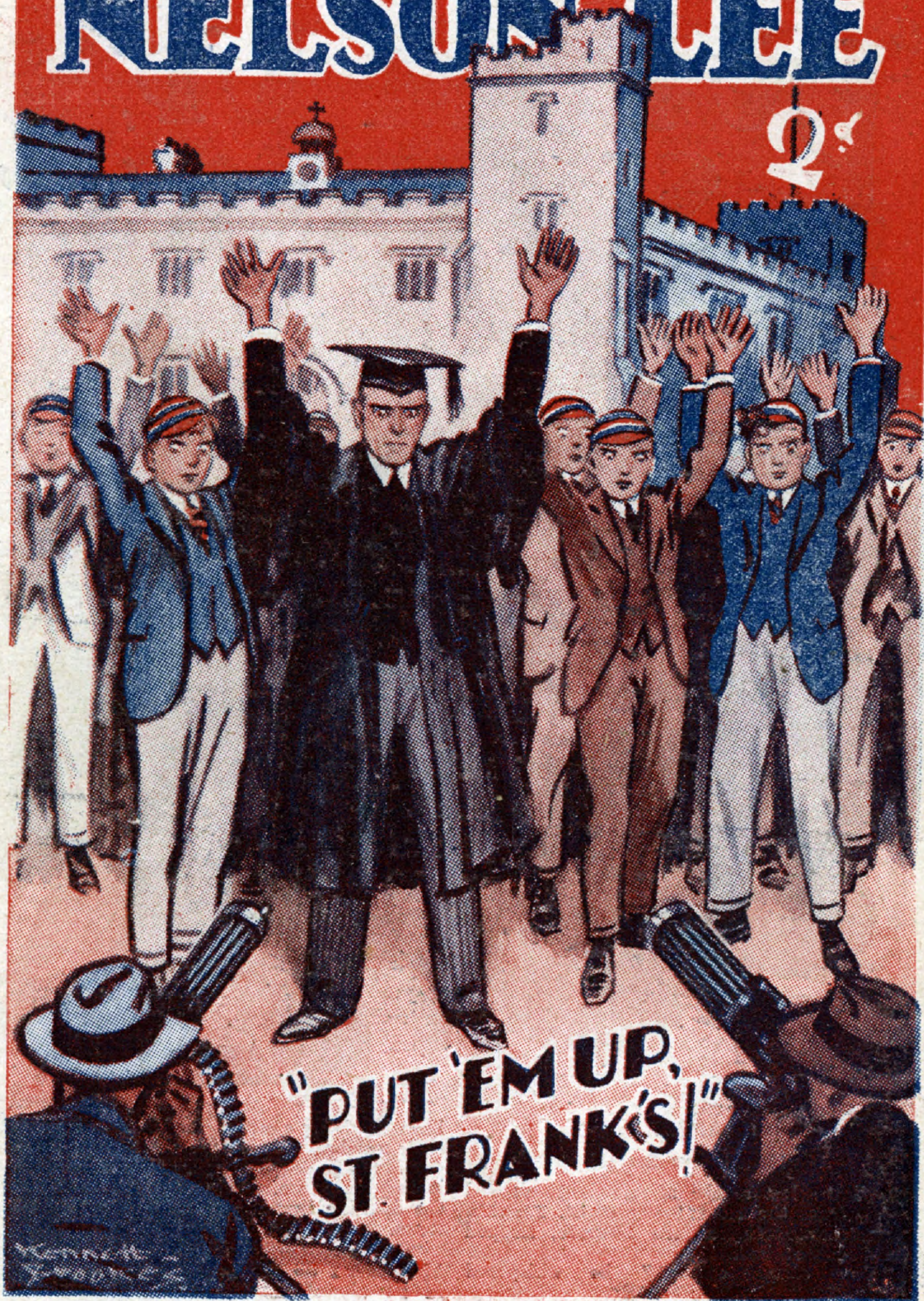


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**"PUT 'EM UP,
ST. FRANK'S!"**

St. Frank's besieged by gunmen! Read the amazing long complete school yarn inside.

New Series No. 50.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

January 3rd, 1931.

The Most Amazing Series of—

"PUT 'EM UP, ST. FRANK'S!"

by *Edwy Searles
Brooks.*



CHAPTER 1.

Handforth's Secret!

AS the last stroke of midnight sounded from the clock tower of St. Frank's, Handforth, of the Remove, slipped out of bed.

"You chaps awake?" he whispered cautiously.

"Yes!" came a chorus of two.

Church and McClure were very much awake. They could not have slept if they had tried; never before had it

been so vitally essential for them to look after their celebrated leader. Not that Edward Oswald Handforth ever knew that his chums looked after him. He always laboured under the delusion that it was he who looked after them.

"Perhaps it'll be a good idea, Handy, if Mac and I do the job?" breathed Church, in an almost careless voice. "There's no need for you to get up—"

"Ass! I'm up already!"

"You can go to bed again—"

"What's the idea of

**RIVAL GUNMEN HOLD UP
FAMOUS SCHOOL.**

PITCHED BATTLE ENSUES!

—School Yarns Ever Written!



trying to edge me out of this?" asked Handforth suspiciously.

"Only that we've got to be extremely careful," replied Church. "If one whisper gets about of what we're doing, it means the sack for the lot of us. Worse than the sack, perhaps. We might have the police on us. And you know jolly well, Handy, that you're not always as careful as you might be."

Handforth received this explanation with cold disdain.

"When the circumstances are sufficiently vital, I'm as careful as anybody," he retorted. "You seem to have forgotten that

I'm your leader. Ready? Good! Then let's have no more silly jaw!"

He moved towards the door, his slippers, loose at the heels, dragging noisily.

"Wait a minute!" said McClure. "What's the matter with you, Handy? Didn't we definitely arrange to wear tennis shoes? You'll wake the whole giddy house with those rotten slippers of yours! And you call yourself a leader!"

Handforth grunted, and felt guilty. He changed into his tennis shoes, and his chums knew more than ever how necessary it was for them to watch him.

At this hour there was not much chance of meeting anybody, and the three juniors successfully slipped downstairs, and ultimately found their way to the Ancient House cellars. The whole school was in darkness, slumbering. Outside the January night was black and rough, with a high wind whistling round the old grey walls. An advantage, this wind, for it helped to drown any sounds that the juniors might make.

Reaching the cellar, they crept down the stone steps, and Handforth switched on an electric torch.

"All serene!" he murmured. "It's only us!"

Two figures came forward from the black shadows—and they were two of the most astonishing figures one could expect to find lurking in the cellars of St. Frank's. For one was Jake Diamond, a notorious New York gang leader and racketeer, and the other was Trixie Foster, a chorus girl of the New York Follies. Trixie was really Jake Diamond's wife, but she preferred to be known by her stage name.

"Hot dog!" she murmured. "Didn't I tell you, Jake? The boy friend has shown up dead on time."

Handforth did not waste much time on Jake Diamond; he was looking at the girl. It was ridiculous to suppose that she was a married woman, for she looked no older than seventeen. She was very dainty and pretty, and although she was slightly bedraggled and forlorn at the moment, she still managed to preserve that charm which had so attracted Handforth at their first meeting.

Church and McClure were not so susceptible. They had not been "smitten," and they could regard this girl with perfect indifference. They looked upon her and Jake Diamond as a danger to themselves and to St. Frank's. The sooner they cleared away from the school the better.

"Gee! It's sure good of you young guys to give us the glad hand like this!" said Diamond earnestly. "But I guess we won't park ourselves here for long. As soon as I get my friends wise to our fix they'll get around and relieve you boys of the job!"

"You can't stay in this cellar, anyhow," said Handforth bluntly. "That's why we're here. We only rushed you into this cellar because it was the handiest place at the moment—but to-morrow you might be twigged. Any of the servants are liable to come down the cellar."

"Jake and I were figuring the same," said Trixie. "Say, we sure are giving you boys the run around. Maybe we'll be able to square things one day. But where do you reckon to park us, anyway?"

Handforth had been thinking things over.

"You've got to be somewhere safe," he replied impressively. "Somewhere beyond Kapone's reach. We hid you in the monastery ruins at first, but it wasn't good

enough. Those Chicago pals of yours twigged, and nearly killed you."

"Pals nothing," said Diamond, a savage light coming into his eyes. "Scarneck Al Kapone and his Chicago gorillas are my worst enemies. They quit Chicago because the racket was too hot, and they came to New York. Tried to run me out of town, too."

"I fancy they succeeded," murmured Church.

"Al shot up some of my boys, and things were so hot that I figured on quitting for a time," said the New York gunman. "I sure thought I'd be safe in England, but those eggs followed me over. They've been trying to bump me off ever since."

"Well, you'll be safe here," said Handforth. "When I give a promise, I keep it. I said I'd hide you up, and so I will!"

There had already been some hectic times at St. Frank's owing to Handforth's impulsive promise to help this hunted pair. The rival gunmen had traced the fugitives, and had nearly "got" them. But owing to swift action on the part of Handforth & Co., the pair had been smuggled to this place of temporary safety—and their enemies had retired, baffled.

There was a secret passage—an old relic of the monastery days—leading from the disused vault to these cellars. Handforth had known of it, and had used it. Thus Jake Diamond and his wife had been enabled successfully to vanish. But Handforth knew better than anybody how risky it would be to leave them in this cellar.

They were safe only for a few hours; a more secret retreat must be found for them at once, and Handforth considered that no place could be safer than the upper part of the Ancient House. A hundred gunmen would never find them there.

It was for the girl's sake that Handforth was taking these chances. He believed that she was a victim—that she had been deceived by Jake Diamond, and that she was only sticking to him because she had no alternative. Besides, Handforth had entered into this rash business with his usual thoughtlessness, and it was now too late to withdraw. He had to go on or break his word; and Handforth was not the fellow to break his word.

"Where do you figure on putting us?" asked Jake bluntly.

It was a point he had been worrying about ever since he had sought refuge in this cellar. The interior of a public school, swarming with boys, was not exactly his idea of a "hide-out."

"Wait and see," said Handforth mysteriously. "Grab those blankets, Mac. You can carry the oil-stove, Churchy. I'll take some of this tinned grub."

They all took something. For when they had hurriedly shifted from the monastery vault to the cellar, they had brought their belongings with them—belongings which Handforth had generously supplied.

Now, creeping cautiously, they ascended from the cellar, and Handforth led the way. This was the really risky part of the programme. It was between midnight and one a.m., and there was not much chance of meeting anybody in the upper sections of the building; but it so often happens that somebody chances to be awake just when they are expected to be asleep.

Caution, therefore, was vital.

Jake Diamond had no fear of capture, for if the worst came to the worst, he could easily make a getaway. All the same, he was anxious. Handforth was full of enthusiasm, but some of his ideas were unique. It wasn't certain that Jake would agree with this latest one.

He could not see where he and Trixie were being led. They went upstairs, crept along a landing, and then up further stairs. More than once Diamond hesitated, bent on refusing to go another step. He didn't like this idea of skulking in a school attic; long experience had taught him that a way of retreat was an essential feature of any hiding-place. He felt that here he was being trapped.

"Here we are!" murmured Handforth, at last.

They had come to a halt high up in the building, and they were facing an extraordinarily heavy oaken door. It was so massive, so iron-studded, that Diamond regarded it with respect. It was the kind of door which dynamite alone would break down.

"Say, what's on the other side of this?" he whispered suspiciously.

"You'll see in a minute," replied Handforth, turning the handle.

The light of his torch revealed a tiny stone lobby beyond, with circular stone stairs leading upwards. They all passed through, carrying their burdens. Then Handforth closed the door, and cautiously shot two enormous bolts.

"Now we can speak more freely," he said, in an almost normal voice. "No chance of being overheard. These walls are two feet thick, and the door is five inches thick, and solid oak."

"Gee! I don't kind of like it," said Trixie. "Reminds me of Sing Sing."

"Forget it! You've never seen the inside of Sing Sing!" growled Diamond. "Say, kid, what's this place, anyway?"

"It's the Ancient House tower," grinned Handforth. "We're in the really old part of the building—this tower is centuries old. Up these stairs there's a turret-room. You'll be as safe as houses in there."

No further comment was made until the turret-room was reached. Jake looked round with interest. There were no windows of the ordinary type, but high in the wall there were little glass-covered apertures.

"For the love of Mike!" breathed Jake. "It's like a cell!"

"Anyway, you'll be safe," said Handforth. "Not a soul ever comes up here—month in,

month out. And even if your enemies got into the school, which isn't likely, they'd never get past that oak door."

"Gee! The kid's cute, Jake!" said Trixie admiringly.

"And what kind of a mash shall we be in if the school folks get on to us?" asked Diamond. "Say, we'll be caught like rats!"

"I tell you, there's no chance of the beaks getting to know," urged Handforth. "You can stay here as long as you like, and not a soul will suspect. At any hour of the night you can slip down with safety and get water from the bath-room, or wash yourselves. There's a bath-room right opposite the oak door, and it's one that's hardly ever used. Nobody sleeps on that floor, so you can use it with safety. I thought it all out before I brought you up here."

"It's dandy, Jake," said the girl eagerly. "We'll hang around here until we get news that Al has been arrested, or has quit the country."

"We can bring up daily supplies of grub," said Handforth.

"Kid, you're sure generous," said Diamond, as he was lighting the big oil-stove. "You're sure white. But it can't be done. I'm quitting as soon as I can get help—and I want you to do a little favour for me as early as you can to-morrow."

"What is it?" asked Handforth suspiciously.

"I just want you to send a telegram, that's all," replied Diamond. "It'll be a long one, but I'll give you the dough to cover it. There's a guy in Paris who will soon set things moving when he knows what a jamb I'm in."

"How can he help you if he's in Paris?"

"Paris ain't so far away," replied Diamond. "This guy is a powerful man, with loads of jack. All I want is to get clear of this country, and avoid any showdown with Al Kapone. I haven't broken your laws, but I'm liable to any minute if I come face to face with Al. Here's the wire."

Handforth took it, and read the words of the message, which was, indeed, of extraordinary length. It was more like a letter.

"This'll cost quids!" he protested.

"Sure! And here's a fifty-spot to cover the charge," replied the racketeer, handing over a ten-pound note. "Ten pounds—fifty dollars in real money. If there's any change, I guess you can use it for our food."

"But this message is all double Dutch!"

"I sure hope the postal guys will think the same," said Jake. "I guess that message is in code, kid. But the guy I'm sending it to will read it easily enough. I can't take any chances."

"Oh, I see," said Handforth, understanding. "All right, then; I'll send this off to-morrow."

Three minutes later Handforth & Co. bade their strange friends good-night, and crept back to their own dormitory.

CHAPTER 2.

The Shadow!

TO be on the safe side, Handforth took that long telegram to Bannington, running over in his Morris Minor with Church and McClure directly after breakfast. He was too well known at the little Bellton post-office, and some entirely unnecessary talk might have arisen.

"Not much change out of that tenner," said Handforth, as he got back into the little car. "What about spending it at a grocer's, now that we're here?"

"What about getting back for lessons?" said Church tartly. "You silly ass, you'll have to drive like the wind even as it is. You've been hours in the post-office."

"Well, you know what messers these post-office people are," said Handforth.

"I'm not so sure about that wire," commented McClure thoughtfully. "We're just as much in the dark as the post-office is. How do you know what Diamond has said? He might be up to some mischief."

"Ass! All he wants to do is to get away."

"I'm not so sure," said the canny Scottish junior. "Anyhow, I think we ought to keep a jolly keen eye on Mr. Diamond. The girl's pretty harmless, I believe, but I wouldn't trust him an inch."

Handforth was thoughtful during the rest of that morning. He was glad that the newspapers had made no mention of the recent activities at St. Frank's. The American gunmen were hardly mentioned in the papers. This silence was mainly due to the caution which Mr. Nelson Lee, the headmaster-detective of St. Frank's, had issued to the Press. He had sufficient influence as a detective to have his wishes granted. And as a headmaster, he was particularly anxious to avoid any breath of scandal.

But even Nelson Lee did not know of Handforth & Co.'s secret movements. He believed that Jake Diamond and Al Kapone and his gang had left the district. As for St. Frank's itself, the normal routine was followed. The boys soon forgot the gangsters, and life at the great school went on in its usual placid way.

In the Remove the fellows noticed a certain difference in Handforth, but they thought little of it. Handy was not his old cheerful, boisterous self. He had become more thoughtful and silent, and took little or no interest in the doings of others. And the Remove just chuckled. They knew that Handforth had been rather "gone" on that American girl, and it was assumed that his manner was due to the girl's disappearance. For it was generally believed that Jake Diamond and Trixie had unobtrusively slipped out of the country.

Actually Handforth's change of manner was due to the load of responsibility which rested on his shoulders. Nothing happened that day, or the next day, either, but Hand-

forth was troubled. More than once he had had the impression that he was being watched and shadowed.

At night he had slipped up to the tower with fresh supplies for the refugees, and he had found everything in order. Jake was getting more and more impatient, but he was sticking it well. He eagerly asked if Handforth had seen any sign of the enemy, and Handforth scoffingly told him that the enemy had gone for good.

But was this a fact?

Handforth could not say for certain that he was really being watched, but the conviction grew stronger on him. It was all so worrying that he was slowly getting fed up. Even his "affection" for Trixie was waning. He was longing for the time when his responsibility would end.

"It's the uncertainty that worries me," he said to his chums that evening at tea-time. "How long is this waiting game going to last?"

"Why ask us?" said McClure. "And why speak so complainingly? You brought the whole thing on yourself, didn't you?"

"Do you remember coming indoors ten minutes ago?" asked Handforth abruptly. "I'm almost certain that I saw somebody watching us in the shrubbery."

"Rot!" said Church. "Your nerves are getting ragged, old man. Didn't we go in the shrubbery and look? There wasn't a sign of a soul."

"Those beggars can make themselves scarce pretty quick," said Handforth gruffly. "You can scoff all you like. I believe we're being watched day and night. They suspect us! They're getting ready to pounce."

"Have some bloater paste, old man," said Church kindly.

"Eat it yourself!" retorted Handforth. "What's the idea of palming off that mouldy stuff on me? Isn't that the pot you bought six days ago?"

"Only five days."

"Then you can bury it—it's just about ready for it," said Handforth coldly.

He had to admit that throughout the next day he saw no one actually watching him. In fact, his conviction was never more than an impression, and in the end he was compelled to believe that it was only his nerves at work. Hadn't it been reported in the papers that Kapone's gang had eluded the police, and were out of the country? It was rot to suspect that the beggars were still hanging about St. Frank's.

Handforth was cheered in one way, but dispirited in another. Fellows were beginning to ask him what was wrong. Handforth was positively worried now. Nothing whatever had happened. No reply had come to that telegram—although this wasn't surprising. Jake Diamond's friends couldn't very well send him wires or letters.

"If nothing happens by to-morrow, we shall have to get Diamond and the girl out," said Handforth, frowning. "But how can we? I promised to keep 'em in that turret as

long as they like! By George! What a mess!"

HE would have been still more worried if he could have known that at that very moment a skinny, dark-haired man was reporting to Scarnec Al Kapone himself. The meeting-place was far out on the desolate moorland road, where Kapone was waiting in a big saloon car.

"I guess we're all wet, chief," said the shadower. "These kids haven't gone to any place except where they usually go. That

them kids outside the school when you ought to watch them *inside*. Go and do your stuff! Snap into it!"

