a powerful car, speeding westward.

There was no doubt at all in Locke's mind where Prince Carlos and his confederates were going. Their destination was Riverwell Court, the house at Thames Ditton that belonged to Isaac Mossman, the oily Levantine merchant.

It was not a good move on Prince Carlos' part to take his royal prisoner to Riverwell Court, seeing that Locke was well aware of the connection between the Abronian rebels and that house. But then, Prince Carlos had been unprepared for the undesired publicity caused by the fracas in Fireman Pete's place, down by the docks. He knew he had to leave his hiding-place in the East End, and until he had found another lair there was nothing for it but to take King Ferdinand to Thames Ditton.

Prince Carlos had been foiled by Locke more than once, but his greatest setback was when the detective had rescued the queen from the hands of the plotters. That had held up all the conspirators' well-laid plans, and they were now in the position of not knowing what to do next for the best.

Obviously, Prince Carlos was keen on getting clear away from Ferrers Locke, even if it meant killing the famous detective and his assistant to do it. But although the bomb had been thrown, and Locke's taxi had been wrecked, it was not likely that Prince Carlos would waste any more time at Riverwell Court than he could possibly help. Therefore, it behoved Ferrers Locke to step on the accelerator and make up for lost time.

Jack sat beside Locke, but he did not talk. Conversation was not easy, for all Locke's attention was given to driving. They met with no sort of check. They roared through Thames Ditton and crossed the river by way of the bridge, and this time no obstacle had been left there to precipitate them into the weir. They came to a standstill about a hundred yards from Mossman's house, and Locke then drove the car off the road and up amongst the bushes, ready for a quick flight if required.

The detective and his assistant approached the house on foot. From the road the place appeared to be bedraggled, dirty. The lawns were ragged and unkempt; the windows were without curtains and grimy, and the massive front door was ajar.

That last fact worried Locke. He could not account for it. If the conspirators were inside they would not advertise the fact that way, and make it so easy for anyone to enter the house and disturb them.

But there was no means of finding out why that door was ajar. And, anyway, it enabled the Baker Street pair to enter the house without any trouble, although there was always the possibility of a trap.

Locke peered in at several windows before he ventured inside the house. He was not surprised to find that all the furniture had been taken away and that the house was empty. While his wife had been impersonating Queen Zita of Abronia, Isaac Mossman had not been idle. But why had the door

HOW THE STORY STARTED.

FERRERS LOCKE, the world-famous London detective, and his boy assistant,

JACK DRAKE, are travelling on the Underground when they witness the murder of a foreigner. Following investigations, they discover that the deed was committed by the Grand Seigneur, or Count, of Perilla, working on the instructions of

PRINCE CARLOS OF ABRONIA. Carlos' ambition is to become king of Abronia, and already he has kidnapped the reigning monarch, King Ferdinand, and brought him over to England. The murdered man was an emissary of Queen Zita of Abronia, who has followed to rescue her husband; hence the man's removal. The queen asks Locke to help her restore King Ferdinand to his country. Later, the queen herself is kidnapped by Carlos, and taken to a house in the East End of London. Disguising themselves as toughs, Locke and Jack go to the house, and the detective rescues the queen. King Ferdinand, however, is still a prisoner in the hands of Carlos. Later, Locke and Jack follow a certain Isaac Mossman and his wife, who are both hirelings of the prince. The trail leads the detectives to a restaurant, where they see Mossman in conversation with Carlos.

(Now read on.)

been left ajar? This point still worried the detective.

Cautiously, Locke entered the house. He sidled round the massive front door rather than pushed it open wider. The hall was bare of furniture, and so was the drawing-room and the dining-room. In the passage and on the stairs were tiny gravel stones that suggested that if the plotters were not in the house they had been there.

Locke led the way upstairs. Every room was empty; all the furniture had been removed. The pictures had been taken from the walls, and the carpets from the floors. Everything spoke of a desertion and flight that had all been carefully arranged. No doubt Mossman, realising that Locke knew how far he and his wife were implicated in the kidnapping of King Ferdinand of Abronia, had deemed it advisable not to remain at Riverwell Court. That much was easy to understand.

But why had the plotters come to Riverwell Court just recently, and where had they gone now? That was Locke's immediate problem—a problem which he was intent on solving. The bare floorboards beneath his feet were gritty; he was following that scanty trail of gravel over the house. It led him from the front door, up the stairs and along the passage to one of the rooms. The detective gripped the handle of the door, turned it noiselessly, pushed open the portal and poked his head round.

There was no one inside, but from the look on Locke's face Jack knew at once that he had discovered something of importance. The detective thrust the door wide open, and both of them entered boldly. What they saw explained a good deal. The room was littered with suitcases and portmanteaux, all packed and strapped. Locke grinned at the sight.

"That explains a lot," he said.

