

NELSON LEE

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The Night Hawk to the rescue! An amazing incident from the full-o'-thrills yarn complete in this issue,

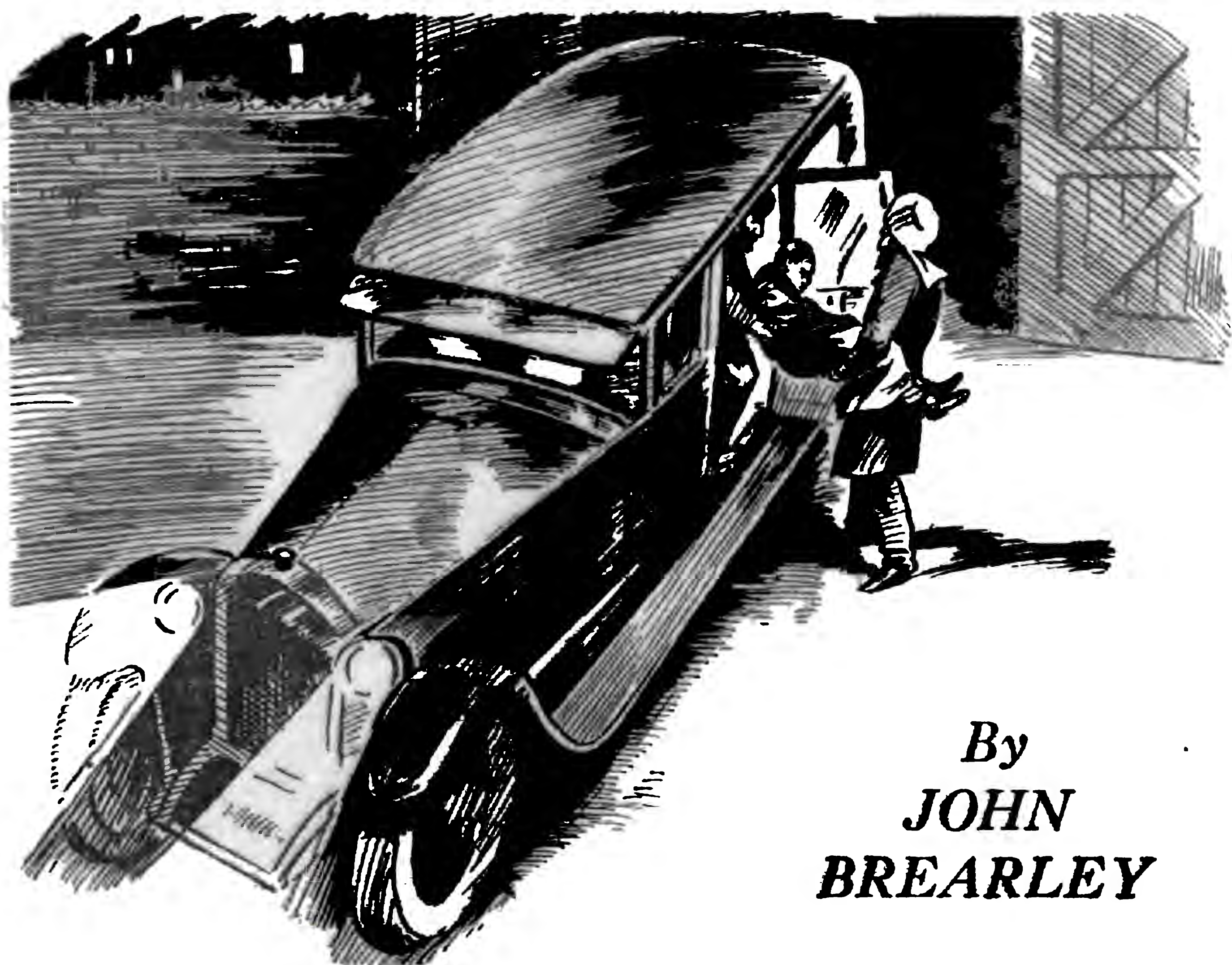
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The Night Hawk Thrills—and Kills!

The FUGITIVE



By
**JOHN
BREARLEY**

CHAPTER 1.

'Neath Grinding Wheels.

FROM a height of five hundred feet, Thurston Kyle, the Night Hawk, stared thoughtfully down upon London: its myriad lights, gleaming and glittering as far as his eyes could see, its roaring streets packed with early-evening traffic, pavements filled with hurrying throngs.

Like some winged phantom of the night, he hung in the moonlit sky, a faint smile on his handsome, sardonic face.

To Thurston Kyle, the nightly cruise through the crisp, cool air was a tonic after the long and arduous day's work in his laboratory. Sailing softly as a shadow under his great wings, his dark, keen eyes ever alert for adventure, he took on a fresh lease of life; shook off the mental fatigue caused by hours of amazing scientific research for

which his name was famous throughout the world.

Sometimes his flights were confined to London, at others he sped farther afield. Sometimes, too, the adventures he met with were trivial, mere incidents lasting a few minutes. But occasionally they were longer, leading to far-reaching results.

It was on one such occasion that he had rescued Nelson Lee, and his alliance with the celebrated detective had begun from there. The Night Hawk, swinging leisurely above the dome of St. Paul's, smiled grimly to think of the stirring events that had come to pass since that meeting, and the rogues for whom that alliance had spelt—finish!

He was in idle mood to-night; nothing seemed stirring. Wearying of the metropolis at last, he swerved away for a top-speed fling into the quieter countryside beyond, exulting in the drive of the mighty pinions above him. Soon he was gliding easily to-

**SNUB HAWKINS Subdues
SILK,
The Hawk Solicitor!**

PRINCE!

wards the downs of Buckinghamshire, following the main line from Paddington as it stretched snakily westwards across fields that were silvery in the moonlight.

Across-country, moving like a long red serpent on the shining metals, came the Devon express, hurtling towards London at sixty miles an hour. The Night Hawk, checking his headlong flight, watched it carelessly, wondering how long it would be before such monsters, magnificent as they were, became as obsolete as the old stage-coach, and everyone travelled by air—as he did.

Then, as he turned to continue his cruise, something else caught his eye, almost beneath him. After a moment's stare he reached for his night-glasses quickly.

Below, showing plainly in the moonlight, two men—one of whom carried a shapeless burden on his shoulder—had climbed the fence of the permanent-way and were running up the sloping embankment towards the lines.

Puzzled, the Night Hawk frowned and measured the distance between them and the oncoming express with a doubtful glance. He took the men for railway-workers, and obviously they intended crossing the track without waiting for the train to pass. But they were taking a big risk, for it was perilously close and already the metals were singing and throbbing with the vibration of its approach.



The men reached the top of the embankment and began to cross the lines. Just for a space the man with the burden paused and bent down swiftly; then both took to their heels and bolted down the opposite slope for their lives.

And above them, the Night Hawk dropped his glasses, gave one terrific slash of his wings, and flashed earthwards at breakneck speed, faster than a swooping swallow.

For the man who had bent down had laid something across the glimmering railway lines. And as Thurston Kyle saw in a single, horrified look, that something was a human figure. The train was less than thirty yards away.

Down—down—down he streaked, driving his wings mercilessly, face white and strained. It was a race—a race for life between himself and the roaring, onrushing monster. Another second and the grinding wheels would flash over the unconscious figure.

Heedless of his own dire peril, the Night Hawk hurtled across, strong arms outstretched, ready to pounce. A noise like the crashing approach of doom itself clanged madly in his ears; before his straining eyes the towering express seemed to leap upon its victim. Then, in a final heartrending burst of speed, a hissing, reckless spurt, he plunged beneath the very buffers of the train.

Wings laid flat, he sailed under. His clawing hands fastened on something limp and yielding in a vice-like grip; for a split second the great train seemed to fill the world. Without a check in his lightning swoop, the Night Hawk flicked across the express, whipped the figure from the lines, and threw it away and in front of him with all his strength.

Out of the inferno of sound and violent movement came a pile-driving blow that caught the tips of his wings, hurling him aside, spinning him round like a top, helpless, out of control. The mighty engine raced past, a long line of carriages following, seeming to glower in triumph. Then the sloping embankment rose to meet the Hawk as he fell wings uppermost, and in a jangle of steel and loosened earth, he slithered and rolled to the bottom.

And so the Devon flyer raced on towards a distant bend. While, still in a silent heap beside the dazed and shaken Night Hawk, lay the figure he had snatched from death.

SNUB HAWKINS, busy as usual in his master's laboratory, turned with a grin of welcome on his cheery, freckled face as a familiar sound came from the veranda outside, and the high French windows swung open.

But after one long, wide-eyed stare, his smile vanished pitifully, and he was across the great room in three anxious leaps, gasping as he came:

"Guv'nor—you're hurt! What on earth—"

At the cry of dismay, the Night Hawk smiled faintly and came in, dragging his right leg slightly as he walked. From shoulder to thigh, his silken flying-suit was ripped and soiled, and his right arm hung limply at his side. His strong face showed signs of tremendous exertion. And over his left arm and shoulder he carried the limp, slender form of a schoolboy in badly-tattered Etons.

Without a word, he crossed to the arm-chair and laid his burden down very gently. The boy was plainly in the depths of coma, and did not move until Thurston Kyle released him, when his youthful head rolled helplessly forward on to his chest.

"Guv'nor!" panted Snub again.

The Night Hawk turned reassuringly.

"Just a little unfortunate adventure, Snub. Get me a cushion for this poor lad's head, please; some cold water and—"

Snub's square jaw stuck out mutinously, and he shot a resentful glance at the crumpled youngster in the chair.

"Blow him, whoever he is!" he muttered. "What about you, sir? Let me see to you first. Gosh—you're hurt! Your arm! And your hand's bleeding!"

The Night Hawk's stern face softened patiently. In the ordinary way, no cooler or more obedient lad than Snub could be found, but there were times, as Thurston Kyle knew well, when he could prove as obstinate as a mule. This was one of them.

Without waiting for further words, Snub began unbuckling the splendid wings with feverish haste, taking care not to touch Kyle's injured arm. A fresh groan burst from him at sight of the damaged pinions.

"Oh, golly, sir! The wings! They—they're—"

Thurston Kyle patted his shoulder.

"Now steady, young man!" he soothed. "The wings have sustained a bad blow, but they are not beyond repair, by any means. So do not worry. One of the controls is badly strained, I fear, and those feathers at the tip will require fresh riveting and re-adjusting. An hour's work, however, will mend all that!"

Briefly, because he saw that Snub would not go on until all his fears had been set at rest, he gave the boy an account of the incident, glossing over that hideous second beneath the buffers of the Devon express.

"And that is all!" concluded the Night Hawk at last. "Here I am, safe and sound, lad; at least"—and he glanced ruefully at his arm—"I am afraid I shall have to be careful with this for a day or so. As far as I can judge, I have twisted the biceps and wrist rather violently, but a course of vibromassage will put that right. Now let us attend to our unfortunate guest."

"And—and if you hadn't been there, the kid would have—would have been cut to pieces!" muttered Snub. His lips tight-

ened into a straight, bloodless line. "By thunder, I'd like to collar those two brutes!"

"Perhaps we will!" replied Thurston Kyle; and his voice was sharp. "But—come!"

Crossing to his chemistry shelves, he selected two tiny phials, and, under his directions, Snub mixed them carefully in a measured glass and carried the potion back to the armchair. Setting it down, he ran out of the room, returning in a moment with a cushion. And, on lifting the stranger's lolling head tenderly, he received a fresh shock.

"Why—my sainted aunt, sir—he's an Indian!"

THURSTON KYLE, watching, nodded calmly.

"Precisely, Snub. Also, I might point out, an Indian of the highest Shatriya caste. Does anything else strike you?"

With puzzled eyes, Snub studied the stranger intently. He was a handsome boy of fourteen or fifteen, with clear-cut Oriental features, the soft, dusky complexion and slim hands and feet of his race. Something, however, in his complete stupor attracted Snub's attention, and he bent forward swiftly, placing his nostrils close to the youngster's lips.

"Doped!"

"Exactly. Chloroform, as a matter of fact!" drawled Thurston Kyle. "We must try and bring him round at once, Snub." His mouth drooped dangerously. "I wish I had caught those two men!" he murmured.

"Any idea who he is, sir?"

"No. His pockets are completely empty!"

Holding the Indian boy's head in one arm, Snub bent again, gently parting the even white teeth and pouring the contents of the glass down the lad's throat. Then he laid him back carefully and stood up.

The Night Hawk compressed his lips and raised the Indian's eyelids, peering down long and thoughtfully. At last he inclined his head.

"Yes," he mused, "I think we will leave him for a while. There is no sign of any blow or further injury, apart from a few bruises when I was forced to throw him. Help me off with this suit, please, Snub."

For the next few minutes the freckled lad was busy; and not until Thurston Kyle was reclining at ease in his Chinese smock, with the bruised arm bandaged in a cool compress, did the lad refer to their strange guest once more.

"What d'you make of it, sir?" he asked, as he unlocked a cabinet and brought out a box of Kyle's priceless cigars.

The Night Hawk lit one and examined the glowing tip critically. At length;

"That is a difficult question to answer, my boy, as yet. Murder, of course; something foul; something involving a dastardly

attempt to put this boy to a hideous death. The fact that he is a very high-caste Indian makes the case interesting; but I can only indulge in guesswork, so far, and that is useless. We must wait until our stimulant takes effect."

At that moment the young Indian stirred restlessly, gave a soft, shuddering moan and opened a pair of dazed and velvety brown eyes.

CHAPTER 2.

A Strange Guest!

THURSTON KYLE did not stir. A heavy dose of chloroform had been administered to the Indian boy by his unknown assailants, as he could tell, and powerful though his own antidote was, it would be some minutes before the last fumes of the anæsthetic were finally forced from the young Oriental's brain.

Under drooping eyelids he studied the reviving youth closely. The Indian's eyes, dull and vacant as yet, gazed straight ahead with unseeing stare. Presently they began to move — slowly, lethargically — wandering round the brightly lit laboratory, with its array of strange, intricate apparatus and colourful shelves of bottles.

Suddenly, as though a veil had dropped, the dark pupils brightened. A look of interest dawned in the soft depths—followed instantly by a gleam of terror and shock, as the drugged brain revived and memory returned. With a little gasp and a staccato stammer of words in a sharp, foreign tongue, the boy attempted to rise.

In a single, unhurried stride, Thurston Kyle left his own chair; his white, strong hand pressed lightly on the boy's damp forehead with a touch that was at once soothing and magnetic. The voice that could ring out so harsh and deep on occasions was wondrously low and tranquil now.

"Be still, my boy. You are safe now; quite safe, you understand? Safe among friends."

For a long, breathing space the Indian continued his dilated stare, his small chest rising and falling rapidly under his Eton jacket. But, looking up at the calm, compassionate face above him, something he saw there acted like an instantaneous balm, lulling his panic, so that he sank back on the cushion, still watchful and amazed, but no longer badly frightened.

Thurston Kyle nodded with grave satisfaction.

"Ah, that is better, is it not? Now rest for a few more minutes, and you shall talk to me!"

The boy's lips moved with difficulty.

"Where am I, sahib?" His accent was quaint, with a thin foreign lisp in it.

"At my house in London. I am Professor Thurston Kyle. This is Mr. Hawkins, my assistant."

Snub's reply was a wide, friendly grin that acted as a further tonic. But next

moment the boy was struggling from his chair again, clutching feverishly at the Night Hawk's firm hand.

"Sahib, what has happened? I remember; I took the promenade, the—the stroll in Hyde Park. Then, in a quiet road, a big car stop—a man ask me the way to some place I do not savvy—know, that is. I reply with politeness that I do not savvy; and then—something seize me—some cloth is pressed to my face—I cannot breathe—I choke like billy-o. And then—nothing!"

The words came in a queer, excited babble, a curious mixture of schoolboy slang that made Snub grin again. But the Night Hawk's face was grim.

"So! You live in London, my boy?"

"Only this one day, sahib. I come from Clayton School; my kind guardian, Mr. Jonathan Silk, he send for me—veree important business." The boy's voice took on an odd thrill of pride. "Mr. Silk is man of law—a solicitor, yes? I lodge with him at his flat, No. 5, Dalmeny Mansions, Hyde Park; verree respectable place. And there, to my delight, I meet my father's brave old servant, Lal Dhulatta, after many, many years. He just arrived from India yesterday, and with him another of my countrymen, also devoted to our cause.

"We have long confab.—all to-day we chew the—the cloth. And then, when all is settled, Mr. Silk say I have been stout fellow, and give me a tip, and say 'Go for stroll and fresh air in the Park.' Because then it was dark, and he thought it would be safe."

Thurston Kyle stroked his chin, turning the speech over in his mind reflectively. The reference to a "cause" interested him keenly, as also did the fact that the boy had friends in London.

He sensed a very big mystery somewhere. An Indian boy at a big English Public School—important business with a solicitor—Indian retainers. And an attempted murder. Yes—very interesting.

"So your guardian sent you for a stroll in Hyde Park at night alone? Surely that was unwise if you were in any danger? What do you mean—he thought it would be safe?"

The Indian rolled his eyes and his nervous lips tightened.

"I do not know, sahib. My guardian, he will be worried—off his chump, yes!—because I am gone. There—there are bad fellows after me; scamps, villains." His face hardened fiercely, and he poured out a torrent of words in his own language.

Recovering, he touched the Night Hawk's arm with a timid hand.

"You are hurt, sahib—crocked, yes? You will tell me, please, how I came here—what has happened?"

Thurston Kyle had anticipated the question, and replied quietly, telling the boy how he had picked him off the railway line; but, of course, leaving out all reference to his own wings and how he had brought the lad back afterwards. When the tale was finished, the Indian looked at him long and

gratefully, and, before the Night Hawk could move, his hand was lifted gratefully and pressed to the boy's lips.

"I thank you, sahib. You saved my life at your own peril, yes? Everything I have belongs to you!"

Thurston Kyle's face broke into a slow smile. The boy in the chair before him looked so small and frail, yet there was a solemn dignity in his voice and manner far beyond his years. His method of expressing thanks, too, was typically Eastern.

"It was nothing; we will not refer to it again," said the Night Hawk. "But you shall tell me this: Why should your guardian fear for your safety? Why should rogues kidnap you, my boy? And, above all, why should they condemn you to such a vile death?"

"And what is your name, young 'un?" put in Snub quietly.

Rising, with Kyle's help, to his feet, the Indian lad looked from one to the other of his new friends; a diffident look that still was somehow grave and searching. At last he lifted his pointed chin proudly and bowed to them both.

"Because, sahibs, I am Prince Budrudin Ananda of Bhuristan!"

He clenched his fist emphatically.

"And the men who tried to kill me must surely have been in the pay of my uncle; that fiend, that usurper of my father's throne, the self-styled Rajah of Bhuristan!"

THERE was a long-drawn silence, during which Snub's jaw dropped slowly and Thurston Kyle looked pensively at the even glow of his cigar.

An Indian prince—this small, dignified boy in the torn Etons! The revelation confirmed much that Thurston Kyle had shrewdly guessed already: the youth was an important pawn in one of the many intrigues constantly seething in the amazing land of India.

Replacing his cigar between his lips, the great scientist calmly reviewed the position in his mind. To most men, having rescued even a youthful member of Indian royalty, the next step would have been to inform the police or, as in this case, the boy's guardian.

But Thurston Kyle rarely did the obvious thing; and least of all did he intend 'phoning the police, for he was his own police force when necessary. Before his own eyes a callous and cruel attempt at murder had been committed—an attempt that in many ways pointed to well-organised team work—with somewhere in the shadowy background an Indian rajah, a fiend, a Pretender, according to Prince Budrudin.

And, further, the Night Hawk required more information about Mr. Jonathan Silk before getting into touch with him. The man was a solicitor and, therefore, presumably acute. But he had been foolish enough—criminally foolish mused Thurston Kyle—to allow a young boy, who was under a cloud of political peril, to go out alone near a big

London park after dark, when apparently devoted servants were within call to act as escort.

The fact attained a keen significance in the scientist's penetrative mind. Decidedly it was for him to sound the Indian lad thoroughly before allowing him to return to such careless guardianship.

And, besides, that attempted murder had nearly cost him his own life. He had a score to settle with those men on the railway embankment if ever he could find them. The thought made his eyes harden.

"I see!" he said at last to the slight figure still standing upright, and waved a courteous hand. "Well, please be seated, your Highness. You are not recovered yet."

The lad sat down at once, alert and bright-eyed now. And Thurston Kyle, leaning forward, went on smoothly:

"I think it would be advisable for you to tell me your story, my boy. I do not wish to be inquisitive, but—well, the circumstances are strange, you will admit. You can trust me?"

"With my life, sahib!" was the instant, eager reply.

"Thank you; the trust is appreciated. Now, your Highness, you spoke of a guardian. You—er—like him?"

"Oh, sahib, he is my greatest friend!" cried the boy prince vehemently. "For over one year he has been to me as a father. My own is—dead."

"Ah!" Thurston Kyle's voice was enigmatic. "And the Indian you referred to—Lal Dhulatta?"

"He, too, is devoted to me, sahib. He was my father's loyal servant at home in the—the old days. I do not remember him very well then, because I was too young. But he knew me again at once to-day, and Mr. Silk he also thinks him stout fellow."

The boy leaned forward impulsively as Thurston Kyle said nothing.

