

NELSON LEE

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Across the bottomless chasm! Read the amazing Night Hawk yarn inside—one long thrill throughout.

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A FIGHT FOR



Kyle's Kittens Kybosh The Rajah's "Rats!"

CHAPTER 1.

Lala the Panther Brings News!

"**S**ALAAM, salaam! O little Rajah of Bhuristan—Budrudin Ananda, our pride! At last I behold thee again after these weary years!"

The deep, harsh voice, quivering with emotion, rang out with such passionate triumph that a solemn stillness fell when it ceased.

In the cabin of the huge troop-carrier lying wrecked at the foot of the Bhuristan

mountains—that enormous airplane captured by the Night Hawk in which Nelson Lee and the Kittens had flown from Palestine to fight for a throne—a joyful reunion was taking place.

Day had just broken, flooding the cabin with grey light, and through the bullet-shattered windows came the faint, cheery voices of the Kittens, busy preparing breakfast. Nelson Lee, leaning back in his chair, smiled quietly at his ally, the Night Hawk, who sat beside him with a coat thrown over his flying costume. The eyes of both men,

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A THRONE!

By
**JOHN
BREARLEY**



and Nipper and Snub, too, turned to where little "Buddy" stood, staring down with grave dignity at the tall old man prostrated at his feet.

The boy smiled slowly.

"I am glad to behold thee, too, O Lala Bagheera!" he said in soft Bhuristani. "Rise, my father's old comrade. No need for thee to kneel before me till I am your rajah indeed!"

Reluctantly the grizzled Indian obeyed, devouring the young prince with an eager stare. As yet, though a full minute or more had passed since the Kittens' sentry had led him to the airplane, he seemed unaware that white men were present. Prince Budrudin

Ananda was all he could gaze at with fanatical devotion shining in his deep, piercing eyes.

Taller even than Thurston Kyle, he stood before his youthful ruler, a lithe, erect figure for all the grey streaks in his fierce, curling beard. On his head was a faded turban of purest silk, pressed close upon his stern brow, yet not so close that it hid the terrible wound where, years before, a tulwar-stroke had robbed him of his left ear, and gashed the brown, bitter face from temple to jaw.

Lala Bagheera—Lala the Panther, they called him in Bhuristan—king of the mountain exiles, lean and tireless, with the great shoulders of a warrior and the knotted limbs of a hill-man. He raised Budrudin's slender hand in his own gnarled fist and touched it reverently to his lips.

"It is true, then—they are really come at last," he muttered, almost to himself. "It is as the great winged lord said who sought me yesterday in the mountains. He gave me also a writing, commanding me to prepare for thy coming, O Star of Bhuristan. All day I watched for the flying-chariot that was to bring thee, according to his words,

and when at last I saw it my heart was singing like a bird. But then from the skies dropped the flying-chariot of that accursed dog, thy cousin, Ram Tagore. And although it was destroyed in fiery flames, yet your own chariot, too, plunged to earth. And I thought, little prince, thou wert lost also—on the threshold of thy country!"

Budrudin laughed gleefully.

"Yet I am here and well, good Lala. But see, here are the white lords, my friends. Salaam to them, lion of the mountains! And henceforth thou shalt speak their language as you spoke it in the days of the War, so that they understand!"

For the first time Lala the Panther's

smouldering eyes left Buddy's face and turned to Nelson Lee and the Night Hawk with pride, gratitude and a faint bewilderment in their brown depths. Arms extended, he bent to the floor in a profound and ceremonious salaam, drawing himself up proudly afterwards like the splendid veteran he was. But it was plain he had yet to recognise Thurston Kyle without his wings and goggled helmet.

"You have brought our little rajah home, my lords—my life is yours!" he said simply. "Lala Bagheera greets you!"

The Night Hawk laughed softly, his own stern heart going out to the fierce old warrior.

"Greeting to you, Bagheera! But don't you recognise me, my friend?"

Bagheera started, lowered his beetling brows and peered keenly at the dark, handsome face before him. A great wonder dawned in his eyes.

"Thou! It is you, the great winged lord who came from the skies——"

"And talked with you on Kanjunga yonder!" smiled Thurston Kyle, waving his hand towards the hoary peak of Bhuristan's mightiest mountain. "Yes, I am he. But of that we will say nothing!" Rapidly he introduced his three companions to the Indian fighter. Then: "And have you obeyed your rajah's orders, Bagheera?"

The Panther flung up his turbaned head, clapping a claw-like hand to the hilt of his tulwar.

"As I promised, great lord. My men—they are already on the farther mountain slopes, awaiting your fine soldiers. Two hundred swords and as many spears—waiting to sweep on to the plain through the western gate of Jhadore and into the palace of that kite-hearted jackal who rules there!"

His commanding voice rose vibrantly.

"Ho, but we shall be joyful men, lords, when our flashing swords go wicker-snick in the courtyard of the palace once more. The fountain before the palace steps shall spurt blood and not water before we have paid our score!"

"Well said, Bagheera!" Thurston Kyle's eager laugh rang out. "But come, you remember my words of yesterday. Can we still surprise the rajah's men even now, do you think?"

The Panther stroked his beard thoughtfully.

"I think so, lord. All yesterday and through the night my spies were alert. They say the usurper has sent many soldiers to guard the eastern passes—he does not expect white soldiers to climb Kanjunga and attack from this side!"

Nelson Lee leaned forward, speaking for the first time.