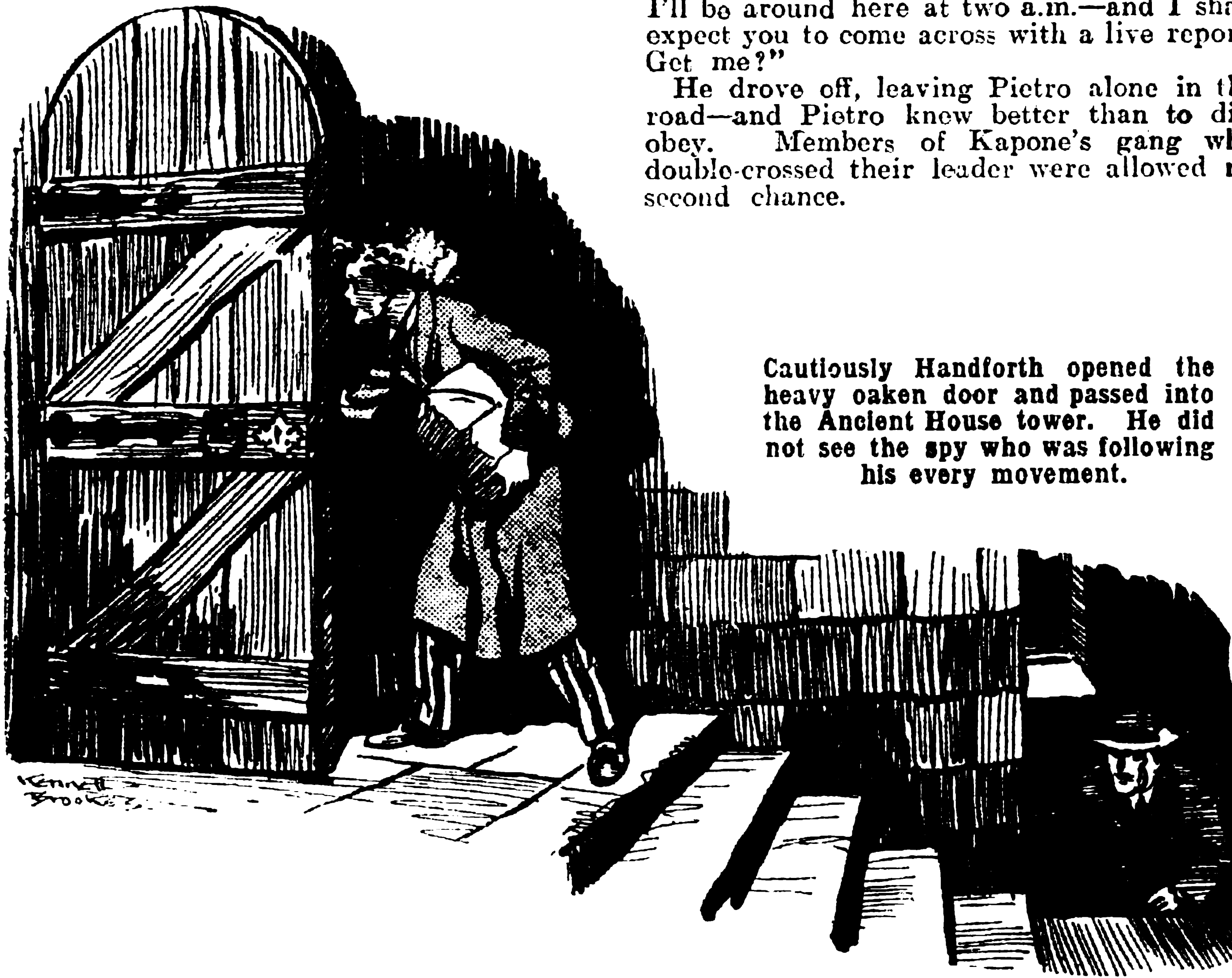
"But, gee, chief——"

"Get right back on the job," interrupted Kapone. "Maybe you won't get a chance of slipping into the school until late at night—but don't come back until you've given the inside the once over."

"Pretty soft for you!" said Pietro bitterly. "But if I'm nabbed while I'm inside that school, it's 'outs' for me! Three years up the river!"

"Get going, brother," retorted Al Kapone. "When I say a thing, I mean it. I'll be around here at two a.m.—and I shall expect you to come across with a live report. Get me?"

He drove off, leaving Pietro alone in the road—and Pietro knew better than to disobey. Members of Kapone's gang who double-crossed their leader were allowed no second chance.



Cautiously Handforth opened the heavy oaken door and passed into the Ancient House tower. He did not see the spy who was following his every movement.

ape, Diamond, isn't around here at all. Didn't I say so from the first?"

"What you say, Pietro, doesn't interest me any," retorted the gang leader. "Your job is to watch—and keep watching."

"Aw, listen, chief," protested the other. "Ain't I watched for days? I tell you, them kids have quit the game. I've followed them until I'm all in. They go to their games field, to the school store, to the village, and so on. They haven't broke away once. If Diamond's anywhere around this dump, he's in the school itself, and that's likely, ain't it? I'll say it is!"

"And why not?" snapped Kapone.

Pietro stared.

"In the school?" he repeated.

"You're dumb, you wall-eyed mutt!" said Al curtly. "Wasting your time watching

IT was at about eleven-thirty when Handforth crept out of his bed, and padded across to the cupboard. He took out a parcel he had previously prepared, containing new bread, butter, coffee and milk.

Church and McClure were asleep. They had both intended remaining awake, for they knew that Handforth was to visit the turret after lights-out. But they had lost a good deal of sleep on three successive nights, and Nature was having her own way for once.

Handforth was grumpy. At first this wheeze had been thrilling; but the thrill had worn off now, and he was hoping against hope that his self-imposed task would soon come to an end.

Not that Handforth dreamed of going back on his word. If necessary he would keep up these nightly visits for a month. It seemed to him that Jake Diamond and Trixie Foster had been in that turret for weeks already, instead of a mere day or two.

Perhaps his faculties were not quite so much on the alert to-night—or perhaps the absence of Church and McClure made a difference. At all events, Handforth failed to see the black shadow which hovered in a recess at the end of the dormitory passage.

Pietro was on the job.

This man was, in his own picturesque language, no piker. Having been told to do this job, he was doing it thoroughly. He had watched the school so assiduously during these last days and nights that he knew its geography as well as the boys themselves. He knew which was Handforth's dormitory, which was Handforth's study, and he knew the best methods of getting in.

Having got in now, he had taken up his position at the end of the dormitory corridor; from here he could see the door of Handforth's room. The gunman had frankly told himself that he was wasting his time. He would have to go back to Al and report failure again. Well, Al was plain dumb.

Shortly afterwards, Pietro changed his mind.

For Handforth not only crept silently out of his dormitory, attired in his dressing-gown, but he was carrying a parcel. With extreme caution, Handy padded noiselessly along the passage, up the stairs, and halted outside a heavy ~~closed~~ door.

Just as silently in his rear crept the spy.

CHAPTER 3.

An Unexpected Check!

P IETRO breathed hard.

"Gee! I guess the chief knows his onions!" he murmured admiringly.

He had seen Handforth slip into that dark doorway, and he had seen the door close. But Pietro stayed where he was. He wasn't the kind of man to exceed his orders—especially when exceeding his orders meant risking his liberty.

He felt that he had seen enough.

The boy under suspicion had left his bed practically in the middle of the night, and had crept through a doorway which obviously led to the Ancient House tower. What could his purpose be? It was as clear as daylight that Handforth was carrying food to the refugees. So Jake Diamond and his dame were actually inside the school, after all! It sure was a licker.

Pietro, who was of Italian extraction, was cunning and crafty. He did not move an inch from his hiding-place; but waited until Handforth reappeared. The school-boy paused in the doorway.

"Certain you'll be all right until to-morrow?" came his whispered words.

"Sure, kid," came another voice, the voice of a girl Pietro knew only too well. "Thanks, a lot. You surely are white, big boy."

"It's for you I'm doing it—don't forget that!" murmured Handforth.

"I ain't forgetting," said the other voice.

The door softly closed; Handforth padded down the stairs, and vanished. Pietro waited for five minutes before moving, then he got out of the Ancient House as quickly as he knew how. The next move was up to Al.

Later, when Pietro met the big saloon on Bannington Moor, he was gratified to find that Al Kapone had brought him a big flask of hot coffee, and some sandwiches.

"Eat!" said Al briefly.

"Guess I can quit duty after this, chief," said Pietro, as he sat back in the car and bit into a sandwich. "Listen, Al! You were sure right! That New York sewer rat is *inside*!"

A hand shot out and gripped his arm.

"On the level?" asked Kapone keenly.

"On the level, chief," said Pietro.

He gave details, and the racketeer stroked his chin with satisfaction.

"It ain't often, Pietro, that my hunches are all wet," he said. "And I sure had a hunch that Jake was skulking around that school. Sorry, old-timer, but you can't quit the racket yet. You and me are going on this job right now—as soon as you've eaten."

"Gee! You mean to get Jake to-night?"

"I've been waiting to get Jake ever since I arrived in this dog-gone country, and I'm not giving that bird any other chance to escape," said Kapone grimly. "It'll be easy, Pietro. We'll slip in, we'll face that ape, and we'll fill him so full of holes that he'll look like a coffee percolator!"

"Don't forget the dame."

"And if she butts in we'll give her hers, too!" retorted Kapone. "Not that I'm the guy to pull a rod on a dame. Guess we'll give her a shot of dope and keep her quiet. By the time she comes around we'll be out of the country."

Pietro didn't like it, but he had to go. It would have been far better, in his opinion, if Kapone had waited until he could bring his whole gang. Pietro believed in the safety of numbers.

The saloon car glided through the night until it came to a standstill in a little by-lane half a mile from St. Frank's. All the lights were turned off, and the two men crept across the playing-fields.

It was pitch dark, and but for Pietro's guidance the big gang leader would never have found his way into the school. Even Pietro's confidence was restored after they had got in, for the Ancient House was like a place of the dead. Everybody—masters, boys, domestics—slept soundly.

But an unexpected snag cropped up. Pietro led the way to the door which Handforth had used. Al Kapone flashed his light

on it, and then he uttered a muttered curse. He knew something about doors.

"Say, you sap, why didn't you tell me?" he whispered savagely.

"Tell you what, chief?"

"Didn't you give this door the once-over?"

"Guess I didn't get near enough for that."

"You bone-headed mutt!" snarled Kapone. "Look at it! Feel it! Solid oak! No lock to speak of, but she won't shift a fraction. That means bolts on the other side."

"For the love of Mike!" murmured Pietro, as he examined the door by the light of his companion's torch. "It sure is strong!"

"Aw, you make me sick!" growled the gang leader. "I guess there's no sense in leaving things like this to dumbbells! We'd need dynamite to shift this door. We could shoot it at a yard range, and I doubt if any bullet would get through."

He was baffled, and he knew it.

Any attempt to move that door would awaken the whole House—that is to say, any earnest attempt. The slightest sound, too, would warn Jake Diamond that his enemies were after him. There wasn't a chance in a thousand that Diamond could be tricked into opening this door. It was practically certain that he and Handforth had some system of signalling—a series of knocks, perhaps. Any departure from that pre-arranged signal would put Diamond on his guard.

"Let's go!" said Kapone abruptly.

He uttered no other word until they were back in the car; then he let himself go freely, and cursed Pietro until that unfortunate man's ears burned.

"Aw, what's the use?" concluded Kapone angrily. "You're just a plain sap, and that's all there is to it. If you had examined that door we needn't have come. But I guess we'll be around to-morrow night, and we'll come prepared. We'll fix Jake good and plenty!"

IT was a half-holiday next day, and there was a fairly important football match to be played away. Handforth didn't go. He had been very much off form lately, and he was really glad when Nipper informed him that Fatty Little would keep goal. Fatty was so keen on football these days that it was only fair to encourage him, and he had been doing splendid work in House matches.

Handforth raised no objection, because he was not anxious to leave the school. He had a feeling that something might happen at any moment. He even got Nipper to play substitutes for Church and McClure—who were the normal Junior backs. K. K. Parkington and Clement Coffin were only too glad to get the places.

"Well, I hope you're pleased with yourself," said Church sourly, after the footballers had departed. "You've messed up our whole afternoon."

"I couldn't explain to Nipper, could I?" demanded Handforth, with some irritation. "We may be wanted. How do we know what's going to happen? I was dropped out of the team, anyway."

"And you took jolly good care to have us dropped out, too," said Mac bitterly. "And why? Just so that we can hang about here doing nothing! What the dickens do you think is going to happen this afternoon?"

"Anything might happen," replied Handforth vaguely.

It was curious that something did happen—something which justified Handforth remaining at St. Frank's. Less than an hour after the team had gone, and when St. Frank's was dozing in the quiet of the afternoon, a stranger appeared.

Needless to say, Teddy Long, of the Remove, was the first to spot him. The stranger had no sooner climbed out of his car in the Triangle than Teddy shot out of the tuck-shop and made a bee-line for the new arrival. It was one of Long's favourite pastimes. Visitors came fairly frequently, and many of them required directions. Teddy supplied directions—at a price. It wasn't often that he let his victim go without having extracted a tip.

"Anybody you want to see, sir?" he asked eagerly.

He was greatly impressed by this stranger. Evidence of wealth was abundant. The car was a glittering, gleaming two-seater, of semi-sports design—one of those enormously powerful eight-cylinder cars, all chromium plating and glittering cellulose. The stranger, who was alone, was a keen-faced, middle-aged man, in plus fours. Clearly a man of substance.

"Hallo! Where did you spring from?" asked the stranger, smiling. "Yes, young 'un, there is somebody I want to see. One of the junior boys, I believe."

"You look like being unlucky, sir," said Teddy. "Most of the chaps have gone over to Helmford to play football."

"They'll be back, I suppose?"

"Not until after tea."

"Well, I'm in no hurry, and I can wait," said the stranger. "Maybe you can take me to your schoolmaster, or somebody in charge. The youngster I want is named Handforth. Happen to know him?"

Teddy's brain, which worked sluggishly in class, overran itself now.

"Handforth!" he repeated. "Why, I don't believe he went to the footer. If it's very important, sir, I might be able to find him."

"Good enough," said the other briskly. "Tell him that Mr. Wright is here. He won't know me, because he's never met me. I'm a friend of his father's. Sir Edward Handforth and I are business friends."

The man spoke good English, but now and again he betrayed his Transatlantic origin—not that Teddy Long noticed anything.

"I'll do my best, sir," said Teddy, a doubtful note creeping into his voice. "But St. Frank's is a big place, and he might be anywhere. I mean, I may have to run miles before I locate him."

Mr. Wright cottoned on.

"And five shillings, perhaps, will make the job easier," he smiled. "All right, kid. I'm not so dumb as I look."

He was feeling in his pocket when Church and McClure descended from the Ancient House steps. They had been listening for some moments, and they were glaring at Teddy Long. Too often had he indulged in this form of petty blackmail.

"Hold on, sir," said Church. "Don't give that money to Long yet. Were you saying that you wanted to see Handforth?"

"Look here, you mind your own business!" roared Teddy Long frantically.

"Hold it!" said Mr. Wright. "Yes. Handforth is the youngster I want."

"Then I'll get him for you in two ticks,

sir," said Church. "Long, you burglar, I'll give you three seconds to clear off!"

Teddy Long gnashed his teeth with helplessness. There was something so aggressive about Church's aspect that he bolted precipitately. He felt that he had been swindled out of five bob, but the loss of that sum was preferable to the acquisition of a thick ear.

"Better come indoors, sir," said Church gruffly. "I hope you won't take notice of that young rotter. Lots of people go away thinking that we're all the same. Mac, buzz round and find Handy, will you? Or I will, while you take this gentleman to Study D."

"What name did you say, sir?" asked McClure, with a straight look.

"Mr. Wright."

"And you've only come to see Handforth?"

"Surely. Who else?"

"You're not, by any chance, from Paris, sir?" asked Mac.

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The stranger's eyes narrowed.

"Well!" he said gently. "Paris, eh? Let's get together."

They went indoors, and nothing more was said until they were behind the closed door of Study D. Church had gone off for Handforth, and McClure was making certain that the window was closed.

"You seem a bright lad," remarked the stranger. "I'm not sure whether you've guessed——"

"I shouldn't say too much if I were you, sir," interrupted McClure. "You're a friend of Handy's father—and that'll do for a bit. Nothing's private in this place while Teddy Long is loose."

He went to the door to glance up and down the passage, fairly certain that Long would be prowling about somewhere. Handforth and Church were just hurrying along, and Church was looking relieved.

"Long's just been grabbed by Biggy of the Sixth and sent on an errand," he said. "So we shall be safe from his long ears."

They went into Study D, and Handforth looked at Mr. Wright with eager eyes.

"I'm Handforth," he said bluntly. "You want to see me, don't you?"

"I do," said Mr. Wright, glancing at Church and McClure. "I take it that these boys are your friends?"

"I haven't any secrets from them," replied Handforth. "And if you've come about a certain diamond, we're the chaps who can help you."

"Cute—darned cute," said Mr. Wright softly. "Wanted to be sure of me, eh? Well, kids, I'm here about Jake. I'm the man who got his wire in Paris, and it's mighty important that I should see Jake at once."

"I'll bet your name isn't Mr. Wright at all," said Handforth accusingly.

"Names don't mean a thing," said the other coolly. "One's as good as another. Spill the beans, sonny—I want an earful."

CHAPTER 4.

The Man From Paris!

MR. WRIGHT had thrown all pretence aside now. He was frankly American. Handforth and Church and McClure, looking at him, were surprised. He didn't look like a gunman or a crook.

"How can I be sure that you are the right man?" asked Handforth cautiously. "You might be one of Kapone's lot, fishing about here for information!"

"Forget it!" said Mr. Wright. "Kapone doesn't know a thing. I'm only here because I got Jake's wire. You sent the wire, didn't you? You're the young guy who has been giving Jake and Trixie the glad hand, aren't you?"

"I think I can trust you," said Handforth judicially. "Well, they're here—but

you can't see them now. You won't be able to see them until to-night."

"Listen, kid, it's important," urged Mr. Wright. "I want to see Jake right away. I'm making plans to get him away from this school."

"That's good news, anyhow," commented Church.

"It's too risky for you to see him now," said Handforth. "He's up in the tower—right in the school itself. And even if you come back at night it'll be risky."

"You youngsters seem to have been doing things darned thoroughly," said Mr. Wright with some annoyance. "What's the matter with seeing him now? Things are quiet, aren't they? I'm supposed to be a friend of your father's, so why can't you show me round—and slip me into Jake's hide-out on the way?"

"It might be done," agreed Handforth. "In fact, I believe it'll be the safer way of the two."

So, five minutes later, the three Removites ostentatiously went about the school with Mr. Wright in tow. They were showing him "the sights," and if anybody spotted them no comment could be raised. But as it happened they didn't meet a soul on their way upstairs, and it was an easy matter to reach that oaken door and to tap upon it by a prearranged signal which Handforth had fixed up with Jake Diamond. Within a minute the bolts were softly shot, and Trixie appeared.

"Gee!" she breathed, startled. "Russ!"

"Easy, sister," murmured the visitor.

"For the love of Mike, come in!" urged Trixie. "Jake'll be tickled to death to see you, Russ. Say, this is surely the cat's!"

Handforth & Co. were left flat, so to speak. Handforth, at least, had thought that he would go up to the turret-room with Mr. Wright, but there was nothing doing. He was asked to "hang around" for a spell.

"Well, perhaps it's best," he growled. "It's a fearfully risky business, anyhow. You chaps had better buzz downstairs, scouting. I'll stay here and pretend to be looking through this old lumber cupboard. If anybody comes along, buzz up and give me the wheeze."

"Let's hope he won't be long," said Mac anxiously.

Meanwhile, Jake Diamond was firmly gripping the hand of the man in plus fours.

"Gee, Russell, this is sure good!" he exclaimed. "I've been expecting something from you since yesterday. How's tricks? You're looking swell, Russ."

"I've got all the boys ready," said Russ, as he took in the turret-room at a glance. "Say, you and Trixie aren't so badly located at that! I'd no notion you were so comfortable."

"Those boys are sure dandy," said Jake Diamond, in earnest. "Makes me kind of feel mean sometimes. I'd hate to play it dirty on them. I'm sure anxious to know

what you've fixed, Russ. And I'm telling you right now that if it means getting these kids into trouble——"

"Nix, Jake," interrupted the other. "It's all set. Your boys are sure keen on getting together again. They're coming over the Channel to-night in a powerful motor-boat. All you've got to do is to quit this school and be on the beach, somewhere along this coast-line, by one a.m."

"Sounds good to me," murmured Trixie. "See, Jake? It doesn't mean double-crossing these school kids at all."

"Down on the beach at one a.m.," said Jake, his eyes gleaming. "What then?"

"You'd be surprised," said Russ coolly. "I've been in touch with the skipper of a cattle boat, returning to Boston in ballast. We're going to pick her up in mid-Channel; you'll be transferred straight on to her with your boys, and the whole bunch of you will get back in the States together."

"Gee! You've been working fast, Russ," said Diamond admiringly.

"When I get going, you can't stop me," retorted the other.

The "boys" they kept referring to were the members of Jake Diamond's gang. Jake himself had wangled a passport into England, but the other gangsters had been compelled to stay on the Continent. It was this fact which had led to the entire series of misadventures, for Al Kapone, knowing that Diamond was on his own, had seized his chance. This man Russell, or Wright, or whatever his name was, had arranged matters so that the Diamond gang could get straight back to America.

"You'll have Al where you want him, Jake," continued Russ. "He can't get wise to this move, and you'll be over in the States before he knows it."

"And the New York racket is mine!" gloated Diamond. "When I get there with the boys I'll grab the opportunity, and by the time Al and his animals get around I'll be sitting pretty."

"Gee, Jake, you ain't square!" complained Trixie. "You promised me that when we got out of this jamb you'd quit the racket for good!"

"Aw, forget it!" said Diamond impatiently. "Me quit the racket? Think again, sister!"

She turned away, her face expressing her bitterness. She had felt, all along, that she could not believe that promise. Jake was a gunman, and he would be a gunman until the end.

"Take a look at this," said Russ, unfolding a square of paper. "This is the coast-line around Caistowe—which is the nearest coast town to this school. Get it? Here's the Shingle Head lighthouse. Here's Caistowe Bay."

Jake Diamond studied the map closely.

"The boat will come ashore with dead engines and without lights at this spot, or as near as possible," said Russ, pointing. "About a mile to the west of Caistowe Bay. It's a shingly beach, and at one a.m., the

tide will be just right. I'm relying on you, Jake, to make it."

"I'll make it," replied the gang leader. "Me and Trixie will be there dead on time."

MUCH to Handforth's relief, the dodge worked successfully. Mr. Wright slipped down from the turret, and rejoined him without any misadventure. They had actually got down to the ground floor before anybody met them.

For the sake of appearances, Mr. Wright was escorted over the rest of the school. He was shown the playing-fields, the gymnasium, the chapel, and other points of general interest. He declined an invitation to tea, saying that he had to get back to London. Then he departed.