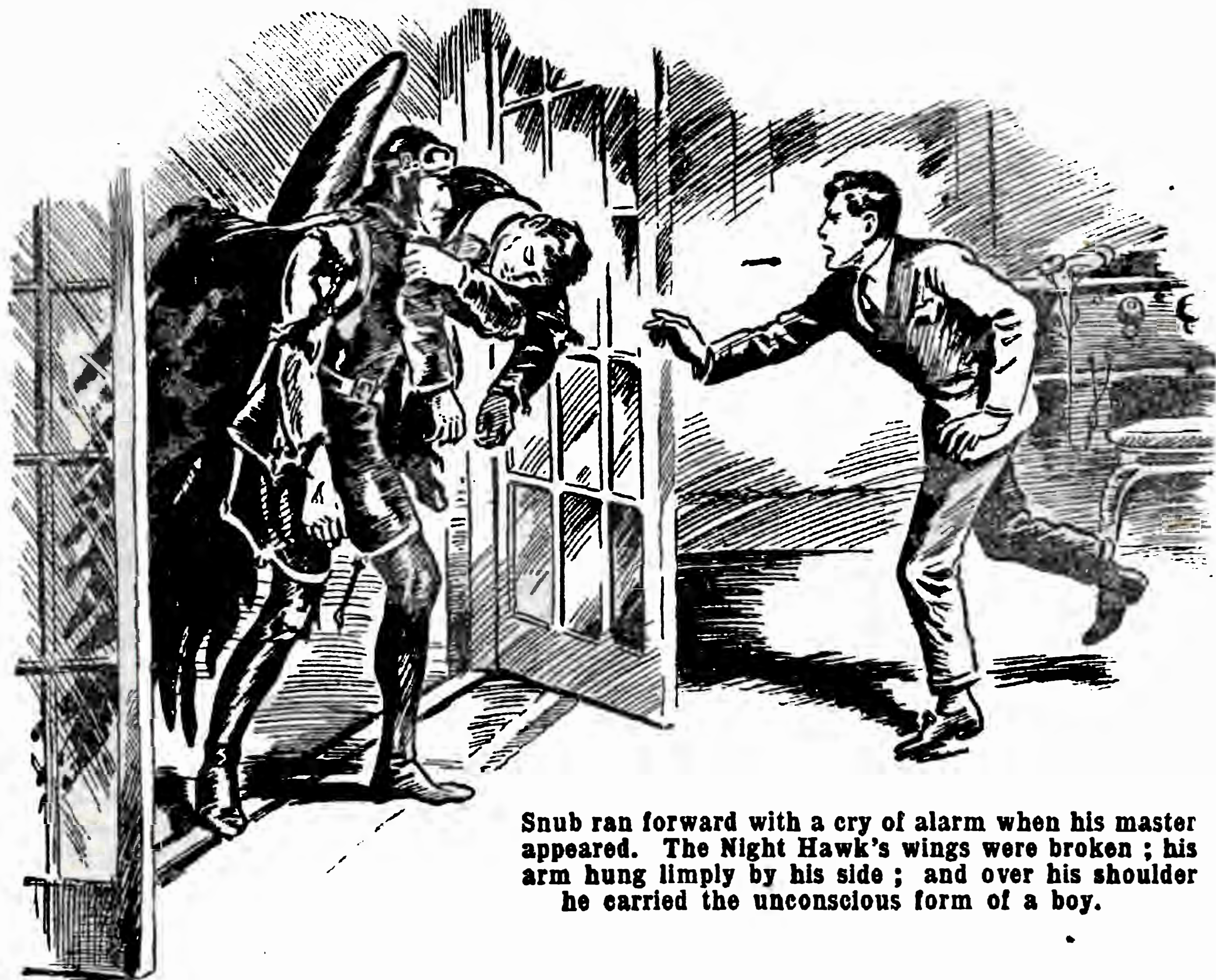
"Listen, sahib, I tell you all about myself. Mr. Silk say never do that to anyone; but you have saved my life and it is different. Yes?" The small brown face was aglow. "As I say, I am Prince of Bhuristan. Really, I am rajah, too. But I am very poor rajah and without a country—yet."

"You know Bhuristan, sahib? No, I see you do not. Few people in Europe do, for our name means the 'Hidden People,' and truly we are hidden—by mountains high as the moon, with only a few passes—great walls that shut us away from the outside world."

His high voice, speaking its quaint English, was the only sound in the laboratory.

"Many years ago, when I am small kid, there is dirty work done. My uncle, the present rajah—may a million jackals devour him!—conspired against my father and robbed him of his throne. We had to fly. And my father, taking only some jewels and me, escaped from India for good."

"But among the jewels he took, sahib, was our wonderful 'Dagger of Blood'—a great ruby cut to the shape of a knife. It is



Snub ran forward with a cry of alarm when his master appeared. The Night Hawk's wings were broken ; his arm hung limply by his side ; and over his shoulder he carried the unconscious form of a boy.

hereditary jewel of Bhuristan—without it no rajah may sit on our throne. And my father took it so that my uncle should be foiled !

“But it was not to be. That clever dog, discovering the loss, sent assassins after my father at once to bring the dagger back, and meanwhile he had another Dagger of Blood made in secret—a poor, worthless thing, sahib, but enough to fool our people when my uncle wears it in the front of his turban. If once they should discover it is not the real dagger, my uncle would cop it—get it in the neck, yes? They would tear him to pieces. But he is too clever; he surrounds himself closely with guards and his own councillors, and the common people do not know the truth.

“Meanwhile, his assassins pursued us, but we escaped at last to France—to Paris. They never give up the trail, though, and after some years they find us again, and again we hook it and come to England, where my father goes to Mr. Silk, who was in India once and is an old pal. That was one year ago.

“But by now my father is old and tired. Dying!” The boy's soft lashes glistened. “He has given up hopes of ever returning to Bhuristan, and one by one our jewels have been sold so we could live. Only the Dagger of Blood remains, and before my father died he gave it to Mr. Silk, and made him promise to guard me till the day

comes for me to go back to my country and claim my right.

“Mr. Silk say ‘yes, yes,’ with joy. And then my honoured sire blessed me and died: and—and I am sent away to school with much sorrow.”

Putting out a hand, Thurston Kyle ruffled the bent black head with infinite gentleness.

“Ah, that was bad, my dear lad. Do not think about it any more. Tell me what happened to-day!”

The prince's face brightened.

“Last night, to Clayton School came a message from Mr. Silk, asking for me to come to London—on verree important business. I come; and there also is Lal Dhulatta, whom I do not remember very well, but who greets me as a subject should his prince.

“Things are going great guns for me. All this time, the good Mr. Silk has guarded the dagger and spent great sums in trying to regain my throne. Dhulatta and the other man have now come from India to find me and take me back to Bhuristan in secret—the dagger also. And there, where some of my father's old friends await me, we shall make known the truth—that the rajah's dagger is false, and that he himself is no good. Thus we shall hoist him with his own bucket, and I am Rajah of Bhuristan in his place.”

"Just so!" exclaimed Thurston Kyle dryly. "But what happened in Mr. Silk's flat?"

Prince Budrudin spread his hands in an eastern gesture.

"Why, sahib, have I not said? We talk, we plot, we scheme. All day we are in Mr. Silk's flat. We think we are safe; that my uncle's men are up the pole—no; off the scent! But it is not so. Mr. Silk say 'Go for walk and fresh air; all is well.' And then behold, they nail me. Now"—he waved his hands round the laboratory—"I am here, thanks to you, great sahib!"

Chin in hand, the Night Hawk looked at him with inscrutable eyes that seemed to pierce and read the boy's innermost thoughts. Then he asked softly:

"And after all this danger—now that death had actually stared you in the face—do you intend to continue the battle, your Highness, for the throne of Bhuristan?"

At the words, as though they were a clarion call, the youngster leapt to his feet. Gone in a flash was the wiry schoolboy in Etons; in his place stood a young Indian potentate, quivering with determination and fiery racial pride. The echoes of a thousand fighting ancestors made his childish voice ring again as he answered:

"Yes, sahib. Yes, yes, yes! Never will I give up my throne. I have loyal friends and servants—if I risk my life a hundred times I will fight and fight till my uncle has his deserts, and I am ruler on my father's old throne!"

His small fist came down on the armchair with a vigorous thud.

CHAPTER 3.

Thurston Kyle is Suspicious!

"SPLENDID!"

Thurston Kyle's hand shot out instantly and clapped the boy heartily on the shoulder. His deep-set eyes gleamed fiercely. The belligerent speech was one after his own heart; and Snub, who knew his master well, knew, too, that the question had been a test. If young Budrudin had faltered for even a second, the Night Hawk would have sent him away there and then and forgotten him forthwith. But the boy had leapt unhesitatingly to the challenge, thus earning a right to the strange, lawless man's friendship.

Leaning back in his chair again, the scientist fell into a reverie, closely watched by the two boys. He was examining the case from every angle.

In spite of the weirdness of Budrudin's language, he had told his tale with deadly earnestness, painting a grim, pathetic picture of the old rajah, his father, hounded from country to country by tireless foes, yet clinging desperately to his young son—and the strangely-named jewel without which no man could securely rule in Bhuristan.

The usurper had apparently tricked the natives completely with a false stone; but he was sparing no effort to recover the genuine talisman, lest some day, even after all these years, Nemesis should overtake him. At any time, the rightful Prince of Bhuristan might return, bearing the Dagger of Blood; and then his fate would be swift and terrible.

To make his throne secure for ever he must regain the dagger—and he must destroy Prince Budrudin. And one of these tasks, but for the Night Hawk, would have been accomplished an hour ago. For it seemed plain, from the prince's own words, that whoever the two kidnappers were who had seized him, they could only be in the pay of the Rajah of Bhuristan.

On the whole there seemed nothing else to do for the present but to return the youngster at once to his guardian, the unknown Mr. Jonathan Silk, foolish though the man had been, to Thurston Kyle's way of thinking.

The young Indian evidently admired and respected Silk; and the solicitor himself, by undertaking to guard two such dangerous wards as the prince and the Dagger of Blood had, to all appearances, shown himself a brave and loyal friend; for guardianship of the jewel alone was sufficient to earn him a bullet or knife-thrust at any time, apparently.

Yet, although his inscrutable face did not betray the fact, Thurston Kyle was puzzled and uneasy. With characteristic firmness he made up his mind as to the best course of action. Rising from his chair, he nodded to the dusky youth.

"I am going to send you home at once in my car, Budrudin. But first, if you will excuse me, I wish to speak to my assistant!"

The prince's teeth flashed in a joyful smile, and, taking Snub by the arm, the scientist led him to the window.

"Now take this lad straight home, Snub," he whispered. "But, frankly, there is something hidden in this I do not quite like. I want you to go into the flat with him—do not be put off. See this Jonathan Silk, and the Indians. Talk to them—try to find out what they are like. You understand?"

"Yes, guv'nor," murmured Snub tensely.

"Tell them how the boy came into our hands—my version of it, of course. Find out if they intend calling in the police, and if they do, let the matter drop. But if they do not—and one can never tell in these Indian political feuds—say that if I can help in any way, I shall be pleased. I will leave that to your own discretion, though." The Night Hawk squared his lean jaw. "I like the young lad, Snub—I should like to help him. And—there are two callous fiends somewhere whom I wish to punish."

Snub looked at his master wisely.

"Leave it to me, sir. I don't like the sound of Silk, either, somehow. Honest or not, he ought to be kicked for letting the kid out alone. But we've only vague sus-

picious to go on and they may be right off-side. In which case, we'll only cause an unnecessary outcry when young India's reported missin' and we'll look fools."

The Night Hawk smiled at his assistant's blunt summing-up, but nodded agreement.

"Exactly. Now get the car round. I must proceed with the repairs to my wings without delay. And, Snub—tell Mr. Silk I may call on him myself to-morrow at, say, ten o'clock!"

Together they returned to his Highness, and Thurston Kyle gave the boy a warm and encouraging handshake.

"Au-revoir, Budrudin; I shall see you again. You will be home with your guardian in a very short time now. And remember"—his voice deepened—"if at any time you need me, I am your friend, my boy!"

There was a strange, awed look in the young prince's face as he stared solemnly up at the superb man in the brilliant silk robe. Without a word he flung out his arms and bent double in a profound salaam, and straightening, he kissed the Night Hawk's hand again.

Snub's bluff voice from the doorway broke the spell.

"Now, come on, kid! Step along!"

With a last smile, the "kid" stepped.

IN his usual light-hearted style, Snub Hawkins whirled his Highness of Bhuristan home to Hyde Park, sending Thurston Kyle's high-powered Daimler through the streets at a pace that made Budrudin's eyes shine. It was nine o'clock when they left the Hampstead mansion, and nine-twenty when they drew up before a dark block of mansions in a quiet Bayswater street. But in that short time the freckled Snub had acquired a devoted hero-worshipper.

In spite of his apparent high spirits, however, Snub was inwardly cool and alert. Like his master, he suspected a nigger in the woodpile somewhere. Jonathan Silk, to whose flat they were going, might be an honest man—there was, strictly speaking, little reason to believe he was anything else. He might have sent his ward for a lonely walk in all good faith, and perhaps by now was frantically besieging the police with messages on behalf of the missing lad. But—Snub reserved his judgment.

Dalmeny Mansions, he found, were a gabled collection of houses, starchy and respectable. They were divided into blocks of six self-contained flats, each block having its own dimly lighted marble vestibule and narrow spiral staircase leading to the flats above the street level.

Silk's flat, No. 5, was in the first block, standing on the corner of a little mews, on one side of which were lock-up garages, and on the other the side-wall of the mansions. Snub brought the car to a standstill and got out first, looking up the road and down the mews doubtfully. "Queer street—old-fashioned—darned quiet," he thought. Still, here they were.

"Hop out, young 'un!" he commanded cheerfully, and taking the boy's arm, helped him into the vestibule and up the stairs. Budrudin leaned on him heavily; he had yet to recover from his hectic experiences earlier on.

They walked up quietly, past the first landing and on to the top one, lit by a single shaded bulb. The prince, detaching himself from Snub, gave a little chuckle of anticipation and stepped forward to knock on the door of number five.

Snub caught his arm neatly, smiling.

"I'll knock, Sunny Jim!" he said, and placed his own sturdy form in front of the prince's slim one. His hefty knock woke the echoes.

For some time following that loud summons there was silence—no reply; and although the door had frosted glass panels, no light showed through them from the flat. The place seemed deserted.

But suddenly, as Snub waited, ears and eyes on the alert, he distinctly saw the letter-box move warily; someone was peeping out. The flap was dropped back into position next instant assilently as it had been raised, and from the inside of the flat, so faint he only just caught it, came the sound of a stealthy footstep. Again there was silence.

Snub became impatient. Stubborn jaw set, he raised his hand and crashed the knocker again. And this time, as the clang rang throughout the house, the door swung open hastily. A sharp voice snapped from the darkness.

"Well?"

There was a perceptible pause, during which Snub, in no way perturbed by the hostile tone, calmly surveyed the speaker. He saw a lined, hollow face framed against the dark background; clean-shaven, save for a pair of meagre side-whiskers of distinctly legal type. Two small pale eyes, set under bushy brows, returned his stare with interest. The man edged forward.

"Well?" he snapped again. Snub raised his cap politely.

"Mr. Jonathan Silk?" he asked.

The other pursed his thin lips and frowned.

"That is my name. What do you——" He stopped abruptly on catching a slight movement behind Snub, and his voice rose in shrill alarm. "What—who——"

Snub swung round quickly, but before he could stop him young Budrudin dodged out of hiding and ran forward, laughing delightedly.

"Guardian!"

On the whole, Thurston Kyle's assistant was not displeased with the interruption. It gave him a chance to watch Mr. Silk's face in the confusion. And there was plenty to see.

As though an invisible hand had struck him across his lean face, the solicitor recoiled, little eyes bulging and lips agape. He looked as though he was seeing a ghost.

It might have been the natural effect of the sudden shock, of course. The light on

the landing was very tricky, and by now Silk had retreated right back into the dark hall of the flat. But Snub, with fast-beating heart, was watching the man's expression with keen eyes, and did not miss in the least the tremendous effort with which he pulled himself together. He fairly lured towards the prince, gripping him with tremulous hands.

"Budrudin! My dear boy! Where—where have you been?"

His sharp voice rang, and out of the passage behind him loomed two tall, gaunt figures on noiseless feet. Snub saw the agitated whites of their eyes shine in the gloom, and guessed they were the Indians of whom Budrudin had spoken. In silent haste they stepped forward, muscular men in ill-fitting European dress, and salaamed to the ground. Budrudin hailed them joyfully, and began pouring out his adventures immediately.

But to Snub's chagrin, the youngster lost control of his English entirely in the excitement, and burst into his own torrential language, which Silk appeared to understand perfectly. From time to time, however, the freckled youth heard the name "Thurston-kyle," the two words run into one, and caught Mr. Silk glancing at him repeatedly with a furtive, calculating light in his flickering eyes. Snub's own face grew more stolid than ever. After all, Budrudin could only repeat what Thurston Kyle had told him.

At last, when the prince stopped through sheer lack of breath, the solicitor braced his shoulders with something like relief. A smile that was meant to be overwhelmingly jovial struggled across his seamed face and, hugging the boy tight, he held out his hand to Snub.

"You are Mr. Hawkins, assistant to Professor Thurston Kyle, so his Highness tells me? Believe me, Mr. Hawkins, I shall never be able to express my heartfelt gratitude for all that has been done to-night!"

"Don't mention it," smiled Snub sweetly. "May I come in? Thanks!"

Without waiting for a reply, he stepped coolly into the flat, and Silk, after a moment's hesitation, switched on the light. Snub grinned inwardly. One of Thurston Kyle's orders had been carried out. He was inside.

"I have a message from my master," he murmured, and stood his ground solidly until Silk, with a last reluctant glance at the door, turned and led the way to a comfortable room, obviously his study. It was littered with papers, and Snub's sharp eyes noted a telephone on the desk and a door leading apparently to an inner chamber, while a glance through the half-drawn lace curtains told him the room was at the back of the house, overlooking the yard or garden below, with no other houses facing.

Jonathan Silk waved his hand to a chair.

"Please sit down, Mr. Hawkins. A glass of wine? Cigarettes?"

"Neither, thanks," drawled Snub. "I cannot stay long. Mr. Silk: I was ordered to

If you like school yarns you should buy—

bring Prince Budrudin back to his—er—
anxious friends, and get straight home."

"Ah!" Silk seemed grieved. "Too bad. But what is your message?"

Before answering, Snub glanced around composedly. The solicitor had a decanter in his trembling hands, and the Indians stood with folded arms against the wall, after the manner of Oriental servants. Young Budrudin lay back limply in a chair, smiling and listening attentively.

"Well, first of all, Mr. Silk," said Snub at last, "have you called in the police—or do you intend doing so now?"

At the blunt question Silk's colourless eyes narrowed; the glass of wine he was pouring for himself was instantly spilt.

"Why?" he cried. And his voice was a challenge.

CHAPTER 4.

The Dagger of Blood!

SNUB shrugged as though in surprise. "I merely asked," he retorted. "As you have been told, my master found your ward in jolly queer circumstances. To be exact, someone has attempted to murder the kid to-night!"

"Yes, yes!" Silk hesitated, thought for some seconds, and then, after an obvious effort, became smoothly candid. "Well, the position is this, Mr. Hawkins. Prince Budrudin informs me he has told your master his history—very natural in the circumstances, I'm sure. Now, to be frank, I do not intend calling in the police at all. We—the prince's devoted friends—are fighting desperately to put him back on the glorious throne of Bhuristan, where he belongs. And if once the case gets into the hands of Scotland Yard, the subsequent publicity might easily ruin our chances."

He gulped the wine down, and his voice became more assured.

"You see, what has happened to-night suits my plan admirably. Strange though it may seem, the hideous attempt on his Highness gives us a very strong advantage. You see why? No? I will explain, then."

He banged the table noisily, then continued:

"The men who—who laid him before the train will surely report him dead. Obviously they cannot know he was rescued. Therefore, Budrudin's enemy, his brutal uncle, will also believe him dead. And so"—he shrugged—"if we keep quiet now, he will be off his guard in future and we can work undisturbed. No, I shall not inform the police, believe me!"

Twirling his cap placidly, Snub thought a moment and nodded. The argument was perfectly sound, he had to admit.

"Right, that lets me out," he said cheerily. "In that case, Mr. Silk, my master says if he can help Prince Budrudin in any way, you have only to say so. In fact, he will give you a call to-morrow morning at ten, partly to

see how the prince is, and partly to introduce himself to you. Is it O.K.?"

Jonathan Silk's face glowed with genial pleasure.

"Well, that is too kind!" he bowed.

"To-morrow — at ten. Yes, I shall be only too pleased to see your master. And now, doubtless, you must go?"

"Sure thing!" Snub took the hint smoothly. There seemed nothing else for it.

Crossing to Prince Budrudin, he held out his hand.

"Well, so-long, Buddy. Glad you're in such good hands again; keep smilin'. Good - night, Mr. —"

The little prince sprang up with a word of dismay, his dark face down-cast.

"But, Snub, you cannot go like this! You have been stout fellow — you bring me home—you are my friend, yes?" He seized Snub's hand and became very dignified once more. "Remember, I am Rajah

of Bhuristan. You must permit me to discharge my obligations to you in some way."

The speech, well meant though it was, made Snub's homely face redden. But even as a curt refusal trembled on his lips, an idea, swift and brilliant, shot through him—an inspiration. He shrugged in well-assumed embarrassment.

"Rats! I don't want anythin' for bringin' you home, Buddy. But——"

"Yes," was the eager cry, "what is it?"