"Neither do I, having seen Kanjunga!" he said quietly. "I thought there were but two mountain-passes, and we were to fight for them. Is there another pass—from this side, Bagheera?"

"Ay, lord. A pass known to hillmen, and, I fear, only fit for hillmen. I showed it to

the great winged lord here; we call it the Leap of Death. But for your white soldiers, in boots——" He stopped and looked again at Thurston Kyle.

"The Leap of Death!" repeated Nelson Lee doubtfully. The strange name conjured up visions of a mighty mountain chasm, but the Night Hawk raised his hand.

"Don't worry, Lee—wait till you see the Leap. Or, rather, you won't see it for long, old fellow, because you'll all be blindfolded for a time. But I have a plan already that will get the Kittens across, never fear. It will save us days of weary climbing and perils. Our surprise raid will still be complete!"

"I have other news, too, my lords," struck in Bagheera, and they stared at him quickly.

"It is this. Many changes have happened in Jhadore since our beloved rajah went away; my spies tell me that the people of the town groan under a tyrant's rule. I think"—he smiled mirthlessly—"there will be only the usurper's soldiers to fight!"

Nelson Lee nodded, partly satisfied. But another thought occurred to him.

"Yet Ram Tagore is a dangerous foe, Bagheera. Are you sure we shall not be spied upon during our mountain journey?"

The Indian's grim chuckle was answer enough.

"Never fear, lord; no one spies from these mountains but the Panther's men. The usurper has driven us from the plains, but we rule in the hills, I say!"

There was a ruthless finality about the words that carried conviction and dispelled Nelson Lee's last doubts. The Night Hawk spoke abruptly:

"And we start—when, Bagheera?"

"Now, lord!" The reply came prompt and short. "By departing at once your soldiers will be on the Bhuristan slopes this night, if all goes well. There they shall rest from their toilsome climb, and then, in the first grey light of to-morrow's dawn, we shall rush Jhadore." He salaamed again to Nelson Lee. "Order your men forth, my lord!" he cried. "Some of my own will meet them in the mountains and guide them to the Leap of Death. And after that—they are in the hands of this mighty winged lord!"

"And the mighty winged lord will play his part!" chuckled the Night Hawk tensely. "Now, Lee, old chap—to action!"

Without a word, Nelson Lee sprang through the cabin door, rapping orders to the Kittens outside.

And that tough, cheerful squad, refreshed by a good night's sleep, leapt to obey. Action at last.

CHAPTER 2.

The Miracle in the Mountains!

THE quiet speed with which the Kittens broke camp made fierce old Lala chuckle with a warrior's pride.

Ordinarily, the "gang" was as independent a set of men who could well be found, taking orders from no man. But "on

service," what Nelson Lee or the gigantic Scrapper Huggins said, "went"—without argument. As for Thurston Kyle, the Kittens would have followed him blindly to far hotter places even than the mountains of Bhuristan.

And it was hot. A short march brought them to the feet of Kanjunga, and all through the long morning and afternoon the little party toiled upwards, through narrow defiles, under beetling crags, past roaring cataracts and up steep and dangerous slopes. The glaring sun roasted them, the mountain winds chilled them; yet they stuck it out cheerfully as ever, helped over the rougher parts by wiry, shy-eyed hillmen who appeared out of nowhere and skipped lightly ahead, carrying the Kittens' rifles and packs like bundles of feathers.

Slowly the day wore on as they climbed ever higher, with short rests every hour; sunset saw them winding along narrow ledges, deep in the heart of Kanjunga, whose topmost peaks towered, snow-clad, above them. The stars came out, not the cold distant twinkles of home, but great flaring lamps hung in a sky of blue velvet; and presently a moon that transformed the mountains to fairyland.

Nelson Lee, following Bagheera's footsteps closely at the head of the Kittens, heaved a sigh of relief. The worst of the journey seemed over. But what was this mysterious "Leap of Death"? And why the "blind-folding" up here in these perilous heights?

And then, edging past a rocky buttress with only inches to spare, he came suddenly upon it. A startled gasp burst from his lips.

On the other side of the buttress the path took a sharp turn, widening out into a wide, long ridge. From the outer edge of this, over a void, hung a swaying bridge of tough hide ropes, with a single side-rail of rough stakes, its farther end lost in distant shadow. Beneath that slender causeway was—nothing. The "Leap of Death."

The detective halted, staring down into the sickening chasm almost at his feet. Despite the moonlight he could see nothing beyond the first few yards—it was a precipice, yawning, horrible, bottomless.

Its width across he could not judge; it might have been twenty yards, thirty, anything. But, most hideous feature of all, out of those ghastly depths whistled a strong vertical wind, in a vortex that shook the frail rope bridge constantly, so that it swung wildly backwards and forwards.

Yet even as Nelson Lee looked the wild hillmen, loaded with rifles and gear, skipped lightly across it with the skill and unconcern of long practice, their brown bodies vanishing into the farther depths. Scrapper Huggins, however, coming round the buttress after Lee, took one look, stopped dead and whistled.

"Strike me pink! Cross that! Not for li'l Scrapper!" he said decidedly, and the other Kittens, edging after him, agreed. It was their first "moan" during that gruelling

day. But no white men could have tackled that wind-tossed ladder.

Lala Bagheera smiled in his beard.

"Behold the 'Leap of Death,' my lords!" he said.