"I don't like it!" said Handforth, later, when he and his chums were sitting at tea. "Why didn't they let me go up with them?"

"Why ask riddles?" said Church. "That's the twentieth time you've asked that question!"

"And it's not even a riddle," grinned McClure. "Naturally, they didn't want you up there, Handy. They're planning to get away—and after they've left the school it's not your business where they go, or what they do."

"All that Wright chap said was that we'd better not risk a visit until the usual hour to-night—half-past eleven," went on Handforth, frowning. "That looks as if Trixie and Jake are staying on."

"Let's hope they've made plans to clear out in the night," said Church feelingly. "After all, they couldn't go earlier, could they? And look here—not so much talk—it's too risky!"

So Handforth, who was naturally impatient, was compelled to contain himself until after bed-time. He managed to hide his worry very successfully, and when he went into the Common-room he discussed the afternoon's football match as keenly and as animatedly as any of the others.

St. Frank's had registered a win, and much of the credit was due to Fatty Little, in goal—which explained, perhaps, Handforth's readiness to forget Jake Diamond for the moment. He went to great pains to explain to the grinning crowd that if he had kept goal St. Frank's would have won by two clear goals. Fatty had allowed the leather to get past him once, but Handy declared that it was an unnecessary concession.

It was the general opinion that Handforth was getting over his "fever," and that within a day or two he would be his old self. Which really spoke volumes for Handforth's self-possession. When it was a matter of real urgency he could keep a secret as well as anybody.

"Thank goodness!" he breathed, as he heard eleven-thirty chime out that night.

He slipped out of bed, and found Church and McClure awake. Within a minute they were out of the dormitory, and creeping upstairs. They were getting so accustomed



Mr. Wilkes looked away—and at the same moment his fist shot out. Scarneck caught napping, thought a mule had kicked him !

to this journey that they needed no light to guide them.

They found Trixie waiting. She had come down the turret stairs nightly, in order to have the door open in readiness. They all slipped through, and the bolts were shot.

"I've brought bread, as usual, and——"

"Gee, big boy, didn't that simp tell you?" interrupted Trixie. "We're not needing any eats to-night. Jake and me are quitting, right now."

"Quitting?" echoed Handforth. "Then—then everything's all right?"

"Surest thing you know," agreed Trixie.

She spoke lightly, but Handforth thought that he could detect a note of weariness in her voice—a hint of resignation.

In the turret-room they found Jake Diamond ready to leave, with his overcoat and hat on. The oil-stove was out, and there was the remains of a meal on an up-turned box.

"Well, it's all set, kids," said Diamond. "No need for me to tell you what my plans are—they wouldn't interest you, anyhow. We're quitting, and that's enough. There's

one little favour I want to ask of you, and I just hate doing it. I owe you such a lot already that I feel mean."

"Rats!" said Handforth. "What do you want?"

"Using the secret passage and that tunnel from the vault to the quarry, how long does it take to get to the coast?" asked Diamond.

"Not more than half an hour, easy walking."

"Half an hour," said Jake slowly. "And it's only eleven-thirty. Listen, boys. Trixie and me want to get to the coast by about half after twelve, or a quarter of one. Guess it'll work out right if we start by a quarter after twelve?"

"You'll do it easily," replied Handforth.

"Maybe you'll slip down right now and open the cellar door, and get that secret passage door open, too?" asked Jake eagerly. "I don't want any delay, once we start. Get me? And it'll sure be safer to leave this place by that secret passage. If you'll fix it up like that, you can get back to bed, and then if there's any trouble

you won't be in it. When you awake tomorrow we'll be on our way."

"We'll do that, of course," promised Handforth. "We'll slip down straight away and open the doors. So you're going?" he added, looking at the girl. "I say, I hope you're not taking any big risks?"

"No, big boy, this is easy picking," said Trixie. "Say, you've been so almighty good to us that I guess we'll never be able to pay you back. Shake, boy friend! I don't reckon we shall ever meet again."

She shook hands with them all round, and they felt very uncomfortable.

"That goes for me, too," said Jake Diamond. "I wouldn't ask you to shake hands with me, brother, because I've got a kind of hunch that you wouldn't care for it; but—well, you've been so dog-gone white that I'd sure like to shake once."

Handforth took his hand readily.

"I wish you were anything but a rotten gunman!" he said resentfully. "It's not fair to your wife! Won't you go straight after this?"

"Sure, kid!" said Jake promptly. "That's just what I'm aiming at. It's the boot-legging racket for your truly when I get back to little old New York—and that's as straight as any other business in the U.S., I guess."

Handforth didn't know whether to believe this or not. Church and McClure, for their part, didn't believe a word of it.

"And don't forget, kid, if ever you come to New York, the city's yours!" added Diamond. "When I get back there I'll be New York's Big Noise, king of the bootleg racket. Anything you want will be yours! Say, if you'd care to carry the Statue of Liberty home, I'll have it packed up and labelled ready for you!"

CHAPTER 5.

Al Kapone in Action!

IT did not take Handforth & Co. long to steal down to the cellar and open the doors, as requested. They could understand Jake Diamond's concern on this point; he wanted nothing to hinder his departure.

"Who wants the Statue of Liberty, anyhow?" murmured Handforth, as he climbed back into bed. "That was all bunkum."

"Fathead!" grinned Church. "All these Americans talk big like that. The rest of his talk was the same. Going straight, eh?"

"About as straight as a butcher's hook," murmured Mac.

"If he was lying, he's a rotter!" said Handforth indignantly. "Dash it, you chaps, I'm not satisfied!"

"That's nothing new. You never are."

"I'm thinking of that girl," said Handforth stubbornly. "You can chuckle all you like! Things haven't gone right. I only brought those two down here so that I could

help Trixie. And what have I done? Nothing! She's going off with that gunman, and she'll be forced to lead the same old life. Oh, rats! I've made a hopeless mess of the whole giddy business!"

"Don't be a chump, Handy!" said Church earnestly. "What else could you have done? They've been kept safe, and what happens after this is their own funeral. It's a jolly good thing St. Frank's is getting rid of them."

"Hear, hear!" murmured McClure.

And he and Church went off to sleep more contented in mind than they had been for some nights, leaving Handforth awake, pondering over his failure. In his chums' opinion, he had been far too generous—for he had risked expulsion for the sake of these absolute strangers.

Little did they guess that this night, which they regarded as the quietest for a week, was to prove just the opposite.

FOR while they had been bidding good-bye to Jake Diamond and Trixie Foster, strange and sinister things were happening.

Dark, mysterious figures merged out of the gloom of the night. They worked with the efficiency of experience. Two of the figures climbed the telegraph-posts, and every wire that led to St. Frank's was cut. In a word, the school telephones were disconnected.

Other men, working just as noiselessly, entered the porter's lodge. A window was forced with silence and expedition, and two or three minutes later Josh Cuttle, the head porter, fought desperately with his night attackers. Not that he stood the slightest chance. They were on him before he was awake. They gagged him, secured a muffler round his face, bound him hand and foot, and left him tied to his bed. Then they stole out as mysteriously as they had entered. Men dealt with the Head's chauffeur in exactly the same way. These two were the only members of the St. Frank's staff who actually slept in outbuildings.

Other men materialised out of the blackness, and some of them were carrying strange, sinister-looking objects. Machine-guns. These were placed at various strategic points round St. Frank's. More men, armed with deadly automatic pistols, took up their positions in trees, so that every quarter of the Ancient House could be commanded. It was mainly upon the Ancient House that the attack was concentrated.

And St. Frank's, as yet, knew nothing.

Like ghouls of the night, these gunmen concentrated their skill upon this peaceful school. They were using their deadly Chicago methods in this peaceful corner of the Sussex countryside. St. Frank's was not only cut off by telephone, but by every other means. Not one living person in that establishment would be able to get past the deadly barrier. The siege was complete.

Scarneck Al Kapone, the directing genius of the whole affair, went from guard to

guard, getting reports. At last he returned to a spot where his two chief lieutenants, Pietro and Ed, were waiting.

"All set!" he said, in a low voice. "Let's go, boys!"

"Gee, chief, you're sure taking a chance!" breathed Ed. "These English guys ain't trained right! They don't stick 'em up as they should! And if there's any resistance we'll have to shoot up the whole joint."

"We've come here to get Diamond—and we'll get him!" snapped Kapone savagely.

That purpose had become a mania with him. His rival had eluded him so many times that he was desperate. He was prepared to take chances which, ordinarily, he would have avoided. At the same time, he was convinced that there would be no desperate fighting. All the advantage was with him, and when the school authorities understood what the position was, they would readily hand over Kapone's victims. The audacity of this stunt would ensure its success.

"Listen, you saps!" growled Kapone. "It's dead easy. We get inside and locate the master of this particular building. Guy named Wilkes. You've got his address, ain't you, Pietro?"

"I know his room."

"Good enough! We get there, and shake him out of his little sleep," continued Kapone. "With three guns pointing at him, I guess he'll listen to reason. We'll explain that we've got the school surrounded, and that any monkey business will mean a lot of nasty, messy killing. I'm figuring that this guy, Wilkes, will knuckle under good and plenty."

"What if he don't?" asked Pietro.

"Aw, heck!" snapped the gang leader. "What else can he do but knuckle under? We'll take this guy round, and we'll make him warn every kid in the school to keep quiet. If there's any trouble, we'll loose off a few rounds to show the saps that we're in earnest. Then we'll force that door—or, better still, bore a hole through it. I'm figuring on a little plan of my own."

"Gee! You're going to gas those New York eggs?"

"You said it, Ed!" replied Kapone grimly. "There's a stairway beyond that door, with a room at the top of the tower. Gas kind of rises, and I guess if we pump enough gas through a hole in that door, it'll get Jake and his dame good and down."

He chuckled.

"But that's only if these school guys oppose us," he added. "We'll give 'em a chance to hand Jake and the girl over first. Now, let's get going."

They moved forward purposefully.

AT just about that same time a powerful motor-boat, gliding coastwards from the open Channel, appeared off the beach near Shingle Head.

Its presence was unknown to any soul along the coast. The beam from the Shingle Head lighthouse flashed regularly and inter-

mittently, but it did not gleam upon this silent craft. The engines had been either stopped, or slowed down until they were practically noiseless. No lights were showing. The craft edged its way across the smooth sea, and finally grounded softly in the shingle. Men leapt ashore from the bows, and the boat was secured.

"Hot dog! Guess this is the spot, boys," said somebody.

Russ was there, in charge of the operations. In the boat was a number of well-dressed, lithe, clean-shaven men—Jake Diamond's gang!

"We're early," murmured Russ, as he looked at his watch. "Only midnight. Jake won't be along for another hour. But I guess we can wait. There's not a chance of any trouble on this coast."

"Say, these English coastguards are sure dead!" sneered one of the other Americans.

The boat waited—ready for the getaway.

BACK at St. Frank's, another move in this drama was being taken—a move which created an unexpected situation.

Al Kapone, in spite of his brilliant organisation—an organisation which rivalled in efficiency that of many a great business—knew nothing of Jake Diamond's plans: knew nothing of that boat-load of gunmen off the coast.

Kapone believed that Jake was a helpless refugee—a scared fugitive—a leader without a gang. That was just where Al Kapone miscalculated!

For at that very time Jake Diamond was stealing down the narrow stone stairway of the turret. He and Trixie passed through the doorway, and the big oak door was silently drawn to. Then they made for the stairs. They were exactly on time. Their plan was to steal down to the cellar and escape by means of the secret passage.

They got down the stairs without adventure, but as soon as they turned into the corridor Jake hesitated. His trained hearing had detected some slight sound just ahead.

The next moment a light blazed out, and a muttered ejaculation followed.

"Gosh! It's Jake!" came Kapone's snarl.

In that same instant his gun spoke.

CHAPTER 6.

St. Frank's Besieged!

THUD!

The pistol was silenced, and it only made a soft thudding noise like a subdued airgun, but there was no mistaking the deadly flash of flame. A gasping scream followed on its heels, and Trixie toppled over.

"You skunk!" snarled Diamond savagely. Thud! Thud!

Two other shots followed, and Jake Diamond himself staggered. One of the bullets had struck him on the chest—and he was saved, as he had been saved once before, by the bullet-proof garment he wore under his ordinary clothes. But the shock of the impact had nearly knocked him over, and his chest felt as though it had been struck by a sledge-hammer.

This was no moment for hesitation.

The next bullet might crash through his brain—and he had no protection over his head. With a lightning-like movement, Jake leapt aside, and at the same instant his own gun snarled. Kapone's electric torch was sent whirling out of his hand, shattered to fragments.

With a panther-like spring, Jake fled up the stairs, his one idea now being to get back behind the oaken door. Later he regretted his move, calling himself a fool for allowing himself to be trapped. Yet it is difficult to imagine what other course he could have taken. It was impossible to advance upon his enemies, for that would have meant certain death. Behind that door he was at least granted a respite. He knew that Trixie had been hit, but in his desire to save his own skin, he paid no attention to the huddled figure against the staircase wall. Al Kapone and his men were not interested in the girl, either. They dashed past her, and reached the heavy oaken door just as the bolts were being slammed home.

"He's sure put it over on us, chief!" panted Pietro.

"The big gorilla!" snarled Kapone. "I guess I plugged him, too! Well, it means going ahead with our original plan. We'll sure have to find that schoolmaster, and give him the dope. Jake's here—and we'll get him!"

But the programme could not be carried out according to plan now. For Mr. Alington Wilkes, the genial Housemaster of the Ancient House, had been awakened.

Now, attired in a shabby old dressing-gown and a pair of floppy carpet slippers, he emerged from his bed-room. His hair was untidy, his glasses were askew, and altogether he looked several kinds of a fool. But appearances are sometimes deceptive—and with Mr. Wilkes they were always deceptive.

"What's all this?" he asked mildly.

He was amazed and startled as he saw the three men in the corridor. He did not see Trixie, although he fancied that he had been awakened by a woman's scream.

Kapone twirled round. The torches held by Pietro and Ed flashed upon the Housemaster's queer figure, and the gunmen were reassured.

"Hands up—and make it snappy!" said Kapone grimly.

"Dear me! Am I to understand that you are samples of these American gunmen who have recently been seen near the school?" asked Mr. Wilkes, blinking. "There is



Jokes from readers wanted for this feature! If you know a good rib-tickler send it along now—and win a prize! A handsome watch will be awarded each week to the sender of the best joke; all other readers whose efforts are published will receive a pocket wallet or a penknife. Address your jokes to "Smilers," Nelson Lee Library, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4.

AM AND 'AM!

Teacher: "What part of speech is the word 'am'?"

Small Boy: "Is it the 'am that you eats, sir, or the am which you is?"

(F. Wilcox, 47, Grange Lane, Rossington, Doncaster, has been awarded a handsome watch.)

TOOTLE-OO!

Old Lady: "Young man, how long does the next train stop here?"

Porter: "From two-to-two to two-to-two."

Old Lady: "Well, I declare! Be you the starting whistle?"

(P. Watkins, 4, Hebb Street, Worcester, has been awarded a penknife.)

OUT OF THE FRYING PAN—

After a sleepless night a man suffering from toothache poured his woes into the ear of an enthusiastic believer in the system of healing by auto-suggestion.

"You must repeat over and over again this phrase: 'Get thee behind me, pain!'" he was told.

"What!" gasped the sufferer. "And get lumbago? No jolly fear!"

(A. Francis, 96, Woodland Street, Dalston, E. 8, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

ALWAYS THERE.

Stranger: "Where does this road go to?"

Yokel: "Oi don't think it goes anywheres. It's 'ere every morning!"

(E. Phelan, River Side Farm, P.O. Noordkaap, Transvaal, S. Africa, has been awarded a penknife.)

HARD LINES.

Circus Manager: "What's wrong now?"

India-rubber Man: "What's wrong! Every time the strong man writes a letter he uses me to rub out the mistakes."

(R. Davidson, "Sunnycroft," Westfield Road, Cheam, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

NOTHING DOING.

An Irish policeman was taking a troublesome burglar to the police station. During a struggle the captive's hat blew away.

really no need for you to point those pistols at me. And I don't see why I should put my hands up."

"Quit the jaw music," retorted Kapone. "Stick 'em up!"

"But, my good fellow, I'm unarmed," protested Mr. Wilkes. "You don't think that we English schoolmasters go about carrying lethal weapons, do you? We leave that sort of thing entirely to you. I would really like to know what you are doing in this school?"

Doors were opening in various parts of the House. William Napoleon Browne, of the Fifth, ventured forth in a dressing-gown which was calculated to put the gunmen completely off their aim; Stevens and Chambers and Phillips, also of the Fifth, were with him. Nipper, Travers, K. K. Parkington and other Removites were aroused and ventured forth. They arrived just as Al Kapone was getting down to facts with Mr. Wilkes.

"See here, you sap, you'd best pipe down!" Kapone was saying savagely. "I guess you're Wilkes, ain't you?"

"An accurate enough guess, but lacking in respect," murmured Mr. Wilkes.

"You'd best understand right now that this school is in my hands," said the gang leader. "You're helpless. Get me? You and all your troop of young boneheads are about as useful as a bunch of stuffed mummies!"

"I'm glad you are so informative," said Mr. Wilkes, perfectly calm. "But you may have exaggerated the situation, my friend. Perhaps we are not quite so helpless as you think. In this country there is such a thing as law and order——"

"Listen, brother!" broke in Kapone. "This dump is cut off. Every telephone is disconnected—my men surround every building. I've got machine-guns placed at every angle. If there's any monkey business, those machine-guns will get busy. So I'm telling you right now that you'd better go slow."

Mr. Wilkes was startled, not to say flabbergasted, but he didn't show it.

"You seem to have made your plans very thoroughly, and very extensively," he commented. "The object, I imagine, is robbery. Boys, don't come too near. These men are armed. We don't want any unpleasantness."

Kapone looked at him contemptuously.

"You're getting wise!" he sneered, lowering his gaze. "As for you kids, keep back, or there'll be more than one funeral. I guess you heard what I was saying to this mutt you call a master."

"Can't we do something, sir?" asked K. K. breathlessly.

"I fancy not," replied Mr. Wilkes. "We seem to be—er—at a disadvantage."

"You spilled a bibful, brother," snapped Kapone. "See here, there's no idea of robbery in this stunt. A guy named Jake

"Let's fetch me 'at, mate," requested the burglar.

"Oh, no, you don't catch me that way!" snorted the policeman. "You stay here while Oi fetch it."

(G. A. Pickett, 25, Woods Lane, Stapenhill, Burton-on-Trent, has been awarded a penknife.)

NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.

Boots: "Are you the gentleman who wanted to be awakened to catch the early train?"

Guest: "Yes."

Boots: "Then you can go to sleep again—you've lost it!"

(A. Sloane, "Dining Rooms," 547, Dudley Road, Wolverhampton, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

SECOND SIGHT.

"Why is Johnny standing in front of the mirror with his eyes shut?"

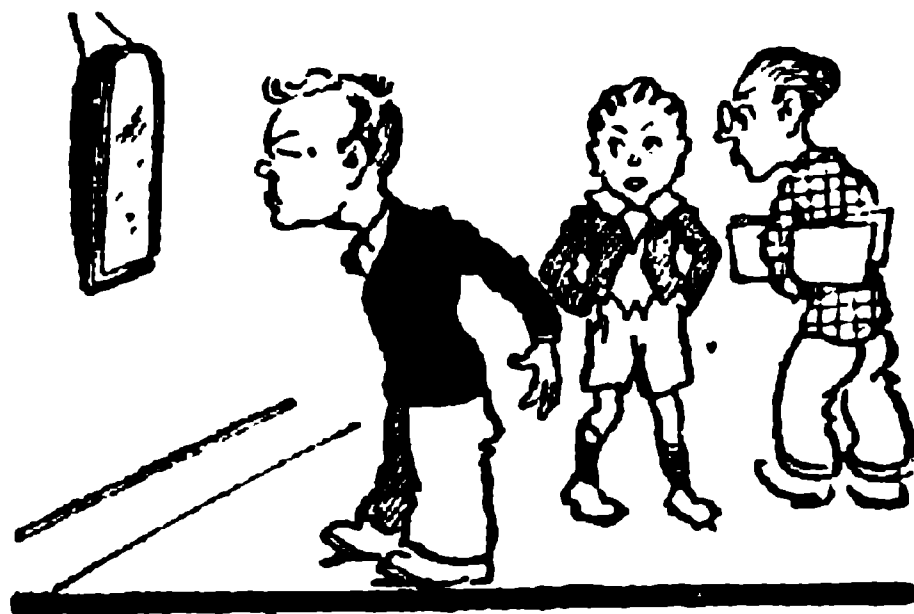
"He wants to see how he looks when he's asleep."

(G. Earney, 12, Wessex Road, Parkstone, Dorset, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

EXTENDED PAYMENTS.

Mrs. Higgins had just paid the last instalment on a perambulator.

"Thank you, madam," said the new shop assistant. "And how is baby getting on now?"



"Oh, he's all right," replied Mrs. Higgins. "He's getting married next week."

(N. Stevens, 20, Sheep Street, Devizes, Wilts, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

THE HAT TRICK.

Albert: "Is that a new hat you've got on, Jim?"