"That wonderful jewel of yours—the—the whatever you call it," mumbled Snub awkwardly. "I'd like to see it if—if it isn't askin' too much!"

Silk's voice cut in sharply.

"See the Dagger of Blood? Impossible! I cannot allow——"

"Oh, all right!" Snub sighed in disappointment and turned away. But young Budrudin seized him by the arm and then swung round on the solicitor, his brown eyes flashing.

"Why cannot Snub see my dagger? Surely, after all that he and the great



Snub was standing no nonsense. He barged open the door and thrust an automatic in front of the scoundrelly solicitor.

Thurston Kyle have done, it is a paltry reward he asks. Mr. Silk, show him the dagger, please!"

Silk's lips tightened.

"Impossible, your Highness," he said firmly, but he winced as Budrudin fairly exploded with wrath.

"Impossible? To me?" he flashed in his boyish voice. He stamped an imperious foot. "Mr. Silk, I command you to show my friend the Dagger of Blood—the glory of Bhuristan!"

If ever venomous hatred glared in a man's eyes, it did then as Silk stared viciously from the slim Indian to Snub. For a moment the English boy thought he meant to disobey; but apparently he thought better of it, and walked dragglingly towards a small safe in the wall.

Slowly the tumblers of the combination lock turned beneath his chary fingers until, eventually, the door swung open. He returned to the two boys, carrying a soft leather case, which Budrudin took from him angrily.

And then Snub saw the most marvellous jewel that he had ever beheld—a thing of uncanny beauty, yet somehow repulsive, as though its dark history was reflected in its rich depths.

It was a single ruby, nearly five inches long, shaped like a cruel, curving knife. Little as Snub knew of jewels, he could tell that every facet had been cut by a prince among workmen, for the ruby glowed and sparkled as though filled with liquid flames. Truly it was a rajah's gem.

He drew a long, deep breath at length, and glanced swiftly at the faces around him. The dagger held them under a spell: Bud-rudin proud and adoring, the Indians plainly frightened, and Jonathan Silk—— Snub turned away hastily. The sooner he was out of here the better, he thought.

Abruptly he held out his hand again to the prince.

"Thanks for showin' me," he jerked. "That's some ruby! But now I'm off!"

The young prince gripped his hand tight and the Indians salaamed. Jonathan Silk, however, accompanied Snub to the door, his manner genial once more. He made no further reference to the Dagger of Blood of Bhuristan.

"Good-bye, Mr. Hawkins; thank you! And your master will call on me to-morrow? At ten? That will be—delightful. Good-night!"

The door slammed briskly.

SNUB went into the street again without a single look backwards, forcing himself to walk leisurely. He was tingling with excitement, though; a voice seemed to ring insistently in his ear:

"It's all wrong, Snub! Snub, you red-headed goat, Silk's a crook—Silk's a crook!"

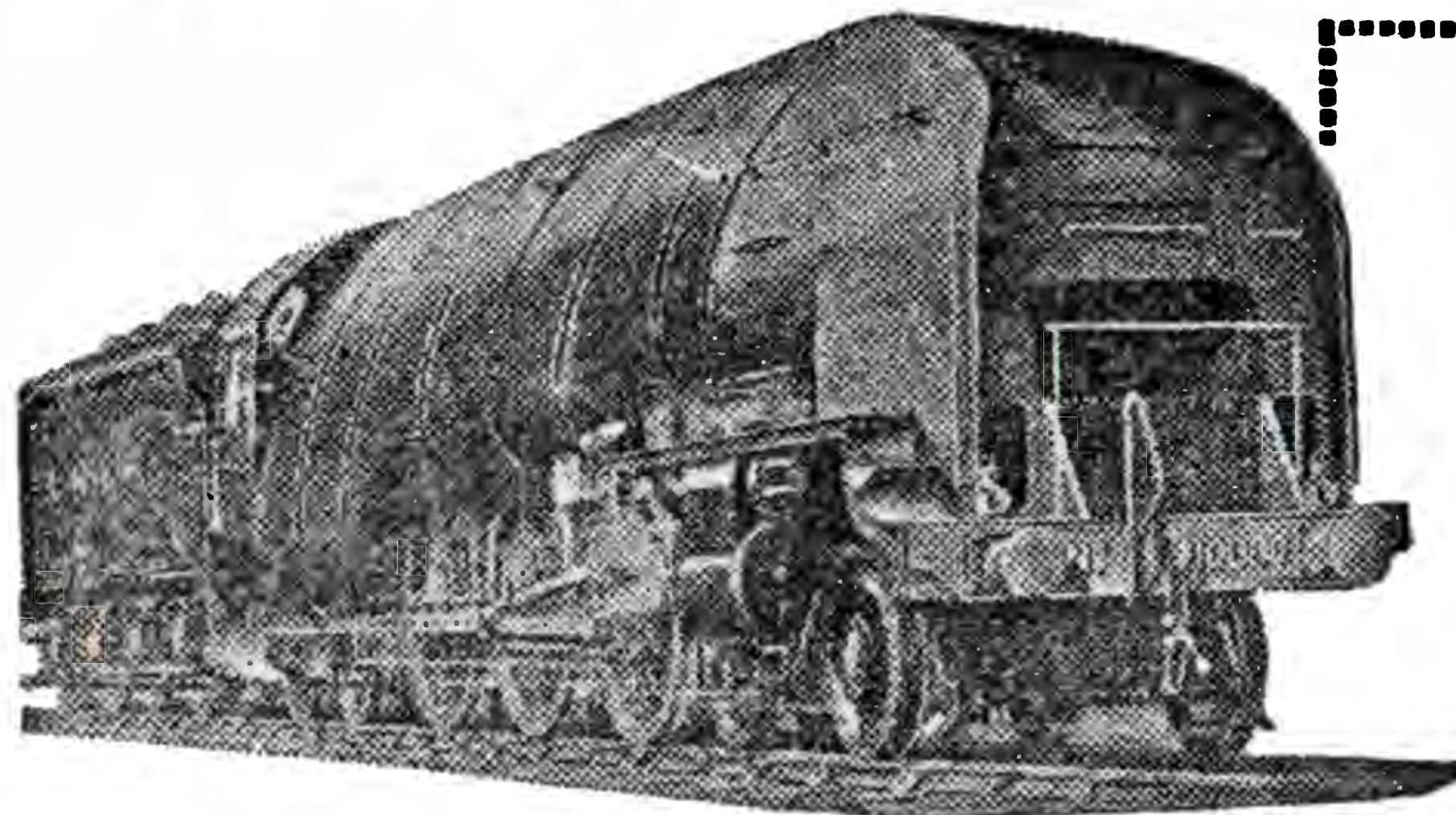
He was sure of it—had been since that first meeting, when Silk had looked sick with terror at seeing "Buddy" again. Thurston Kyle's vague suspicions had been right. Snub was willing to bet anything that the young prince had been deliberately sent out to his death by his treacherous guardian.

Once in the street, the youngster's actions were swift. Leaping into the car lest anyone should be watching him, he drove it gaily down the street, round a corner, then parked it with only the side lights burning. Then he nipped out and returned to Block 1, Dalmeny Mansions, at the double.

In his head simmered a hard-and-fast plan. Sidling down the little mews beside the house, he examined the wall, and found it fairly low, but protected by broken glass. With a determined snort, he tossed his folded jacket over the jagged frieze, gave a run and a jump, and in a moment was on top and lowering himself carefully down into the yard beyond.

The rear of Block 1 was in total darkness save for a single light on the top story—Mr. Silk's study—which he had left only five

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minutes before. The plan was working well.

Snub knew something of mansions, and as he had fully expected, he found a narrow iron stairway zig-zagging from the yard up the house-wall to each flat above. He went up that stairway like a shadow.

At last he came to the top balcony—Mr. Silk's "back-yard." From where he stood he was unable to see in the room, but without hesitation he climbed over the protecting railings, leaned forward till he could grip the window-sill and, from this perilous position, craned his neck to peer inside.

One glance was enough to tell him his fears had been well-founded. Such a scene of swift and drastic activity met his eyes that he nearly fell from his post.

At a centre table, Jonathan Silk, with beads of sweat glistening on his forehead, was stacking handfuls of papers into a suitcase, talking fiercely the while to one of the two Indians. And, in the armchair, little Prince Budrudin lay unconscious; as completely drugged as when Snub had first met him!

The men must be desperate; they must have fallen on the boy the moment Snub had driven away. Of the Dagger of Blood there was no sign.

Through the window a babble of words came clearly; but Silk was speaking in Bhuristani, leaving Snub completely in the dark. Now and again, however, he caught words he understood: "Thurston Kyle" was mentioned spitefully, together with two other English names—"Arthurs" and "Smith." And time and again came the word "Croydon."

Croydon! Snub frowned and listened harder. He wished, with all his heart, the solicitor would lapse into English.

And finally the man did so. One of the Indians, whom Snub guessed to be Lal Dhulatta, "the rajah's old loyal servant," said something which did not meet with Silk's approval, and an angry outburst followed.

"You black dolt! Don't you understand? This interfering fool Thurston Kyle, whoever he is, will be here to-morrow at ten. We must do the thing to-night and get clear in good time. I bluffed that idiotic Hawkins boy; but something tells me his master will be different."

Dismissing the Indian with a contemptuous gesture, the crook flung himself at the telephone. Snub, almost panting with excitement, leaned closer to the window.

In a harsh, jerky voice the solicitor spat out a number; waited impatiently for the call. It came at last; and Snub's thoughts ran riot as he listened.

"Hallo! Croydon aerodrome?" The words were loud and distinct. "My name is Jonathan Silk, solicitor, Lincoln's Inn. I am acting for his Highness Prince Budrudin of Bhuristan. Yes. Can I engage a three-

seater 'plane immediately to fly to France? Yes; very urgent indeed. The boy has been taken seriously ill and an immediate operation is necessary.

"What's that? A London surgeon? My dear fellow, I have already suggested that, but the boy's parents and friends are in Paris, and his equerry insists on taking him over there at once to a French surgeon.

"Eh? No; we shall not need a pilot. The equerry, Lal Dhulatta, is an experienced flying-man, holding an 'A' certificate from Bombay. Yes, he will produce it. You can let me have the 'plane, then? In an hour? Excellent. Thank you."

He rang off, lantern jaws agrin with triumph. Without ado, the two Indians snapped into action at his few brief words, hustling themselves and the unconscious prince into heavy overcoats and scarves. The solicitor passed over a big wad of notes to Dhulatta, who took it, signed to his companion to pick up the prince, and, after a curt nod and salaam, the two left the room.

The whole thing was finished at a speed that left Snub breathless. A 'plane to France—no official pilot; that was easy. 'Planes, of course, could be hired at Croydon like ordinary motor-cars by a certificated pilot. And Prince Budrudin's state of coma, when they arrived there, would raise no queries, thanks already to Silk's neat explanation.

It was clever, diabolically so. For Snub knew, with grim certainty, that the young prince would never reach France once he was off the ground. Somewhere over Kent or the dark Channel, what would be easier than to throw his unconscious body out; or say, a fake accident? Snub saw the move as clearly and as shrewdly as if Silk himself had explained it to him.

Cold with rage, his hand dropped to the gun in his hip-pocket, and it was a toss-up for a second whether he smashed his way in there and then. But saner thoughts prevailed. It was three against one, and at the first alarm one of the Indians might kill the young prince at once. They plainly meant doing so that night, one way or the other. Or they might shoot Snub himself before he could get them.

Crouched in the darkness, he heard the men come cautiously down the alley below and open a garage. Soon a big car was purring in the mews, the prince was stowed safely inside, one of the men leapt to the wheel.

Headlights on, it slid out and into the open street. Its purr died away swiftly. Snub, with a last bitter glare at the solicitor, who had resumed his interrupted packing, faded away from the window and down the iron staircase again.

Nor did he stop running until he was in a telephone-box, eyes blazing, red hair bristling with rage.

"THAT you, guv'nor?"

He snapped out the words. The Night Hawk's deep voice answered him.

"Guv'nor, listen hard! Gosh, it's a proper work-up here! Jonathan Silk's a beastly crook; so are the Injuns. The kid was sent out into a trap to-night and they set it. Silk nearly swooned when I produced young Buddy. And now they've doped him again and they're going to have another try!"

In flaming tones choked with wrath, he poured out all he had done, seen and heard, while Thurston Kyle listened in tense silence.

At last:

"So the Indians have gone to Croydon aerodrome now?"

"Just left, sir. They'll be there in an hour."

"Very good. You did well not to interfere, Snub. I will handle this myself without fuss."

Snub caught his master's meaning instantly. His voice rose in a wail.

"But, guv'nor, you can't fly again to-night! Let me grease off to Croydon myself. Or 'phone the police to stop them. You're hurt!"

"Do we usually ask police assistance, my lad?" replied Thurston Kyle tartly. "I can and will see to it. I have almost repaired the wings and will leave at once. Return home immediately and do not worry. Silk can wait. You have done very well."

The telephone clicked into silence. Snub crashed out of the booth and did a war-dance of fury.

"You chump! You howling, ugly, wooden-headed goop!" he raved at himself. "You might have known the guv'nor would do this. And, by golly, he's badly hurt! Oh, what the dickens am I to do?"

Snub soon came to a decision. Squaring his shoulders with a jerk, he shoved out his jaw and touched his gun lovingly. Thurston Kyle's orders to return at once were forgotten.

"And now, Mr. Snaky Silk," he growled, "it's you and me for it!"

He had just remembered the Dagger of Blood. In a moment he was running back to Dalmeny Mansions, softly, but at top speed.

CHAPTER 5.

Snub Plays a Lone Hand!

THIS time Snub made no pretence at stealth. He was dealing with one man, as chary of the police as himself, and he had nothing to fear.

Racing lightly up to the front door of No. 5, he rat-tatted loudly, at the same time pulling his gun. Again there was a pause before any answer came, but Snub wasn't standing for the letter-box dodge on this

occasion. He kept his hand over it firmly, and the moment Silk timidly opened the door at last, the stocky lad pushed his way in before it could be closed, and rammed his gun savagely into the pit of the man's stomach.

Thus the two stood for an instant; pale, terrified eyes glaring into fiery grey-green ones. At last Silk's stiffening lips managed a word:

"You!"

"Little me!" snapped Snub. "Now don't bother to bluff me again, Silky. I know what you've done with young Buddy; so let's get inside and talk."

The words reduced the solicitor to a state of gibbering panic in a flash; his thin face went a dirty grey as he collapsed against the wall. Without mercy, Snub hauled him upright and thrust him into his study at the point of the gun. Once inside, he closed the door with a firm slam.

"Now, you scut, let's get to business. You can guess what I want. I want that ruby and I want it quick! I'm going to count five; and then, dear old thing, if you don't come across with the dagger, I'm going to shoot you through both kneecaps. I won't kill you this time, but you'll never walk again. And believe me, oil-painting—it'll hurt!"

"You—you——"

"Don't thank me; it's my sweet nature," mocked Snub.

Then, swift as a flicker of lightning, his manner changed to a deadly earnestness, as determined and as ruthless as that of the Night Hawk, his master, when criminals were to be dealt with.

"Get me that jewel, you treacherous dog!" he blazed. "Or, by thunder——" He raised the gun. "One, two——"

"I won't—I won't!" screamed Silk. "I'll call the police!"

"Three——"

"Mr. Hawkins, don't be greedy! Come in with us, my dear lad! This Bhuristan game is not finished yet——"

"Four!" counted Snub stonily. "Fi——"

Silk collapsed. Tears of sheer terror and rage trickling down his grey cheeks, he swayed and dragged himself once more to the wall safe.

Ten seconds later the glorious Dagger of Blood was safe in Snub's inside pocket. He lowered the gun, stood back and surveyed the shaking rogue pitilessly.

"You're a rotten, double-crossing hound, Silk! Now listen to me!" He jerked his head towards the bag on the table. "I see you're all packed up ready to go. Well, you can go. You're going to kiss England good-bye, see? If you pull up your socks, you can just catch the night boat-train from Victoria, and to-morrow morning you're to send me a cable to the Hampstead Post Office at ten o'clock—from France!"

"Once you're 'on the Continent—stay there! If you ever come back to England, I'll find out. And, Silky dear, your name'll

be Charlie." He waited for the words to sink in. "Savvy?"

Raising his head, Silk gave him a long smouldering stare of poisonous hatred. But he was beaten and knew it. He nodded slowly.

"Yes." Hands clenched, he took an impulsive step forward. "But remember what I said, Hawkins, this game isn't finished yet. Whether from the Continent or anywhere else—I'll get you for this!"

A merry laugh made him wince again.

"That's O.K. with me, handsome!" Snub kissed his finger-tips daintly. "Good-bye—and remember that wire."

He walked calmly out of the flat for the last time.

Back in his Hampstead home, his first step was to place the *Dagger of Blood* in Thurston Kyle's safe. The *Night Hawk*, he judged, had been gone some ten minutes.

Snub sat down with anxious heart to await his return.

CHAPTER 6.

The Crippled Hawk Flies Again!

MEANWHILE the *Night Hawk* was flying to the rescue of Budrudin.

Not, however, at his usual smooth thrilling speed, but haltingly, slipping repeatedly in dizzy plunges that called out all his splendid strength and skill. He had told Snub the wings were repaired, but that was far from the truth, for, with one arm powerless, the work had taken too long to complete. Then, too, he had injured his arm-muscles far more than he had admitted, and the harsh, stoical set of his lips told of the pain he was enduring.

Yet he kept on; a grim, inexorable figure, flitting across London and the suburbs until, a few hundred feet below him, glowed the blazing floodlights of Croydon aerodrome.

Swaying aloft, he waited. And finally, his patience was rewarded. A small D. H. three-seater was run out of the hangar, he saw two passengers get aboard, attended by a stretcher-party. A shapeless bundle was stowed gently into the rear cockpit, the men stood back, the propeller whirled, and, in an easy glide, Dhulatta sent the machine ahead—on murderous intent, disguised as an errand of loyalty and mercy.

After it flew Thurston Kyle, the *Night Hawk*.

At best possible speed, he soared above the 'plane, studying it carefully. His lips parted in a mirthless smile: Dhulatta and his companion did not intend waiting long, either!

Already, while the pilot flew steadily, the other Indian was leaning back over the cockpit. The Croydon officials, of course, had strapped Budrudin in securely, and the man's hands were busy with the buckles.

Thurston Kyle had foreseen that; and it suited his plans exactly. Below him were

the hills and fields of Kent; the sky above was serene and lonely in the moonlight. Nursing the damaged wing-control cleverly, he swerved over and dived.

As the real hawk drops on his quarry, so the scientist swooped now, left arm extended. His stern heart leapt with the desire to shoot—to destroy these brown devils, but that was out of the question. They, like Jonathan Silk, could wait.

Budrudin's last second had come. He was lifted out of the cockpit, poised on the edge; one slight push—and the assassins could fly on to the Continent and safety. With all his power, Thurston Kyle flashed down to the boy's aid.

A tense instant before the Indian let go, the black hawk's wings streaked into his line of vision. All nerves paralysed by the sudden awe-inspiring sight, the Indian glared for a terrified second, gave a horrible, vibrant scream and fell back into his seat. And Budrudin, limp and helpless, toppled out of the 'plane into space—

Only for a few yards, however. Reckless of consequences, the *Night Hawk* gave a shout of rage and hurtled after him. Ranging alongside, he shot out both arms, disregarding the white-hot, searing pain that burnt through his whole body, and caught the falling boy to his chest. The aeroplane raced away!

Throwing back his head, Kyle laughed defiantly; his battle-cry. And then, for the second time that night, Prince Budrudin of Bhuristan was borne to safety in the arms of the *Night Hawk*.

"BEAUTIFUL! Beautiful—but sinister!"

Thurston Kyle, from the depths of a vast armchair, handed back to Snub the *Dagger of Blood*. He had reached home after a nightmare flight; Buddv, expertly doctored, was already safe in bed.

Raising a glass of fragrant old brandy to his lips, the *Night Hawk* sipped thoughtfully. His half-closed eyes were pensive.

"To-morrow, Snub, is also a day, as the Arabs say. After to-night, Budrudin is in our care. And"—he tapped his knee quietly—"I will not rest until that boy is restored to his rightful throne! That shall be our next task."

"Any plans, sir?" asked Snub eagerly.

"Not yet. But we will call in our old comrades-in-arms, Nelson Lee and Nipper. And our new ones, Scrappier Huggings, and"—he smiled faintly—"Thurston Kyle's Kittens! I think, Snub, we're going to have plenty of excitement in the very near future!"

THE END.

(Next week's enthralling story in this exciting series is entitled, "*Honours Divided!*" Look out for it, lads.)

"No Surrender!" Is The Cry of The St. Frank's Rebels!

THE REBELS'



CHAPTER 1.

Holding the Fort!

"CHARGE!" bawled Kenmore at the top of his voice.

"Hurrah!"

"Down with the rebels!"

A mob of St. Frank's boys, seniors and juniors mixed, dashed to the attack. The leading dozen, including Kenmore and Sinclair, of the Sixth, were carrying a great telegraph-pole. And they were charging straight at the main doors of the Ancient House.

Forrest, Gore-Pearce, Gulliver, Bell and Hubbard, all of the Remove, were also hanging on to that improvised battering-ram. The mob in the rear were waiting to dash in after the doors had been burst open.

These attackers called themselves the loyalists—they were loyal to the new St. Frank's masters, and were doing everything in their power to smash the rebellion. For the Ancient House had been seized and held by a large party of Removites, Fourth-Formers and fags under the leadership of Nipper.