"It does," agreed Jack. "But why should they leave the luggage here, guv'nor?"

"They're not leaving it," said Locke; "they have come for it. They have taken some and will be back soon for the rest."

He gritted some gravel under his foot as he spoke.

"And Mossman will be going with them?" asked Jack.

"Exactly!" said Locke. "He has stored his furniture, but he could not store his clothes and effects, nor the personal luggage of Prince Carlos and his confederates which he had been taking care of for them. They are cutting adrift from all the places we know them to be connected with, and will bolt for some new hiding-place—if we let them. I dare say they have another motor-launch down on the river. Quiet, now!"

The warning was hardly necessary. Jack's ears were as keen as Locke's, and he, too, had heard the scrunching of feet on the gravel path outside. Locke closed the door, as they had found it. Even then they could hear

people coming in at the front door, and up the stairs. There was the low murmur of voices.

Locke and Jack flattened themselves against the wall behind the door. The footsteps came nearer and nearer. They hesitated a moment immediately outside the door as the new arrivals whispered together. Then slowly the door opened, and the newcomers entered, still talking. They were Mossman and his wife.

"The prince is right," said Mossman irritably. "We must take precautions."

"I don't agree," came the answer. "That bomb must have stopped them. I think——"

The woman said no more, for with a quick movement Jack had closed the door for them and Locke had leapt at Isaac Mossman. The merchant was fat and could not move very quickly. It was easy for the athletic Ferrers Locke to clap one hand over Mossman's mouth, and with his other fist to send in a swift, swinging blow that crashed on the man's jaw.

Mossman did not so much as cry out. He just grunted and slumped to the floor senseless. The woman opened her mouth to scream, but Jack pounced on her. He didn't like the idea of it, but it had to be done. He clapped his hand over her mouth and stifled her cry.

Locke went to Jack's assistance. He took a large handkerchief from his pocket and deftly gagged her, while Jack held her wrists. She squirmed and struggled, and her eyes flashed venom. Locke found a length of cord amongst the suitcases, and he tied her wrists together behind her back, and secured her ankles.

Not a word was spoken. It was impossible to say how far away Prince Carlos and his confederates were lurking. The detective and his assistant hauled the unconscious Mossman out of sight behind the door, and placed his wife beside him. Then they waited; grimly, patiently. As it happened, however, they did not have to wait long. For very soon they heard more scrunching on the gravel outside, more footsteps on the stairs.

The Baker Street pair took up their stand behind the door. Jack calmly took off his jacket, laid it on the floor, and turned up his shirt-sleeves. This sort of thing was more in his line, and afforded much more satisfaction than impersonating riverside loafers.

This time they knew exactly what to expect. The men came straight upstairs and along the passage to the room. They turned the handle and opened the door, all unconscious of the packet of trouble that awaited them.

Jack was hoping against hope that he would be able to deal with the Grand Seigneur of Perilla—the assassin of the conspirators, the man who had murdered Baron Rehmann. Jack hated Perilla!

But he was unlucky. Perilla was the first to enter the room, and Locke dealt with him. The detective sprang at him, one arm went round the man's neck and shot his head forward to meet the vicious, powerful uppercut that crashed on his point. Perilla groaned and dropped, inert.

Jack did not bemoan his fate. The Duke of Silene, who had followed Perilla into the room, tried to bolt back.

"Peste!" he cried.

Then Jack had him. A fierce drive to the solar plexus had the duke bent double, and Jack followed up with a right to the point. The duke, out to the wide, went crashing on to the floor in a heap.

"Too much noise!" snapped Locke.

"Sorry, gov'nor," whispered Jack, "but I meant to get him properly."

Locke was rummaging amongst the suitcases for more cord, and found plenty.

"Better truss them up," he said.

This was done, and then they laid their captives in a row behind the door.

"A great game, this!" said Jack, grinning.

"Quiet!" whispered Locke, suddenly straightening.

A man had entered the house downstairs. He called, angrily, peremptorily.

"You're a long time up there!"

Naturally, he received no answer. He called again, in the Abronian dialect, and came running up the stairs. He strode along the passage and entered the room.

"What are you doing——" he began, and then his voice trailed away. It was Prince Carlos, and he was staring at Ferrers Locke in amazement. But he soon recovered. As Locke sprang, his hand came from his side, and it grasped a revolver.

Quick as he was, Locke was a shade quicker. He seized the prince's wrist with one hand and forced the gun to point to the floor, then his right fist came round in an arc.

Jack saw the prince open his mouth to curse Locke, but whatever words he intended to utter were never heard. Locke's fist crashed home on the vital point, and the leader of the conspirators slumped helplessly to the floor.

Jack trussed up the prince, grinning as he did so. He was enjoying himself.

"Only one more," he said.

"Major Patens," agreed Locke. "The biggest and strongest of the lot."