The words were a tonic; the quietly-sardonic edge to them spurred Nelson Lee out of his amazement and dismay. Taking a deep breath, he dragged his eyes away and nodded with a calmness he did not feel.

"Quite so, Bagheera. Now, you chaps, stop talking. Edge along this back wall. Every man is to blindfold himself tightly with his handkerchief. And after that, stand still for your lives!"

Awed by feelings of unknown peril and with that demon wind forever whistling about their ears, the Kittens obeyed, sidling along the rocky wall. Soon the moonlight shone down on twenty rigid figures, Nelson Lee included, each with a bandage tight about his eyes. Thus they waited—for the coming of the Night Hawk.

His arrival was prompt. Across the precipice he came, mighty wings fighting the up-rushing gush of air, hands outstretched. Nelson Lee, at the end of the line, heard faintly the rustle of great pinions above his head, felt a light touch on his shoulder. Thurston Kyle's voice came to his quietly.

"Step forward, Lee. Have no fear!"

The detective, his faith strong as ever, took a long stride from the wall. His heel touched the brink of the chasm, but his toe went over the edge; he lurched forward clumsily, blind as he was, arms upflung as the wind shrilled in his ears like the scream of demons. Then as he tottered into nothingness two steel arms closed easily around his body, and next moment he was whipped up and taken out into space.

Teeth tight-clenched, he trusted himself to the Night Hawk entirely, mastering the awful chill in his heart. An eternity of fighting with the roaring gusts followed—flyer and passenger were tossed about like a shuttlecock. But the powerful grip round his body never faltered an inch until, the nightmare journey over, his feet touched solid land once more and he was gently thrown forward into firm eager hands that drew him to safety.

It was the thrill of his adventurous career. Breathlessly he collapsed to the ground, tearing the handkerchief from his eyes. And Thurston Kyle flew back.

Only the Night Hawk could have accomplished that wondrous feat over the Leap of Death that night. One by one the Kittens were carried across the swirling chasm, the huge bulk of Scrapper Huggins as easily as the frail form of little Budrudin. If once the Night Hawk's mighty strength had failed, nothing could have saved them from hideous death. But it did not fail, and the Kittens, blindfolded, did not struggle. They trusted the strange man who bore them to the hilt.

In twenty long-drawn minutes the uncanny task was accomplished. Thurston

Kyle's Kittens were across the Leap of Death. All unknown to the usurper of Bhuristan, a bunch of reckless fighting-men were safely over the barrier he supposed impassable for white men.

And a horde of brown men awaited them far below. The net was drawing close.

DAZEDLY the Kittens stared into the starlit sky in a vain endeavour to catch a glimpse of their amazing leader, already high aloft again and laughing triumphantly as his wings spurned the crags beneath him. The faces of Lala Bagheera and his wild hillmen, too, were tense and drawn with superstitious awe. For they had seen a miracle performed.

But, as Scrapper Huggins muttered when the party turned and filed down the Bhuristan slopes towards the plain:

"If it means comin' back this way, Mr. Lee, I'm walkin' across Bhuristan to China. You bet!"

And again the Kittens agreed. But the night march went on. So far nothing had been seen of the main body of Bagheera's force.

"Nor will you, lord," chuckled the Panther grimly, when Nelson Lee spoke to him. "But they are ahead, and waiting for the dawn. Vengeance will be ours before long!"

Two hours of winding down into the foothills followed, until at last the tireless mountaineer gave the signal to halt. Rapidly and silently a camp was made, two small fires lit in the shelter of a cave. A hearty meal was bolted hastily, after which weary men stretched themselves out and were asleep in a moment. Only Nelson Lee sat on, smoking pipe after pipe, reviewing the position while the stars waned and the night flew past on wings. He wondered where Thurston Kyle was.

And when the first light stained the high mountain peaks above him, his ally returned, gliding down silent as a phantom of darkness. Nelson Lee rose quickly.

"I am here, Kyle!" he whispered.

The Night Hawk thrust out a hand.

"Good man. Listen, Lee; all is ready. I have flown over Jhadore, passing Bagheera's men going and coming. They are huddled at the edge of the plain below, ready for the signal. From there to the city is a short hour's march. There are strong guards around each gate—Ram Tagore is taking no chances—but while the men are on the alert there are no signs of immediate alarm. They do not suspect our presence here, I am sure."

Nelson Lee nodded quickly.

"We are to rush the western gate, as you know," went on the Night Hawk. "It is nearest to us—and nearest the rajah's palace. In fact nothing but a wide market-place separates the city gate from the palace walls—plenty of elbow-room, Lee, plenty of fighting-space, old fellow." Thurston Kyle's voice was sharp with eagerness.

"Your plan of attack is simple. Dawn will not break on the lower plains yet for over an hour—you should be within striking distance when it does. Then—rush that western gate: machine-guns, rifles, everything! Bagheera's men will charge first, the Kittens can shoot the wall clear of defenders. And I shall be above that wall, clearing the space behind with my guns and grenades."

He clenched his fists till the knuckles whitened.

"Once inside the gate, Lee, smash for the palace gates as hard as you can. It is the palace we want: the rajah and that dog, Ram Tagore. Once we have that, I think we shall conquer swiftly, for as Lala Bagheera says, the townsfolk are sullen. Have I made myself clear?"

"Perfectly." Nelson Lee docketed every scrap of information in his mind. His ally rustled his wings.