Jim: "No; I've had it cleaned twice, exchanged it once in a teashop, and it's still as good as new."

(D. Beale, 8, Canterbury Road, Brixton, S.W.9, has been awarded a penknife.)

WORTH WHILE.

Sandy (to boot-shop assistant): "I want a pair of tight-fitting shoes."

Shop Assistant: "Rather unusual, sir."

Sandy: "Ah, yes; but I found a corn plaster and I don't want to waste it."

(E. Warner, 95, Monk Road, Ward End, Birmingham, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

THE EXPLANATION.

Railway Passenger: "Why are we so late?"

Guard: "Well, sir, the train in front is behind, and we was behind before besides."

(J. Hill, 31, The Oval, Guildford Park, Guildford, has been awarded a penknife.)

Diamond is in this school—and we want him."

"I will confess," said Mr. Wilkes, "that I have heard of your friend, Diamond, but I can assure you that he is not in this school."

"You fool! I nearly plugged him a minute ago!" retorted Kapone. "He's skulking up in the turret, and I'm telling you right now, my friend, that you've got to surrender him."

"This is a disturbing piece of news," said Mr. Wilkes, in agitation. "You tell me that Diamond is up in the turret? Dear me! I am perturbed. What do you intend doing with him if I persuade him to come out?"

"We want Jake Diamond—and it don't mean a thing to you what we do with him after we've got him!" replied Al Kapone. "You'd best get to that door and tell Diamond that the coast is clear. I guess he'll believe you."

"That's sure a dandy idea, chief," said Pietro. "And as the sap comes out, we'll fill him full of lead."

Mr. Wilkes shook his head.

"I am afraid I cannot help you in this," he said. "In the first place, it would involve lying on my part—and in the second place, I gather that you intend to kill this man. No, I can't sanction that."

And as Mr. Wilkes regretfully shook his head and turned away, his fist unexpectedly shot out, and made contact with the side of Al Kapone's jaw with such force that it was like the kick of a mule.

Mr. Wilkes, in fact, had been awaiting his opportunity. He was a man of surprises, and he certainly surprised the gunmen. His other fist followed up the excellent work, and Ed went over with a terrific crash. Pietro, taking aim, was just too late, for Mr. Wilkes' foot, as deadly as his fists, caught Pietro neatly on the shin.

What would have followed is difficult to say; Mr. Wilkes might easily have been riddled with bullets. But perhaps he had been relying upon the boys. At all events, the boys came very much into the picture.

They rushed forward on the instant, and after a wild scramble the three gunmen were bodily seized, hauled to their feet, and rushed to a window which Browne had obligingly opened. One after another, the invaders were pitched out. In the excitement of the moment, the fellows had overlooked the fact that this was an upper window. The three men went hurtling through the air and they thudded to the ground with shouts of fury and pain.

But they were tough. The upper windows of the Ancient House were not particularly high, and the ground immediately underneath was fairly soft. Except for bruises and sprains, the gunmen were uninjured.

But their pride was hurt very deeply.

This foolish-looking master, whom they had held in such contempt, had thrown them out! It was a shock. Kapone was in such an ugly mood as he staggered to his feet

that he loosed off his gun at random, and three or four bullets "pinged" against the Ancient House wall, and one smashed a window.

"Keep back, boys!" warned Mr. Wilkes urgently.

"They're not hurt, sir!" yelled K. K., looking out.

"They're American gunmen—and a fall like that means nothing to them," replied Mr. Wilkes. "Back from that window! The school's being held up—and we've got to be calm!"

"My only sainted aunt! The way you slobbered those brutes was worth quids to see, sir!" exclaimed Travers. "Three cheers for Mr. Wilkes!"

"Hurrah!"

Everybody was wildly excited, and naturally the whole school was soon awake. Lights were appearing in window after window; voices were making themselves heard in dormitory after dormitory.

There was something almost picturesque in the scene. It was as though a settled plan was being followed. First the Ancient House became lighted up, and then, across the Square, the West House followed suit. In quick succession, all the upper windows became illuminated; heads appeared at the windows; sleepy, excited voices demanded to know what it was all about. Then the Modern House and the East House followed suit. The whole school was awake within the space of two or three minutes.

Kapone realised that he must do something drastic if he was to retain command of the situation. He rapped out his orders. Machine-guns got to work. They were not silenced, like the pistols, and the effect was devastating. The gang-leader gave instructions for the preliminary burst of fire to be harmless. The guns were turned skywards, and bullets flew harmlessly over the school.

"Gunmen! We're being held up!"

"Oh, my only hat!"

"Help!"

"Why doesn't somebody call the police?"

Shouts were ringing out from every quarter, and the excitement became positively hectic. In the middle of it all Nelson Lee came over from his own house—which, of course, was isolated from the other school buildings. There was evidently something very wrong, and Lee wanted to know what was in the wind.

He soon found out. Searneck Al Kapone faced him grimly, and his automatic looked menacing.

"Hands up, you!" he snapped. "I know who you are—Lee, the detective! I guess I'm not giving you any chance. Make one grab for your hip, and you'll be dead! Get his gun, Ed!"

Ed and Pietro leapt at Lee together, but they might have saved themselves the trouble. The famous headmaster-detective was not armed. When he had started on this trip of inquiry, he had had no inkling of the real truth—and Nelson Lee was not in

the habit of walking about with guns on him.

"I warned you once before, Kapone," said Lee quietly. "This piece of effrontery will cost you dearly. What do you hope to gain by this melodramatic nonsense?"

"Maybe my methods are fresh over on this side," replied Kapone. "But in the States folks don't ask questions—they just do as they're told. It's a heap safer. You'd best tell your boys that we mean business. If anybody tries to leave the school they'll be shot down."

"And your object?"

"Every telephone wire is cut, and the place is surrounded," continued Kapone. "You'd best get that right into your head to start with. All we want is Jake Diamond; hand him over and we'll quit."

"What reason have you for supposing that Diamond is here?"

"You make me tired!" snarled Kapone. "That New York guy is hiding up in that tower." He pointed. "I guess he's been there for days, skulking away with that dame of his. Well, this is the finish. It's a show-down between me and Jake."

"I'm not interested in your quarrels with Jake Diamond, and what you do to one another off these premises is entirely your own concern," replied Lee. "But if you think you can bring your quarrel to St. Frank's you are mistaken."

"You're plumb crazy!" shouted Kapone. "All I want you to do is to hand that guy over to me. Make him come down from that tower, and surrender him. Do that and we'll quit."

"Your demands are not so unreasonable as I had supposed," said Lee smoothly. "But there is just one little point. What do you intend doing with Jake Diamond if we persuade him to leave?"

"He'll be shot like a rat!"

"In that case, Diamond will not be surrendered."

"Say, listen! You'd better change your mind—"

"I have listened enough," said Lee, a dangerous gleam in his eye. "Jake Diamond is a gunman and a crook, but I will countenance no lynching. That is your object, I take it?"

"You said it," retorted Kapone. "That yellow dog is going to be lynched right here. He's given me the run around too long. I'm taking no more chances with him."

"I would remind you, Kapone, that you are in England, not in America. Lynch law does not operate in this country, and if I were to countenance your proposal I should be a party to Diamond's murder," said Lee sternly. "I think you had better abandon this foolish project and go. If you don't —"

"Aw, I'm tired!" shouted Kapone. "Lynch law may not operate in this country, but gang law does. Gang law operates any place!"

He turned away, and shouted orders to his men. The next moment machine-guns

were trained on the Ancient House tower, and a devastating fire commenced. Machine-guns rattled from all quarters, and the tower was struck by a hail of bullets, many of which glanced off and hissed dangerously near many of the crowded windows.

"Boys, keep back—keep well inside!" shouted Lee. "I call upon all masters and prefects to see that every window is cleared."

The masters and prefects were already doing that, and much as the excited fellows hated it, they were compelled to get back and seek safety in the inner passages.

Came a lull in the firing, and then a series of sharp thuds sounded from the Ancient House tower, and tiny flashpoints of fire showed. A bullet whizzed perilously close to Kapone's head; another struck one of the machine-gunners, and laid him low with a broken arm. Jack Diamond was answering back. Knowing that he was trapped, and that there was no way of escape, he was taking pot-shots at his enemies. Kapone, raging like a madman, retreated to cover, and gave orders for a fresh onslaught.

St Frank's was more or less stupefied. It seemed that nothing could be done to put an end to this outrageous situation. The boys themselves could not hope to overpower the gunmen without incurring severe casualties; and it certainly was not worth the risk. Most of the fellows would have gone into the fray eagerly, hardly realising the perils in their excitement; but the orders had gone forth that no boys were to approach any window, let alone venture outside.

Naturally, St. Frank's seethed.

Masters and prefects dashed for telephones, only to discover that they were cut off. There was talk of getting somebody out—smuggling a messenger through the enemy's lines, so to speak—so that the police could be informed. But, after all, what good would that be?

There was only one policeman in Bellton, and in an affair of this sort he was just about as useful as a stuffed owl. By the time the messenger got to Bannington, and by the time a sufficiently strong police force had been collected, an hour would have elapsed. And by that time the gunmen would have had their way. The position seemed hopeless. St. Frank's was at the point of the gun—held up—powerless. And all because these daring racketeers were determined to seize the leader of a rival gang. They had no quarrel with St. Frank's itself, and, provided Jake Diamond was handed over, they would go their way.

But everybody in the school, from Nelson Lee down to the smallest fag, was determined that Al Kapone's demands should not be met. Jake Diamond was caught like a rat in a trap, and, crook though he was, he had to be protected.

"Goodness only knows how it's all going to finish," Nipper was saying. "Why can't we do something?"

"That's what I want to know, dear old fellow," replied Travers. "But old Wilkey's firm. We mustn't take any action, for fear that we shall hurt our little selves. It's the same in every other House. We're bottled up. We're besieged! Upon my Samson! What a life!"

"The masters are right," came a frightened whimper from Claude Gore-Pearce. "Half of us would be mown down by those rotten machine-guns if we tried to do anything. Oh, my hat! There they go again! Hark at 'em!"

A shattering, echoing rattle sounded. "Firing at the tower again, I expect," said Nipper, nodding.

"Where are the police?" asked Gore-Pearce indignantly. "Why should these beastly gangsters have it all their own way? I'll get my pater to write to the papers about this! Yes, and I'll ask him to take me away from St. Frank's, too—it's too jolly dangerous."

"Let's hope your pater agrees, and then we shall know that there is a silver lining to every cloud," said Travers feelingly. "These gunmen won't have come to St. Frank's for nothing."

"This is no time to be funny!" snarled Gore-Pearce.

"Funny!" echoed Travers. "Dear old fellow, I was never more serious—or hopeful. You won't forget to write that letter, will you? By the way, has anybody seen

Handy? I haven't noticed his silvery voice mingling with those of the multitude."

"It's a funny thing about Handy," said Nipper, frowning. "Nobody has seen him, or Church and McClure, either. And for those three chaps to be absent at a time like this is—well, fishy."

But even Nipper did not guess the true reason for Handforth & Co.'s non-appearance.

CHAPTER 7.

The Escape!

IN the ordinary course of events, Edward Oswald Handforth would have been one of the first to show himself; and Church and McClure would naturally have been with him. But something had happened to alter this.

At the commencement of the rumpus the chums of Study D had naturally been startled. They had gone to bed in a somewhat subdued mood after opening the cellar doors which would assist the easy getaway of Jake Diamond and his girl-wife. Then had come the rising commotion.

"Something's happening!" exclaimed Handforth, sitting up in bed.

"Why be surprised?" asked Church bitterly. "What else do you expect when you make a hobby of hiding gunmen in the school? I've been dreading something like



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this ever since we hid those people in the tower."

"And to-night they were going—at this very hour!" put in Mac. "Just our luck if something crops up at the last minute and prevents them getting away!"

"Well, thank goodness, we can't be involved," said Handforth breathlessly. "I mean, there's nothing to connect us with Jake Diamond. We've kept the secret well, and not even the Remove chaps guess what we've been doing."

"No thanks to you, Handy," growled Church. "If Mac and I hadn't been at your back morning, noon, and night, you'd have let the cat out of the bag days ago. I say! Hark at that shouting! We'd better go and see what's happening."

Handforth hesitated.

"Wait a minute!" he said. "We don't want to attract suspicion. We're supposed to be fast asleep. It might be better to lie doggo for a bit."

Church was already getting into his dressing-gown.

"You're mad!" he said tartly. "Either one extreme or the other—that's you, Handy! You're either too reckless or too cautious. You haven't the faintest idea of a happy medium. Can't you see that if we stick in here we shall attract suspicion? You're always the first on the scene when there's some excitement—and it'll look unnatural if you're not first on the scene this time. Buck up!"

The door burst open, and Harry Gresham put his head in.

"Come on, you chaps!" he yelled. "The school's full of gunmen!"

"What!" gasped Handforth, leaping out of bed.

"Hurry up, or you'll miss the fun!" shouted Gresham, and he was gone.

"He must be mad!" breathed Handforth desperately. "Full of gunmen! What rot! We know for a fact there's only one——"

"We know nothing!" interrupted McClure. "It looks very much as if Jake Diamond's enemies have got into the school. For goodness sake let's go and find out what is happening!"

Handforth was the last to grab his dressing-gown, but he was the first at the door. As he opened it a small, dark figure almost fell into his arms, and a waft of perfume filled his nostrils.

"Who—who's this?" he asked falteringly.

"Let me in, big boy—it's urgent!" came a whisper.

"Trixie!" gasped Handforth.

He helped her into the room, and closed the door. The electric light was not switched on, and the three juniors could not see that Trixie was as pale as a sheet. Her left arm was limp, and she was holding it agonisingly.

"They're here—Al's gang!" she said, almost hysterically. "They'll get him! They're here to croak him!"

"You must be wrong!" said Handforth quickly. "They couldn't——"

"Listen!" urged Trixie. "They met us as we were making our getaway. Al fired, and I got the bullet."

"You!"

"Oh, it's nothing, I guess—plugged in the arm, that's all," said the girl, biting her lip. "I've wrapped my scarf around it, and it's O.K. Boys, I want you to help. Jake's doubled back into the tower, and Kapone's gang are helpless. Guess they won't get him for an hour, at least. That tower's like a fortress, and even Al's machine-guns won't bust it in."

"Machine-guns!" said Church faintly.

"Sure! They've brought the whole works!" said Trixie. "I guess I'm kind of weak, or I wouldn't be asking another favour of you—and I don't know whether I could make the coast."

"Whether you could do what?" asked Handforth, bewildered.

"I'll give you the low-down," said Trixie. "Some of Jake's boys are waiting with a motor-boat on the beach. We figured to make a silent getaway, and board a steamer in mid-Channel. But I guess that's out, unless we can get in some snappy action. Get me to that boat, and Jake's boys might be able to help some."

"You'll be able to get away, anyhow," said Handforth, his first thought for her safety. "Come on, then!"

Trixie's quick intake of breath was enough reward. She was weak and trembling, and Handforth & Co. could easily understand her tortured state of mind. Alone, and in the dark, she might not have got through that secret passage and the underground tunnel to the quarry. She had lost Jake—and it was Jake who had the electric torch and the matches. In her extremity, she had turned once again to Handy & Co.

"Wait a minute!" said Church hesitatingly. "We can't go out like this—in dressing-gowns and with bare feet. We shall have to dress."

"It's—it's awkward!" said Handforth.

"Awkward nothing!" murmured Trixie. "Get to it! I'll wait outside the door—but make it snappy!"

Handforth & Co. held the Remove record for quick dressing—it was nothing unusual for them to be downstairs three minutes after jumping out of bed. But that record went to the winds now.

Scarcely more than two minutes after Trixie had gone out of the dormitory Handforth & Co. emerged. They were collarless, it is true, but collars were not needed for such an expedition as this.

THE remarkable thing was that they succeeded in getting to the cellar without meeting people and exciting inquiry, and so they got out of the school by the only method that was possible—a method which Al Kapone had not counted upon, and of which he knew nothing. Diamond himself had not used it because he feared that rival gunmen were guarding the door that led to his hide-out.

When they were well on their way, Handforth & Co. found that Trixie was more badly hurt than she had admitted. The scarf she had wrapped round her arm was soaked with blood, and before the journey was half over she was so weak that Handforth had to help her along.

"Don't you think we'd better stop for a bit, so that you can rest?" suggested Handforth anxiously, when they had emerged into the open air at the old quarry.

"Not on your life, big boy," said Trixie. "I'll make it all right."

"Well, you've got plenty of pluck!"

"Gee! It's tough!" said the girl bitterly. "This is sure a bad break for Jake. Just when we were ready to make our get-away, too!"

"I shouldn't worry about him, if I were you," said Church. "Don't forget that Mr. Lee is at St. Frank's, and he won't let those beastly gunmen do anything to your husband."

"I wish I could believe you, boy friend," said Trixie. "But even your Mr. Lee is in a tough spot right now, I guess. When Al Kapone starts a thing, he finishes it. Say, how far to this beach?"

"Not far now," said Handforth. "Straight across the moor, here, then over the downs, and we drop straight down to the beach. We ought to do it within seven or eight minutes."

He gloated over the fact that Trixie, at least, had escaped. Al Kapone and his Chicago gunmen could do no harm to the girl now. And another idea had come to Handforth, too. Now that he and his chums were out, they could rush to Caistowe as soon as they had seen Trixie safely delivered to her friends. They could give the alarm and get help.

That last half mile seemed the longest stretch of all. Trixie was nearly spent by the time the cliffs came within sight out of the gloom. They had come to the right spot—just near Shingle Head at the end of Caistowe Bay. It was a desolate part of the coast, where there were rocks and dangerous headlands. But there was one little stretch of beach, and at this point a dark blob showed against the creamy foam of the gently breaking surf.

"They're here!" said Handforth, pointing.

"Russ sure knows his stuff," murmured Trixie.



They scrambled down the cliff path, and as they went across the beach one or two men came forward to meet them. There were some murmured ejaculations of surprise.

"It's all right, boys—these kids are friends of mine," panted Trixie, as she ran up. "Where's Russ?"

"Here I am, sister," came the voice of the man who had visited St. Frank's.

"Gee, Russ, get a load on this!" said Trixie, clutching him. "Kapone and his gang are at St. Frank's with machine-guns, and they've got Jake trapped. I guess they mean to give him the works!"



Al Kapone's gangsters opened fire on the Ancient House Tower, and Jake Diamond replied. Soon a pitched battle was taking place at St. Frank's.

"For the love of Mike!"

"But Jake's safe yet. He's in an old tower—you know the one, Russ—and those eggs can't get in. But see here, if you boys hurry over there in quick time, there's a chance that you'll be able to get Jake out."

"Come around, boys!" exclaimed Russ urgently. "There's a pile of trouble!"

Handforth & Co. stood aside, rather non-plussed, as Trixie quickly gave all the details to Jake Diamond's gang. There was quite a large number of them, and an ominous clicking of automatic pistols sounded. To Handforth's horror, a couple

of machine-guns were fetched from the boat. These men had come prepared!

"You stay here with the dame, Russ," said one of the men. "I guess we'll go along to this school and give Al a surprise!"

"You can do it easily, boys!" said Trixie excitedly. "I've told you where that quarry is, and how to get into the tunnel. At the end of the tunnel you'll find an old vault, and there's a secret passage from there right into the school cellars. Gee! You'll get right in, and if Al's dirty tramps try to stop you, you'll know what to do. But you've got to get Jake out."

"Leave it to us, sister—we'll make it!" said one of the gunmen. "Let's go, boys! I guess we've been waiting for this show-down with Al Kapone and his gang!"

CHAPTER 8.

The Rescue Party!

HANDFORTH sprang forward, hot and angry.

"But you can't do that!" he shouted frantically. "You can't go to St. Frank's and fight those other men!"

"Say, kid, best keep out of this," said Russ, pulling at his arm.

"Not likely!" retorted Handforth. "When we brought Trixie here we didn't know that she would start these games. Why, if you all go to St. Frank's and take those machine-guns and revolvers with you, there'll be a pitched battle!"

"It wouldn't surprise me any," said one of the gunmen. "I guess some of Al's men will get bumped off!"

"Look here, Trixie, this isn't fair!" exclaimed Handforth, turning to her. "We took you and Jake Diamond to St. Frank's and we sheltered you. There'll be a horrible scandal if there's a big gun fight at the school. We shall probably be involved, and it'll mean expulsion!"

"Gee, my friend, I'm real sorry," said Trixie. "But I didn't know these boys had machine-guns with them."

"You know it now," said Handforth. "Why can't you tell them to stay here?"

"And allow Jake to be lynched by those Chicago gunmen?"

"He won't be lynched!" retorted Handforth. "He's far more likely to be lynched if these men go there and start trouble. Why, I'm going to give the warning now—get the police there!"

"Listen, kid!" snapped Russ. "You're staying right here—and this gun is going to help you to stay, I guess!"

"What—what do you mean?"

"You're getting no police on this job to-night!" replied the man. "Why, you sap, if the police got around they'd get bumped off like flies. Kapone's gang would escape, and then Jake Diamond would find himself arrested. Our boys are figuring on settling this matter in their own way."

"Gee, I'm sorry!" said Trixie, looking at Handforth with concern.