"But there'll be two of us to handle him," pointed out Jack, rubbing his knuckles.

"He won't come," retorted Locke.

Jack stared at the detective.

"Not when he gets fed up with waiting for his pals?"

"Hasn't it occurred to you," said Locke, "that someone has been left with the king. We can save time by going to the major. Have you finished trussing up the prince?"

"Yes, gov'nor!"

"This way, then!"

The Flight!

THEY left the room where their unfortunate captives lay securely trussed. The Baker Street pair proceeded downstairs and out of the house by way of the front door. They walked across the lawns in the direction of the river, making for the boat-house.

"Listen, Jack," said Ferrers Locke. "I'm pretty certain that Patens is in that boat-house with the king. Notice that this path from the boat-house to the house is of gravel. Remember that we found gravel on the bare boards of the house. You don't pick up much gravel on the soles of your boots merely by crossing a drive, but when you walk the best part of a quarter of a mile on gravel, you are likely to carry some into the house, especially when the door-mat has been taken away. No more talk, now. Be ready to get Patens—anyhow—if I miss him!"

They left the drive and approached the boat-house, walking on the grass that deadened the sound of their steps. They kept a clump of rhododendron bushes between them and the boat-house in case Major Patens was keeping a sharp look out. The night was not dark, for the moon was shining from an almost cloudless sky.

Keeping to the shadows, Ferrers Locke and Jack crept up to the side of the boat-house, where there was a grimy window. A faint light at the window showed that the place was so far inhabited.

The window was placed high—too high for Locke to look through—but this difficulty was soon overcome. Jack stood on the detective's bent knee, and the boy peered in through the grimy panes.

The boat-house was little more than a shed built over a kind of dock, in which floated a motor-boat that looked as if it could travel at a good speed. On the boarding beside the boat lay King Ferdinand of Abronia, trussed up pretty much as Prince Carlos was now trussed up. Seated beside him, cross-legged, tailor fashion, was the burly Major Patens, calmly smoking a cigarette. A candle flickered on a ledge against the wall.

Jack pressed hard with one foot, and Locke let him down to the ground. They retired to the rhododendron bushes for Jack to whisper his report. Locke puckered his brow when he learned that the Major was facing the door.

"Tell you what, gov'nor," said Jack, in a whisper, picking up a dead branch from the ground. "I'll rattle at the window to make Patens look round. See? You rush in at the door and hand him a sleeping draught. You get me?"

Locke grinned his approval.

"Good for you, Jack," he said. "And now for action!"

(Will Ferrers Locke and Jack succeed in rescuing King Ferdinand of Abronia? Look out for plenty of excitement in next week's grand instalment of this corking serial, chums!)

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.*

He Wants to be a "Bobby."

"H. M.," a staunch League-ite hailing from Preston, wants to join the police force, and he has written asking me to give him a few details as to the qualifications necessary.

The minimum age to become a policeman is twenty-one, and a fairly good education is essential. In the City of London Police Force one has to be over six feet in height, but outside this area applicants of 5 feet 9 inches are accepted, providing they are of good, sound physique.

If my chum possesses all these qualifications, he should apply to the Chief Constable of his county.

Join This Club!

HERE'S news of the Homeland and Overseas Correspondence Club. This club was only formed a short while ago, yet already it is a firmly-established success, thanks largely to the efforts of its energetic secretary, Alec Singleton, and also of Harry Farrier, who acts in the capacity of assistant secretary.

More members are desired to make this club an even bigger success, and any readers who would like to join should apply to Alec Singleton, 18, Nelson Square, Castle Croft, Egremont, Cumberland.

By the way, Alec, thanks for that snap of yourself. You say you want my photograph in return. I think you're labouring under a misapprehension, for it is Mr. Edwy Searles Brooks who offers his photo in exchange for those from readers. Anyway, I have passed on your snap to him, and you'll receive a portrait of your favourite author in due course.

THIS WEEK'S WINNING LETTER

DEAR CHIEF,—I am a League member, and a reader of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY of long standing, and during all the years I have taken the Old Paper I have always found it to contain clean and wholesome literature. Although I am nearly twenty years of age, I still consider the "N.L.L." to be the pride of all my "every day" books.

Any person or persons who run down the "N.L.L." in my presence are soon ticked off, and I make a point of taking their addresses and then sending them one of my back numbers. I have met with considerable luck—one of these "Doubting Thomas's" has now become a member of our League.

Wishing OUR paper and OUR League the best of success,

Your loyal reader,

(Signed) W. S. HAWKEN.

(For this interesting letter W. S. Hawken, of Truro, has been awarded a useful penknife.)

News from Newcastle!

J. MASSEY, of 5, Castle Street, Newcastle, Staffs, informs me that he wants to join a club. I believe my chum means a sports club, although he does not definitely state that such is the case. Come along, those of you who are secretaries of sports clubs in the Newcastle district. Here's a prospective member for your club.