"Then—au revoir. Make the boys stay at the rear; it will be men's work once inside the gates, and they can act as messengers between us if necessary. And take care of yourself, old friend—and the Kittens!"

With that he was gone into the mountain gloom again. Nelson Lee turned to waken his men.

Quietly the Kittens rose to it, buttoning their drill tunics, settling their steel-lined sun-helmets firm on their heads. Nerves were taut now that the final march was to commence, but the brawny fists that closed on rifle-stocks and holsters were firm and hard. The hefty bunch were looking forward to the scrap of a lifetime.

Cool and alert, Nelson Lee moved among them, whispering orders. "Scotchy" Sanders was appointed to one Lewis gun, "Sailor" Peters to the other, with two men to help on each. The others had rifles, Colts and their favourite "coshes" for close work. At the order to march, they sprang swiftly into file.

Down they went through the slow-creeping dawn till the mountains were behind them and, through gaps in the foothills, they saw a great plain still wrapped in night. For the first time, also, they came upon their dusky allies: two long lines of stalwart, silent men, wild as their native crags and armed with tulwars and small, round shields. They turned for a moment to gaze at the party of white men coming down upon them, then, at a sharp command, sprang up and vanished into the gloom.

The surprise raid on Jhadore had started with a vengeance.

It was tense work, moving stealthily on level land at last, with that ghostly, fanatical army ahead. Gradually the light from the mountains began to spread across the plain, dim at first, but growing clearer; the minutes sped by, checked on Nelson Lee's wrist-watch. And suddenly, as through a thin gauze veil, the detective had his first glimpse of the walls of Jhadore.



Scrapper Huggins flung "Uncle Dunlop" with unerring aim, and it curled round the Rajah's sword just as he prepared to strike down young Budrudin.

In another minute the Kittens were among Bagheera's men, as they squatted on the ground, waiting like wolves for the white leader to sound the assault. Naked blades glittered coldly, keen eyes were turned towards Nelson Lee. Lala Bagheera strode up, his dark, hawk face shining with fiercest joy. As he halted before Nelson Lee, a shaft of early sunlight struck the walls of the town—two hundred yards away. It shone, too, on a great wooden, iron-studded gateway—the western gate.

Bagheera flashed his blade in salute.

"Ho, great lord, yonder is our quarry at last! We, thy servants, await the word!"

Nelson Lee took a final look round, cool as ice now that the time had arrived. On either wing of the Kittens' line, Scotchy and Sailor were ready with their machine-guns; the others stood, rifles at the ready.

He waved his hand and his voice crackled.

"Go, Bagheera! Charge—for Budrudin Ananda!"

A shrill yell, like the voice of vengeance, answered him.

CHAPTER 3.

The Fight for the Gate!

NEVER in all his life was Nelson Lee to forget that first wild, breakneck charge of the shrieking hillmen. In a flash, the Panther storming at their head, they were hurtling for those dim stone walls, blades and spears flickering wickedly, their roaring, shattering scream splitting the silence.

It was an avalanche from the mountains; a terrifying surprise. Bedlam heralded its advance.

Watching points calmly, Nelson Lee saw bearded, startled men in helmets shoot up above the ramparts, heard the instant, strident peal of a trumpet. At once he flung up his arm again, shouting to the Kittens above the din.

"Every man—rapid fire—fire!"

The ringing smack of the Winchesters rang out with the word; the distorted faces on the wall vanished as though swept aside by in-

visible hands. To left and right the Lewis guns broke into their staccato chatter, shooting over a swarm of red-hot lead that sprayed the rampart with a death-hail. In a shrill noise of shouting and the blare of trumpets, the city of Jhadore woke up to its peril.

Then, crash—crr-rash! The Panther's men had reached the great gate, a great brass-headed rammer they carried was thundering home against the groaning timbers. Like ravening wolves they tore and fought at the barrier, hoarse with yelling already, but fury surging in their untamed hearts as they fought to get at their ancient foes.

From farther along the wall a body of men leapt up, letting drive at the throng with old-fashioned guns that poured out clouds of smoke and jagged, whistling slugs. Immediately the Kittens' machine-guns crashed them into silence: the sharpshooters in the line cleared the ridge above the gate once more.

Crash, crash, crr-rump! Again and again the battering-ram smashed into the gate. It trembled, shuddered, but still held. And now, from the brightening sky above, came twin spurts of fire, followed by squat missiles as fast as the invisible thrower could send them down. Within the city, behind the weakening gate, the crash of exploding grenades added their vicious note to the uproar.

Drifting smoke swirled across the fiends at the portal: Nelson Lee ran forward the better to see. There came another smash of a grenade and a gaping hole appeared in the studded door, just as a fresh onslaught from the battering-ram shook it from top to bottom. It was giving—its huge hinges were snapping—wider—wider—

Nelson Lee whirled on the Kittens, arms aloft.

"Now, Kittens!—One last volley—and charge!"

Crack, cra-ack, crack!

A scarlet tongue licked down the line, then, with guns and coshes swinging, the Kitten broke, bunching into a solid rush as they scampered for the gate, the low thunder of their cheering rising even above the wild howls of their allies.

"Kim' on, me lads; the blackies are pinchin' the fun!"

Scraper Huggins, mighty shoulders swaying, heaved through the rear of the Panther's men, fighting his way to the gate, Nelson Lee and the others barging in behind. Crr-umph! : Smash! The battering-ram slammed in for a last overwhelming drive, its brass head vanishing clean through the timber. And beneath its weight and the united, feverish rush of the attackers, the great western door of Jhadore groaned—split into jagged fragments—and swung open.