From the upper windows of the Ancient House came a sharp command. All the windows there were in darkness, whereas the other Houses were brilliant with electric light. The rebels had had their current cut off, but they were undismayed.

"Now, you chaps!" came Nipper's steady voice. "Let 'em have it! Fire!"

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TRIUMPH!

By EDWY
SEARLES BROOKS



A second earlier those upper windows had been empty; now they were crowded with boys. A devastating fusillade of snowballs hissed down. They came from all sides, concentrating upon the attacking party.

Thud! Biff! Thud! Thud!

Kenmore and the other leaders were practically blinded by the flying snowballs. The charge hesitated, wavered.

"Come on!" panted Kenmore savagely. "Snowballs can't hurt us! Smash the door down!"

"Once they're down, we're in!" yelled Forrest.

Again they charged. Then came another unexpected turn. The barricades at a lower

window were thrust aside; something long and gleaming was thrust out; a face appeared beside it. It was the face of Edward Oswald Handforth.

"Right-ho!" he shouted excitedly. "Turn it on!"

The gleaming thing which projected was the heavy brass nozzle of a fire-hose! A stream of water suddenly spurted from it, and Handforth and Church, who were hanging on to the hose, had all their work cut out in holding it.

A great stream of water shot upwards, wavered uncertainly, and then the two juniors got the hang of the thing. They directed the stream at the attackers, and the result was effective. Yelling madly, shrieking and hooting, they dropped the battering-ram and retreated in the wildest disorder.

"Hurrah!"

—HEAD OF THE REBELS!

"We've beaten them back!"

The attackers fled in confusion to the other side of the Triangle, and a stream of water and a hail of snowballs followed them. Drench and snow-smothered, they were compelled to seek refuge in the Modern House and the East House.

"The young blighters!" snarled Kenmore. "We were only ten seconds too late. Why on earth didn't you young idiots charge while you had the chance?"

"You were in command of the party, weren't you?" asked Forrest bitterly.

Cheering and laughter sounded from the Ancient House—and the rebels had good reason to make merry. They had beaten off that attack with ease, and they were ready for any other attack. They knew that their position was secure, and they laughed at these futile efforts to dislodge them.

Certainly they had all the advantages of the situation.

Snow lay thick around St. Frank's—so thick that the entire school was cut off from the rest of the world. The recent blizzard had been the worst in the history of the school. The drifts were ten and twelve feet thick in every direction; roads were absolutely impassable.

In the school itself, the Triangle was under many feet of snow. The only means of communication between the Houses were crudely-cut trenches. The attacking party, therefore, had been compelled to keep to that particular trench which had been recently dug to the Ancient House door. So the rebels had been able to concentrate their fire.

"We've got to get in!" Kenmore was saying, after he had cleared some of the snow from his person. "Those young demons have got most of the food in the school. We can't let them get away with a thing like this!"

"What are we going to do, then?" snapped Sinclair. "We've tried to batter the door down, and we can't even get near it. It's no good trying the rear, because they'll treat us in the same way."

"The masters are on our side, and we can do anything we like," put in Forrest eagerly. "We can go to any extremes——"

"It's no good talking like that, kid," interrupted Kenmore impatiently. "The only way to get those rebels out of the Ancient House is to use dynamite."

He stared across the dark Triangle, frowning. He and all the other boys who had taken part in the attack were desperate. The situation at St. Frank's was bad. Not only was the school completely cut off—and likely to be cut off for many days to come—but the rebels had recently made a raid on the West House, and had secured all the food stores! The West House was the one House at St. Frank's which had had an adequate supply, and the rebels, with rare daring, had grabbed that supply for themselves! The rest of the school was left with the mere leavings.

After that brilliant coup there had been wild excitement. Mr. Horace Pycraft, who

was temporary Head, had called the school together in Big Hall. Mr. Wetherell, who completely overshadowed Mr. Pycraft, had urgently addressed the boys.

"You know the position," he had said impressively. "There is no possibility of getting supplies from outside—those rebellious juniors had seized our food stocks. We have some supplies, of course, but unless we recover the seized goods we shall be on very short rations. Indeed, a starvation diet for all. And it is those rebels who should be on a starvation diet—not us!"

"Yes, rather, sir!" a roar had gone up.

"So I urge you to use any methods in your power to smash this rebellion at once, and to bring these boys to their senses!" Mr. Wetherell had shouted. "Go to it! Destroy their defences, rout them out as you would a pack of rats! It is the only way in which we can be certain of adequate food."

Thus the great attack had commenced—with the full sanction of the masters. Such fellows as Fenton and Morrow and, indeed, the great majority of the Fifth and Sixth, had taken no part. They were neutral. They were neither sympathetic with the rebels, nor with those who called themselves loyalists.

THE new St. Frank's masters were not what they seemed to be. There were ten of them, under the leadership of Mr. John Wetherell. They were supposed to be the scholastic staff of Halford Grammar School—men who had come to the rescue of St. Frank's during the illness of the regular masters.

Actually they were a gang of crooks—confidence men—and Mr. Wetherell was none other than Mike Satella, an international crook of great daring and skill. Millionaire Mike, as he was called, had come to St. Frank's with his gang for a set purpose; but St. Frank's, to his dismay, had proved very much of a handful. The Remove, in particular, had distrusted him from the first. And the great barring-out was the outcome of that distrust.

The boys who had seized the Ancient House felt that they were justified. They refused the authority of the masters, and they were ready to abide by the consequences of their rebellious action. Later Nipper had overheard two of the men talking, and he had learned then the truth of the audacious imposture. Thus the rebels knew now that their actions were fully justified.

The great blizzard had added to the difficulties of the crook schoolmasters, for there was now the vital food question. And although Mike and his men had gained the support of such fellows as Kenmore, Sinclair, Grayson, Forrest, Gore-Pearce and the rest of the rotters, this faction would very soon break away unless adequate food was provided.

But for the snowstorm, the matter would have been easy to remedy; but with St. Frank's cut off as it was, the recent coup of the rebels was one of vital significance.

IN the West House, Simon Kenmore was reporting to Mr. Wetherell.

"We did our best, sir, but the young blighters turned the hoses on us," he was saying. "Most of us were drenched through, and in this weather we couldn't stick it. We had to dash indoors and change."

"A pity we can't cut off their water supply," said Mr. Wetherell gruffly. "How do the mains go, Kenmore? Do you know?"

"I believe there's a man-hole somewhere out in the road, sir—a sort of master-tap—but it would be like looking for a needle in a haystack," replied the prefect. "It's buried under ten or twelve feet of snow, and we don't even know exactly where it is located. Even then it wouldn't be much good, for it would mean cutting off our own water, too."

"That wouldn't matter for the period of an attack," replied Millionaire Mike. "However, since the man-hole is so difficult to locate, we had better forget it. Surely there is some other way, Kenmore, in which you can get the better of these foolish boys?"

"Perhaps you'll think of one, sir?" suggested Kenmore, not without sarcasm.

"Well, I doubt if it's any good taking any further action to-night," said Mr. Wetherell. "The boys are prepared—they're watching. I doubt if we can catch them 'on the hop' yet awhile. To-morrow, perhaps——"

"It wouldn't matter if they hadn't grabbed that food," said Kenmore gruffly. "We could let them stew in their own juice. But what chance is there of our getting supplies from outside? All the roads are blocked, and it may be five or six days before they are open again. We shall be starving before then."

"Leave this to me," said Mr. Wetherell briefly.

After Kenmore had gone Millionaire Mike sought counsel with Mr. Walter Ross, the Housemaster of the West House—alias Dicky Bliss, confidence man.

"Things are looking umpty, Dicky," said Mike. "Even Kenmore is beginning to whine—and we counted on Kenmore as our strongest ally. He's already talking about starvation."

"The rest won't be long in following his example, either," said Dicky Bliss. "Hang it, Mike, is it any good sticking on? Wouldn't it be better to quit while we've got the chance?"

"You're very clever, aren't you?" retorted Mike sourly. "How in blazes are we going to quit? Shall we sprout wings and fly?"

"But surely we could force a way through——"

"You don't know what you're talking about," interrupted the other. "Go to the top of one of the towers and look at the valley. Snow everywhere—snow ten and fifteen feet thick on all the roads! Do you think I'd stop here if there was any chance of getting away? We've got to stop now, Dicky—whether we like it or not. And as we've got to stop, our only course is to get the better of these rebellious juniors. It's

the only way of keeping the support of the other boys."

"But what's coming afterwards—when the roads are open—when the telephones are restored—when we get in touch with the school Governors, and other people who matter?"

"If we handle this situation well, we shall be sitting pretty soft," replied Millionaire Mike. "We came to St. Frank's to get in touch with the sons of rich men. We've done it, haven't we? Forrest—Kenmore—Gore-Pearce—Sinclair—just to mention a few. We have gained their confidence, and when this affair is over we can easily get into their homes. Our introductions will be cast-iron, and their parents will accept us without a suspicion. We can get rid of all our bogus shares. We can unload the whole cargo—and clean up anything between twenty and twenty-five thousand quid. Have patience, Dicky, and we shall come out on top."

CHAPTER 2.

The Raid!

"BY gad!" ejaculated Bernard Forrest, in a startled voice.

He was sitting up in bed, and the first grey of the dawn was glimmering through the window. Gulliver and Bell and Doyle and Owen major, the other occupants of the dormitory, were sound asleep. Forrest & Co. were Ancient House fellows, really, but as they were barred out of their own quarters they were temporarily accommodated in the West House.

Forrest had been dreaming; he had been fighting a gang of gunmen, singlehanded, in a dank, subterranean tunnel. He had already killed five of the gunmen, and as a last resort he had thrown a bomb. The tunnel had caved in, and Forrest had awakened just as the masonry was crashing down upon his head. He wasn't startled by the dream—but by a thought which came into his head because of the dream.

Leaping out of bed, he shook the shoulders of Gulliver and Bell, and within a few moments those worthies were sitting up, rubbing their eyes.

"What's the matter with you, Forrest?" Bell grumbled. "The rising-bell hasn't gone yet, has it?"

"I've had a dream," said Forrest tensely. "I was dreaming about an underground tunnel——"

"Go to the dickens with your dreams!" interrupted Bell sourly. "Of all the nerve——"

"But listen!" broke in Forrest. "I've just remembered something. What about that old tunnel which leads from the monastery ruins into the cellar of the Ancient House? You know the one! It was used, not long ago, by those gunmen who came to St. Frank's. Jake Diamond and that lot."

"What about it?" asked Gulliver, yawning.

"Can't you see the possibilities?" urged Forrest. "A secret tunnel—leading into the cellar of the Ancient House! And those blighters in the Ancient House have grabbed most of the school's grub!"

"By gad!" said Gulliver, thoroughly awakened.

They were dressed within five minutes, and then they dashed out and awoke Chambers of the Fifth and Stanhope of the Sixth. They all sought Mr. Ross, the Housemaster; and Mr. Ross, when he heard what was in the wind, fetched Mr. Wetherell. Kenmore and Sinclair and Grayson were routed out from the East House.

"The idea came to me suddenly, sir," said Forrest breathlessly.

He had explained about that secret passage, and he had added how easy it would be for a party to get to the monastery ruins without attracting any attention.

"The boy's right," said Millionaire Mike, his eyes gleaming. "The snow is so thick

that none of those young beggars in the Ancient House would be able to see us. The trenches are deep, and we can very easily get to the ruins without being seen."

"Simple as A B C, sir," said Kenmore. "We could get there by the back of the West House, work round, and keep out of sight all the time."

"Do you know this secret tunnel, too?"

"I've heard about it, sir," replied Kenmore. "There's a perfect labyrinth under the monastery ruins—there's one tunnel which leads right along to the moor quarries. But that wouldn't be any good to us, because the other end is bound to be snowed up. The moor must be impassable. But the tunnel that leads from the ruins to the Ancient House is a cert."

"Who knows his way about in the Ancient House cellars?" asked Mr. Wetherell.

"I do, sir," replied Forrest eagerly. "There's not a chance that any of the rebels will be on guard down in the cellars—

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and it's easy enough to creep up and get to the store-rooms. Why, we can seize their whole food supply."

"It will be a master coup if we can bring it off," said Mr. Wetherell. "And at this early hour those boys are bound to be off their guard. Come! We'll get to work at once!"

It seemed to be a complete solution to the problem. Once the rebels were deprived of their food, they would cave in. Millionaire Mike could see complete victory ahead.

A strong party was chosen, including Sinclair, Kenmore, Grayson, Forrest, Gore-Pearce, and fifteen others. Mr. Ross and Mr. Padbury, Mr. Manning and Mr. Ferris were in the party, too.

A trench had already been dug in the rear of the East House, but there was no direct communication with the monastery ruins. Yet to venture over the top of the snow was risky. In the first place, the party would only flounder helplessly in the drifts; in the second place, the operations would be seen by the rebel guards, and they would probably twig what was in the wind.

So another trench was cut—from the rear of the East House, direct across to the monastery ruins. With so many willing hands it was not a difficult task, especially as the trench only needed to be narrow.

The ruins were reached by the time full daylight had come—and even now the bulk of the school had only just got up. The idea was to catch the rebels "on the hop."

Hot from their exertions, the raiders plunged down the worn stone stairs which led to the vault. Most of them were carrying electric torches. Forrest located the secret door, and opened it. Cautiously they went along the tunnel, and in a very short time they found themselves in one of the big cellars beneath the Ancient House. The origin of the tunnel was lost in antiquity; for the Ancient House itself had, in the remote past, been a part of the old monastery.

"There's nobody here," whispered Mr. Ross, after a quick look round.

"We're in the enemy's territory, and they don't know a thing about it," gloated Forrest. "Better let me lead the way, sir. I know my way about here. This is my own House, you know."

"Be careful, then," warned Mr. Ross.

There were no food supplies in the cellar; not that the raiders had expected to find any. They were relieved when they discovered that the door at the top of the steps was unlocked. They had half expected to find it secured—and that would have been a nasty snag. As it was, they crept through, and found the lower passages silent and empty. Dimly, from above, they could hear voices.

"Where are the store-rooms?" whispered Kenmore.

"This way," breathed Forrest.

The store-rooms were perilously near to the kitchens, and in the kitchens the rebels were

already noisily preparing breakfast. The raiders could hear the cheery shouts, the clattering of cooking utensils and crockery.

"Here we are!" breathed Forrest. "There are two store-rooms on this side, and another over here. I don't think we'd better risk going to the larder——"

"Ye gods and little fishes!" ejaculated Kenmore, flashing his light into one of the store-rooms.

The raiders were triumphant. They had hit upon the main food supplies of the rebel forces: cases of butter, cheese, sugar, jam, canned goods, sacks of flour and oatmeal, rice and other cereals!

And not a rebel on guard!

As noiselessly as possible the raiders seized boxes and sacks and staggered back to the cellar under their loads. It was fortunate that such a big party had come, for every member was needed. Back in the monastery vault the spoils were set down. Mr. Ross would hear of no breathing space.

"We didn't bring much more than half the stuff," he said, the perspiration streaming from him. "Come on, boys! We'll go and fetch the rest!"

"But the rebels may have twigged by now, sir," urged Sinclair. "Wouldn't it be better to be content with this stuff?"

"If there's a chance of clearing the lot, we'll clear the lot," replied Dicky Bliss firmly. "Come on! All of you!"

Back they went. The noise in the kitchens was greater than ever. The breakfast evidently was cooked, and a party of rebels were partaking of the food. The store-rooms, as before, were left to look after themselves.

They were cleared completely this time—not a grain of food was left. And once again the raiders collected in the vault and eyed the booty with satisfaction.

"I'll tell you what," said Kenmore. "Instead of smuggling this stuff straight indoors, why not come out openly with it—so that the rebels can see us? They can't do anything now—they're bottled up in the Ancient House and daren't leave it. What a triumph for us!"

"By gad, rather!" said Forrest vindictively. "It'll be worth quids to see their faces when they spot what we've done!"

Mr. Ross and the other masters made no objections, although they themselves did not figure in this part of the programme. Mr. Ross had only one word of caution.

"Go ahead if you want to," he said, "but don't go too near the rebels. They're capable of dashing out of the Ancient House and fighting for this food. Keep well on the East House side of the Triangle."

The victorious raiders complied. Twenty minutes later they appeared in the biggest of the snow trenches, staggering under their loads. And the watchers at the Ancient House windows rubbed their eyes at first, and then started shouting.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Forrest. "How do you like it, you giddy fools? One good turn deserves another, what?"

"Hi! What have you got there?" came a roar from Handforth at one of the windows.

"Wouldn't you like to know?" jeered Forrest. "Grub, my son! Grub—from your own store-rooms! We've cleared the lot! You'd forgotten that secret passage, hadn't you?"

Other fellows were crowding out of the Houses now, and the uproar was terrific. Rebels were gathering at the Ancient House windows, packing them. Millionaire Mike, from the West House, looked on complacently. It was his turn to smile.

Curiously enough, however, the rebels did not seem half as dismayed as the rotters had expected. They were excited, it was true, but by no means startled. In fact, chuckles were going round, and the chuckles very soon gave place to loud laughter.

"It's all right with us!" sang out Nipper cheerfully. "You're welcome to all that stuff if you really want it. We had more than enough, anyhow. We've still got plenty."

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled the rest of the rebels at the windows.

"You young idiots!" snapped Kenmore, surprised at this attitude. "Go down to your store-rooms and have a look! We've cleared them completely out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

This time the rebels shrieked with merriment.

"We're generous chaps, and we hope you'll enjoy that grub!" shouted Nipper kindly. "It may be a bit indigestible, but that's your funeral."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Be careful how you cook it!" bawled Handforth. "Unless it's well done it's certain to be tough and gritty!"

The raiders looked at one another with a sudden awful suspicion. Why were the rebels so indifferent—so hilarious? Kenmore gave a gulp as he whipped out his pocket-knife. With one slash he cut through one of the sacks.

"Sand!" he gurgled, as a yellow stream poured out.

"Sand?" howled Forrest. "But—but I thought there was flour in that sack!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came a roar from the Ancient House.

Somebody wrenched off one of the box lids—a box which was supposed to contain butter. But the box was full of bricks carefully packed amidst quantities of newspaper.

"We've—we've been swindled!" roared Kenmore. "There's no food here at all!"

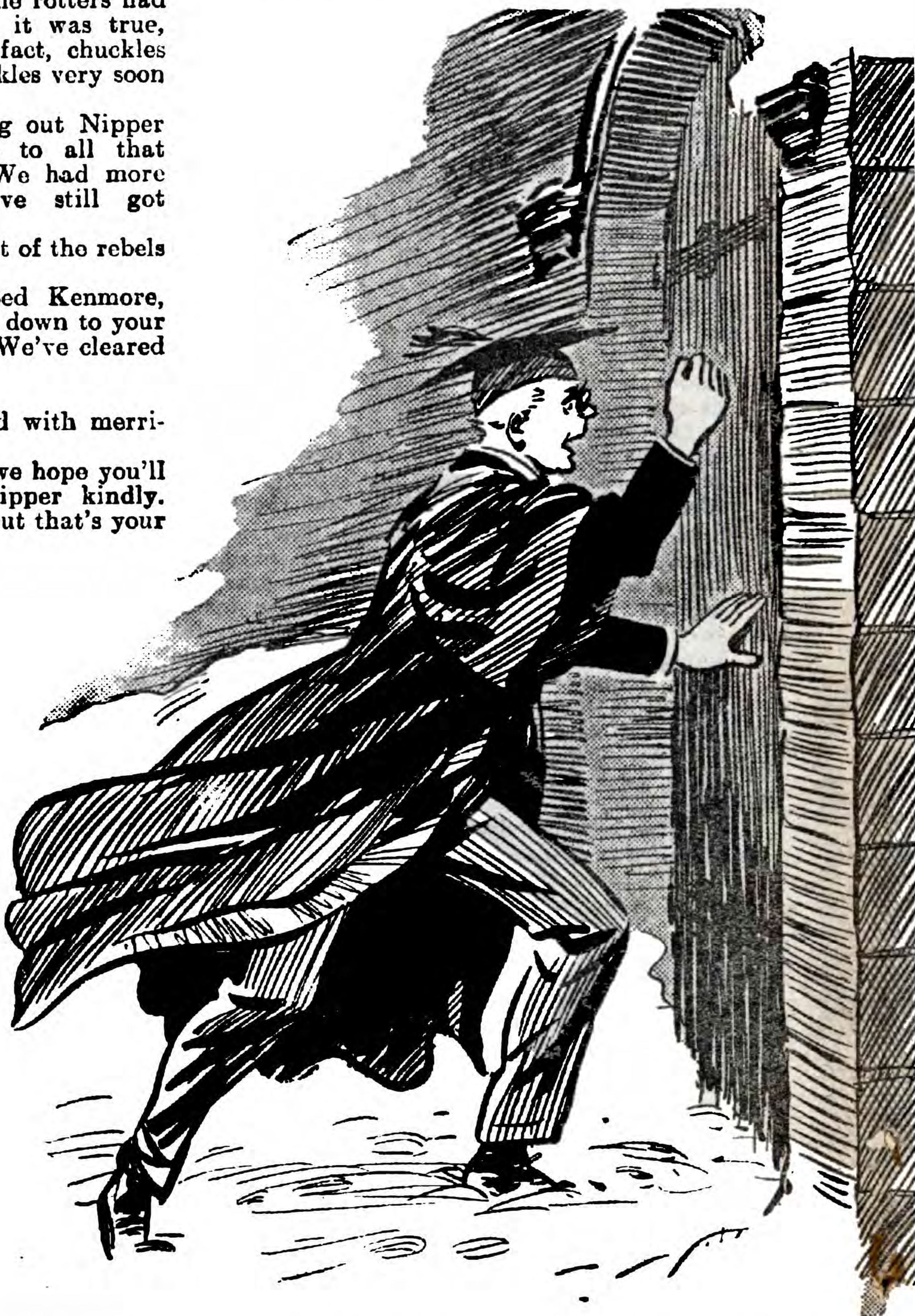
"Wha-a-at!"