Hard Luck!

MY sympathies to J. Rogers of Bloemfontein, South Africa. This unfortunate League-ite met with an accident last Guy Fawkes day, but he tells me that he is now progressing favourably.

Here's to wishing my chum a speedy and complete recovery.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED

R. Gaida, 79, St. James's Residences, Little Pulney Street, **London, W.1**, wants correspondents anywhere.

Leonard T. Gale, 7, Buckwell Street, **Plymouth**, desires correspondents in England interested in soccer.

H. Nickson, Hollins Farm, Pope Lane, New Longton, near **Preston**, wants members for his correspondence club.

J. Murphy, 385, Northampton Buildings, Clerkenwell, **London, E.C.1**, offers back numbers of the N.L.L.; also wants to hear from readers keen on school stories.

Jack Saunders, 14, Queen's Road, Walthamstow, **London, E.17**, wants correspondents, particularly overseas.

Richard Stanley Hodgson, Castle Hill, **Settle, Yorks.**, wants copies of the N.L.L. containing the "Secret Societies at St. Frank's" series.

J. Rogers, 207, Monument Road, Bloemfontein, **South Africa**, wants correspondents.

Hamish McLean Barr, 5, Armour Avenue, **Airdrie, Lanarkshire, N.B.**, wants to correspond with a French boy, or one in India or South Africa.

Leonard G. Williams, 2, Hallyville Road, **Wallasey, Chex.**, would like correspondents anywhere.

Harry Farrier, 122, Walker Road, Byker, **Newcastle-on-Tyne**, wants to hear from those interested in his correspondence club.

Maurice A. Noakes, 747-2, Avenue, Verdun, **Quebec, Canada**, wants correspondents anywhere.

Jacob Fine, 70, Chapeltown Road, **Leeds**, wants correspondents.

Miss Nicoline F. Samson, 21, Flora Terrace, Prospect, **South Australia**, offers back numbers of the N.L.L.

Miss Margaret Baird, 3, Monkstown Road, St. John's, **Newfoundland, Canada**, wants girl correspondents.

Albert Norris, 1, Prison Road, **Norwich**, offers back numbers of the N.L.L.

John Hastings, 62, Herald Street, Berhampore, **Wellington, New Zealand**, wants correspondents, ages 12-14.

C. J. Edwards, Plerkville, Eketahuna, North Island, **New Zealand**, wants N.L.L. Nos. 124, 136-165, new series.

Ernest Kohler, Whyalla, Copley Street, **Kilkenny, South Australia**, desires correspondents anywhere.

Ernest Littler, 21, Kay Street, Middleton, near **Manchester**, offers N.L.L., new series, odd copies from No. 38.

J. Stewart, 82, Botany Street, Randwick, **Sydney, Australia**, wants correspondents; also N.L.L., new series, 1-121.

H. Brearley, 150, Catherine Street, **Doncaster**, wants to hear from Frank Dayman, of Miramar, New Zealand.

A. Pilcher, 229, Edward Road, Walthamstow, **London, E.17**, wants correspondents.

Sidney H. Garbett, 16, Hill Crest Avenue, High Ercal, **Brierley Hill, Staffs.**, desires correspondents at home and overseas.

Frank E. Ansty, 1, Army Street, Clapham, **London, S.W.4**, wants to hear from readers interested in humorous stories.

Geo. F. Sykes, 16, Moston Lane, Harpurhey, **Manchester**, wants correspondents.

Peeps Past the Pyramids!

(Continued from page 13.)

set. And Dr. Potiphar quoth unto him, saying:

"Well, Rik me-Nek, alias Grubbie Phist, and thou hast the answer already, hast thou? Art sure thou hast no ready reckoner under thy desk?"

And Rik me-Nek answered:

"I am sure, O master!"

Then said Dr. Potiphar to the boy:

"How many, then, were required?"

And the boy made answer:

"One dog and a half, O master; and of men, four and a half."

"My aunt Saphira!" said Dr. Potiphar, turning to the other boys. "One dog and a half," he says. Then, addressing the mathematician, the Doctor said unto him, with a multitude of sarcasm in his voice: "Hast ever heard of half a dog, other than in the shop of the maker of sausages?"

"Yea! O master!" replied Rik me-Nek. "And where and when, O boy?"

"But yesterday did I see, and hear, half a dog," the boy said; "the front half of a dog. But," he added, edging away somewhat, "the front half was, it is true, joined to the back half—"

Thus far did he get and *much* farther, for the master cuffed him soundly, so that he fled to the topmost tier of the School-room.

"Of all the blith-erring lot of asses I have had through my mitts," fumed Dr. Potiphar, "the present Form is the worst. Get ye away to thy midday repasts; I am even fedd up with the sight of ye all!"

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