As a millstream rushes into its channel, so the raiders, white men and brown, poured into the gateway, hacking, stabbing, slashing and shooting. Before them the packed defenders huddled together: the two parties met in a whirling, hissing clatter of steel.

"Budrudin—Bagheera! Ho, for the Panther!"

"Come on, the Kittens! Sock into 'em, laddies!"

"Jhadore. Hold fast for Jhadore!"

In a deafening din the rival war-cries rose to the morning skies, drowning for an instant the clash of whickering blades. Slowly but surely the attackers wedged their way in: the rajah's soldiers fell back, widened out until they were pushed back twenty yards inside the wall, and two hundred fighting fiends, with years of exile to avenge, were raging in their midst, dying with yells on their lips, yet taking a foeman with them.

Blindly the hillmen fought their way in across the space beyond the gate, Lala Bagheera, his tulwar red from point to hilt, whipping them into frenzies with his war-cry; the Scraper's great arms and "Uncle Dunlop" rising and falling beside the warrior.

With Nelson Lee was Alf Jenkins, dour and silent as ever, downing his foes with a vicious jab of his rifle-butt; little Ike Jacobs, plunging forward with Colt and knife, the other Kittens whirling coshes or empty guns. And above them all, huge wings terrifying those who glimpsed them, glided the Night Hawk, firing till his automatics were hot, for only two grenades were left in his belt.

Suddenly, as the rush was checked, an idea struck him and he whirled about. Outside the walls, the machine-gun crews stood by their useless weapons, staring discontentedly at the mêlée ahead that cut them off from their targets—when down upon them swooped Thurston Kyle, shouting orders that made their eyes blaze. Nelson Lee, among the attackers, was the first to notice a new note introduced into the battle for the gate; and turning his head for a second he cheered hoarsely at what he saw on the city walls.

Tat-tat-tat-tat! Tatta-tat-tatta-tat!

Both machine-guns, their crews crouching on the broad rampart to which the Night Hawk had hauled them, were spitting furiously into the Rajah's reserves forming up in the background, the cloud of heavy bullets shrieking a deadly song above the writhing, hacking fighters below. In broad swathes, those hovering, armoured men were mown down, beaten back, swept off their feet as by a gale of wind. With piercing cries of panic they broke and fled among the cowering townsfolk, huddled in the alleys at the farther end of the square.

And after them, slowly at first, then faster, retreated the soldiers who had held the gate. Flesh and blood could not withstand the fanatical, demoniac charge of the hillmen any longer.

Dismayed by the flight of their comrades at the rear, the vanguard collapsed abruptly, and to the uproar of a long screaming yell of triumph, Lala Bagheera, the Kittens, all the fighting-mad horde of invaders stormed over them, treading them into the slippery cobbles underfoot, lashing and cutting at the

laggards till, of a sudden, their opponents melted like a dawn-mist and twenty yards of undefended square stretched between the raiders' front-rank and the gates of Jhadore palace.

The attackers halted for a moment to recover themselves, the long trail of twisted men behind them on the ground marking the passage of that first deadly drive.

Before they had time to re-form their ranks, however, out of a side street dashed another body of soldiers, hastily summoned from the eastern gate. The panting Kittens, at Lee's sharp command, faced round to greet the reinforcement with a volley, but there was no need; the rush ended before it had well begun. A lithe, ruthless apparition suddenly streaked down into "visibility" from the blue, paralysing the Bhuristan soldiers into instant and horrible panic; two hand grenades flashed destructively among the leaders. With a piercing wail of "Devils' Sorcery," the rest plunged back, stampeding into the squalid depths of the town, spreading terror in their trail.

Swiftly there came a ringing shout from Lala Bagheera; his bloodshot eyes rolled to the alleys and the flat tops of houses, where trembling townsfolk had gathered to watch, in doubt whether to fly or join in the battle. Bursting from the ranks, the terrible veteran raised his arms and tulwar above his head.

"Listen, ye of Jhadore! We come to fight for Budrudin Ananda, son of our dead rajah. Are ye with us? Or will ye fight for the Usurper, the Cheat who hath tricked thee so long with a false Dagger of Blood?"

His harsh voice rang out like a trumpet-call, every word clear in the sharp, stricken hush. The townsfolk murmured in amaze at the stirring accusation that meant so much to the men of Bhuristan; some diving to cover, others running out to join the invaders, but most waving their hands in token of neutrality. The Panther's whirlwind army rose to their leader's shout in a frenzy of glee:

"'Tis false! The Dagger of Blood is false! On to the palace, brothers! Death to the Cheat!"

Howling their new war-cry, the ranks swung round in a clatter of steel and flung themselves headlong upon the bronze gates of the palace.

CHAPTER 4.

Ram Tagore's Treachery!

THAT shrill scream, the cry of the hunting pack, penetrated even to the depths of the palace of Jhadore, increasing the alarm and dread among the occupants, sending many of them cowering to hiding.

In the gorgeous Council Chamber, hastily summoned from his couch, the false rajah of Bhuristan, Budrudin's uncle, quailed deeper into the ivory Chair of State, glaring furiously around at his councillors and Ram

Tagore, his son, and heir to the stolen throne.