The raiders, so triumphant a minute before, were dizzy with consternation.

"Frightfully sorry and all that," came Nipper's clear voice through the crisp atmosphere. "But we're not quite such mugs as you supposed us to be. Surely you didn't think that we should forget the secret tunnel?"

"They're dotty enough for anything!" came a comment from Handforth.

"We knew all about it from the first," went on Nipper, "and we prepared these fake sacks and boxes so that you shouldn't be disappointed. We had guards on the watch, and we knew when you came in, and



Mr. Pycraft rushed up and banged on the Ancient House—the temporary Head of St. Frank's was

we were ready to jump on you if you tried to get beyond the store-rooms. You'd better cook that stuff carefully—it's not very digestible!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Nipper's bland tones sent the rebels into fresh shrieks of laughter. And the raiders, crushed, retired. Their great triumph was no triumph at all.

"And you needn't try to get in by that passage again," roared Nipper. "It's blocked up by now, and we've got guards on the watch. You don't know how sorry we are

that you've been so deeply disappointed."

"Listen to our sorrow!" bellowed Handforth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was another triumph for the rebels, and Mr. John Wetherell, alias Millionaire Mike, gritted his teeth helplessly in the privacy of his own study. Once again he had been "dodged." There seemed to be no way in which the cheeky rebels could be overpowered.

CHAPTER 3.

A Shock for Mr. Pycraft!

THINGS were quiet that day. The rebels were jubilant over their victory, and the rest of the school seemed stunned by disappointment. The rotters especially were sullenly resentful. Many of them were eager to make another attack on the rebel stronghold, but what was the use? The rebels were well prepared.

A hard frost had set in now, and during the day it grew even sharper. Mist was beginning to form, and soon it was difficult to see any distance across the snow-covered landscape. A complete calm had descended over the countryside, with heavy, murky clouds overhead.

The great snowdrifts were becoming frozen — almost solid. Communication with the outer world looked more remote than ever. Another few hours of this intense frost and the snow would be like iron; pickaxes would be needed to cut any further trenches.

Kenmore and Grayson and Forrest and the rest of the rotters were becoming restless. They resented the short rations which had been doled out during the day. They were hungry—and hungry boys are by no means easy to handle.

It was all the more exasperating because they knew that the rebels, secure in the Ancient House, had all they needed. The discontent was spreading, and Mike Satella and his men were growing more and more anxious as the hours passed.

Unless something definite was done about this food problem, the masters would not only have the rebels against them, but the rest of the



Kenneth
Brooke

the door. "Let me in, let me in!" he bellowed as a new recruit for the rebels!

problem, the masters would not only have the rebels against them, but the rest of the

school, too. The neutrals—Fenton and the great majority of the Fifth and Sixth—were already inclined to favour the barring-out. It was only the rotters who gave the masters their support. How long would they be willing to do so?

The feeling was spreading that the masters were helpless; that the rebels had beaten them. Millionaire Mike, being a shrewd man, knew that he must do something big—spectacular—if he was to retain the confidence of the boys whom he had gathered about him.

He took the opportunity of addressing the school in Big Hall, and urged the boys to wait patiently. There was nothing to be gained, he declared, by acting rashly or in a manner which was unsuitable to the dignity of the great school. He made a really good speech, and impressed the fellows greatly. For Mike was one of the cleverest confidence men known to Scotland Yard, and he had a winning way with him. Big, portly, kindly-looking, he was more like a country squire than a crook.

MR. HORACE PYCRAFT, in the privacy of his own study, paced up and down feverishly. His thin, weedy frame seemed very much bowed down these days. Mr. Pycraft was not a strong man at the best of times; and just now he was carrying a burden which was too heavy for him. The responsibility had got him down. As acting headmaster he was not a success.

Even under ordinary conditions he would have made a poor showing. But the advent of the fake masters had made things even worse for Mr. Pycraft. He was definitely under their thumb: he was mortally afraid to lift a finger against them. And there was no court of appeal; as a result of the great blizzard he could not telephone, he could not write, he could not telegraph. He was left entirely to his own resources.

"It is exasperating—maddening!" he muttered, as he paced up and down with clenched fists. "What can I do? Good heavens! Was ever a man in such a plight?"

A great conviction had come upon him, particularly during the last twenty-four hours, that the ten masters supposedly under him were not what they pretended to be. They were acting very strangely now. They were throwing aside their masks, so to speak. He had found them drinking, gambling. They were reckless now that St. Frank's was isolated. They felt that there was no need for them to keep up the pretence. And their contempt for Mr. Pycraft was such that they hardly troubled to take precautions in his presence.

More than this. Mr. Pycraft had heard rumours that the ten men were crooks; some of the Ancient House boys, the rebels, had been openly talking about it. Mr. Pycraft, who knew more about the masters than anybody else, was startled. Perhaps that rumour was right! In his heart he knew that it was

right. No schoolmasters worthy of the term would act as these men had acted.

And yet he could do nothing!

Zurrrrrrh!

Mr. Pycraft jumped nearly a foot into the air. Without warning, the telephone buzzer was sounding. He stared stupidly at the instrument on his desk. This was really the Head's study—Mr. Nelson Lee's study—but Mr. Pycraft, of course, was in occupation.

"What—what was that?" stammered the startled man.

Zurrrrrrh—zurrrrrrh!

Like a drowning man who clutches at a straw, Mr. Pycraft leapt to the desk and grabbed the receiver from its hook.

"Hallo!" he said hoarsely. "Who—who is that?"

"Bannington 70?" came the clear, crisp voice of a girl telephone operator. "I want you, 70."

"But—good gracious!—what has happened?" asked Mr. Pycraft frantically. "Isn't this telephone cut off?"

"If it was, I couldn't have got you," came the girl's voice.

"But I don't understand!" muttered Mr. Pycraft, with mingled amazement and relief. "I thought all our telephones were out of order because of the blizzard."

"A great many wires are down," replied the operator. "In fact, I believe all your other 'phones are out of order."

"Then—then this instrument has been connected all the time?"

"Yes, of course," said the girl. "Will you hang on, please? London wants you."

Mr. Pycraft hung on—literally. He felt limp. Like a man in a dream he suddenly remembered that this particular telephone—Nelson Lee's own instrument—was not linked up with the other St. Frank's 'phones. It was a special underground wire.

Ever since the blizzard had happened, Mr. Pycraft—like everybody else in the school—had taken it for granted that all 'phones were dead. Many had been tested, and it was only by the purest chance that this particular instrument had been left untouched.

Mr. Pycraft's head was buzzing. The telephone had been in order all the time, and he had not even used it! Even now he was the only living person in the whole of the school who knew that St. Frank's was not completely cut off, as everybody believed!

A dozen thoughts chased themselves through Mr. Pycraft's mind. The knowledge that this telephone was open thrilled him. It opened up many possibilities. Perhaps Sir John Brent, the Chairman of the Governors, was back in London! If only he could get in touch—

"Hallo!" came a quiet, steady voice.

"Good heavens!" panted Mr. Pycraft. "Is—is that you, Mr. Lee?"

"Yes, Mr. Pycraft," came the familiar voice of Nelson Lee. "I am glad that I

CHAPTER 4.

Nelson Lee Investigates!

have been able to get into touch with you. I fancied that this private wire would still be in operation. Things are rather bad at St. Frank's, aren't they?"

"I—I am overwhelmed!" panted Mr. Pycraft excitedly. "Good gracious, Mr. Lee! I am delighted! I am overjoyed to hear your voice, sir! This—this is splendid! Upon my soul, I do not remember when I have felt so relieved!"

"You sound upset, Mr. Pycraft."

"I am so pleased to get in touch with you, Mr. Lee, that I hardly know what I am saying," replied Mr. Pycraft, pulling himself together with an effort. "Where are you, sir? In Bannington? I hope, indeed, that you are in Bannington."

"No; I am in London——"

"Yes, yes, of course!" interrupted Mr. Pycraft. "Foolish of me. The telephone girl told me that it was a call from London. Mr. Lee, can you come down? Move heaven and earth to get here! St. Frank's is in an appalling state!"

"Calm yourself, Mr. Pycraft," said Nelson Lee steadily. "It cannot be so bad as you hint. I know that the blizzard was serious, and that the school is completely snowbound."

There was something in the quality of Nelson Lee's voice which gave Mr. Horace Pycraft hope. Although Lee was so many miles away, Mr. Pycraft felt suddenly stronger.

"I understand, of course, that Mr. Wilkes and the other St. Frank's masters are in the Bannington Hospital," continued Nelson Lee. "I read of that affair while I was still abroad. I only got back in London an hour ago, Mr. Pycraft. And although I had intended taking a few days' rest before resuming my duties at St. Frank's, I thought it as well to get in touch with you at the earliest possible moment."

"I am thankful you did, sir," replied Mr. Pycraft. "You know, of course, that our masters were poisoned?"

"Yes, a very unfortunate affair," said Lee. "They were having dinner at the Grapes Hotel, Bannington, weren't they? Ptomaine poisoning, wasn't it? I have recently heard that they are recovering rapidly, and that they will be fit for duty within a few days."

"That is a glorious piece of news!" panted Mr. Pycraft. "I had feared that they would be ill for another ten days, or a fortnight. But you, Mr. Lee! Cannot you get here?"

"I'm afraid not; the railway and the roads are completely blocked."

"I know—but is there no other possible method?" asked Mr. Pycraft. "St. Frank's is in the hands of a gang of criminals!"

"Really, Mr. Pycraft——"

"I tell you, sir, that St. Frank's is in the hands of a gang of criminals!" repeated Mr. Pycraft hoarsely. "I am not excited now, Mr. Lee—I am not talking wildly. I am telling you the plain, blunt truth!"

NELSON LEE'S voice came quietly from the other end of the wire.

"You must pull yourself together, Mr. Pycraft," it said. "You really must not say such things. I met Sir John Brent in Paris, and he assured me that he had fixed things up very satisfactorily with some masters belonging to Halford Grammar School."

"Is Sir John in London?" asked Mr. Pycraft quickly.

"No; he has moved on to Berlin."

"But you are in London, Mr. Lee, and I rely upon you far more than I rely upon Sir John," went on Mr. Pycraft. "My dear sir, you cannot appreciate what a terrible state St. Frank's is in! These men—these rascals—have gained complete control over the school."

"But you are temporary Head——"

"I know it!" groaned Mr. Pycraft. "I have been weak, sir—lamentably, appallingly weak. I cannot explain over the telephone—I dare not. But I urge you to come. These men are not the real Halford masters. And they have succeeded in inciting this rebellion."

"Rebellion?" came Nelson Lee's sharp inquiry.

"Didn't I tell you, sir?" asked Mr. Pycraft. "A large section of the Junior School is in revolt. It has barred itself into the Ancient House, and is defying all our efforts. The rest of the school is making a pretence of carrying on, but it only a pretence. There is disruption and discord."

"A barring-out—masters who do not appear to be masters—disruption generally," said Nelson Lee. "Things seem to be in a fine pickle at St. Frank's, Mr. Pycraft. I am afraid I shall have to hold you responsible——"

"I admit my responsibility, sir," interrupted Mr. Pycraft huskily. "I have made a miserable failure of this undertaking. And I urge you, sir, to come immediately. What is more, I beg of you to act secretly. If these men know that I have given you this information they make take a drastic revenge. They might even kill me!"

"Come, come, Mr. Pycraft——"

"I tell you, sir, that they might even kill me!" panted Mr. Pycraft. "So whatever you do, do it secretly. I dare not let them know that I have been talking to you. I shall not even tell them that this telephone is in order. I am relying upon you, Mr. Lee—as I never relied upon anybody in my life before!"

His voice had lost some of its quavering now, and Nelson Lee could tell that Mr. Pycraft was in deadly earnest.

"Carry on, Mr. Pycraft, exactly as before," said Lee. "Say nothing to anybody. I will be with you at the earliest possible moment."

"You will come, then?" asked Mr. Pycraft eagerly. "You promise——"

"By hook or by crook, I will get to you," replied Nelson Lee crisply. "Good-bye, Mr. Pycraft!"

IN London, Nelson Lee hung up the receiver of the telephone and sat for some minutes in thoughtful silence.

He knew Mr. Pycraft, and he did not place a great deal of reliance upon Mr. Pycraft's frantic statements. That those ten Halford masters could be crooks, as Mr. Pycraft said, was almost unthinkable. It was far more likely that they had soon discovered Mr. Pycraft's weakness and had taken advantage of it. He had exaggerated their actions.

However, the news was serious enough, without that. A barring-out! The school at loggerheads! And only Mr. Pycraft in control! It was certainly time that somebody with real authority went down to St. Frank's!

Nelson Lee left his Gray's Inn Road chambers at once. As he had told Mr. Pycraft, he had only just got back in London after completing a particularly arduous case. He was naturally anxious to find out how things were going at St. Frank's; but he had not expected to hear such alarming news.

Knowing Mr. Pycraft as he did, he hardly credited the statement that the supposed masters were impostors. However, there was an easy way of finding out for certain. His chat with Sir John Brent had been useful. He knew the name of one, at least, of the Halford Grammar School Governors, and he went at once to interview this gentleman.

"My dear Mr. Lee, surely you must have been misinformed?" said this gentleman. "Our masters did not go to St. Frank's, after all."

"There was some change, at the last moment?" asked Nelson Lee. "I am afraid I am not au fait with the situation. You see, in addition to being headmaster of St. Frank's, I occasionally take on an investigation. I have just been abroad——"

"I quite understand, Mr. Lee," said the other. "But, you see, our masters were called back at the last moment—even after they had got to Victoria Station. Sir John Brent's own private secretary stopped them. I understand that St. Frank's was already provided with a temporary staff, and it was for this reason that our own men were stopped."

"I see," said Nelson Lee, smiling. "Then, of course, I must have been in error."

When he went away he drove straight to the Hotel Fitzroy. London, curiously enough, was not foggy. A murky mist was hanging about, but it did not interfere with the traffic. Lee soon arrived at the Fitzroy, and his inquiries here were brief and to the point.

He was glad that Sir John Brent had mentioned this hotel—Sir John, in fact, had given him most of the details of his inter-

view with the Halford masters. It had taken place just before Sir John himself had flown off on business to Paris.

"Yes, Mr. Lee, I remember the meeting quite well," said the manager. "Sir John Brent had the use of one of our big reception-rooms for the conference."

"Yours is a big hotel," said Lee bluntly; "therefore it is impossible for you to be sure of the integrity of your guests. It is a fact, is it not, that this hotel, like the other great hotels of London, is sometimes used by well-dressed crooks?"

The manager did not resent the statement.

"Unfortunately, we cannot guard against such men," he replied. "They look like gentlemen, they pay well, and it is very difficult for us to keep them out. I have every reason to remember Sir John Brent's conference with the Halford schoolmasters, since that conference coincides with the departure of a man named Satella."

"Satella?" repeated Lee sharply. "Mike Satella?"

"He did not register under that name, Mr. Lee," said the manager. "But I learned afterwards from Scotland Yard——"

"One moment!" interrupted Lee. "You say that this man Satella checked out from your hotel on the same day as Sir John's conference?"

"Within a few hours," said the other. "Satella had two or three companions with him—and just before he left he had a number of guests in his suite. Practically a second conference, as you might say. I was glad enough when they all left."

With suspicions becoming certainties, Lee went straight to Scotland Yard, where he soon got in touch with his old friend, Chief Detective-inspector Lennard, of the C.I.D.

"Well, well," said Lennard, as they shook hands, "this just shows how much we can believe the newspapers! I read that St. Frank's was so cut off that it might have been in the middle of the Arctic. Yet you've managed to get through the snowy wastes."

"Wrong, Lennard," said Lee. "I have just arrived from the Continent. St. Frank's, to the best of my belief, is completely snowed up. I have come here to ask you some pertinent questions concerning one Mike Satella."

The Chief-inspector grunted.

"I'd like to know something about Mike," he replied gruffly. "That bright gentleman has completely disappeared during this last week or so. We had the whole of his gang under observation—we stopped their share-pushing stunt at the outset, and they were helpless. Then—pouf!—the whole lot of them disappeared."

"Perhaps I can tell you where they are," said Lee.

"I wish you could," went on Lennard eagerly. "Not that we've got any case against them. But we like to keep our eye on such people. Somehow, they've managed

Kenmore slashed open the flour-sack — to discover that it contained nothing but sand! A roar of laughter went up from the rebels. They had "put one" across their opponents.



to give our men the slip; yet I'll swear they haven't left the country."

"How many have eluded you?"

"Ten."

"Ten," said Lee slowly. "H'm, this is getting rather ugly!"

"What are you driving at, old man?" asked Lennard, staring. "One of our fellows saw Satella and his crowd at Victoria, and reported. We thought they were going down to a race meeting, but although we sent out all sorts of warnings and made all kinds of inquiries, we lost touch with the whole bunch. Darned queer!"

"It's not so darned queer, Lennard. When were they seen at Victoria?"

The chief-inspector told him.

"The very afternoon those Halford masters were stopped at Victoria," said Lee. "Yes, it fits like a glove, Lennard. I can not only tell you where those con. men are, but I can provide you with sufficient evidence to convict them of conspiracy."

"By the Lord Harry!" ejaculated Lennard. "Spill it, old man! I've been itching to get a conviction against Mike for years, but the beggar has been too slippery for me!"

"Mike and his gang are down at St. Frank's, masquerading as schoolmasters," replied Lee. "And, considering that St. Frank's is snowed up, it ought to be fairly easy to make a capture."

The chief-inspector stared sceptically.

"Trying to pull my leg?" he asked. "Mike and that gang masquerading as schoolmasters? What do you take me for?"

Lee told the other of his suspicions, and of the facts which had led to those suspicions.

"We don't know what Mike's game is, but we can guess," concluded Lee. "Primarily, he wanted to get out of London—away from the Yard's observation. And in a big school like St. Frank's there are plenty of rich boys. Those men are trying to pull something off, Lennard; but for this big blizzard, and the mistrust of a section of the boys themselves, they might have succeeded. Here is your chance to round them all up."

"I'll have warrants sworn out for their arrest within the hour," growled Lennard. "But how on earth are we to get to St. Frank's? The roads are blocked, aren't they?"

"We must not wait," replied Lee. "As soon as communications are open Mike and his men will vanish again. They must be disturbed already by the way things are going, and they are only remaining at St. Frank's because they cannot get away. Well, what's wrong with chartering a big cross-Channel air liner at Croydon? You can bring a dozen of your Flying Squad men along, and you can make a clean up."

"Sounds good," replied Lennard. "But what about landing?"

"A skilled pilot can easily land on the snow without damaging his machine," replied Nelson Lee briskly. "And I tell you, Lennard, it is most important that those ten crooks should be placed under arrest. They are menacing the morale of hundreds of schoolboys. They have already got Mr. Pycraft, the temporary headmaster, in their power. This is a serious matter."

"We'd better see the Commissioner at once," replied Lennard grimly.

AN hour later Nelson Lee, Lennard, and a dozen Flying Squad men drove out to Croydon Aerodrome. It was evening. Nelson Lee made known his requirements, and the officials were dubious.

"I doubt very much if we can serve you, Mr. Lee," said one of them. "Two of our 'planes had to land at Lympne less than an hour ago—finding it impossible to continue owing to the mist. Another was forced down at Caterham. It doesn't look much from here, but farther south the fog is much thicker."

He consulted the meteorological experts, and when he came back he was shaking his head decisively.

"Quite impossible," he declared. "We could not allow any aeroplane to fly over the Stowe Valley this evening."

"But, man alive, this is a Scotland Yard job——" began the chief-inspector.

"I can't help that, Mr. Lennard," interrupted the official. "Reports have come in that the Stowe Valley—and, indeed, that entire section of the South Coast—is enshrouded in thick fog. Not mist, as we have here, but dense fog. No 'plane could locate the school, let alone effect a safe landing."

"Surely there would be no harm in flying over the valley just to make certain?" asked Lee. "This matter is very urgent."

"Urgent or not, my instructions are that no 'plane can be permitted to take off on such a venture," replied the official. "To-morrow, perhaps——"

Nelson Lee took Lennard aside.

"Game for a little adventure, old man?" asked the great detective. "My own 'plane is here, you know. I flew her over from the Continent to-day. She'll hold four men easily—five at a pinch. These aerodrome officials cannot prevent me from taking up my own 'plane."

"Think we could make it?" asked Lennard eagerly.

"We could try—and I really am anxious to get to St. Frank's as quickly as possible," replied Nelson Lee. "We could take two of your men, and, fog or no fog, if we get anywhere near St. Frank's we can chance a landing in the snow."

"Think it's really worth it?" asked Lennard dubiously. "I'm game enough, of course, but after what these fellows have said——"

"We can make straight for the South Coast, follow the coast-line until we reach the Caistowe Lighthouse," said Lee briskly. "The beam from the lighthouse should make an excellent landmark, and we only have to cut inland for three miles and we're at St. Frank's. What do you say, Lennard? Shall we take a chance?"

"I'm with you, old man," replied the chief-inspector promptly. "Let's take a shot at it!"