"You're just like the rest of them," replied Handforth bitterly. "I thought you were different, too! You're Jake Diamond's wife, and he's a gunman, and, by George, you're a gun-woman! I'm sorry I ever got mixed up in this rotten business!"

The girl was genuinely concerned, but this affair was beyond her control now. Jake Diamond's gang were ripe for action. Then and there they hurried off into the night—a grim band of determined men—armed to the teeth, and fired by a deadly hatred of their gangster rivals.

Handforth & Co. could do nothing to avert the clash. The man Russ was holding them up with an automatic pistol, and although Handforth was reckless enough to chance a scrap, Church and McClure held him back. They knew well enough that Russ was in earnest, and they did not want to see their leader laid low. They did not fear that he would be shot dead; but it was almost a certainty that Russ would wing him.

And through the night went Jake Diamond's gang.

It was simple enough for them to follow their instructions. They went to the old quarry, then into one of the disused workings, their electric torches showing the way. Then onwards through the dank, evil tunnel, until they arrived at the monastery vault.

There was no delay here, for Trixie had deliberately and purposely left the secret door open—the door which led into the underground passage which communicated with the Ancient House cellar. Trixie, apparently, had believed from the first that Jake Diamond's men would take advantage of the situation.

ABOVE ground there was a deadlock.

Scarneck Al Kapone had soon realised that it was a waste of good ammunition to blaze away at the Ancient House tower. The machine-gun bullets did little more than chip fragments of granite from the stout walls. There wasn't one chance in a thousand of Jake Diamond getting hit. In that eyrie he was safe. It was a miniature fortress. So, for the time being, there was a lull. Kapone was consulting with his men, planning what steps should be taken next.

"I guess we'll have to crash right in, boys," said Kapone harshly. "We've got

our guns, and if any of these schoolmaster mutts try to interfere, we'll give them what's coming to them."

"They won't interfere, chief," said Pietro contemptuously. "I guess they haven't got a gun amongst the whole bunch of them. They're surrounded, and they can't get in touch with anybody outside."

"But the sooner we get Jake, the better," said Kapone. "Gosh, this is fierce, boys! We ought to have croaked that cheap skate long ago."

"Where's that guy Lee?" asked one of the others.

"Went indoors," replied Al. "There's no other place for him to go. Our cordon is drawn right round the school. A grasshopper couldn't get through it."

"We've sure got them bottled up, chief," said Ed.

"They won't hand Diamond over to us, so we must go in and take him," continued the gang leader. "And, by golly, we'll make these saps pay, too! Before we leave this dog-gone place we'll set it on fire, and there'll be nothing but a heap of ruins by the morning."

"A funeral pyre for Jake," said Pietro.

"You said it!" nodded Kapone. "Well, let's go. We'll get in, force that door down, and go up into the tower. We'll machine-gun the rat out of his hole!"

Indoors the boys were making excited preparations for action. A crowd of them had got together—Kirby Keeble Parkington, Travers, Fullwood, De Valerie, and a big mixed crowd of Old-Timers and Red-Hots.

"Why not?" Travers was saying. "The hose pipes are all handy, and there's a big supply of water. One good dose would not only cool these gunmen off, but it would put their machine-guns out of action."

"It's a wheeze," said K. K. "Deeks and Goffin and I will take one hose; three of you chaps can take another, and so on. And at a given signal we'll all let fly at the same moment."

"Hear, hear!"

"Good egg!"

"We're not going to be frightened of these American gangsters!"

"Not likely!"

The fellows were hurrying off to their various posts when an interruption came.

"Just a minute, boys!" said a quiet voice.

Nelson Lee was amongst them, and they waited breathlessly.

"Much as I admire your spirit, I deplore your recklessness," said the headmaster. "What you propose doing is sheer folly. Not one boy must expose himself at any window."

"If we get the fire hoses going, sir——"

"I will not hear of it," interrupted Lee gravely. "You seem to forget that the school is besieged—that these men are armed with machine-guns. Before you could get one of the hoses into operation, machine-guns would spring into action. It is not worth the risk."

"But if we were quick, sir, we might do it!" urged Parkington. helpless as everybody else; and the school, although it made excuses for him, was dis-

"You might—exactly," said Lee. "On the appointed. They had looked for something other hand, you might not. And special from Nelson Lee.

what then? Several of you would be killed and wounded. These men have come here determined to get Jake Diamond, who has sought refuge in the Ancient House tower. Directly they suspected that the hose pipes were about to be directed at them, they would not hesitate to fire. The odds are altogether too unequal. It is like a man with a penny cane offering battle to a skilled swordsman armed with a rapier. No, boys, I cannot allow this."

"But what's being done, sir?" demanded De Valerie.

"Nothing, at the moment."

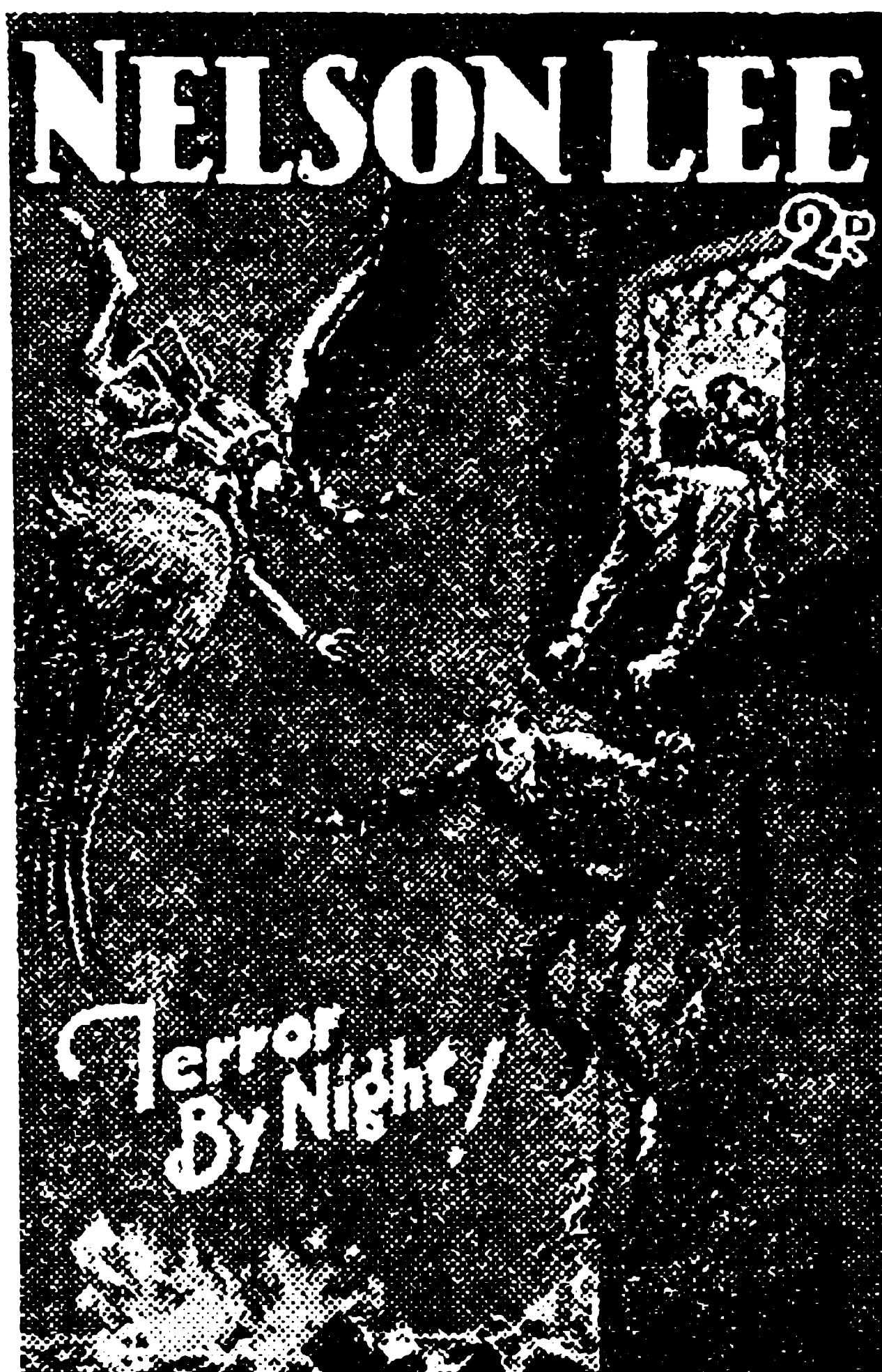
"Aren't you going to do something, sir?" asked K. K. "Sink me, but you're not going to let these gunmen have everything their own way, are you?"

"It is sometimes more courageous to remain idle than to go into action," replied Lee quietly. "I think you will believe me, young 'uns, when I tell you that I am not feeling at all happy. But my responsibility is great, and I have no intention of allowing any boys to expose themselves to a danger that is very real and very deadly. You must abandon this rash project."

After Nelson Lee had gone there was a good deal of grumbling. Seniors and juniors alike were expecting their renowned headmaster to do something, and something big, too. Yet he seemed to be as

his gun into a nervous fag's back, and this youngster was ready enough to lead the way. The men crowded round the heavy oak door, and one of them hammered on it.

Next Week's Stupendous Story Programme!



"THE SEVEN FIENDS!"

By John Brearley.

They call themselves the Destroyers, these seven fiends who are blackmailing all the big industrial companies in Britain. Refusal to meet their exorbitant demands spells—ruin! Disaster confronts the country. Then into the affray comes Nelson Lee and the Night Hawk—matching their wits, their energies against the ruthless cunning of the Seven Fiends in a series of thrilling encounters. Don't miss the first yarn of this superb new series.

"THE HERO OF SHINGLE HEAD!"

By Edwy Searles Brooks.

A powerful series of school stories, featuring the Chums of St. Frank's; with Nipper playing a prominent part, and with Mr. Pyecraft, the unpopular master of the Fourth, in a new role—that of headmaster! There are plenty of surprises—and plenty of trouble—in store for St. Frank's!

"The Valley of Hot Springs!"

Another exciting instalment of our new adventure serial.

A fresh excitement came at once. K. K., Deeks, Goffin, and a number of other Red-Hots were talking in a group at the head of the stairs, excitedly discussing the situation, when they heard strange voices from the hall.

"Great Scott! They're inside now!" ejaculated Deeks, startled.

And it seemed true. Men were mounting the stairs, armed with automatic pistols. There were so many of them that the boys backed away, staring wonderingly, and perhaps a trifle fearfully.

"Say, you kids," said one of the men. "Where's this oak door which leads up into the tower? Come across, and make it snappy!"

"You can go and eat coke!" replied Parkington boldly. "We're not going to help you to kill your man."

"Kill him nothing!" said the other. "We're Jake Diamond's friends."

"Says you!" scoffed K. K.

"Says me!" retorted the man harshly. "Say, what are you trying to do, give me the run around? Spill it, kid, and don't give me any more of your balony."

K. K.'s help was unnecessary, however, for one of the other men had stuck

"Nix, Al," came Diamond's shout from the other side. "You can't trick me!"

"Forget it, chief!" shouted one of the men. "We're here to get you out of this jamb. It's O.K., Jake—you know us!"

The bolts were shot, the door opened, and Jake Diamond stared gladly at his own New York gangsters.

"Well, say, this is sure the real dope!" he ejaculated, as he joined them. "Boys, you've blown in at just the right moment!"

CHAPTER 9.

The Battle!

ZURRRRRRH — crack-crack-crack — zurrh!

Suddenly, devastatingly, a rattling roar of machine-gun fire broke out from three different windows of the Ancient House. Yells of alarm and consternation came from the darkness of the West Square and the Triangle. Al Kapone, talking to his men, dropped like a log—not because he had been hit, but long experience had taught him that dropping like a log when machine-gun fire started was both expedient and healthy.

"Say, what's this?" he snarled. "We didn't know that these boys were armed with machine-guns!"

"Guess we'd best get out of range," said one of the others.

The tumult ceased, and a voice, loud and triumphant, sounded from one of the dark windows of the school.

"Now, you Chicago rats, come and take me!" shouted the voice. "I guess this battle is fifty-fifty now. I've got my gang here, and we'll make it a regular show-down."

"Jake's gang!" gasped Pietro. "Say, chief, we didn't figure on this."

Thud-thud!

Kapone's automatic belched fire and lead. But his aim was wild; he could not judge with any accuracy from which window that voice had come. He was answered quickly enough, for a machine-gun swung itself in Al's direction and opened fire. Bullets spattered on the stone paving. Kapone, and the men with him, only dodged round an angle of the building in the nick of time.

"The scum!" snarled Kapone.

He was staggered, bewildered. His cordon was completely round the school, and he could not understand how Jake Diamond's gang had gained admittance. He could only conclude that his rivals had been within the school all the time. Somehow he had been tricked. Three of his men had been hit already—one killed. The whole situation was altered. It was no longer possible for the attackers openly to show themselves. Those machine-guns at the windows were deadly.

Inside the school the excitement was more intense than ever. The boys had never felt so helpless. All this fighting was going on, and yet they could not take part in it. They

were compelled to remain well indoors, for bullets were flying about everywhere. Nelson Lee's orders were strict, and none of the boys dared to disobey. Masters and prefects were constantly hurrying up and down, seeing that everybody was well clear of the danger zone.

The situation was not only extraordinary, but alarming. It had been bad enough for one gang of American gunmen to hold up the school, but it was worse than ever for a second gang to give battle to their enemies. St. Frank's was being used as a battleground where these rival American gangs could settle their deadly, long-standing feud. Windows by the dozen had already been shattered, and it was rather a marvel that none of the legitimate inmates of St. Frank's had been hit.

A burst of machine-gun fire came from West Arch, and more windows crashed and splintered. One of Jake Diamond's gang screamed and toppled to the ground. An answering rattle of machine-gun fire came from an upper window, and black shadows in the West Arch scuttled out of the way.

"We can't do it, boys," said Kapone harshly. "There's no horse-sense in keeping up this racket. The odds are dead against us. Guess we'd best get back a space and decide on the next move."

Cautiously he peered round the wall of West Arch; he saw a shadowy figure at one of the upper windows. Taking careful aim, Kapone pulled the trigger of his automatic, and dodged back to safety. He heard a grunting, gasping cry, and shouts of alarm from others. He grinned.

"Maybe we'd best stick around, after all," he said evilly. "Guess I've croaked one of those eggs."

A shattering roar followed, and bullets spattered upon the paving-stones, thudded against the walls, and some of them glanced off dangerously. Kapone shook as one bullet tore a hole in his trousers-leg.

"Not so good!" he grunted. "Let's go, boys!"

MYSTERIOUS things were happening, however.

Three of Kapone's gang—men who had been operating a machine-gun—were retreating cautiously into the shrubbery. Their idea was to climb one of the trees and to send a devastating hail of bullets direct into one of the open windows. But something else happened.

Quietly, almost casually, six or more figures materialised out of the blackness. Without a sound, they pounced upon the gunmen, tripped them over, and held them down. It was all done in such a matter-of-fact way that the gangsters were completely taken off their guard. In any case, they had not been expecting any attack from the rear. Cold handcuffs were snapped over their wrists, muffers were tied expertly round their faces, and in the gloom the surprised gangsters could see the dim outline of police helmets and the glimmer of metal buttons.



Policemen loomed up out of the darkness and seized Handforth. He had been mistaken for one of the gangsters.

"Three of them, anyway!" whispered a voice. "Take these men back to the road, Collins, and put them straight in the tender. We'll see about the others."

"Yes, sir!" breathed another voice.

The helpless gunmen, writhing with fury, were carried bodily away. They had walked clean into the hands of—police! And they had believed that there was not a policeman within two or three miles of St. Frank's!

The rest of the job was not carried out so silently, but this did not impair its success. Scarneck Al Kapone, creeping away with two of his men, was suddenly arrested by a shout from the distance.

"Gee! The cops!" came a cry. "One of you guys best tell Al——"

The voice was smothered, and silence reigned.

"Did you get that, Al?" asked Pietro nervously. "The cops are on the job!"

"Cops nothing!" snapped Kapone. "You're crazy! There are no cops——"

He broke off, his jaw sagging. Uniformed figures came as though from nowhere. Four of them—six—eight—a dozen! They fell upon Kapone and the other gangsters swiftly, purposefully. The gunmen had no

chance to draw their weapons. They were handcuffed, muffled, and dragged away, all within the space of thirty seconds. For the first time in his career, perhaps, Al Kapone was scared. He knew well enough that the English police were very different from those of Chicago. Arrest meant trouble with a capital T.

"Well, Kapone, you cannot say that I did not warn you," said a smooth voice, out of the darkness.

The gang leader cursed inwardly. Nelson Lee was standing side by side with Inspector Jameson, of the Bannington police. Other officers were very much in evidence, too. As far as Kapone could judge, St. Frank's was completely surrounded by platoons and companies of police.

Nelson Lee, apparently, had not been so helpless as the school believed!

CHAPTER 10.

The Round Up!

"FUNNY!" said Handforth, in perplexity.

"Perhaps the show's over?" murmured Church.

"Imposs. ! If it was over the school would be one mass of lights," said Edward Oswald.

"But look! It's as black as pitch everywhere—there's not a light! And everything is as quiet as a graveyard!"

The chums of Study D were approaching the school cautiously along the footpath which led from the golf-links. They had thought it better to come in the open, rather than take the subterranean tunnel from the old quarry. By being out of doors they would be better able to judge what was happening at the school.

But nothing seemed to be happening.

They had been allowed to go by Russ after twenty minutes' detention. Russ, evidently, judged that the boys could do no harm after the expiration of that time. Jake's gang would have got in the school, and their presence would be known, in any case. There was very little chance that the three schoolboys would do anything. There was only one policeman in this district, a few shopkeepers in Bellton, and farm-labourers in the cottages. A useless enough force against gangsters with machine-guns.

"We'd better get a bit nearer," whispered Handforth, as he broke through the hedge in the lane. "Then we can see—Hullo! What the—Hi! Look out! There's—"

He found himself seized by strong men, and Church and McClure, following him through the gap, were held in the same way. A quick footstep sounded softly on the hard road.

"It's all right, men—you can release these boys," said a familiar voice. "I think they are quite harmless."

"Mr. Leo!" gasped Handforth.

He and his chums had been seized by police, but they were now released. Nelson Lee stood before them, grim and stern.

"What does this mean, young man?" asked the headmaster.

"You're not safe out here, sir!" exclaimed Handforth, clutching at his arm. "Those gunmen are about—"

"Every member of Kapone's gang is under arrest," interrupted Lee. "We have just rounded up the last."

"Under arrest!" gurgled Handforth. "Then—then—"

"I have not been so helpless as Kapone fondly imagined," said Lee dryly. "It was very clever of him to cut all the telephone wires, but unfortunately, from his own point of view, he did not know that my own telephone wire is an underground one. Therefore it escaped."

"My only hat!" whispered Church excitedly.

"As soon as I knew what was happening I telephoned the Bannington police, and told Inspector Jameson that a large force would be necessary. Every policeman from Bannington, Caistowe, Helmford, and other places has been collected and brought here," continued the headmaster-detective. "Even now the school does not know that the tide is turning. I have played a waiting game, but I fancy it will prove to be a winning game."

"What—what of the others, sir?" asked Handforth breathlessly. "Diamond's lot?"

"What do you know of them?" demanded Lee. "Come on, Handforth—out with it! I know that these men gained entry into the school by means of the secret passage. I used that passage myself to get out to meet the police. You must have used that passage, too."

"Yes, sir," muttered Handforth guiltily.

"In what circumstances did you use it?"

"That—that girl, sir!" said Handforth, throwing his head back almost defiantly. "She was hurt—injured in the arm—and she begged me to get her out of the school. She said she had some friends in a boat, on the beach. So Churchy and Mac and I smuggled her out, and took her along. But when she got there she told Jake Diamond's friends of what was happening—and they were all rotten gangsters. They came along at once."

"I think I understand," said Lee quietly. "I fear you are guilty of an indiscretion, Handforth, but it is no more than an indiscretion. And I suspect that you were prompted by your generous impulses. So perhaps it would be as well for me to ask you as few questions as possible. This night's events will turn out badly for the gunmen—and I rather fancy that St. Frank's will have done the country a good service. Whom did you leave at that boat?"

"Only one man, sir—and that girl."

"Perhaps we can do without them," nodded Lee. "The girl, I suspect, was drawn into this vortex against her own will. If she managed to get away, so much the better. In any case, the police would have no case against her."

Handforth & Co. were too relieved to speak. They thought they understood. Nelson Lee suspected a lot—perhaps the whole truth—but he considered it wiser to ask no awkward questions. Nelson Lee was a man of shrewd judgment, and he knew Handforth very thoroughly; he knew that the burly Removite would do nothing disgraceful or dishonest. Inquiries might compel him to enforce a punishment. As headmaster of St. Frank's, he would be compelled to take action—action which, as a man, he would prefer not to take. The fewer questions asked, therefore, the better.

"You boys will remain here," he said. "Keep with these police-officers until you get the word that it is safe to enter the school."

"What are you going to do, sir?" asked Handforth eagerly.

"Get those other gangsters," replied Lee.

"But the danger, sir?"

"There will be no danger."

"Then we can come, too, sir?" asked Handforth promptly.