Of the little company, the Prince alone had his nerve and wit in hand; the four councillors, grey-bearded, frightened men who for long years had helped their rajah to dupe the people with a false Dagger of Blood, trembled at the babel without. Short but terrible would be their fate if once those devils from the mountains broke in.

To the Council Chamber, bursting through the curtained doors with little ceremony, came the stalwart captain of the palace guard, magnificent in splendid but antique helm and breastplate. His dark face was working as, saluting the potentate in haste, he burst out nervously:

"Sire, the enemy hammer at our gates. Our soldiers within the city are beaten and in flight. The palace is cut off, my lords. May we not charge?"

Ram Tagore blazed out at him harshly before the sluggish Rajah could speak.

"We know that, fool! Is it for this thou hast dared disturb our councils? To the door, presumptuous dog, and await thy orders!"

But the moment the scowling soldier had retired, his Highness's manner changed. He whirled on the councillors.

"Thou seest? Thou hearest?" he cried vehemently. "Our guards are growing restive. Now wilt thou hearken to my words?"

Heedless of their mumbled protests, he snapped his fingers in their faces and, turning, bowed low and reverently to his sullen-eyed father.

"My lord, Splendour of Bhuristan, Beloved of our Gods, I beseech thee to heed my counsel. Now is the time for thee to rouse thyself, O Lion, and lead thy soldiers against these rebel curs!"

The rajah's fat, jewelled hand plucked doubtfully at his trembling lips.

"But, my son——"

"Nay, High-Born and Glorious, wilt thou waste time while these jackals howl at thy gates? What if they have gained a footing in the town by surprise—they are but a handful, and thy glorious palace guards are here within the walls, eager to charge if thou wilt lead them thyself!" Stern eyes flashing, he flung out a strong, masterful hand. "Up with thee, sire. Be once more the mighty warrior that hurled my uncie from the throne in years gone by!"

Still the rajah and his councillors, slothful from years of easy living and excess, hesitated. At which Ram Tagore redoubled his fervour.

"What is there against us, Great Rajah? Nought but a band of wild hillmen, led by some white adventurers. I say to thee, saddle thy famed white stallion Emperor, place our glorious Dagger of Blood in thy turban, and sweep these dregs from the town. Charge for the white men, sire; once they are destroyed Bagheera's scum will break before thy guards. Or"—his fist struck the table in a clinching blow—"if we delay, who knows but what the townsfolk

may join against us? Shall such a warrior as thou, Magnificent, be dragged to death by the common herd?"

The last fierce words struck home. Hard lights glimmering in his sunken eyes, the Rajah rose mountainously, and, to his councillors' dismay, raised a hand of command.

"So be it. I will crush these rebels with my own hand!" he growled hoarsely. "Let my horse be fetched, and order the guards to be ready. And thou, Ram Tagore, fetch the Dagger of Blood!"

At that, the chief councillor struck in silkily.

"But which Dagger, Magnificent? The real or the false? I, thy servant, would counsel thee to wear the false, as thou hast done these many years. His Highness's words may be good; truly thou art a great warrior, lord. But must we risk the real Dagger in battle? There is small difference between them at a hasty glance—even we, thy councillors, can scarce tell the right from the wrong without long scrutiny!"

A murmur of applause from the others greeted the suggestion, and the rajah lowered his brows in doubt. But in a torrent of rage Ram Tagore snarled at the grey-beards, who recoiled before him.

"Fools! Accursed fools! Is it for this I have undergone perils and a long journey to bring our jewel back from England?" He swung again to his father, all reverence gone. "And art thou a fool, too, sire? For long years we have played with fire, tempting Fate and the Gods of Bhuristan by profaning thy turban with a worthless gem. Wilt thou do so now, with an enemy at the gates and thy throne trembling in the balance?"

His grim face and fiery manner overwhelming them, the councillors only plucked feebly at their beards as he rushed on:

"By the Dagger you rule, sire; by the Dagger you shall win. Besides, there is further reason for wearing the real ruby. Thy councillors say there is little difference to be seen. Bah! What if, by some foul chance, keen eyes among the common people discover the trick in the heat of the fight? They would lay down their arms at once and tear us to pieces forthwith!"

Voice quivering with patriotism and superstitious fervour, he pleaded his cause.

"Wear the real Dagger, High-born. With that, the Gods of Bhuristan will sustain thee. And thy people will fight to the death."

There was no gainsaying him; again he had struck the right note. To the people of Bhuristan the Dagger of Blood was possessed of magic qualities in which they firmly believed. After a long moment the rajah, secretly awed by his clever, iron-willed son, bowed his head in acquiescence.

No sooner had he done so than Ram Tagore had crossed in three long strides to a beautiful wall-shrine of ivory and gold, his slender hands vanishing into the interior.

He was back again at the table in a moment, bearing with him two great crimson gems that glowed with strange, sinister fires. The Daggers of Blood—the real and false.

Ever since the banishment of Budrudin's father, the rajah had ruled by virtue of the counterfeit emblem, and the imitation had been marvellously manufactured. Only an expert, by close inspection, could have told which of the two was the older, the more wondrously carved. But Ram Tagore held them out before the rajah, one in each hand, and named with without hesitation.

"See, in my left hand, the false; in my right, our ancient and lovely talisman. That is so, indeed, sire?"

After a hasty glance the rajah and his councillors bowed to the right-hand gem; whereupon Ram Tagore stepped forward, and his quick hands played deftly about his father's turban. When he stood back again a great fiery stone blazed and flashed above the rajah's brow. With a curse Tagore flung the other gem contemptuously across the chamber.