CHAPTER 5.

The New Recruit!

THIS fog's getting boastly thick!" said Handforth, rubbing his smarting eyes.

He had been peering out of one of the upper windows of the Ancient House. Only faintly could he see the gleaming blurs across the Triangle which represented the Modern House and the East House. The swirling fog was becoming more and more dense as the evening advanced.

Yet overhead the moon was shining somewhere; the glow of it could be distinctly seen when one looked upwards. The fog was low-lying, covering the ground densely, but it was of no great height.

"We shall have to be careful," remarked Travers. "The enemy is likely to take advantage of this fog and to spring an attack on us."

"The sooner it comes the better!" grunted Handforth. "I'm fed-up with doing nothing!"

He echoed the sentiments of the others.

The day had passed uneventfully. There had been absolutely nothing to do. No lessons, no footer practice, no prep—nothing, in fact, except to kill time. It was this inactivity which robbed the rebels of a great deal of their enthusiasm. They were becoming restless, impatient, and their nerves were on edge from waiting.

The fog, too, affected them. Standing at the windows on guard had been a thankless enough task during the day. Well wrapped up as they were with mufflers and caps, they had become chilled. But this fog was getting into their very marrows. Before long all the windows were closed and sealed, and the barricades were placed in position.

"It's keeping the fog out, anyhow," said Nipper. "And if there's an attack we can soon deal with it."

IN the Head's study, Mr. Horace Pycraft was in a fever.

He had no means of knowing what Nelson Lee would do, yet he felt confident that the Head would take action of some kind. He had promised to come—and come he would!

"But how—how?" muttered Mr. Pycraft, pacing up and down. "I hope to heaven that he soon gets here! I am not strong enough

to deal with this situation—I admit it. What a fool I have been!"

The door opened, and Mr. Wetherell came in. Mr. Pycraft spun round.

"Really, sir!" he protested. "Is it not customary for a gentleman to knock before he enters?"

"What's wrong, Mr. Pycraft?" asked Millionaire Mike, looking at him curiously. "I was wondering what had happened to you. You've kept very much to yourself this evening, haven't you?"

"I prefer to keep to myself, sir," replied Mr. Pycraft sourly.

He was looking flushed and excited, and there was a gleam in his eye which attracted Mike's attention at once.

"The boys are in Big Hall," he said. "I thought it as well to have another talk with them—just to assure them that everything is going on well. I'm going there now. It would be better if you came, too, Mr. Pycraft."

"You seem to be doing all the ordering about, so perhaps you had better carry on with it," said Mr. Pycraft bitterly. "I am not—er—in the mood to see the boys now. Deal with them yourself."

Mike Satella faced him squarely.

"Anything happened?" he asked. "You look excited, Mr. Pycraft—you look jumpy. What have you been up to?"

"Nothing—nothing whatever!" panted Mr. Pycraft, almost terrorised by the other's strong personality. "But be sure of this, you scoundrel! Before very long you will be—er—bowled out! Your reign is nearly over, my friend!"

"Something *has* happened!" rapped out Mr. Wetherell. "What is it? What have you been doing?"

"If you are so clever, perhaps you will find out!" retorted Mr. Pycraft in a voice of shrill triumph. "Oh, no, my dear sir! You'll get nothing from me! I'm not quite so helpless as you imagine!"

In his disturbed, excited mood he glanced mechanically at the telephone. Mike followed that glance with the quickness of light.

"You haven't been 'phoning anybody?" he snapped. "No, that's impossible. The telephones are not connected."

"No, no—of course they're not connected!" panted Mr. Pycraft, trying to hide his alarm. "What nonsense! We know perfectly well, don't we, that all the telephones are dead?"

Perhaps he overdid it. At all events, Millionaire Mike, with a deep suspicion in his mind, walked towards the instrument. Mr. Pycraft leapt forward, but he was roughly pushed aside. Mike lifted the receiver from its hook.

"Hallo!" he said sharply. "By gad, this line is alive! Yes, yes? Oh, is that the Bannington Exchange?"

"Number, please?" came the familiar request.

"Then this 'phone is operating!" snarled Mike. "Tell me, operator, has this telephone

been used this evening or this afternoon? Have you put any calls through?"

"There was one not long ago—a trunk call from London," replied the operator. "But if you wish to make any inquiries——"

Millionaire Mike snapped the receiver on its hook, and he twirled round upon Pycraft.

"Who 'phoned?" he demanded hoarsely. "You sly old fox! To whom have you been talking?"

Mr. Pycraft backed away, startled by the man's ferocity.

"Really, Mr. Wetherell, I protest!" he panted. "You must not say things like that to me——"

"Tell me who rang up!" grated Millionaire Mike, seizing Mr. Pycraft's arm. "You fool! If you think you can spoil my game, you are mistaken!"

"I was right!" shouted Mr. Pycraft wildly. "You are a criminal—a robber—a thief! You are no Halford schoolmaster!"

"Who 'phoned you?" demanded Mike savagely. "Who told you?"

"Then—then you admit it?" gloated Mr. Pycraft. "Wait! Why shouldn't I tell you? You can't get away even if you want to! But, no—I'll let you puzzle over this. And you will kindly understand that I am in charge of this school— Oh, oh! Really, I—I——"

His arm had been seized, and was squeezed tightly.

"Now, you drivelling fool!" grated Mike. "You'll tell me everything! Sharply, now! Who rang up?"

"I—I—— Good heavens, you are breaking my arm!" wailed Mr. Pycraft. "It—it was Mr. Lee!"

"Lee!"

"Ah, that has startled you, eh?" gasped Mr. Pycraft. "Yes, Mr. Nelson Lee! He is coming here—he is coming at once! And when he arrives, my friend, you will meet your master!"

Mike Satella was so astonished—so startled—that he released the other. Mr. Pycraft drew himself away and made a sudden dash for the door. He was through it before Mike Satella could stop him, and he was outside, and pelting along the snow trench in Inner Court by the time Mike had reached the outer door.

The confidence man pulled himself up short, cursing. He had blundered. He should have dealt more delicately with the situation. Not that Mr. Pycraft could do much harm. The fact that Nelson Lee was coming to St. Frank's overshadowed everything else in Mike's mind. The only consolation he obtained—if any—was the absurdity of Mr. Pycraft's statement. Even if Nelson Lee knew the situation, how could he get here?

Mr. Pycraft, running into the School House, arrived in Big Hall to find all the boys in their places. The only absentees were the rebels. Mr. Pycraft fairly staggered on to the platform—which, at the

moment, was in the charge of Mr. Ross, of the West House.

"Listen to me!" shouted Mr. Pycraft hoarsely. "Attention, everybody!"

The school sat up and took notice. Mr. Ross, alias Dicky Bliss, moved forward rather grimly. There was something about Mr. Pycraft's attitude which he did not like.

"What on earth is the matter, sir?" he asked with affected concern.

"Do not come near me!" shrilled Mr. Pycraft. "Boys, listen! The school is in the hands of a gang of dangerous men!"

There was a minor sensation.

"The man who calls himself Wetherell brutally assaulted me not five minutes ago!" went on Mr. Pycraft excitedly. "He is a crook—and all his colleagues are crooks! I tell you that these men are not schoolmasters at all, but criminals!"

"Oh, I say, sir, cheese it!"

"Draw it mild, Mr. Pycraft!"

"He's mad!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Forrest and Gore-Pearce and a number of other rotters started the laugh, and it was soon taken up by the others. The truth—and they were really hearing the truth—was so incredible that the fellows were amused.

"Don't you believe me?" almost shrieked Mr. Pycraft, losing all his dignity as he danced up and down on the platform. "You young idiots! I'm telling you the truth! Don't you understand! These men——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go and tell it to the Marines, sir!"

"Poor old Pieface!"

"Silence, there!" shouted Fenton angrily. "Have you forgotten that Mr. Pycraft is our headmaster?"

"I think Mr. Pycraft's forgotten it!" retorted Forrest contemptuously.

Fenton bit his lip; he had not been prepared for that repartee, which, in all truth, was apt enough. None of these boys could have much respect for the man who stood on the platform now, gesticulating and shouting.

"Very well!" panted Mr. Pycraft. "If you don't believe me, I know some boys who will! I have finished with you! I no longer accept the responsibility for your welfare! I shall definitely ally myself with those boys who have shown common sense since the advent of these scoundrels!"

He dashed off the platform and ran out of Big Hall, leaving the school in a tumult. In spite of Mr. Pycraft's excitement, he had made up his mind. Once again he braved the cold outer air and the fog—which was thicker than ever. Choking and gasping, he reached the Ancient House door, and thumped hard upon it.

"Open!" he shouted. "Boys—boys! It is I, Mr. Pycraft! Be good enough to open this door!"

"Sorry, sir—nothing doing!" came Harry Gresham's voice. "We're not to be tricked like that!"

"It is no trick!" panted the master. "I have decided to join you. I am on your side from this minute onwards."

All your favourite authors write for—

"My only hat!"

"Somebody had better fetch Nipper!"

There seemed to be confusion within the Ancient House, and a minute later Nipper's voice sounded.

"You say you want to come in, Mr. Pycraft?" asked the rebel leader.

"Yes, indeed—I am nearly choking in this fog!"

"Do you give me your word, sir, that you are quite alone?"

"Yes, yes!" replied Mr. Pycraft.

The bolts were shot back, the door was opened, and Mr. Pycraft staggered in. The door was quickly shut and bolted again. A crowd of rebels stood round the dishevelled master.

"What's the idea, sir?" asked Nipper steadily.

"My boys, I have done you an injustice!" said Mr. Pycraft, with as much dignity as he could muster. "I have realised that your revolt was thoroughly justified, and, if you will permit me, I will take command of this—er—force."

"You mean that you'll support us, sir—that you'll help us to hold out?" asked Nipper.

"I will do everything in my power to help," replied Mr. Pycraft fervently. "When you defied those wretched men, you showed your common sense. They are not schoolmasters—they are scoundrels. Any revolt against them is justified. From now onwards, my boys, I am with you, heart and soul. And when the time comes for an inquiry, you can rely upon my help."

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Pycraft!"

"He's not such a bad old stick, after all!"

The rebels were thoroughly excited. This was indeed a change! The first barring-out on record, in fact, when a master had joined the side of the rebels!

Much as they had scorned Mr. Pycraft before, they now found themselves feeling a certain amount of respect for him. He was different. In spite of his wild appearance, there was a certain defiant courage about him—almost amounting to dignity. All that was best in him—and that was not much—had come to the fore. The one fact that he had had the pluck to come out into the open, and to range himself on their side, was enough to convince them.

And while the rebels cheered their new recruit, further excitement was afoot in the other part of the school.

CHAPTER 6.

The Coming of the Death Fog!

"PYCRAFT'S mad!"

"Clean off his rocker!"

"The silly old fool!"

Excited comments were being exchanged in Big Hall. Discipline had gone to the four winds, and seniors and juniors

were standing about in groups talking animatedly.

Kenmore was doing his best to keep his own "gang" together. They formed a big mob on one side of Big Hall—Kenmore and Sinclair and Grayson and Shaw and Forrest and Gore-Pearce and Merrell, and a large number of others. They were rather dismayed, in fact, by the way things were going.

Dicky Bliss and one or two of the other false masters were on the platform, talking in low tones. Mr. Pycraft's dramatic defiance of them had taken them unawares. And then Mr. Wetherell appeared, anxious and angry.

"What has been happening here?" he asked sharply.

"That fool, Pycraft, has been spilling the beans," murmured Bliss. "He said that he was going over to join those young fools in the Ancient House."

"Pycraft will suffer for this!" said Millionaire Mike darkly. "Something else has happened—I'll tell you later." He strode to the edge of the platform. "Boys, boys!" he went on, raising his voice. "What is the meaning of this? Why are you not in your places?"

There was a tense silence.

"There is enough disruption in the school already," continued Mike earnestly. "We must pull together if we are to come through this difficult period with success."

Something significant happened. Fenton, of the Sixth, walked towards the door. He was accompanied by Morrow, Biggleswade, Conroy major, and one or two other prefects. The bulk of the Fifth and Sixth, after a moment of hesitation, followed.

"Wait!" shouted Mr. Wetherell. "Where are you going? Who told you to dismiss?"

Fenton turned.

"As captain of the school, I am not satisfied with the way you and your colleagues are conducting your duties," said Fenton quietly. "Don't misunderstand me, Mr. Wetherell; I am not indulging in any heroics. But I think the time has come when I must definitely show the school that I do not recognise your authority."

"Fenton!" shouted Mr. Wetherell. "You will regret this folly!"

"Call it folly if you like," replied Fenton. "But Mr. Pycraft is the headmaster of St. Frank's—and Mr. Pycraft has definitely allied himself with those boys in the Ancient House. You need not fear that I shall start any trouble; but from now onwards I decline to acknowledge your authority—or the authority of any of your colleagues."

"Good for you, Fenton!"

"We're with you!"

"Hear, hear!"

And the seniors walked in a quiet and orderly fashion out of Big Hall.

Millionaire Mike gritted his teeth. It was plain that Mr. Pycraft's action had had a



Through the thick death fog the juniors fought their way on improvised snow-shoes—bound for the Moor View School on a mission of mercy.

deep effect. The seniors were not rebelling in the ordinary sense—but they were rebels, none the less.

Big Hall looked singularly empty now. Only the rotters remained—the fellows who were really of no account. They made a fairly big crowd, but they weren't really of much importance.

The disruption of St. Frank's was complete.

A school divided. A school of out-and-out rebels, who had seized one House and were barring-out everybody else; a body of seniors who defied the masters' authority; and a mob of nobodies which was still on the masters' side.

The seniors went back to their own Houses, coughing as they plunged through the rapidly-increasing fog. They went into their Houses, closed the doors, and gathered in Common-rooms, prefects' day rooms, and studies.

The rotters, dismissed by Mr. Wetherell, also went back to their own Houses, and before long St. Frank's had the appearance of being peaceful. Only those who were supposedly in authority knew that the school was really a seething cauldron of excitement.

Mike Satella, in the West House, gathered his men about him. Many of them were looking scared.

"This is the right time for us to quit, Mike," said Mr. Padbury, of the Remove—alias Sam Pope. "These kids are too hot for us."

"If you can only speak like a fool, Sam, you'd better not speak at all!" retorted Mike savagely.

"Hang it, there's no need to fly off the hook——"

"Why talk about quitting?" broke in the leader. "How can we quit? We're snowed up—we're fogbound! If there was any chance of getting away, I'd be the first to seize it. But as we *must* remain here, we've got to do something to re-establish our full authority."

"Tell us what to do, old man," said Dicky Bliss.

"Things are looking bad," continued Mike Satella. "That fool Pycraft has been in touch with Lee."

"Lee!" went up a general echo.

"Lee—Nelson Lee!" snapped Mike. "Lee, the detective—the headmaster of this school! We thought he was safely abroad, but he isn't. He's come back; he's on his way here now."

And Mike explained to his startled gang.

"And you say we'd better not quit!" ejaculated Sam Pope frantically, when he had heard everything.

"You fool—how many more times must I tell you that we can't quit in this fog and snow?" snarled Mike. "And do you think I believe this nonsense about Lee coming? How can he come? As long as we can't get out, nobody can get in!"

"That's true," said Mr. Ross,

"We must apply ourselves to our job here," continued Mike. "Unless we act drastically—strongly—all those senior boys will turn against us."

"Aren't they against us now?" asked one of the men.

"Passively, perhaps, but that's all," replied the leader. "If we can get those rebels out of the Ancient House, and smash the mutiny altogether, we shall prove our strength. And that's what boys like to see—strength. I tell you, we've got to get them out—the sooner the better. It's our only chance. Fortunately, we've got a considerable number of boys who are willing to help us. It's the food question which has made such a difference. Once we conquer the Ancient House, we shall have command of the food supplies—and therefore we shall be on top."

KENMORE, Grayson, Forrest and the rest of the rotters, of course, were all located in the West House now. With everything upside down at St. Frank's, they had automatically chosen the West House as their headquarters.

The portly, kindly Mr. Wetherell, going amongst them, talked smoothly and eloquently. With these fellows, at least, he was a complete success. He had gained their confidence at first, and he had retained it.

"It is deeply unfortunate," he said sadly, "that there should be these grievous misunderstandings. I will admit that my colleagues and myself have not conducted St. Frank's with any great success. But, at least, we have done our best. We brought new ideas with us, and the boys resented these new ideas."

"We didn't, sir," said Forrest.

"No; some of you welcomed our modern innovations," replied Mr. Wetherell kindly. "But I am afraid that boys, as a whole, are conservative. They do not like changes. Our methods are different. We have no use for hide-bound conventions; we like to be friendly with our boys—free and easy. And, what with these foolish rebels, and the snowstorm, our task has been too much for us. Mr. Pycraft's regrettable weakness has added to our difficulties."

Mike knew how to talk, and Kenmore and Forrest and the rest were more eager than ever to help. A meeting was arranged in the West House lecture-hall, and it was an enthusiastic gathering.

All the rotters were there—all the masters were there. They made a brave show, and even fooled themselves that they were a party of considerable strength.

"The most important thing I've got to tell you, boys, is that our food supplies are precariously low," said Mike gravely. "I don't intend to make a big speech, or to bore you by lots of unnecessary details. You know that the boys in the Ancient House have command of the main food stocks."

"We ought to rout them out, sir!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Down with the rebels!"

"Our previous efforts to conquer the Ancient House have failed," continued Mr. Wetherell. "But I am going to suggest that we should make another attempt to-night—now. Everything is in our favour. There is a dense fog outside, and our movements will therefore be cloaked."

"Hurrah!"

"I would further suggest that you do not make too much commotion," went on Mike quickly. "We don't want to give the rebels any indication of what is coming. I suggest that we take a leaf out of their own book."

"How do you mean, sir?" asked Kenmore eagerly.

"When they seized our food supplies—and from this very House—they created a great commotion in the front whilst a raiding-party entered by the rear," replied Mr. Wetherell. "Well, my idea is that half of us should make a pretended attack at the rear of the Ancient House, thus concentrating the rebels in that quarter. Meanwhile, another party, armed with a battering-ram, will smash down the front door. If it is organised properly, an entry will be gained within five minutes. A surprise attack is our only chance of success. Much as I hate proposing violence, we must do something drastic in our own defence. Starvation looms ahead; the rebels have all the food. Are you with me in this enterprise?"

"Yes, rather, sir!"

"Let's get down to it, sir!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We'll rout the rebels out of their burrow!"

The enthusiasm was tremendous. That promise of ample food supplies was Millionaire Mike's trump card. He had purposely—and cunningly—deprived the boys of food throughout the day. They had had but meagre meals, and were all desperately hungry. They were in the right mood for intensive action.

The two parties were quickly formed—Mr. Wetherell and five other masters being in charge of the main attack. The rest were to make as much noise as possible at the rear and attract the enemy.

The two forces gathered at the front and rear of the West House. There was no fear that their movements would be spotted by the rebels. The fog was denser than ever now, and it was impossible to see for more than a yard in front of one's face.

As Mike Satella flung open the main doors of the West House, a surging mass of yellowish vapour poured indoors. It was almost like something solid—and it caught the boys by the throat and set them coughing.

"Great Scott!" gurgled Gore-Pearce. "I didn't know the fog was as thick as this!"

"It has become thicker during the last hour," muttered Mike. "It's worse than a London special. In fact, I never remember a fog like it."

They were all rather startled. There was something sinister in the quality of that choking vapour. It wasn't mist or fog, in the ordinary sense. It came indoors like a vast blanket. It blotted them out as they stood there.

But this was no time for hesitation. Mike led the way out, and before he had got half-way down the steps he had lost himself. He floundered. The members of his party came blundering into him, and their eyes were already smarting horribly. They were all beset by a deadly choking sensation in their throats.

"Come on!" urged Mike determinedly. "It won't take us long. We can't go wrong—this snow trench leads straight to the Ancient House. The others will begin their racket at any second—and that will be the signal for us to smash in."

He groped forward, and felt that Padbury and Jackson were by his side; crowds of boys pressed close behind. The air was full of the sound of muffled coughing.

"I say! I—I can't carry on!" came a choking voice from out of the fog. "I can't breathe! I'm—I'm suffocating!"

"So am I!" gurgled another voice.

"Let's—let's get back indoors! This fog is death!"

Panic seized the would-be attackers. The fog, instead of helping them, was proving their undoing. And once the panic spread, it spread rapidly. Floundering madly, badly frightened, they reeled up the West House steps again and charged indoors. Even Mike and the other masters felt that this was the only thing to be done. They themselves were nearly choking; and they knew that their proposed attack would be a failure if they attempted it.

Slam!

The great door of the West House was closed, and the awful fog was shut out. A good deal of it had penetrated indoors, and it was swirling about like dense yellow smoke. For some moments nobody could speak, for the coughing had become a veritable epidemic.

"I'm dying—I can't breathe!" gasped Gore-Pearce, who had collapsed on the floor. "Help! I'm dying!"

He was not the only one who was so stricken. A third of the party had also collapsed on the floor, immediately after getting back indoors. It was so startling that Mike Satella and the other men felt bewildered. They themselves were coughing painfully—reeling about in agony.

"There's poison in the fog!" panted Mike hoarsely. "This is no ordinary fog!"

"Poison!" echoed Kenmore, his eyes wild. "It must be from the Bannington factories! There's a big chemical works down in the Valley, too! Shut the door—bar every window! We shan't be able to breathe soon! We shall all be killed like rats in a trap!"

CHAPTER 7.