"Ahem! I rather think, young man, that you have done sufficient for one night," said Lee dryly. "Do as I say, and remain here with these police-officers."

Lee vanished in the darkness. He joined a number of men who, under Inspector Jameson, had collected in the monastery ruins.

"It's going well, Mr. Lee," said the inspector contentedly.

"I don't think we shall have much trouble with the others," said Lee. "All here? Good! Then let's make haste."

They descended to the vault, and got through into St. Frank's by means of the cellar. Then, creeping silently and cautiously, they made their way upstairs. They knew that Jake Diamond's gangsters were concentrating at the windows, watching for Al Kapone's next move. So successful had the police operations been that the New York gangsters knew nothing of what had been happening outside.

But they soon did know something. Four or five men, crouching near one of the windows, machine-gun ready, were suddenly aware of a soft voice in their rear.

"Hands up—every one of you!" said the voice. "The first man to make a move will be shot as he stands!"

An ominous click followed, and the gunmen recognised it. Long experience had taught them to act when they heard that sound. Up went their hands. The flash from a torch gleamed out; they caught sight of a gun-barrel; and then in a moment the policemen were upon them. A brief fight, and they were all prisoners.

"How many more of you?" asked Lee curtly. "We have taken nine, including yourselves——"

"Guess that's the whole bunch, brother," said one of the men dully. "You'll find two on the floor in the next passage—badly wounded. Then there's Jake."

"Where is your leader?"

"Say, didn't you know?" asked the man. "Jake's wounded, too—he's got it badly."

Going into the adjoining passage, Nelson Lee found the gang leader. He was seriously wounded; and lying alongside him were two more gangsters, also badly injured. The police carried them away.

Thus ended gang warfare at St. Frank's.

FIVE minutes later lights sprang up in every House at St. Frank's.

Voices sounded excitedly, boys were marshalled unwillingly into columns, and marched into Big Hall. The entire school was assembled. Meanwhile, policemen were making a systematic search, on the chance that other gangsters had hidden. A clean sweep was made, both gangs having been captured intact.

"We must count ourselves lucky that nobody belonging to this school has been hurt," said Nelson Lee, as he addressed the hushed gathering in Big Hall. "Fortunately, we kept our heads and we let these gunmen fight out their own battle."

"Thanks to you, sir!" sang out somebody.

"Hear, hear!"

"Three cheers for the Head!"

"This is no time for cheering," said Lee, holding up his hand. "We must be thankful that the school has suffered little damage, and that these dangerous gangs of American gunmen have been rounded up. I think we can truthfully say that St. Frank's has emerged from the ordeal very creditably."

"And that," as Vivian Travers remarked, "was that."

WITHIN three days St. Frank's was normal, and that desperate gang-war was only a memory—a thing of the past, almost too fantastic to seem really true.

On the fourth day Handforth received a letter, bearing the Paris postmark. It was from Trixie, and Handforth showed it to Church and McClure with some glee. For Trixie declared that she had finished with gunmen for good. She stated that she was going back on the stage, and she had hopes of appearing in London. Perhaps one day Handforth would come to a show, and see her on the stage.

"Rather!" said Edward Oswald. "We shall have to keep on the look out, you chaps. And when we see Trixie Foster's name in a revue, or a musical comedy, we'll get seats!"

"We've had enough of Trixie Foster!" said Church. "I'm jolly glad to hear that she's going straight now, but she's lucky. She might easily have been rounded up with those gangsters and sentenced to prison. You'd better forget her, Handy."

"In any case," said Mac, "she's bound to appear under a different name—so you'll never know what's actually become of her."

Edward Oswald Handforth feared this, too, but in his heart he realised that it was perhaps just as well. He, also, had had enough of American gunmen, and he was only too thankful that St. Frank's was now pursuing the even tenor of its ways.

THE END.

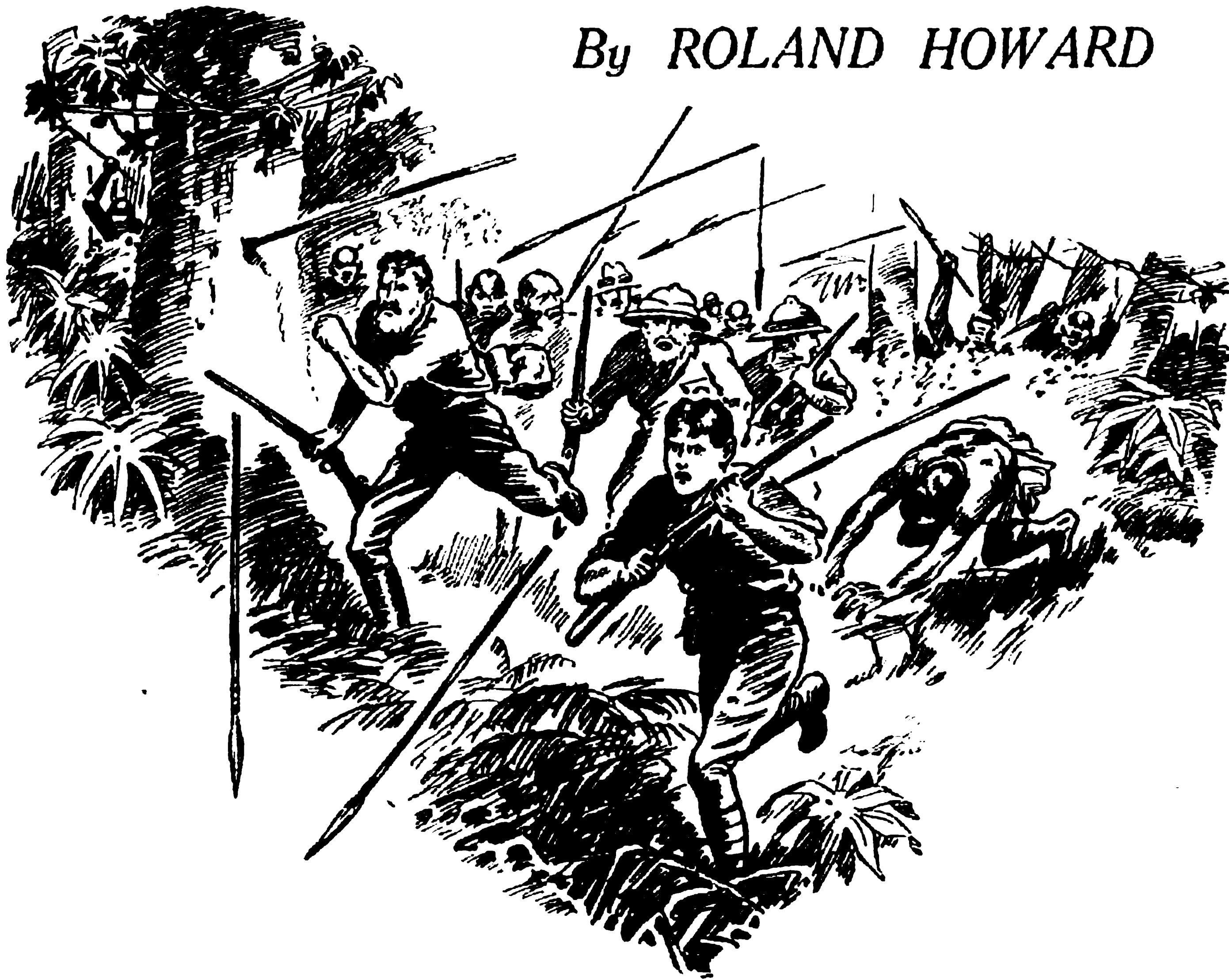
(The "Hero of Shingle Head!" is the title of next week's corking school yarn, the first of a grand new series of stories featuring the Chums of St. Frank's.)

The Editor
Wishes
All His Readers
A Happy and
Prosperous New Year.

A Gripping Story Of Perilous Adventure In The African Jungle!

A ROGUE to the RESCUE!

By ROLAND HOWARD



Tropical Fury!

WITH the coming of night, an inky pall had fallen over the African jungle. Jack Maitland, youngest member of the party which had just rescued his uncle from the hands of an infamous slave-raider, called his father's attention to the fact, and Mr. Maitland smiled rather grimly.

"Yes, Jack, I'm afraid we're in for a storm," he remarked. "Luckily, chance has brought us to a place where we can shelter."

"A regular home from home, in fact!" laughed his brother, Rupert Maitland.

Yet it was hardly that. The shelter consisted merely of a kind of a recess at the bottom of a slope, where some overhanging rocks provided a few yards of natural roofing. But it was certainly better than nothing, if Mr. Maitland's prophesied storm was to materialise.

Materialise it did, only a few minutes later. A low, menacing rattle in the dis-

tance gave the first warning. Then a dazzling ribbon of light streaked across the sky, and a mighty crash made the very earth tremble.

A moment of sinister silence, then the heavens opened and a thousand furies seemed to be loosened. The landscape was lit up by the weird, flickering glare of endless lightning, while the deafening roar of the thunder became terrifying in its violence.

The eight Britishers and a dozen or so blacks who made up the party crouched back in their shelter, awed by the fearful fury of the tropical storm. Not one of them but thanked the lucky

fate which had led them to a haven out of the raging inferno.

With the storm at its height, a big, black shape suddenly lumbered across the blinding scene on which they looked. Then another shadow, smaller and swifter, flashed into view and hurtled to meet the first.

Jack Maitland jumped to his feet, nerves

A Trumpeting Rogue Elephant Comes Up Trumps!

a-tingle, and shouted into his father's ear above the din of the elements:

"A fight, dad, isn't it?"

"A fight to the death!" yelled back Mr. Maitland. "Looks like the elephant's a rogue—on his own. Hear me?"

Jack nodded and turned his eyes again to the white-lit arena where the lion had flung himself into battle with its hereditary foe.

Jack had heard before of rogue elephants—those lone, outlawed creatures that wander through the forests, homeless and tribeless, enemies of all, whether mankind or beast. He felt interested and somehow sympathetic with the great, cumbersome creature which was fighting for its life before him now.

While the rest stared at the furious combat with fascinated eyes, Jack reached for his rifle. For a moment, during a lull in the storm, the din of the battle could be heard—the agonised trumpeting of the elephant and the snarling of its conqueror.

Jack levelled his rifle, took aim and fired. A shattering peal of thunder made the shot inaudible, but in the glare of the lightning he saw the lion throw back its great maned head. Another shot and it crumpled up, collapsing in a heap at the foot of its intended victim.

Jack felt a hand clapped on to his shoulder.

"What have you done?" came a shout from his uncle. "The brute's bound to go for us now!"

That was evidently what the rest of the party thought, for the Britishers were on their feet now, rifles ready, while the blacks crouched back against the hillside in obvious terror.

The rogue elephant lumbered round in a circle for a moment or two, then returned to the scene of the combat and trampled clumsily on his fallen foe, crushing the lifeless body into a shapeless mass. After that he stood his ground for some time, trunk curling from side to side, a menacing black shape in the white light of the storm. Then, with sudden decision, he turned and advanced towards the shelter under the hill.

There was a yell from the natives and a movement of rifles on the part of the Britishers. But fortunately, perhaps, the rifles were not brought into play. Instead of attacking the party, the beast rolled slowly past them and came to a halt at the other end of their shelter.

The Britishers lined up, ready for any emergency, but the emergency did not arise. The monster stood hunched up against the rocks, his trunk swinging and his great ears raised. He made no attempt to attack them. That he was aware of their presence was obvious, for occasionally, in the glare of the lightning, they saw his eyes turned in their direction. He remained, however, on the spot where he had chosen to shelter, heedless of his human companions. In the circumstances, the latter deemed it advisable not to take the offensive.

Thus they stood right through the night, while the storm raged about them. A more

uncomfortable night Jack had never experienced. Torrents of rain fell as the storm reached its climax, and for some hours streams of water from the hillside swirled through the recess, knee-high.

But at last the lightning grew less vivid and the roar of the thunder died away, and when the sun rose it was in a sky so crystal clear that its former fury seemed now like a half-remembered nightmare.

At dawn the elephant departed, pounding away without once looking back at his companions of the night.

"Thank goodness the brute has gone!" said Rupert Maitland, as the great beast disappeared in the distance. "It would have been all up with some of us if he'd taken it into his head to charge us!"

"Probably saw we were friends; elephants are knowing cards," remarked Mr. Maitland. "And now we'll have some breakfast and push ahead again."

And the rogue elephant was temporarily forgotten.

Little dreaming of the strange circumstances in which they were soon to renew their acquaintance with the lone giant of the forest, they hurried through breakfast and resumed the march, hoping to make a good day's progress in their journey back to civilisation.

But they were not destined to get far that day before a new and more terrible danger than they had hitherto encountered arose—a danger that soon threatened the extinction of the entire crowd.

A flying spear was the first warning they had of trouble. It sang through the air with the unexpectedness of a bolt from the blue, and buried itself in the trunk of a tree within a yard of Mr. Maitland.

A moment later the air was thick with them.

"An ambush!" yelled Dan Chivers, the veteran of the party. "Run for your lives and keep together! It's our only chance!"

Human Sacrifice!

DAN CHIVERS led, and the rest followed, rushing through the death-laden clearing where they had been trapped.

One of the blacks received a spear right into his skull and collapsed in his death-throes without a cry. For the rest, too, death lay in every step they took, but miraculously they escaped with only minor injuries.

They halted in the shadow of the trees. All around they could hear the rustling of unseen enemies closing round them again.

"Bad business, this," said Mr. Maitland, as he loaded his rifle.

"Puzzling, too," remarked Dan Chivers. "The natives weren't unfriendly when we were in these parts before."

"Something has happened to change them, then," Rupert Maitland said, with a forced laugh. "Looks as if we shall have a job

to make friends with them this time, anyway. Duck, Jack!"

Jack Maitland flung himself down to the ground, just in time to miss an ugly spear that his uncle had seen hurtling towards them. A moment later Rupert Maitland's rifle was at his shoulder.

Crack!

Even as the puff of smoke came from the gun there was a yell from the long grass into which Rupert Maitland had aimed, and the Britishers saw an ebony-skinned savage leap out of the grass and then fall, mortally wounded.

"That ends our chances of making peace!" said Dan Chivers grimly. "It's a fight now, men!"

"We're ready!"

"Get down among the undergrowth in circular formation," ordered Mr. Maitland. "We should be able to keep them at bay with our guns."

"If they give us a chance to use 'em!" said Chivers, making a sudden dive into the grass where he had suddenly spotted one of the enemy.

It was a big "if," as the adventurers soon discovered. With their rifles, the whites would undoubtedly have had a big advantage once they had got into proper circular formation. The trouble was that there was no time to get into that formation. The savage spotted by Dan Chivers was soon laid out with the old campaigner's clubbed rifle, but he proved to be only one of the veritable army which was within a few yards of the party even when Mr. Maitland gave his order. The result was that as the Britishers tried to spread out, the grass became alive with savages.

"Stand up to 'em!" shouted Rupert Maitland.

And he set the example by rushing at two of the natives who were advancing, knives in hand, swinging his rifle at them with paralysing force. Shooting was impossible now, with the enemy at such close range, and the Britishers therefore followed Rupert Maitland's example by using their rifles as clubs.

In a few seconds a desperate hand-to-hand struggle was in progress. The whites fought like demons, realising that their lives were at stake, and even their native "boys," though not of the fighting kind, used their clubs and knives and joined in the battle.

For a time they resisted the onslaughts of the savages. But for every one they laid out, two seemed to appear, and slowly but surely the pressure of superior numbers told. Bit by bit the whites were forced back and separated from each other till at last it was plain to the most optimistic among them that they were a defeated force.

Jack Maitland was the first to go down. He had fought like a Briton from the word "Go!" but at last his rifle was wrenched from him and two muscular savages bowled him over and flung themselves on him, knives at his throat.

Jack felt that his last moment had come.

But strangely enough, as it seemed then, the natives did not strike the fatal blow, neither at Jack nor at any other of the Britishers whom they one by one disarmed. It was amazing that they did not do so, but the mystery was to be cleared up later on, when the defeated whites were to learn that a fate more dreadful than death in battle had been prepared for them.

At last the fight was over. The adventurers, weak and exhausted from the unequal struggle and bearing many mementoes in the shape of cuts and bruises, were assembled in a line, each in charge of two or three of their captors. Then they were marched through the forest.

For an hour they struggled along. At the end of that time they reached a stream and were conducted along its bank till they came in sight of a big native village.

A medley of cries greeted them from the crowds of women and children who came out to meet the returning warriors.

"They don't like us!" remarked Dan Chivers, with a grim attempt at humour. "Pity, isn't it?"

"Who are the painted fellows coming out of that hut?" asked Jack, his eyes on a group of weirdly-attired natives who had just appeared.

"Priests, by the look of them!" replied Rupert Maitland gloomily. "Looks as if we've just come along in time for a religious festival."

"Is it that, or is it anything to do with last night's storm?" asked Jack's father. "By the look of the village, the storm created havoc here. I wonder if——"

"If they came out to find something with which to propitiate their local gods?" finished Jim Barney, another of the party. "In that case, friends, we're in for it!"

"Time will show," growled Rupert Maitland.

Time did show. It showed, unhappily, that Jim Barney's prognostication was only too correct. With growing uneasiness, the prisoners watched strong stakes being driven into the ground under the supervision of the painted priests. With feelings akin to despair they submitted to being trussed to the stakes.

Evidently their fate was not to be shared by their black followers, who were tied up in a group and left on the ground. For the whites, however, something special was evidently reserved. They wondered what it was.

Rupert Maitland was the one to find out. He had sufficient knowledge of native dialects to understand a good deal of what was being said, and after listening to a pow-wow of the priests, he gave it out to his companions.

"It's the storm, as you said, Barney," he called out. "They're going to keep us till the next storm, then sacrifice us to the storm god by burning!"

"Then I hope the fates keep storms away



A yelling, painted savage rushed up to Jack, bound and helpless, with a long knife upraised to strike.

till these fellows get tired of waiting!" said Mr. Maitland earnestly.

Unfortunately, Mr. Maitland's hope did not materialise. The prisoners watched with trepidation the lowering clouds that gathered at sunset. A prayer was on every lip that the sign was a false one and that the night would pass in peace.

Darkness came.

Then a distant rumble.

"Looks as if it's all up now, boys," said Rupert Maitland huskily. "Keep a stiff lip and hope for the best!"

That was the last word that was spoken. A brilliant flash of lightning lit up the skies as Maitland finished, and the crashing boom of thunder roared out again.

The storm had begun!

A Rogue to the Rescue!

THERE were not many intervals during which the captives could see anything but the lightning or hear anything but the thunder. But the few that occurred were sufficient to show the whites what was happening in the village.

Their captors' moves were ominous enough. At the first rattle of thunder the warriors and priests had assembled to the beating of tom-toms. At the storm developed, they

approached their white prisoners, and the warriors piled brushwood round the stakes, while the priests performed a grotesque circular dance that grew faster and faster as time went on.

The prisoners watched the weird scene with feelings of sickening horror. To die fighting, none of them feared; but the prospect of dying this death of torture in a state of utter helplessness was one that made the boldest of them quail.

Flaming torches were produced before the prisoners' horrified eyes. The yelling savages, bearing them aloft, danced nearer and nearer.

Then came the rain.

Up to that time not a spot had fallen. Now it descended in roaring sheets, sending up a spray that enveloped the ground in a swirling mist. In a moment the torches were extinguished and the brushwood saturated beyond any hope of burning.

The whites were saved—but only from the flames! The priests still continued their wild dance, maddened by the fear which drove them on to carry out the human sacrifice which they hoped would placate the storm god. More and more frenzied became the dancing, and faster and faster beat the tom-

(Continued on page 44.)

The VALLEY

**In dingy dockland commences a drama of
amazing treasure-seeking adventure !**

Drama At The Docks!

RAT LAYTON fumed. He fumed at himself, at the skipper of the Augantic, from which he had just been discharged, at London, at the weather and at Fate. They were all combining against him.

Take the weather. It was January according to the calendar, but the night, with its bitter wind and its fog, featured all the most disagreeable symptoms of November.

Take London. The very last place he wanted to put in at was London. He had run away to sea to escape from London and Boss Maunsell and his gang, and here he was back in the durned place.