"Now, Great Rajah, lead thy soldiers to victory!"

"But you, your Highness?" struck in a councillor venomously. "Do you not follow his Majesty?"

Ram Tagore stared at him with smouldering eyes, quelled him with a look.

"I have another task. I go secretly now from the palace and town to summon our troops from the eastern passes and fall on these curs from the rear. Hold thy peace!"

Arrogantly he swept aside further argument, the most masterful man there. He salaamed deeply again to the rajah and, straightening his back, glanced significantly towards the windows through which the roars of the Panther's men came viciously. Without a word his Majesty, hiding a trembling heart behind a dark scowl, lumbered from the chamber slowly, attended by his men.

At his appearance in the outer hall, shouts echoed, orders snapped. There came a jingle of steel as the palace guard sprang to arms.

Back in the council chamber, alone, a slow smile of mocking delight spread over Ram Tagore's bearded face. On silent toes he sped across the room, tenderly picking up the ruby he had flung down and pressing it to his lips in triumphant adoration. Then his piercing, derisive glance turned to the door, through which his father had just passed.

"Ay, go lead thy guards in the charge! Go to thy death, old fool. The white men will soon settle thee!"

Again and again he caressed the ruby.

"But I have the real Dagger here—conjured from under thine own dull eyes, O Mountain of Fat. And when thou art dead and I have fetched the men from the eastern passes to slay this rabble, then we shall see who is Rajah of Bhuristan henceforth!"

Laughing at the success of his plan the traitor stole to a window, peering out evilly through a chink in the curtain.

He was just in time to see the high bronze gates of the palace crash from their hinges at last and Lala Bagheera's men, with the Kittens to the fore, smash their way into the great courtyard. His father's picked troops, led by the rajah on a plunging white horse, surged from the palace to meet them.

CHAPTER 5.

Fighting Fiends!

"BUDRUDIN!
Budrudin!"

"Jhadore. Way for the Dagger of Blood!"

Shouting their grim challenge, the palace guards charged at the heels of their ruler. It was a valiant rush, formidable, well-disciplined but foolish. Towards each other across the wide courtyard raced the rival foemen, but before they could join battle the huge marble fountain in the centre split the ranks of the defenders in twain.

Rapidly they split into two parties to go round the basin and join up before the van of the rebels could reach them. Tat-tat-tat-tat! stammered Sailor Peters' machine-gun round the bunched flank of his own men, meeting the left wing of the rajah's soldiers with a gush of bullets that slashed great holes in their line and flung them back in disorder. And while the right wing shouted and stormed at them for cowards the Panther's men were upon them.

Invaders and defenders met together in a single titanic crash.

"Get the rajah alive, Kittens!" roared Nelson Lee above the din, and a dozen rifles that had been aimed at the unwieldy potentate on the beautiful horse blazed into the guardsmen instead. After that it was tulwars, Colts and coshes all the way.

By now the rajah was well back among his own men, yellow with fear and feebly waving the defenders on. But the blaze of crimson in his turban spurred the soldiers to terrific efforts, and for the first time Bagheera's men were checked.

The Night Hawk flashed into view; a figure dropped into the fountain—the scoundrelly Prince Ram Tagore!



Only for a moment, however; nothing but rifles could have stopped that seething horde. A foaming torrent of reddened steel rolled back the Jhadore front rank, and into the gap hurtled the Panther, Nelson Lee and Scrapper Huggins, swinging their weapons venomously as they drove a wedge through the soldiers into which their followers swarmed. Harassed on both flanks now by machine-guns and by mysterious bullets from above, the guards gave back sullenly. Soon Bagheera's prophecy concerning the fountain was fulfilled; its crystal waters were clear no longer, but red with blood.

It was then, at the crucial point of the raid, that Prince Budrudin Ananda, his slim

form quivering with fury, appeared at the head of his men.

From the first moment of the fight the three boys had been following the machine-guns, obeying orders to keep to the rear and easing their discontent with shots now and then whenever a target offered. But at the first appearance of the Usurper of Bhuristan on his great white stallion, little Budrudin went berserk.

Before Nipper and Snub could restrain him or even realise his intent, the Indian boy was racing towards the fight, snatching up a tulwar from a fallen man on the way. The Britishers were after him in a flash, shouting "Buddy, you ass! Come back!" but the lad tore blindly on, threading his way unnoticed through the ranks of the eager struggling hillmen, slipping away from the clutches of his chums. Nipper and Snub were still a yard behind when he shot between Nelson Lee and Bagheera, brandishing his blade at the rajah and screaming in Bhuristani:

"Ho, cheat and thief! It is Budrudin who calls thee!"

Even in that fierce scrimmage the dramatic words caused a second's lull, while fierce sweating men turned wondering faces towards the boy. And, most wondrous of all, came a thunderous lone charge by his Majesty of Bhuristan in answer to the challenge.

At sight of the little prince the usurper's face grew devilish with fury and dismay. Spurring his powerful charger, he whirled up his sword, treading his own men underfoot as, all caution gone, he crashed down upon his fiery nephew. The blood of fighting ancestors boiling in his veins, Budrudin leapt forward, too; a boy against a heavy man mounted on a maddened horse. The rajah's blade rose higher, and he leaned forward for a crashing stroke.