The Distress Signals!

THE coming of the Death Fog—as the boys quickly called it—changed everything.

All possibility of an attack on the Ancient House was abandoned. Over a dozen members of the attacking parties were taken ill, and had to be carried to bed. Parties went round the various Houses, seeing that all windows and doors were tightly shut, blocking ventilators. Desperate efforts were made to keep out the fog.

But in spite of all these precautions the atmosphere indoors soon became noxious. There was a tight feeling at the back of everybody's throat—a horrible, choking sensation. Air! Everybody wanted air!

In the rebel stronghold the boys were perturbed. They had soon discovered the deadly quality of the fog when some of them had opened the upper windows to take a general look round. They had recoiled back, half-suffocated. Windows had been slammed and locked. Consternation was rife.

"It's no good getting the wind up," said Nipper, addressing a big meeting which had gathered in the Common-room, where a big fire was blazing. "As long as we don't go out—or let the fog in—we shall be all right. Perhaps it'll clear off by the morning."

"Anyhow, we're safe from those rotten masters," said Handforth. "They can't attack us in a fog like this."

It was certainly a relief. The rebels had been fearing, ever since the fog had gathered, that the masters would use it as a cloak for a determined assault. The rebels knew nothing of the recent attack which had been defeated at its inception.

"It's a case of history repeating itself, dear old fellows," said Travers solemnly. "Don't you remember, there was a fog like this in Belgium, just before Christmas—in the Meuse Valley?"

"I was thinking the same thing," nodded Nipper.

He went off on a tour of inspection—to make certain that every window and door was bolted and barred properly. He was not altogether convinced, either, that the fog was as deadly as some of the fellows made out.

Nipper went to one of the upper windows, and he wrapped a big muffler tightly round his face. It was a box-room, and he had closed the door. If he admitted any fog into the room, it would not get beyond into the House itself. He opened the window wide and leaned out.

"Phew!" he breathed, aghast.

It was far worse than he had believed. He could see absolutely nothing. But the fog, as it came in, surging about him, felt like an icy clutch. It gripped him, it wrapped itself round him. It was unlike any other fog he had ever experienced. Yes, there was certainly something deadly about it.

Strive as he would, he could not see any of the lights of the Modern House or the East House—yet he knew that these buildings were only just across the Triangle. A faint radiance seemed to glow overhead, and for a moment Nipper was puzzled. Then he realised that somewhere above the moon was shining—a full moon in a clear sky. This indicated that the layer of fog was not so thick, after all—it just clung closely to the ground. And the fog was responsible for another effect. An utter and absolute silence reigned.

The muffler protected him well, and he found that he could breathe fairly comfortably. It was difficult to tear himself away. He was fascinated by the eerie mystery of it all. Then he suddenly started. Were his ears deceiving him, or could he hear a sound? A curious drum-like beating, rhythmic and yet irregular.

He tensed himself, listening keenly. Yes, there it was again! It came in waves, as though the fog allowed it to pass through in occasional spasms. But that, after all, was one of the peculiarities of fog. Sounds which are made within a hundred yards are inaudible—but sounds half a mile off can be heard.

Thud-thud-thud — thud-thud — thud-thud-thud!

It was like the beating of a drum, only the beats were in curious time, and there were pauses. With a start, Nipper recognised the Morse code.

"Great Scott!" he ejaculated thickly through his muffler.

He leaned farther out of the window. The mysterious beating became slightly clearer to his ears; then it stopped, and again there was that awful silence.

Turning, Nipper groped his way across the box-room, and flashed on his electric torch. The fog was thick within the room, and he could hardly see. His smarting eyes brightened as he located a heavy, old-fashioned gong. There was no beater, but he seized a bent old poker. He returned to the window and listened. Still utter silence.

"Hallo!" he Morsed, using the hammer as a poker. "Who is it?"

He waited then, breathless and inwardly excited. Perhaps it was only some joker in the East House, and the fog was making it appear that the sounds were coming from a greater distance. The silence continued. Perhaps, after all, there was really nothing—

The drum beating came again—very faint, very distant—but just audible.

"Help!" came the Morse signal. "Can you hear?"

"Yes," replied Nipper. "This is St. Frank's."

It was a slow business, and Nipper was already feeling the effects of the fog, but he stuck it.

"Help!" came the Morsed reply. "Moor View. Starving. Twenty-four hours. Eight

Clinging precariously to the top of the Ancient House flagstaff, K. K. Parkington flashed his warning to the aeroplane overhead.

girls dying. Fog plague. Help! Bring Brett."

Nipper, in a fever of wildest anxiety, read the message. It was sufficiently alarming. He did not hesitate a moment in his reply.

"Will come!" he Morsed back.

He did not even wait to hear if there was any further drum-beating, but slammed the window, reeled out of the box-room, closed the door, and tore the muffer from his face. He gulped in the warmer air, pulled himself together, and ran downstairs. He raced into the crowded Common-room, where all the rebels, except the fellows on guard, were gathered.

"Did you hear anything?" shouted Nipper.

All eyes were turned upon him.

"A sort of gong," said Travers. "Who's been fooling about——"

"That was me," broke in Nipper. "I was replying in Morse to a message. It just came over from the Moor View School."

"What!"

"They understand Morse as well as we do—most of them are Girl Guides, just as we are Boy Scouts," said Nipper. "They're in an awful pickle. Starving for twenty-four hours, and eight of their girls are in danger of dying from the fog plague!"

"My only sainted aunt!"

"Great Scott!"

The room was wild with excitement and consternation. Many of the fellows had girl chums at the Moor View School, and all along they had known that the girls' school must have been suffering. But their own troubles had been so severe that they had had no time to think of the other victims of the blizzard.

"Moor View is snowed up just as we are," said Nipper quickly. "But it's a smaller

place, and their food stocks have run out. They're starving. They ask for Dr. Brett."

"But he's not here," said Handforth, in agony. "He was at home when the blizzard struck us, and he hasn't been able to get to the school since."

"We can do without Dr. Brett," replied Nipper. "We've got to make a dash for it,



Kenneth -
Brookes

you chaps! We must go to the rescue! Come on—I need volunteers!”

Practically everybody volunteered in a body.

“How are we going to do it?” asked Handforth. “This fog is death!”

“It’s not so bad as all that,” retorted Nipper. “I’ve thought of something, too. What about those gas-masks we were experimenting with some weeks ago in the Cadet Corps? There are twenty-four of them stored away. With gas-masks on, we shall be safe enough!”

“By George, that’s a brain-wave!”

“As for the snow, we can improvise some sort of snow-shoes—skis.”

“Tennis rackets!” said Travers brilliantly.

“By Jove, old man, that’s another brain-wave!” said Nipper, nodding. “Tennis rackets! Why not? With tennis rackets tied to our shoes, we ought to get over the snow all right. And, fog or no fog, we know just where the Moor View School lies, and if we keep in a bunch we can’t go far wrong.”

“Hurrah!”

“First of all we’ll get the party ready—two dozen of us,” said Nipper decisively. “Then we’ll get across to the laboratory, seize all the medicines we can get hold of, and—wait a minute! What about those two cylinders of oxygen? We can leave one here for our own chaps, in case there are any serious cases, and we can take the other with us for the girls. Oxygen is what they want more than anything.”

“Good egg! You’re always on the spot with the right wheeze, Nipper!” said Travers admiringly.

THERE followed a half-hour of hectic preparation.

The tennis racket idea, ludicrous as it seemed, was a sound one. The rackets would be ruined, but what would that matter—when lives were at stake? The gas-masks were distributed among the twenty-four volunteers. The raiding of the medicines and the cylinder of oxygen was soon accomplished. And then the party sallied out, armed with great flaring torches which had been specially prepared by the others.

It made a weird, grotesque spectacle. The gas-masks gave the juniors a horrific appearance, and the flaring torches and the swirling fog added to the fantastic nature of the picture.

The boys found that the fog did not penetrate the masks. They were able to breathe with comparative comfort. But it was difficult going—even now, while they were still in the cut trenches. The improvised snow-shoes tied to their feet were difficult to manage.

The occupants of the other Houses must have got wind of what was going on, in spite of the fog. For as the rescue-party went past the West House the windows were crowded with faces. Through the dense fog they could just see the blazing torches and the weird figures of the masked boys. Some of the

fellows opened the windows and shouted for information, and the truth got about.

Once out of the trench, the going was hard indeed. The great snowdrifts were more or less frozen, but the boys soon found themselves floundering badly. They struggled on. The lane was almost unrecognisable; but they were familiar with every inch of this ground, and they recognised certain trees—for the hedges, of course, were completely buried under the snow. They managed to keep to the lane, fighting on, falling into the drifts, with others helping them out.

But for the “snow-shoes,” they would never have got to their destination. Even as it was, they only progressed at a snail’s pace. Yet the Moor View School was only two or three hundred yards up the lane from St. Frank’s. All the rescuers knew that they could never have reached Bellton. The snowdrifts were far worse than they had even imagined. And they realised now how completely and utterly St. Frank’s was cut off.

It was their strong determination—their grit—which got them through. They conquered the snow and they conquered the fog. Their girl friends were in danger—starving. Nipper had not forgotten the food question, and every fellow carried a heavy pack on his shoulders. Only the essentials were taken—tea, butter, sugar, biscuits, flour, two or three hams, and so on. The boys were carrying enough to provide the Moor View girls with at least two days’ rations.

There were girls at the windows, watching anxiously. Hysterical cheers went up when the first gleams of the torchlights were seen. Then came the grotesque figures—so weird and terrible-looking that many of the girls were badly frightened until they realised the truth.

The main door was flung open as the foremost boys arrived, and they staggered in, aching in every limb, well-nigh exhausted. But they had won through, and nothing else mattered.

Nipper was the first to tear off his gas-mask, and his face was streaming with perspiration. He found Miss Bond, the headmistress, and he was relieved when he saw Mary Summers, his own special girl chum. She was looking haggard and pale and worn—as, indeed, were all the girls.

“Oh, Nipper, thank Heaven you’ve come!” almost sobbed Mary, as she gripped his arm.

“I’m here, too!” gurgled Handforth, emerging from his mask.

“Good old Ted!” cried Irene Manners, running to him. “I knew you’d be one of the first to get here.”

“Why didn’t you tell us before, Miss Bond?” asked Nipper. “Why didn’t you let us know—?”

“We couldn’t,” interrupted the headmistress huskily. “It was only when some of our girls became desperately ill that Irene thought of using the Morse code. Even then we did not dare to think that it would be successful in attracting your attention.”

"It was only by a fluke that I heard," replied Nipper. "But never mind—we're here. And we've brought plenty of food. Enough to carry you on for a couple of days—"

"Never mind the food now," interrupted Miss Bond. "What of Dr. Brett? Have you brought any medicines? Our own stocks have been used."

"We've brought all we could lay hands on—and a cylinder of oxygen, too," said Nipper.

The oxygen and the medicines were rushed upstairs to the patients—and that oxygen proved a godsend indeed. Miss Bond afterwards declared that it saved the lives of at least two girls.

The boys had risen to the occasion, forgetting all else in their rescue work. But back at St. Frank's the crook schoolmasters were taking full advantage of the situation!

CHAPTER 8.

Victory for the Masters!

MILLIONAIRE MIKE was an opportunist.

"This is our chance, boys," he said to his assembled men. "Twenty-four of those youngsters have gone off on some fool rescue stunt to the girls' school. There's only a handful left in the Ancient House."

"A handful?" repeated Dicky Bliss. "Two or three dozen!"

"Rabble!" said Mike contemptuously. "The leaders are away. It's our chance. But we shall have to use strategy—for even the rabble might cause trouble. We'll dispense with that original idea, and adopt something better. There are plenty of boys ready to support us, and once we have seized the Ancient House we shall be in command of the whole situation. When those young fools come back they'll find us in full control."

"You haven't forgotten the fog, Mike, have you?" asked one of the men.

"We're ready for the fog now," replied the leader. "We'll put damp handkerchiefs round our mouths—with mufflers over the top. The fog won't hurt us."

They lost no time in preparing. Kenmore and Forrest and the others were eager enough to help, and before long a powerful attacking force was ready for action.

Within the Ancient House, the rebels were in a fever of excitement. Kirby Keeble Parkington, the burly leader of the Red-Hots, was in temporary command. Not that he was able to do much with the excited boys. They were anxiously awaiting the return of the rescue party—and they were wondering how Nipper and his men had fared.

Jimmy Potts and Harry Gresham, on duty in the lobby, were on tenterhooks.

They were not fearing any attack, but as the minutes passed they were becoming more and more anxious about the fate of the boys who had gone. They were talking in low tones when they heard a queer, slithering sound against the big door.

"What—what was that?" whispered Potts shakily.

"I don't know," breathed Gresham. "Something against the door, wasn't it?"

They moved nearer, and they could hear scratching on the outer side, as though some animal was trying to force a way in.

"Hallo!" shouted Potts abruptly. "Who's there?"

"Help!" came a feeble cry. "I'm choking—let me in!"

"One of the chaps!" gasped Gresham. He pressed his face closer to the door. "Who is it?" he shouted.

"Church!" came the muffled, choking voice. "I got lost—the fog—can't breathe!"

Never for an instant did the two rebels suspect a trick.

"It's old Churchy!" panted Gresham. "He got lost—and the fog's got him! Quick!"

They thrust back the bolts just as two or three other rebels came into the lobby to know what the shouting was about. The door was unlocked and flung open. On the snowy steps lay a huddled figure, only just visible in the dense fog. The fog came pouring in.

"Grab him!" said Gresham tensely. "Poor old Churchy!"

NEXT WEEK'S BUMPER PROGRAMME.

"THE FIGHTING FAGS!"

By E. S. Brooks.

As a rule nobody at St. Frank's takes much notice of the Third Form; they're just—fags. But what a change comes about next week. From obscurity the fags leap into the limelight; they become the talk of the school. How this comes about—how St. Frank's is the victim of an audacious practical joke—is vividly described in this rollicking complete yarn.

"Honours Divided!"

By John Brearley.

Once again the Night Hawk and Nelson Lee join forces—in a stirring fight to place a boy prince upon his rightful throne. John Brearley has excelled himself in this magnificent yarn; it will grip you from the first line; it will carry you through a series of thrilling adventures that will leave you breathless. A story not to be missed, lads.

"The Valley of Hot Springs!"

By Ladbroke Black.

At last plucky Eric Denning and his uncle arrive at the mysterious Valley of Hot Springs—and there many surprises and thrills await them.

Order your copy in advance, lads.

They seized the figure and hauled it through the doorway. And at that very moment the burly figure of Millionaire Mike loomed out of the fog, followed by many other figures.

"All right, boys—we're in!" shouted Mike crisply. "All together—take it on the run!"

"A trick!" roared Potts. "Quick—the door!"

The huddled figure which he and Gresham had been assisting sprang to life. It proved to be Bernard Forrest, and as Forrest leapt up he dragged a muffler from his face.

"Come on, you chaps!" he bellowed. "We're in!"

The next moment the Ancient House lobby was filled with rushing figures. The invaders poured in, and the rebels who happened to be on the spot were swept aside.

The entire invading force poured in, and somebody closed the door again. Then the invaders branched out in all directions, sweeping down the passages, entering studies, Common-rooms, and carrying all before them.

Many of the rebels were locked in their studies before they could even get to the doors. In the Common-room there was a wild battle. Deeks and Goffin and a crowd of other Red-Hots fought valiantly. Archie Glenthorne and Reggie Pitt and Dick Goodwin and others helped to the best of their ability. For a time the invaders were checked—but it was a losing fight!

As soon as the fighting had died down—with nearly all the rebels locked in various rooms—Millionaire Mike took command of the situation. He sent his men round the House to keep watch over all doors and windows.

"St. Frank's is ours now," said Mike grimly. "When those boys come back, we'll draw their teeth in the first minute. There'll be no more fighting. We have command of the food stocks, and the other boys will support us after this."

"I believe you're right!" said Dicky Bliss breathlessly. "It's the food that matters. We shall be able to feed them properly, and they'll help us through thick and thin. This is a master-stroke!"

But there was one rebel who had not been captured.

Kirby Keeble Parkington had been upstairs when the fight started. In fact, he knew nothing about it until it was nearly over. And he bitterly accused himself of neglect. For he was in charge, and he had allowed this catastrophe to befall the rebels while Nipper was absent!

K. K. was rushing down to find out the state of the situation, when he met Deeks. Deeks' nose was bleeding, his right ear was thickened, and he was very much in rags. Obviously, he had been fighting hard.

"What's happened?" gasped Parkington, seizing him.

"They're in—they've beaten us!" panted Deeks.

An electric light overhead suddenly sprang to life, and from below cheering sounded.

Millionaire Mike had evidently given orders that the Ancient House lights were to be turned on again. Now that the rebellion was quelled, there was no reason why the Ancient House should still be in darkness.

Mike's idea, in fact, was to switch on every available light in the house, to make it a perfect blaze—so that when the rescue party returned from Moor View it would get a shock. Nipper & Co. would be compelled to surrender. They could not remain out in the fog. They would be forced to come indoors—and by coming in they would give themselves up.

"We can't warn the chaps—we can't do anything," said K. K. in despair. "But look here, Deeks. When I was up at that attic window just now, I caught a glimpse of the moon through the swirling fog overhead. The fog isn't deep—it's only a surface vapour. I thought about going up into the tower to see how it looks from there."

They wrapped mufflers round their faces, and went up into the great tower of the Ancient House. Emerging on the flat roof, they found themselves in a sea of fog—but it did not seem quite so thick here. And occasionally they could catch a glimpse of the moon sailing serenely in a clear sky overhead.

"What the dickens is that rummy sound?" asked K. K. suddenly. "Can't you hear it? It keeps coming and going."

They both listened intently.

"Sounds rather like a motor-car," said Deeks, frowning. "But it can't be a motor-car."

They listened again. Suddenly Parkington jumped.

"It's an aeroplane!" he ejaculated excitedly.

"Cheese it!" mumbled Deeks. "You're mad! How could an aeroplane—"

"It's Mr. Lee!" yelled K. K. thickly. "Didn't Pycraft say that Mr. Lee was coming? And how could he come—except by 'plane?"

"My only hat!"

"And he's trying to find a landing spot!" went on Parkington, taking a grip of himself. "Great Scott! Mr. Lee will kill himself if he tries to land in this fog!"

"He doesn't even know that the fog is so deadly," added Deeks. "We can't warn him, either."

Parkington looked round, grunted, and moved towards the great flagstaff which projected from the top of the tower.

A moment later, to Deeks' consternation, K. K. was swarming upwards through the fog!

CHAPTER 9.

The Round Up!

"**C**OME down, K. K.!" shouted Deeks. "If you happen to slip you'll kill yourself!"

But it was obviously useless. K. K. was climbing steadily, with all the

agility of a monkey. That flagstaff was something more than an ordinary pole. It served, too, as a wireless aerial—another one being erected on the West House tower. They were of steel—great masts which arose majestically above the school, and they were provided with notches in which a climber could easily obtain a hold for foot and hand.

"By the beard of my grandfather!" ejaculated K.K., in sudden amazement.

He had nearly reached the top of the flagstaff, and to his bewilderment the fog had suddenly swirled completely away, leaving him in perfectly clear air. Climbing higher, he found the moon, bright and strong, shining almost directly overhead. K.K. clung there, staring fascinatedly.

The picture he saw was wonderful enough.

Beneath him rolled a great sea of dense fog, looking like billowing clouds in the moonlight. He could understand the phenomenon after thinking for a moment or two. The fog over the Stowe Valley was of extraordinary density—and depth, too. But St. Frank's was on high ground, and thus, by mounting the flagstaff, K.K. had risen above the deadly vapour.

The night was calm and frosty and moonlit. A powerful aeroplane, seven or eight hundred feet above him, was circling round with throttled engine. K.K. could see the wings gleaming distinctly in the bright moonlight.

An idea came to K.K. It was rather a brilliant idea. At all costs, Nelson Lee must be warned! He must not land in this fog of death!

K.K. pulled a powerful electric torch out of his pocket, and, switching it on, he flashed out the word "Hallo" in Morse.

Almost before he had finished, an answering flash came from the rear cockpit of the 'plane. K.K. was thrilled. His signal had been seen. Steadying himself on the flagstaff, he Morsed out another message:

"St. Frank's. Do not land. Fog—death."

As though in answer, the aeroplane came lower, gliding down with throttled engine until it was only just skimming over the billowing fog. And as the machine circled round and round, under perfect control, K.K. was able to read the answering signal:

"State your exact position."

After K.K. had got that message, he hardly knew what it meant at first—but he answered:

"Ancient House tower."

Then he watched closely. The reply came:

"Keep flashing."

And Kirby Keeble Parkington clung there, his fingers numbed, his brain in a whirl. He kept flashing, flashing—

"I'M going to chance it, Lennard," shouted Nelson Lee.

"Man alive, you'll kill the lot of us!" replied Chief Detective-inspector Lennard.

The flight had been a nightmare. Reaching the South Coast had been easy enough, for Nelson Lee had flown well above the mist, and for a greater part of the trip he had been able to pick out certain landmarks. After reaching the neighbourhood of Caistowe, however, everything had become blotted out below—sea and land. But at last, by skilful piloting, Nelson Lee had picked up the vague beam of the Caistowe lighthouse. Taking his bearings from that he had flown straight inland to St. Frank's.