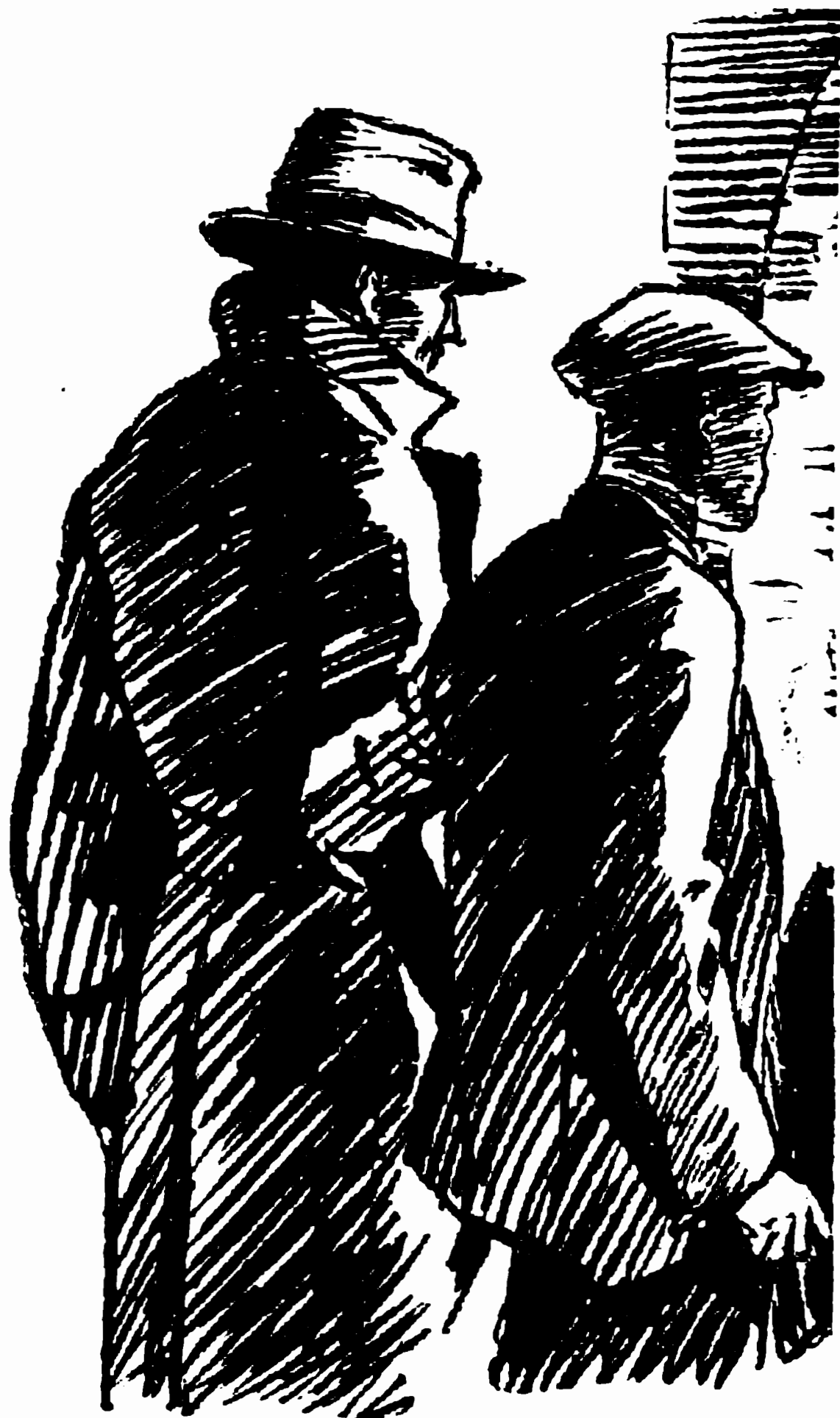
Take Fate. Who would have thought that the Augantic would have got a freight from Canada to Iceland, and, having arrived at Iceland, would load up with another cargo for London? Any other English port he would have hailed with relief, for he had money in his pockets to burn; but to be flung ashore in London, where at any moment he might meet the cold, cruel face of Boss Maunsell or the ugly, vindictive glare of one of the "boys," was just cruel luck.

They wouldn't have forgotten how he had sold them to the police for a ten-pound note—the ten-pound note which had provided his fare to Bristol and enabled him to sign on with the Augantic. Boss Maunsell had one cure for treachery. The cure might be administered through the medium of a sand-bag, a life-preserver, or through Boss Maunsell's own curved hands; but it would be prescribed and administered as soon as it was known that Rat Layton was back in London.

He looked apprehensively up and down the fog-laden street. There was death there—waiting for him at every corner—lurking for him like a sinister shadow.

"See that fare of mine, mate? Got his luggage all aboard, but blowed if I know where he's beat it to."

Rat Layton started as a voice hailed him out of the gloom. He could see the dim headlights of a taxi a few yards away, and, standing against this background, very indistinct in the fog, a red-faced driver. Rat Layton shook his head. His mind was too



occupied with Boss Maunsell to worry about the taxi-man's troubles.

"He came off your ship. You're from the Augantic, aren't you?"

Rat Layton started almost imperceptibly. The officers of the Augantic had still duties to perform on board. The only person from the Augantic who could think of hiring a taxi was the strange passenger whom they had picked up at Reykjavik, in Iceland.

John Peters, that was his name—a man with a face like a hawk, with his cheeks scarred with frostbites, and his big hands pitiable objects from contact with the Arctic. And the cold had got into his brain, they said. He talked funny. Rat Layton had had a talk with him while he was on watch one night.

"You'd sell your soul for money, wouldn't you, my lad?"

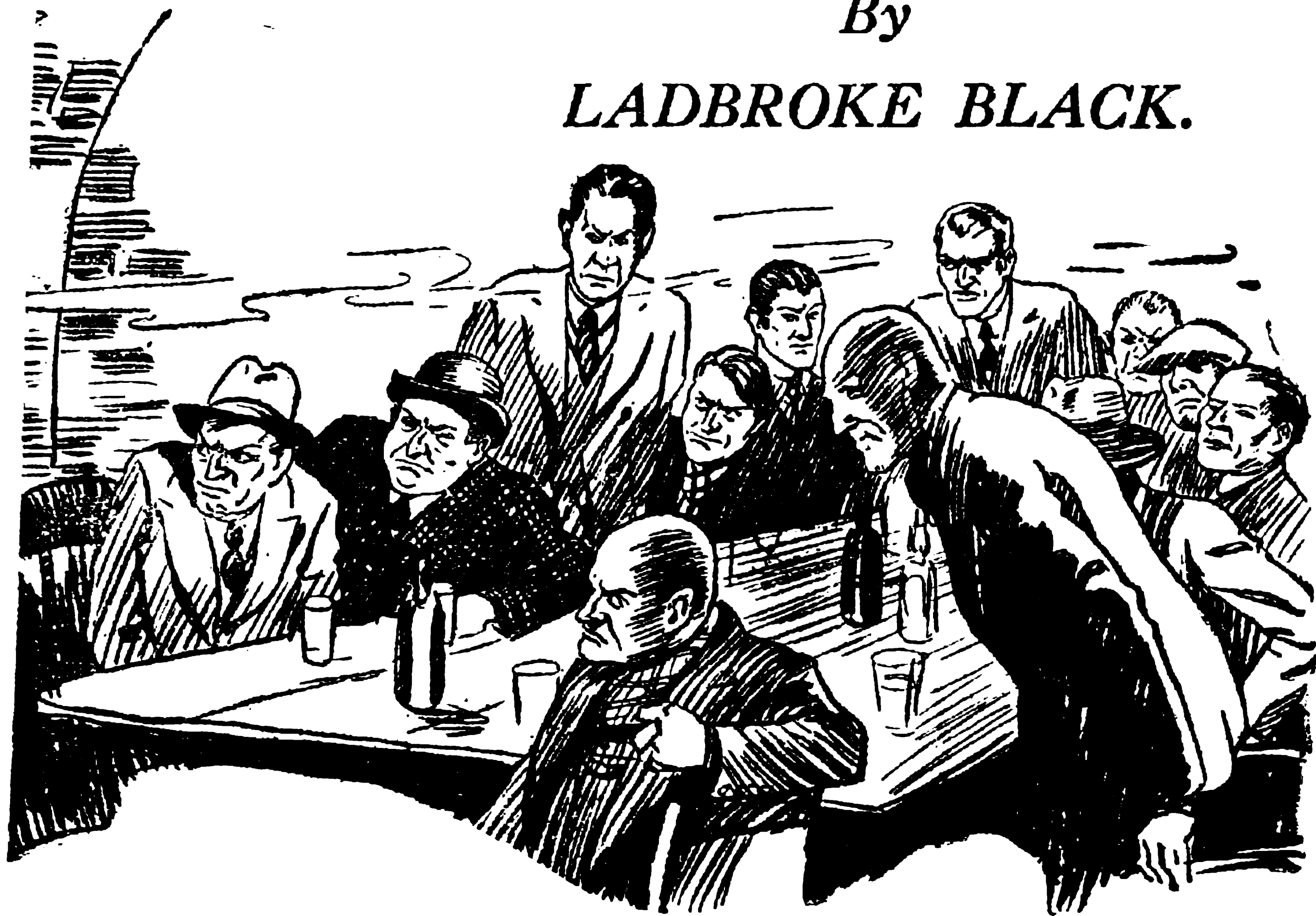
That was how John Peters had begun their talk. Rat Layton hadn't contradicted him, because there didn't seem anything to the proposition—souls not being negotiable securities with any pawnbroker he'd ever come across. And then the man—talking as if he felt he must talk or burst—had gone on to tell him that he was on the track of the greatest treasure in the world.

"That's why I'm in such a hurry to get

of HOT SPRINGS!

By

LADBROKE BLACK.



to England," John Peters had said. "There's only one person I know of who can solve the riddle for me. I used to attend his lectures when I was at the University."

It had seemed all blather to Rat Layton. He was thinking of his bunk and when he would be relieved. But now, at this moment, there had begun to form in his mind a vague notion of how he might use John Peters as a means of placating Boss Maunsell.

Supposing he could get hold of this balmy guy and take him to the headquarters of the gang, and let him talk his blather there? Mightn't that clear him of any responsibility for that unpleasant little affair of nine months ago? It would prove that he had the interests of the gang at heart, that his flight to sea had been almost in the nature of an accident—that he couldn't have done what he was supposed to have done, or otherwise he wouldn't have dared to show his face in that particular cellar in Dripping Court which the gang used as its headquarters. It would be a big bluff—but it might come off. The alternative was—well, to plunge into

the murk of these narrow streets and run up swiftly against death.

"I know the bloke you mean, mate," said Rat Layton. "I'll have a look round for him."

But John Peters wasn't on the quay, and he wasn't anywhere in the big shed which Rat Layton searched before he was turned away by the man on duty. He ran into him quite by accident not forty yards away from where the taxi was standing—literally bumped into him.

"Beg your pardon, Mr. Peters!" he exclaimed, hardly believing his luck.

He could see the man's hawk face, with his cheeks disfigured by the cicatrices of those dreadful frostbites and his dazed, bewildered blue eyes.

"Professor Denning, The Cottage, Chalcombe. I've got to get there quickly," Peters murmured. "He can tell me the secret. He'll be able to read what's written on the Narwhal's horn."

Rat Layton linked his arm in the other's.

"That's all right, guv'nor. I know the blokes what'll take you to this Professor Denning. They'll look after you proper."

The man fastened on the name of Professor Denning.

"Something's wrong with my head. When you've been a whole Arctic night on the pack ice it does something to you. I'm funny. But say, you know Professor Denning?"

"Yep!" said Rat Layton.

He led the man down the street away from the taxi and turned to the right into the mouth of the alley. It was easy. John Peters' balminess was of the quiet order. If he had been violent, it might have been a different thing altogether, for there was six-foot two of him, and the arm Rat Layton was holding was as hard as steel. He had only to say "Professor Denning" at intervals and it worked like a charm. After twenty minutes they were at the entrance to Dripping Court.

Rat Layton took a deep breath. The bluff mightn't come off, but what else could he try? He steered his companion across the cobbles of a yard, and, diving into the open doorway of a house, followed a route only too familiar to him down a flight of cellar steps. A moment later and he had pushed open a door.

Beyond was a vault, heated by a paraffin stove. In the centre was a deal table. The place was lighted by an incandescent lamp, the glare of which illuminated the faces of twelve men.

Rat Layton had no particular taste in faces. His own was nothing to write home about. It was not so much the fact that all those faces were brutal and sinister that troubled him. It was the glare of the twelve pairs of eyes that instantly fastened upon him—the dreadful pause which seemed to take place.

The man seated at the end of the table was of a different type from his companions. His features were long and lined and clean-shaven. Place a cowl on his head and dress him in the appropriate livery, and he would have passed for an admirable monk. The hands that rested on the table were curiously long and very white. His shock of hair was grey in colour, giving him an almost benevolent air. It was only his eyes that gave the lie to the rest of his appearance. They were little, cruel, set close together, and seemed to be flecked with a myriad blood-vessels.

There was dead silence—a silence which Rat Layton found appalling. In spite of the bitter night he felt the perspiration break out upon his body. Suddenly the man at the end of the table spoke in a voice that was like the slashing of a knife.

"The Rat. He has come back, if not to the ship, at any rate, to the trap! Close and lock the door, one of you!"

Two men darted to the door. There was the sound of a key being turned and a bolt drawn. Rat Layton moistened his lips.

"I only just got back, Boss Maunsell. I was shanghaied down in Bristol, and when I woke up I was aboard a ship."

"I suppose the Yard shanghaied you, after you'd given them all that information?"

There was an acid smile on Boss Maunsell's lips. Rat Layton stirred himself to play his part.

"Blessed if I know what you're talking about, boss. What I'm telling you is true. They doped me at Black Jack's place, and when I come to I was in the fo'c'sle of the Augantic. But quit kidding. I've brought you something that sounds good."

He jerked his head in the direction of his companion.

"He'll tell you. It's a great treasure, he says, somewhere up in the Arctic regions. Leastways, that's where he's come from. We picked him up in Iceland. I brought him along here at once. He ain't told me much, but I reckon you might be able to make him talk."

John Peters was looking round the room with that curious, wild, vacant look in his blue eyes.

"Where's Professor Denning?"

Boss Maunsell rose. He was well below the average height, and the immense breadth of his chest and his bowed legs gave him an almost dwarf-like appearance.

"You come and sit down and tell us all about it, Mr. Peters," he said. "Professor Denning doesn't happen to be here, but we know where to find him."

"The Cottage, Chalcombe—I wired him to expect me."

"That's it. He got your wire all right. You come and sit down."

Like a child, John Peters sank down on the form by the table. Boss Maunsell resumed his feet.

"Suppose we have the yarn, so that Professor Denning will know it's the goods when we tell him? This treasure you were talking about?"

The man looked at him vaguely.

"Platinum and gold. Tons of it. That's what Karl Ericson told me before he died. He was going to translate the runes for me, but he was nearly gone when I found him. He gave me the narwhal's horn. The secret's there—gold and platinum—the two most precious metals in the world. Tons of it. There's the wealth of the world. Professor Denning can read the runes. Then all we've got to do is to take ship for the Valley—the Valley of Hot Springs—that's what Ericson called it—"

He stopped abruptly. Into his eyes had come a curious look. It was as if the veil had been suddenly drawn from across his brain, allowing him to realise for the first time where he was.

"Who are you, anyway?" he demanded truculently.

The first and second fingers of Boss Maunsell's left hand played a tattoo on the table. Quietly and unobtrusively six of the gang rose and took up their places behind the stranger.

"Go on, Mr. Peters. This is really most interesting. Gold and platinum, you say? And the place is called the Valley of Hot

Springs? What I can't quite get is this narwhal's horn you speak of. It contains the secret of where the Valley of Hot Springs is situated—is that it? And our friend Professor Denning, of the Cottage, Chalcombe——”

He got no further. John Peters suddenly sprang to his feet, his eyes blazing.

“What's the game? You're trying to get something out of me! Where's the narwhal's horn? I put it in the taxi.” He paused a moment, his big hands clenched. “The taxi—I remember——”

He turned swiftly as if to bolt towards the door. Instantly the six men standing behind him flung themselves on him. Two he felled with his fists, but the rest of the gang, coming to their companions' aid, bore his tall figure down by sheer weight. Even then he rose, shaking off that clinging mass of humanity like a dog shakes itself after a swim. It seemed for a space as if he would hew his way to the door. At that moment Rat Layton, who had stood a white-faced spectator of the whole scene, sprang forward. The blade of a knife glittered in the lamp-light. It rose and fell three times. There was a groan, and John Peters collapsed.

“Stand aside, you fools!”

Boss Maunsell thrust his way through the press. Lying on the ground was the dead body of John Peters. Boss Maunsell stared at him for a moment, and then turned his cruel eyes upon Rat Layton's flushed, anxious face.

“What about that taxi he was talking of? Where is it?”

“It's down at the docks, boss. I'll show you where it is!” Rat Layton exclaimed eagerly.

Suddenly he paused, every vestige of colour draining from his cheeks. Boss Maunsell was coming towards him, his hands curved, and that in his eyes which he understood only too well. A stifled scream escaped from Rat Layton's lips.

Ten minutes later, in ones and twos, the gang slipped from the cellar in Dripping Court. But there was no taxi waiting outside the dock gates. Boss Maunsell interviewed the man on duty.



Eric's uncle studied the little lines on the Narwhal horn with excited interest.

“The driver waited the best part of an hour, and then he got fed up and told me to tell Mr. Peters, or anybody who came inquiring about him, that he'd taken the luggage to the Cottage, Chalcombe, and he hoped he'd be paid his fare when he got there. Proper put out, he was.”

Boss Maunsell slipped into the fog and darkness of a neighbouring alley. Putting his fingers to his lips, he gave a curious whistle. In a few minutes the gang had gathered around him.

“This horn we're after has been taken to the Cottage at Chalcombe. We've got to have it, boys. Chalcombe is forty miles from here up in the Chiltern Hills. Eight of you can use the lorry, and the rest can come in the car with me. Step on it. This job's got to be done to-night.”

Midnight had already struck when a car, bearing an entirely wrong registration plate, swept northwards along the Edgware Road followed by a respectable-looking lorry.

And on the floor of the cellar in Dripping Court lay, side by side, the bodies of John Peters, the Arctic explorer, and Rat Layton, the Judas of the Maunsell gang!

The Narwhal Horn!

WHAT on earth are you doing, Danny? What's the great idea?" Daniel Rugg surveyed the dinner-table with the pride of an artist. His bulldog jaw, his broken nose, his cauliflower ears and his big broken-knuckled hands seemed out of keeping with such a scene; not even the swallow-tailed coat and white shirt-front he was wearing made it seem real. Put him in the ring at Wonderland with a Saturday night audience watching him, and he would have appeared quite normal; but in a cottage dining-room, surveying the mixture of polished oak and shaded lights and old silver, he looked curiously out of place.

"The great idea, Mr. Eric, is a real, slap-up, posh dinner."

Eric Denning, in an old sports coat and flannel trousers, looking the picture of health after a long day's tramp, learned against the mantelpiece and went off into helpless shrieks of laughter. Danny, his uncle's man of all work, was a perfect scream. He himself had been living with his uncle now for six months, and though he had seen Danny in many rôles—gardener, cook, bootboy, chauffeur to Tin Lizzie, valet, housekeeper—he had never yet seen him disguised as the old family butler.

"Whom are we entertaining, Danny?" asked the youngster.

"Mr. John Peters. By all accounts he's an Arctic explorer. Don't you remember? He cabled ten days ago to your uncle, to tell him to stand by for something or other that was going to lift the lid off the earth!"

"By Jove, Danny, I'd quite forgotten. Why on earth didn't you remind me this morning?"

"Didn't know till five o'clock this afternoon that the ship that Mr. Peters was coming by had made London Docks. I've been proper busy cooking grub ever since. Not that your uncle would mind what he had. He just munches and talks, and if you was to feed him with sawdust it would be all the same."

Eric grinned.

"There's something in that, Danny," agreed the youngster. "I'm afraid my uncle gets more absent-minded every day—"

He broke off abruptly as the door opened and Professor Denning appeared.

"Danny, you scoundrel, what have you done with my green notebook? I left it on purpose by the side of the coal-scuttle in my study. I shall want it to-night."

If Danny looked an oddity, his employer was even more so. He was dressed in an old-fashioned Norfolk coat and knickerbockers, finished off by plain worsted stockings which displayed an enormous pair of muscular calves. His chest was immensely broad, and his big head seemed out of all proportion to his body. From his face, flowing down on to his waistcoat, was a long, untrimmed red beard, and his grey eyes stared out through a tangle of eyebrows.

"It's in your right-hand pocket, guv'nor," Danny replied calmly.

"Bless my soul, so it is!" The professor blinked as he took the book out of the pocket of his coat. "Mr. Peters hasn't arrived yet?"

"Not yet, sir."

"Let me know when he comes, Danny."

The professor seated himself in a chair by the fire and began turning over the pages of his notebook. It was clear that he had become completely unconscious of his surroundings.

He didn't even stir when there was the sound of a motor-car drawing up at the door, and the hoot of a horn. Danny at once gave his evening coat a pull, grinned, and bolted into the hall. Five minutes later he returned, his old battered face a picture of despair.

"It ain't him—it's only his luggage," he announced. "And three pound ten to pay. Seems he loaded up his stuff somewhere about six o'clock, and then went and lost himself. Leastways, that's what the taxi-driver said. He reckoned he waited an hour, and then, as he didn't want the job for life, thought he'd best come on here. What are we going to do about it, Mr. Eric?"

"We'd better have dinner. I'll tell uncle."

It was some minutes before Professor Denning, still wrapped up in studying his green notebook, would listen to Eric. When finally he understood that John Peters had somehow lost himself in the neighbourhood of the docks but that his luggage had arrived, he showed signs of being testy.

"Extraordinary behaviour! He was always very erratic and unreliable, I remember, as a student. Does the fellow take this for a left luggage office?"

He stepped out into the hall where the luggage, unloaded from the taxi, was lying. There was a battered suitcase, a canvas grip of military pattern, a gun-case, and an extraordinary object that looked like a very long yellow tooth stuck into a rough slab of some grey metal.