Lee was still circling round; he was keeping his eye on the flashing light below. He knew that it came from the top of the Ancient House tower—presumably, the very top of the flagstaff. He judged the distance from the flagstaff to the ground, through the fog. He knew that there was open ground on every side of St. Frank's, two or three hundred yards beyond the flashing light. There were trees, but they were mostly close in. And there was thick snow. The snow would provide the 'plane with an excellent buffer.

Taking his decision quickly, Lee gave one more look at the flashing light, and then took the plunge. The passengers held their breath. Down, down—through the thick fog.

The machine pancaked into the snow, her under-carriage burying itself, and the nose tipping slightly. The propeller splintered, and several of the stay-wires snapped with reports like pistol shots. Nelson Lee and Lennard were pitched forward, but the shock was not very severe.

"Well, we're down," said Lee coolly. "Now we've got to find out exactly where we— By Jove! That fellow with the flash-lamp was right about this fog! It's deadly!"

The fog had caught him in the throat, and it felt as though somebody had gripped him tightly. He turned up the heavy collar of his flying jacket, and put it over his mouth. The others did the same. They plunged out on to the snow, and found themselves floundering.

Lee plunged through the thick snow, the three Yard men following. The fog surrounded them like a solid wall. Lee had lost his bearings now, and he knew that he might be going away from St. Frank's instead of towards it. But luck was with him. He struck something solid, and discovered that it was the top of the brick wall which divided the playing fields from the West Square.

The rest was easy.

They arrived in the Triangle at an interesting moment—at the very time, in fact, when Nipper and the other members of his rescue party were returning from the Moor View School. They came face to face in the glow from the Ancient House windows.

"Guy'nor!" gasped Nipper, in amazement.

He had flung off his gas-mask in his excitement, and he was further astounded to

(Concluded on page 44.)



The VALLEY of HOT SPRINGS!

The Cry in the Night!

SAGDLOQ was standing on the threshold of the doorway, his little eyes full of fear. The professor strode across to him, and, seizing him by his fur collar, pulled him into the room, then shut the door.

"What's this all about?" he demanded in Esquimo.

Sagdloq pointed a trembling finger at an old crone who sat on a form by herself, meditatively chewing a piece of walrus meat.

"Ask Arnaluk," he stammered.

The professor turned impatiently to the old dame.

"Sagdloq has seen a Kevitok, and is frightened out of his wits. What does he mean?"

Arnaluk took the piece of walrus meat

out of her mouth and began to rock herself backwards and forwards.

"What can I know of anything save love and food, O Tuluwit?"

She put the piece of walrus meat back into her mouth as if indicating that her cross-examination was at an end.

"Tell me of these Kevitok!" the professor exclaimed.

Outside in the glow of the Arctic night the dogs began to whine. The women looked uneasily at the door and huddled more closely together. Arnaluk once more suspended her repast.

"When the dogs whine, are not the evil spirits abroad?" she crooned. "The Kevitoks, with the ancient magic and the ancient devils—the Kevitoks

TREASURE-SEEKING EXPEDITION

**led by Professor Denning
arrives at the Valley of
Hot Springs!**

who dwell in the caves of the dark with Tormansuk."

The professor straightened himself with a jerk and gave a grunt of satisfaction.

"I remember now, of course!" he exclaimed, turning to Eric. "In the long nights here, the Esquimaux develop a form of nervous illness and go off to the hills to live by themselves. There, according to tradition, they become the slaves of Tormansuk, the ancient god of the Esquimaux, and are believed never to die. They are the Kevitoks. Every misfortune that happens is attributed to a Kevitok, though it is not usual for them to be about at this season."

He swung round on Sagdloq.

"Now supposing you tell me what happened?" he added.

"I was up on the hillside, O Tuluwit, when I saw two dark shadows. One lay on the ground and the other stooped over it. I called, thinking maybe it was one of my brothers, but as no answer came I went towards the two shadows. That on the ground was a dead reindeer, and that stooping over it with a knife in his hand was like a man. He was very tall, but at the sound of my coming he stood up. When I saw his face and his burning eyes, I knew he was a Kevitok, and I fled."

The professor began hastily to pull on his furs, motioning to Eric and Danny to follow his example. The company stood aghast at their daring as they opened the door and stepped out into the Arctic night. Making their way through the village they came to a green, snow-patched slope. There was the dead reindeer, but there was no sign of the Kevitok. As the professor bent over the carcase of the animal he gave vent to an exclamation of surprise.

"Curious! Look here!"

Eric saw that he was pointing to three arrows sticking into the reindeer's side.

"What's the trouble?" he asked in surprise.

The professor glowered at him.

"Your ignorance is abysmal!" he snorted. "Don't you know that the Esquimaux don't use bows and arrows, and never have used them?"

As he spoke something whizzed within an inch of Eric's face and buried itself in the carcase. It was an arrow. At the same

moment a ghastly scream, like the war-whoop of a Red Indian, rent the silence of the night!

An Exciting Chase!

"**T**HERE he goes!" Danny exclaimed, stepping quickly in front of the professor.

A tall, shadowy figure was visible racing towards the shore. Even as they started off in pursuit, the figure was joined by another. There was the sound of a revolver-shot, and a bullet whizzed past Danny's ear. Instinctively the trio dropped flat on the ground. As they did so, they saw that the first figure, who carried the bow and arrow, had halted and was staring at his companion as if he were an unknown and unexpected ally. The professor, who was fumbling with his furs, at last managed to extricate his revolver. The shot that followed shattered the bow in the tall figure's hand. Instantly there was a fusillade of shots from what was obviously a Browning automatic. The light, however, was too bad for good shooting.

As if satisfied that they had checked the pursuit, the two men turned and began to run.

"Come on!" shouted the professor, jumping to his feet.

Leaping over lumps of ice, mounds of frozen snow, and the litter of the beach, Eric, his uncle, and Danny started off on the chase. But the mysterious fugitives had a good start and ran with the speed of the wind. Before they got to the edge of the broken ice, they heard the splash of a paddle, and a kayak shot swiftly out into the water.

"The impudence of the fellow!" the professor roared. "That's one of our kayaks. Run back, Eric, and tumble out Sagdloq and the crew. I mean to catch them and give them a lesson."

It took some time, however, before the boy could persuade the terrified kayakers to leave the school-room. Even Sagdloq seemed nervous, but by a mixture of promises and threats Eric at last got them down to the boats. A few minutes later and they were afloat. But by that time the mysterious strangers were already lost in the gloom of the Arctic night.

HOW THE STORY BEGAN.

ERIC DENNING, a cheery, adventure-loving youngster, lives with his uncle,

PROFESSOR DENNING. The professor, absent-minded and interested in nothing save his studies, is expecting a visit from John Peters, an Arctic explorer who has discovered a narwhal's horn, on which is written in Runic writing the key to tremendous treasure, in Greenland. The horn arrives, but not Peters. For Peters is dead—murdered by one of a gang of scoundrels, the leader of which is

BOSS MAUNSELL. Maunsell attempts to capture the narwhal's horn, but is frustrated, largely owing to the activities of

DANNY, the professor's man-of-all-work and an ex-pugilist. The professor deciphers the writing on the horn, and he and Eric and Danny set out for the Valley of Hot Springs. They reach Greenland, in spite of the gang's attempts to prevent them. A dance is held by the natives in the professor's honour. It is suddenly interrupted by a shout of "A Kevitok! A Kevitok!" Instantly the music stops, and everybody huddles together in a terrified group.

(Now read on.)

Standing up in the bows, the professor shouted directions at Sagdloq, who was steering. After they had skirted the island on which Krikkertak stands, they reached a stretch of open water. Half a mile ahead of them was the stolen kayak, moving swiftly.

"Step on it!" Danny shouted, evidently thinking of the old car he used to drive at home.

But the exertions of the crew were unable to lessen the distance between them and the fugitives. At the end of an hour they were running alongside the mainland, and shortly afterwards entered the Wigat. The scene grew wilder and wilder. All along the shore now were towering masses of ice—huge bergs which had stranded there. The Channel narrowed between bold masses of red and black rocks, seamed on the one side by glaciers. They shot past the settlement of Sarkak, and shortly afterwards the professor bawled out to Eric that they were passing Dronvik.

Looking landwards, the youngster saw the walls of a massive stone building and the outline of several houses. That was where his namesake had lived—whence he had set out on his expedition to the Valley of Hot Springs—that disastrous adventure which had ended in the ruin and massacre of his people.

As the Arctic night waned the race became a procession. The kayak containing their unknown assailants was now more than two miles ahead, and frequently the pursuers lost sight of her amidst the broken ice with which the channel was wedged. The sun had risen, and its rays, refracted from the glaciers and ice, were hot and dazzling. The water was alive with bubbles. Every moment Eric could hear a crash as the great icicles hanging from the rocks broke and fell. Where there had been a strange stillness before, they could now hear coming from the land the murmur of streams awakening from the grip of the frost.

Their crew was evidently tiring as the temperature increased, but the professor would not hear of stopping.

"A nice thing if I'm going to allow a couple of rascals to steal one of my boats!" he exclaimed testily.

The fugitive kayak was drawing farther and farther away. Suddenly the passage in the ice widened. On the right was a clear channel leading to the narrow mouth of a fiord, into which the kayak was heading.

The fiord was a curious one—not only because of the extreme narrowness of its mouth and the almost perfectly straight passage it cut in the mass of the hills, but because it was absolutely devoid of ice. No frost rime even powdered its edges. In the perpendicular height of its walls it bore a striking likeness to the pictures Eric had seen of the great Canyons in the Yellowstone.

This great furrow, driven through the solid rock, stretched for an immense distance ahead, its sides seeming to come together in a point like parallel lines in perspective.

Some three miles away was the stolen kayak, looking for all the world like a small wedge in a cleft.

A south-westerly wind had sprung up and the weary rowers, relinquishing their oars, hoisted the sail. In less than a quarter of an hour they had entered the fiord.

The scene was grimly majestic. On either side the perpendicular cliffs rose to a thousand feet, and every sound and every movement in the boat was caught by the echoing rocks and repeated again and again. The dim light of the sun's rays only served to cast the shadow of those vast walls on the water. Even Eric was conscious of a strange, eerie sensation. As for the Esquimaux, they began to show unmistakable signs of panic. The professor turned testily to Sagdloq.

"What's the matter with them?" he demanded.

"The fiord is accursed, O Tuluwit! None has sailed up it before and lived. It is called the Valley of Tormansuk, and it has its end in the abode of the Evil One!"

THE professor tugged exasperatedly at his beard, and was clearly about to make some hasty reply, when his gaze came to a focus on some object ahead.

They had now been travelling up the fiord for the better part of an hour, the wind growing steadily in strength. For the last five minutes the channel had grown so narrow that a jutting elbow of rock had completely hidden the prospect from view. Now they had just cleared that obstruction, and there ahead of them they saw the end of the fiord.

"Well, if it's the abode of the Evil One," the professor exclaimed, "it must have been the Evil One who stole our kayak! Look—there it is!"

But Eric was not looking at the little sandy beach on which the kayak lay. His gaze had wandered farther. Beyond, almost like a continuation of the fiord itself, was a long valley cut deep in the mountains. This gap was not more than forty yards wide at its entrance; what lay beyond it was impossible to see, for the space between the two narrowing walls of the mountains was filled with vapour which rose in great clouds from the ground.

He could hardly believe his eyes. He knew that until that moment he had never really believed in Eric the Red's story. But now—There flashed into his mind those words which his uncle had translated from the ancient runes.

"There landing I made my way up a long valley not more than forty paces in width at its widest part which is cut between the glaciers."

"Uncle," he gasped, "it's the Valley of Hot Springs!"

(Amazing adventures await Eric and his uncle now that they have arrived at the Valley of Hot Springs. Next week's instalment of this grand serial is the most exciting yet, so don't miss reading it on any account. chums.)



Jokes from readers wanted for this feature! If you know a good rib-tickler, send it along now. A handsome watch will be awarded each week to the sender of the best joke; pocket wallets, penknives, "Holiday Annuals" and "Nature Annuals" are also offered as prizes. Address your jokes to "Smilers," Nelson Lee Library, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4.

THE RIGHT TIME.

The teacher was telling the class about the four seasons of the year.

"Now, one of you boys tell me which is the proper time to gather apples."

"When the dog's chained up, sir," replied Johnny.

(G. Singleton, 40, Brixham Gardens, Ilford, has been awarded a handsome watch.)

MISSING.

The absent-minded professor drove up to his garage, got out of his car, opened the garage, looked inside, and blinked. Then he leaped back into his car and drove like fury to the police station.

"Sergeant," he gasped, "my garage is empty! My car has been stolen!"

(F. Wise, 163, St. John's Road, Walthamstow, E.17, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

A LONG WAIT.

Mother: "Why don't you get on with your dinner?"

Small son: "I'm waiting till the mustard gets a bit cooler."

(E. Haskey, S.P.1 Ward, Erdington House, Erdington, Birmingham, has been awarded a "Holiday Annual.")

"FREE AND EASY."

The football match was over and the spectators were leaving. Suddenly an official saw a man climbing the fence.

"Hi, you!" he shouted. "Can't you go out the way you came in?"

"Yes," said the man as he dropped to the ground, "that is just what I am doing."

(H. Clow, 95, Percy Road, Canning Town, E.16, has been awarded a "Nature Annual.")

HIS SHARE.

Tommy: "I was out in all that dreadful rain last night."

Sammy: "Not all of it—I was in some of it myself."

(P. Edwards, 27, Barnard Hill, Muswell Hill, N. 10, has been awarded a penknife.)

A GUILTY CONSCIENCE.

The Vicar (to small boy): "Thank you very much for those eight apples for the harvest festival. I must call round and thank your mother personally."

Small boy: "P-please, s-sir, if you do, will you thank her for twelve?"

(D. Austin, 58, Eustace Road, East Ham, E.6, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

HE WAS LUCKY.

Patient (frantically): "Doctor, doctor! I was playing the mouth organ and I swallowed it!"

Doctor: "Keep calm, sir, and be thankful you were not playing the piano."

(H. Cathcart, 288, Baltic Street, Glasgow, has been awarded a "Holiday Annual.")

IN THE TALKIES.

Herbert: "What does your brother work at?"

Horace: "He's in the talkies."

Herbert: "What part does he take?"

Horace: "He's the approaching footsteps in the burglary scene."

(J. Ward, 3, Martin's Court, Sleaford, Lines, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

AT THE TOP.

Proud father: "Well, my son, did you come near the top of the list in your exam?"

Willie (brightly): "Yes, father, I came top of the 'Dunce List.'"

(Miss Joan Rout, 14, Lyall Street, Melbourne, Australia, has been awarded a "Nature Annual.")

BOTH OLD 'UNS!

Old farmer: "Tom, go and fetch the old horse."

Tom: "Why the old one, father?"

Old farmer:

"'Wear out the old ones first' is my motto."

Tom: "Well, then, father, you fetch the horse."

(K. Essoyan, 137, Nakayamate Dori 2 Chome, Kobe, Japan, has been awarded a "Holiday Annual.")

LIGHT DIET.

Explorer (speaking of the progress of civilisation): "In the past the Eskimaux used to eat candles."

Old lady (seriously): "And now, I suppose, they eat electric light bulbs?"

(A. Watt, 176, Kingsbridge Drive, Glasgow, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

BUSINESS.

Assistant: "The gentleman over there wants to know if this woollen pull-over will shrink."

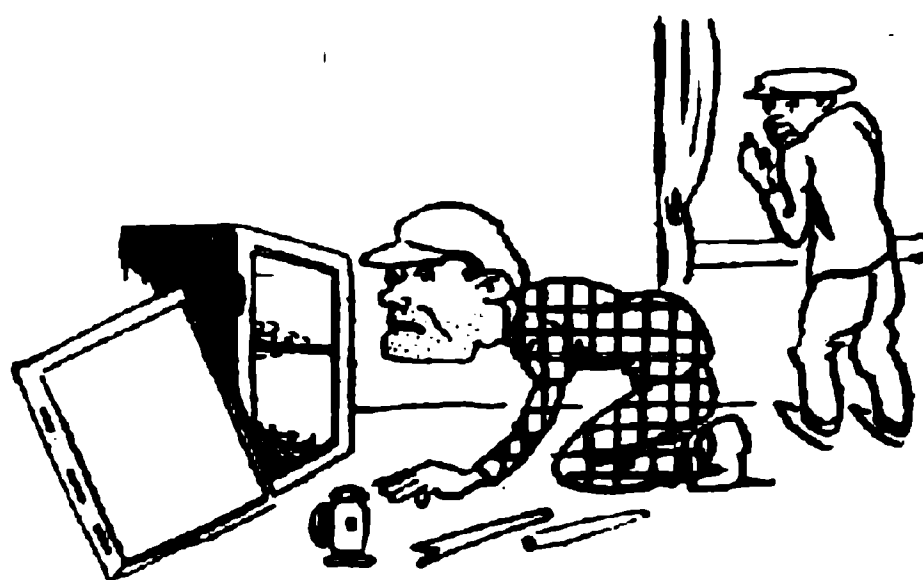
Floorwalker: "Does it fit him?"

Assistant: "No, it's too large."

Floorwalker: "Why, certainly it will shrink."

(P. Mooney, 5, Sorrento Road, Dalkey, Co. Dublin, has been awarded a penknife.)

HERE'S A GOOD 'UN!



COPPED.

First burglar (at safe): "'Ere, Bill, this safe's full o' coppers."

Second burglar (looking through window): "So's the blinking street!"

(R. Austin, 17, Platt Hill Avenue, Bolton, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

THE REBELS' TRIUMPH!

(Continued from page 39.)

see that the Ancient House door was now opening. Millionaire Mike became dimly visible.

"Come in, boys!" he said kindly. "I'm afraid your fellow rebels have met with disaster during your absence—"

He broke off, his jaw sagging. For Nelson Lee and Inspector Lennard had stepped briskly into the lobby, flinging their coats away from their faces as they did so.

"By Heaven, you were right, Lee!" said the chief inspector. "Mike Satella, I have a warrant for your arrest."

"Haven't you made a mistake?" asked Mike curtly. "My name is Mr. John Wetherell—"

"Cut it out, old man," said Lennard. "I've got your photograph in my pocket, and you can't bluff out of it."

Millionaire Mike took his arrest with a certain quiet dignity, but the other members of his gang were inclined to fight. Sam Pope and Al Spink and the others, indeed, made a vicious attack upon the Yard officers. But Nipper and his men were ready, and they joined in valiantly. It was a short fight, but a desperate one whilst it lasted.

The game was up, and well the confidence men knew it. All were arrested, and they were securely locked in one of the cellars—and it wasn't the one which was conveniently provided with a secret exit!

THE hectic troubles of St. Frank's were practically over. With Nelson Lee in full command, the school was normal again within a few hours.

The arrest of "Mr. Wetherell" and his colleagues had confirmed the suspicions of the rebels, and it had hit the rotters like a

blow between the eyes. For the rebels were now justified, and Nelson Lee himself told them they would have nothing to fear when the Governors held the inevitable inquiry.

Mercifully, the deadly fog lifted in the morning, and with the setting in of a heavy thaw, the Stowe Valley roads were once again opened. There were two or three days of disruption, of course, and the school thoroughly enjoyed itself, for very little work was done.

Mr. Pycraft had the courage to confess everything to Nelson Lee—how he had been tricked into playing that fateful card game, and how he had unconsciously given his I O U's to the men who had got him under their thumb.

"I think, Mr. Pycraft, that the Governors will exonerate you when they know all the facts," said Nelson Lee, not unkindly.

Under Lee's leadership the school battled bravely with the problems, and when at last the roads were open, and fresh food supplies came in, everything was all serene.

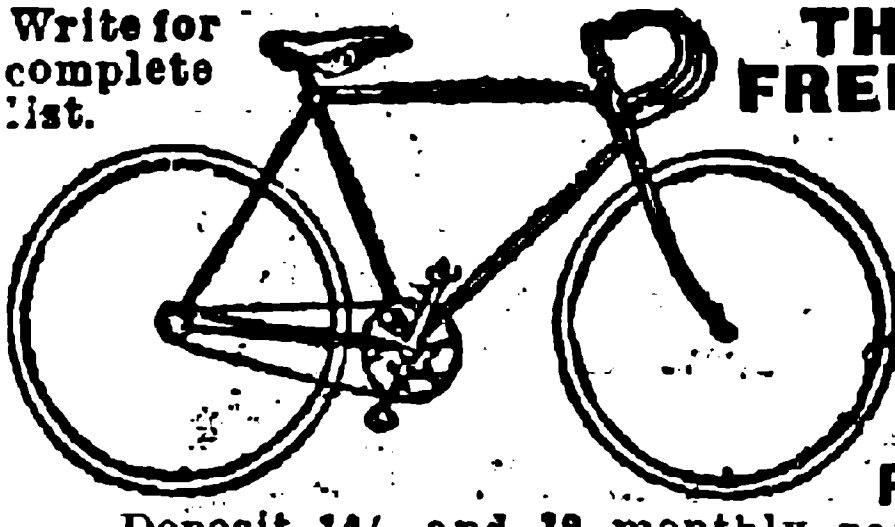
Mike Satella and his gang were taken away to face the charge of conspiracy—which would be proved to the hilt.

Another fact which pleased the school was that Mr. Alington Wilkes and Mr. Stockdale and Mr. Crowell, and several others of the St. Frank's masters were fit enough to resume their duties. Only a few would be on the sick list for another week.

That week soon passed—and then St. Frank's, as though by magic, quietly settled down to its normal routine.

THE END.

(Another topping St. Frank's yarn next Wednesday, entitled: "The Fighting Fags!" written in E. S. Brooks' liveliest style.)



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