"What the dickens is that?" the professor exclaimed instantly.

"Looks like a tusk," Eric answered, stooping down to pick up the object. "By Jove, it's heavy, uncle."

He placed the object in a vertical position. The horn, or tusk, yellow with age, was over six feet long. The professor stared at it for a moment, and then came nearer. Now Eric could see that from the top of its tapering end down to the place where it disappeared into its metal base, the horn was covered with innumerable little lines. The professor came still closer. Suddenly his eyes began to blaze, and he regarded the horn with excited interest.

"What's this?" he exclaimed. "Eric, there's something about a treasure here!"

(What has Professor Denning discovered? You'll know when you read next week's exciting instalment of this magnificent new serial, lads.)

Read About Bill's Big Chance To Play For A Famous Club!

BULL'S-EYE BILL!



Bill is Suspicious!

ONE fine, brisk winter's morning Bull's-Eye Bill met his chum, Chip Rogers, centre-half of the Spiders—for which team Bill also played—in the town, and stopped to talk to him. While they were talking they both saw Ginger Hackem outside the Stores, where he was employed as an errand-boy, in conversation with a man.

The man compelled attention. He wore a check suit, a grey bowler hat, and a red tie; he carried washleather gloves, was smoking a long cigar in an amber holder, had patent-leather boots and spats on his feet, and a pink carnation in his buttonhole. Altogether he looked a thorough "sport."

"Now I wonder who that chap is?" said Chip Rogers, regarding the stranger with uncommon interest. "He and Ginger seem to be very pally."

"He's a crook if he's a pal of Ginger's, Chip," said Bull's-Eye Bill; and Bill was in the position to know, for he and Ginger were

deadly rivals. "Just look at the size of his pink carnation!"

Having taken his look, Bull's-Eye turned his back on the stranger and went on talking to Chip; but that pink carnation stuck in his mind.

Meanwhile the man with the grey hat had been looking at Bull's-Eye and Chip.

"Who are those guys over there?" he asked with a jerk of his thumb. "They'll know me if they see me again."

"They're Bull's-Eye Bill, the chap I was telling you about, Cute," answered Ginger Hackem, "an' Chip Rogers, his pal. And I don't mind tellin' you I'd give something to wipe the floor with both of 'em."

"Why?" asked the man with the grey bowler.

"Because Bull's-Eye's always takin' a rise outa me no matter what I do, an' I hate the sight of 'im. He's gotta pair o' goal-scorin' boots that enable him to score six goals or more in a match, an' whenever I've tried to pinch 'em I've been sold a pup. Now, if you were any sort of a brother of mine you'd help me chew 'em up."

SHAKING SHOTS FROM BILL—SHAKING SHOCKS FOR GINGER HACKEM!

The man in the check suit gave a pull at his cigar, then slapped Ginger hard on the shoulder.

"Tell me more about 'em, Ginger, and then leave 'em to me," he said. "And if I once start there'll be nothing left of them two guys inside of a week. I'm your big brother, Cute Hackem, I am, an' I'd unload a mine to do you a good turn!"—which, reduced to common or garden English, meant that he would go a long way to help a brother.

Bull's-Eye Bill and Chip Rogers strolled on, and Ginger had to say good-bye to brother Cuto because he had to do a round of deliveries on his motor-tricycle.

Next day found Bull's-Eye Bill chewing some of Gipsy Dick's toffee as he sat on the steps of the caravan in which he lived with the cheery gipsy. Bill was talking to Chip Rogers, while Dick was busy making a fresh supply of sweets to sell on Saturday, when across Mudbank Flats strolled a man in a blue serge suit and a soft felt hat. He was swinging a cane and whistling, and as he caught sight of the caravan he made a bee-line for it. When he came nearer, Bull's-Eye and Chip saw that he wore a droopy moustache—one of those moustaches that never seem real; a sort of Harry Tate wobbler.

"Can you tell me where I can find Bull's-Eye Bill?" he asked.

"You've found him," answered Chip Rogers with a grin. "This is Bull's-Eye."

"Glad to meetcha," said the stranger, holding out a hand. "I could have written, but seeing you is best. Bull's-Eye, lad, how would you like to play a trial game for one of the finest teams in England? There's no catch in it, either. If you made good you'd be signed on for the team, and, the way you score goals, you might make a fortune out of a £10,000 football transfer fee in a coupla years."

Bull's-Eye Bill caught his breath, and even Chip Rogers became excited. They were both fine players, and had turned out for some good sides, but the lucky chance—the one that meant fame and fortune—had not turned up yet.

"What's the team?" asked Bull's-Eye, his eyes glistening with excitement.

"Forest Row," said the stranger. "All you've gotta do is say 'Yes,' and come over to the ground on Saturday an hour before the kick-off, so's to meet the boys and change for the game. We'll lend you a club shirt, and you can bring your own boots. The Row are playing the Wanderers, one of the best games of the season, and there's bound to be a big gate. It's the chance of a life-time. What say?"

"I'll do it if the offer's genuine," answered Bull's-Eye, hardly able to speak in his excitement. "But who are you?"

"I'm Mr. Waddle, the Forest Row secretary," said the man with the wobbly moustache, offering his hand. "Then we'll call it a date. Be at the ground at half-past one

on Saturday—one o'clock would be even better. Now I've gotta run along, as I've a few calls to make. I'm not often in this town."

Then, for the first time, Bull's-Eye looked hard at the flower the man wore in his buttonhole. It was a pink carnation, and it recalled a man with a grey hat whom he'd seen talking to Ginger Hackem. In spite of the wobbly moustache, this man in blue serge looked something like the man with the grey bowler, and Bull's-Eye was instantly on his guard.

"All right," he cried, cooling down, "I'll be there. But I shan't come at all unless I receive a written invitation on club notepaper."

The stranger showed his teeth in a sickly grin.

"You can trust me," he said.

"I know I can," replied Bull's-Eye. "But I always like to make sure. You send me that letter, Mr. Waddle. See you on Saturday!"

The man in blue serge seemed about to explode, but he managed to force a smile as he said:

"All right; you'll have the letter in the mornin'." And off he walked, swinging his cane.

"You don't seem to trust him, Bull's-Eye," remarked Chip. "My hat, wouldn't I give something for an invitation like that! Fancy playing for Forest Row."

"I know, Chip," said Bull's-Eye glumly, "but that pink carnation put me off. I can't help thinking it's a spoof, and I believe the man is that chap in the grey bowler we saw speaking to Ginger Hackem yesterday morning."

Chip Rogers sat up, whistling sharply.

"Gosh, Bill," he gasped, "I think you're right!"

— —

Bill's Big Chance!

BUT in the morning a postman delivered the letter of invitation at the caravan. It bore the Forest Row postmark, the envelope was stamped with the name of the club, and the letter of invitation itself was typed upon official notepaper and signed by George Waddle, secretary.

"We've all heard so much about your goal-scoring that we are anxious to see you play for the team, and if you do as well as we expect, we shall be only too pleased to sign you on," the letter concluded. "Don't forget to be in good time, as I advised you yesterday."

Even yet, however, Bull's-Eye's suspicions were not allayed.

"Chip," he said, when his chum motor-biked to the Flats to learn the news, "it's not a bit of use. I can't help thinking that that man with the pink carnation was a fraud."

"You'd never think so, in the face of this letter," remarked Chip.

"I know that, and yet— Chip, give me



Ginger swerved, and bumped into a lorry, buckling the axle of his motor-tricycle. Bull's-Eye Bill and Chip Rogers grinned unsympathetically.

a pillion ride to the nearest telephone box, will you?"

Chip was only too willing to oblige. Reaching the telephone box, Bill entered, dropped twopence in the slot, pushed the button and found himself talking to the Forest Row secretary.

"I don't know who you are. I've never heard of Bull's-Eye Bill," the voice said at the other end of the line after Bull's-Eye had explained. "I never wrote any letter, and, of course, you're not going to play for the team."

Bull's-Eye put up the receiver and told his pal.

"Then you're right, Bull's-Eye, after all," said Chip. "It's only another dirty trick of Ginger Hackem's. And Ginger would have gone along to Forest Row on Saturday to jeer at you, and would have taken all his pals, too. My hat, what a good job you found out!"

Bull's-Eye's smiling, boyish face was set and grim. He hated Ginger Hackem to score off him, and he did not intend to take this lying down. Suddenly he brightened.

"You busy, Chip?" he asked.

"No; why?"

"I want you to run me over to Forest

Row. I'm going to see Mr. Waddle at once."

"What for? You can't do any good."

"Perhaps I can't, but I might find out who this cove with the grey bowler is; and when I do——"

Chip slung himself into the saddle and kicked the self-starter into action.

"Come on!" he cried. "We'll be over there in half an hour."

"I think I know how this happened," said Mr. Waddle, the Forest Row secretary, after Bull's-Eye had told him the whole story and shown him the letter. "A chap came over here to ask me to give his younger brother a trial in the team, and I turned him down. Then he got rude and told me I wasn't fit to be secretary of a first-class football club. I gave him the air and he went away in a rage. I suppose he pinched the official notepaper and the envelope while he was in my office."

"Was he a middle-sized man in a check suit and a grey bowler hat, and did he wear a pink carnation?" asked Bull's-Eye excitedly.

"That's the fellow to the very life. His name is Cute Hackem."

"Coo!" gasped Bull's-Eye. "Then he must be Ginger Hackem's older brother."

And the whole plot was revealed.

By this time the secretary had taken quite a liking to Bull's-Eye Bill and Chip Rogers. He liked their cheery, honest faces, their frankness.

"Now, since you are here, Bull's-Eye," he said, "perhaps you will tell me if you can score goals. We've got a grand set of forwards on the pay-roll, but none of them can score for nuts."

"Can Bull's-Eye score?" chimed in Chip Rogers. "Ever heard of a duck that can't swim? Bull's-Eye would score goals against the finest defence in football, and nothing could stop him. Let me tell you—"

And for ten solid minutes Chip detailed a catalogue of Bull's-Eye's goal-scoring feats for the Spiders and other teams which made the secretary gasp.

"Listen," said Mr. Waddle. "The Wanderers beat us on their ground, and they'll beat us again on Saturday if we can't score goals. I'm going to give your chum a fair break, Chip. I'm going to put him in the team. After all, we can only lose at the worst, and we look like losing anyway. I'll see that Bull's-Eye's properly qualified to play. And you be here a bit before the time that crook Cute Hackem said, kid, and we'll give you a run before the crowd come in."

"Do you mean it?" asked Bull's-Eye, hardly able to believe his ears.

"Yes. I like the look of you, lad; and if you could score a lot of goals against Smudge Green, you're no mug. I'm going to take you on trust. I'm not even going to ask you to turn out and give me a show now."

"Lend me a football," said Bull's-Eye. "You go into goal, Chip. I haven't got my goal-scoring boots on, Mr. Waddle, but I think you'll be able to judge if I can control a ball."

So Bull's-Eye borrowed an old football, and Chip went into goal; and while the secretary looked on, Bull's-Eye dribbled the whole length of the field, controlling the ball perfectly in a corkscrew run, and finished up by beating Chip with a smashing drive that would have licked the finest goalkeeper on earth.

"That'll do," called the secretary. "I've seen enough. You definitely play on Saturday, kid!"

Bull's-Eye Bill on Trial!

CHIP ROGERS had hardly driven Bull's-Eye back to the town than he almost ran his motor-bike head-on into Ginger Hackem, who came buzzing recklessly round a corner on the delivery tricycle from the Stores. Ginger was on the wrong side of the road, so Chip refused to give way. In a panic, Ginger swerved and bumped into the back of a stationary lorry, knocking his front axle sideways in the process.

"What d'you think you're doing?" Ginger

howled, as he leaped out of the saddle, and Chip brought up his bike with a grin. "I'll have you up for this."

But Sergeant Puffin, of the town police, who had seen the accident, butted in. Puffin liked the chums, and had no use for Ginger.

"Now then! Now then!" he cried. "Want a road made for you and your motor-tricycle? Good job you bumped a lorry and not a private car, or you'd have landed the Stores for damages and lost your job."

"He did it!" yelled Ginger, pointing at Chip Rogers.

"Get away!" cried the sergeant. "You saw the bike coming and you were on the wrong side of the road. It was your own fault entirely." He turned to Bull's-Eye. "Where've you been to, my lad?"

"Over to Forest Row to see the secretary of the football club. I'm going to play for the team against the Wanderers on Saturday, sarge," answered Bull's-Eye, and Ginger pricked up his ears.

"That so?"

"Yes. I had a letter of invitation this morning, but went over to make absolutely sure. I gave a show, too. It's a chance, Mr. Puffin."

"Sure," said the sergeant, with a nod, "and if I can arrange an exchange of duty, blow me if I don't come over and see you play!"

"Bah!" cut in Ginger Hackem, as he rolled his crumpled tricycle out into the road and started the motor running. "Bull's-Eye play for Forest Row! I'd like to see him!"

"And so you will if you come over to the ground on Saturday," said Chip. "By the way, Ginger, how's your crook brother, Cute?"

Ginger Hackem realised then that Bull's-Eye Bill and Chip Rogers had once again turned the tables on him. In a fine old rage he rode off at a slow crawl to finish his round on his motor-tricycle, to face the music at the Stores afterwards, and then to carry the news of Bull's-Eye's triumph home.

That night, for the first time on record, for he hated spying, Chip Rogers took a tram out to the lower side of the town and walked past Ginger Hackem's house. And as he peeped in at the open window, he saw a crowd of chaps in shirt-sleeves sitting at a table.

A loud-speaker was distorting good music, and the men were all talking. One-Punch Pete, Bull's-Eye's rascally stepfather—who had been the cause of Bill leaving home to live with Gipsy Dick—was there, and Cute Hackem, too. Chip also saw a number of gaolbirds there, including Jawbreaker Jim, Darkey Dan and Tiny Martin, the sixteen-stone crook with ten convictions. Chip flattened himself against the wall, sidled to the window, and listened. Cute Hackem was talking.

"I can't see what you chaps are making such a song and dance about," Cute was say-

ing. "Bull's-Eye Bill hasn't played for the Row yet. My young brother 'ere says Bull's-Eye can't play if he hasn't got his football boots. Then all we've gotta do is go down to the Flats, break inter the caravan and pinch the boots. We'll steal every bag or packet of sweets Gipsy Dick has prepared for Saturday, and we'll all go down to the Forest Row ground and barrack Bull's-Eye when he plays. We can sell the stolen sweets on the ground. Is it a bet?"

"Yus," said Jawbreaker Jim. "Let's do the job to-morrow night."

Chip slipped away, and, boarding a tram in the main street, went down to the Flats with the news.

"Going to raid my caravan to-morrow night, are they, Chip?" said Gipsy Dick, with a broad grin. "Fine! That'll give me time to make some special sweets that'll get the gaolbirds mobbed if they sell 'em to the crowd at Forest Row. Come over to-morrow night and see the raid, Chip." And Gipsy Dick laughed as if he thoroughly enjoyed the joke.

Most of the next day Gipsy Dick spent in making sweets in his travelling kitchen, applying himself to the task with unusual zest. When the sweets were made and wrapped in brilliant tinsel paper of all colours, he grinned with delight.

"It'd be as much as my reputation's worth, Bull's-Eye," he said, "to sell these suckers to the crowd. Cute Hackem and the gaolbirds will be welcome to them."

Chip Rogers came over that night at dusk. He stayed to dinner, and afterwards Gipsy put the lights out and the three friends stowed themselves away under the van. They were there when the gaolbirds carried out their raid.

"He's left the blinkin' van door open! That shows the kinder mutt Dick is!" said Jawbreaker Jim, grabbing a sack full of sweets.

Ginger Hackem was content with Bull's-Eye's football boots, which he found lying on Bill's bunk.

Five minutes later the gaolbirds were trooping back over the Flats laden with loot.

"And that's that," said Gipsy Dick, when they had gone. "We could make a police-court case of this, boys, but I think it will be better for the gaolbirds to sell my sweets." He raked a pair of red, white and blue football boots out of a secret drawer, and gave them to Bull's-Eye. "There are your boots, my lad," he said, "and may you get many more goals with them."

For once in a way Gipsy Dick went to a football match without his caravan. He had no sweets to sell, for the gaolbirds had stolen them. And as the crowds gathered on the terraces he could see Jawbreaker Jim, Tiny Martin, Darkey Dan and Cute Hackem selling sweets in tinsel paper to the eager crowd at sixpence a packet.

Before the game began the gaolbirds had sold all their sweets, and with their pockets dragged down with the weight of silver, they gathered in a group to see Bull's-Eye fail.

"He'll never score without his boots, boys," said Ginger Hackem, as he joined them. "He's done this time."

And then the teams turned out to a welcoming roar. The programme had something to say about Bull's-Eye, and as the dapper youngster with the red, white and blue boots turned out, the mob gave him a cheer all to himself.

The Wanderers won the toss and set Forest Row to face the wind. Bull's-Eye was feeling decidedly nervous.

But a minute from the kick-off, after some smart passing, Bull's-Eye swept down on a Wanderer and hiked the ball away from him. It only needed the play to steady him. As cool now as if he were playing for the Spiders on the Flats and not for the famous Forest Row, he tricked man after man and finished up with a rising shot which nearly smashed the goal-netting. Bull's-Eye had scored as usual!

Ginger Hackem went white.

"Boys," he said hoarsely, "blowed if I don't think Gipsy Dick has tricked us again! Cute, that open van door—those boots bunged where I couldn't help piping 'em—it was all part of a plan! And those sweets—what about those sweets?"

He was answered by a sound something like this:

"Urrrr! Grrrr! Mmmmm!"

Similar grunts and groans and chokings echoed all round them, and as Ginger turned to see what was the matter, hundreds of angry-looking spectators came swarming down on them. Every man was purple in the face, and pointing to his mouth as he groaned and grunted.

Then one of them gave Ginger a sock on the jaw which flopped him. Simultaneously a huge Forest Row supporter, whose jaws were stuck together, lifted Cute Hackem upside down and shook his pocketfuls of silver on to the ground, where the spectators scrambled for it.

"Sold!" said Jawbreaker Jim in a panic. "Crikey, boys, those sweets have gummed their faces up, and they can't open their jaws. Let's beat it!"

But they couldn't beat it. Each man was seized by half a dozen angry customers, who turned him upside down and shook the money out of his pockets. They finished up with a wallop on the jaw for luck, and as the luckless gaolbirds and company slunk out of the gates, Bull's-Eye burst through and scored his third goal for Forest Row.

The laugh was with him and Gipsy Dick. And that evening, after the game which the Row won by five clear goals, Bull's-Eye Bill signed the necessary forms that made him a member of the Forest Row team!

THE END.

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A ROGUE TO THE RESCUE!

(Continued from page 33.)

toms, while the storm still raged at the height of its fury.

Suddenly one of the hideous dancers leaped out of the circle, and in the white light of the storm the captives saw a long knife flash. Swiftly he advanced towards the stake to which Jack Maitland was tied, the knife upraised, ready to strike.

Jack closed his eyes. Then—

From somewhere close at hand came a sound that was not the thunder—a sound that had a familiar ring to those who heard. It was the trumpeting of an elephant!

A great black shape suddenly appeared out of the forest, pounding straight towards the centre of the village. In the illumination of the lightning-flashes the watchers saw a great brute with the blood still clotted round wounds that were not a day old.

The rogue elephant had come back again! Straight into the frenzied dancers he charged.

Jack opened his eyes again and saw the priest's knife flash as the owner's hand brought it down in what was meant to be a death-blow. But the blade never reached its mark. Before it could do so, something had curled round the demented savage and with terrible animal strength whipped him a dozen feet into the air. One violent movement of the great creature's trunk and the black crashed to the ground, a huddled heap.

Again the trunk curled—but this time it was round the prisoner himself. Jack felt the power of the primeval brute wrenching him up; the stake came away from the ground and the boy whirled dizzily through the air for a moment. Then he felt himself dropped comparatively gently to the ground; and as he fell, there was a snapping of the bonds that bound him.

Jack almost shouted aloud for joy. Before him, lying on the ground, he saw the knife which had come near to slaying him. He seized it and rushed to release his comrades. With frantic force he slashed right and left, rushing from one to the other till all were freed; Then he ran over to the enclosure where the black boys were confined and released them, too.

After that, they all ran for the shelter of the trees, while the elephant raged up and down, destroying everything that came in his path.

And so through the night, plunging madly through forest and grass, heedless of the dangers of the night in their anxiety to escape from the spot where they had come so near to death.

"WELL, we're through the mill!" Thus Mr. Maitland, two days later, when the adventurers came in sight of the first outpost of civilisation.

"And goodness knows how we've got through!" added Dan Chivers. "But for the miracle of that rogue elephant turning up just when he did—"

"Was it a miracle, then?" asked Jack Maitland. "I have an idea it wasn't altogether. After all, I did save his life the night before!"

"And because of that, you fancy he intentionally saved yours?" smiled Rupert Maitland.

"Well, elephants are brainy animals, I know; but—"

"But it's far-fetched—too far-fetched," summed up Jim Barney, thus expressing the opinions of his comrades.

But Jack, though he remained in a minority of one, was content with his own opinion on the subject of the rogue elephant!

THE END.

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