But it never landed. Something like a lithe serpent flicked into the air, and the Scrapper's "Uncle Dunlop" caught the swishing weapon in its sinuous coils, tearing it from the rajah's hand. Out of the ruck streaked Snub Hawkins, to cling like a leech to the stallion's heavy bridle, hauling its fighting head round while a ring of hillmen's tulwars bristled around him.

Then joyous clutching hands reached up, steel fingers grabbed at the horseman's legs. Amid a screech of triumph, the greatest shout of the fight, the Rajah of Bhuristan vanished from the saddle to the feet of his bitter foes.

A roar from the guards; a desperate forward rush. Ere they could rescue their ruler, and even as Nelson Lee's protesting order rang out, the terrible figure of the Panther, laughing with rage, towered above the fallen man. His dripping tulwar sang backwards over his shoulder, paused for an instant, then whistled downwards.

"Revenge! Revenge!"

Instantly a dozen hands tore from the lifeless body the stained turban, the false Dagger

flashing fire. In less than a breath the same hands had pressed their prize upon the head of Prince Budrudin, standing dazed among a howling circle of defenders.

At the first touch of the headgear, however, the boy rajah snapped into life again, pulling the turban off, gazing deeply at the glowing talisman. Once more his shrill voice rose above the din, this time in sharpest dismay.

"It's the false Dagger! The false Dagger!"

Wrenching the ruby off, he hurled it furiously far into the ranks of his uncle's soldiers. His piercing cry was the beginning of the end.

Dismayed by the swift end of their leader, the guards, after that first hopeless effort at rescue, had retreated; a space of two yards suddenly appeared between the warring forces.

Plain for all to see, therefore, was Budrudin's contemptuous rejection of the Dagger—the pride, the soul of Bhuristan. It soared through the air in an arc of crimson light. And equally plain were his passionate words.

A false Dagger! His action struck the guards with stunning force, for none would treat the peerless ruby so foully. Gradually, unmolested for the time being by the panting, cheering rebels, the remnants of the palace defenders retreated back across the courtyard so that the space between them and their foes widened.

And then, from the dazzling sky above, came the crowning blow.

CHAPTER 6.

The "Scrapper" Keeps His Vow!

STILL peering from his vantage point, Prince Ram Tagore, that subtle schemer, had watched the final stages of the fight with fascinated interest, for the first time losing sight of his own plans in the lurid spectacle below. Eyes glowing like hot coals, he looked down on the whirling fight; recoiled in alarm at the amazing entry of Budrudin, whom he thought drowned in far-away England, but forgetting his dismay in spiteful triumph when he saw the end of the rajah's disastrous charge. Thoughts of his own danger returned then to sober him, and he drew back into the chamber with a curse at his own foolishness.

It was time for him to go; to flee into the plains and bring back the guardians of the passes to complete his triumph. His father dead, himself the owner of the real passport to Bhuristan's throne, and Budrudin protected only by tired and worn-out fighters. Ram Tagore's hopes beat high.

Running lightly across the room, he plunged his hands into the wall, feeling there for a hidden spring. The instant he pressed it an aperture opened in the wall by his side, and he was through it in a stride, pattering up a narrow stairway of stone that led to the great flat palace roof.

He came to the last step, pulled a lever in the wall. Above his head a trap-door slid back, letting in a flood of sunlight. With a leap he sprang and drew himself up and into the morning air.

A quick look in every direction satisfied him that the flat expanse of glistening stone was empty; all who were not defending the palace in the courtyard were huddling for safety in the deep dungeons. The mighty central dome behind him hid him from keen eyes watching from the town; a quick dash across the roof, through another trap-door and down inside the walls to the back of the palace and he would be safe—not even his enemies and the councillors would see him. And, once there, he could melt into the exotic shrubs and shady trees of the huge gardens before the raiders could surround the grounds.

Raising his bearded face to the sky, he laughed triumphantly, gloating over the Dagger of Blood in a last fond look. So full of his victory was he for the moment that he failed to notice the ominous dark shadow or the dazzling, keen-eyed figure in glittering silk that swooped down upon him under widespread, brilliant wings.

Slipping the ruby back into his pocket, he waved mockingly towards the sounds of battle floating up and turned to run—straight into the arms of the Night Hawk.

"Gods of Bhuristan, protect me!"

A strangled gasp, torn from Tagore's very heart, greeted the dread apparition. His hands went weakly to his eyes as though to shut out a terrible spectacle, and, crouched at bay, he staggered backwards on palsied legs.

The Night Hawk, landing softly on the roof, folded his wings and smiled coldly.

"Well met, Prince Ram Tagore!"

The prince uncovered his eyes at the English words, searching the sardonic face before him in deathly fear. Long seconds passed while he stared, and presently his panic gave place to slow, amazed recognition.

"The scientist! You! Thurston Kyle!"

The Night Hawk nodded.

"Thurston Kyle! We meet again, Tagore!"

"You fiend! You—you're not human!" Tagore's glazed eyes blinked stupidly at the tapering wings on his enemy's back, and he retreated still farther. Thurston Kyle followed deliberately. The clash of fighting from the courtyard came to an abrupt end.

"The battle seems over, Ram Tagore!" The Night Hawk's voice sounded soft in the sudden hush. "And you, too, are beaten, my friend!"

The Indian snarled like a wild beast.

"You have won, eh? You and your accursed bandits. Well, man, devil, whatever you are—the fight is not ended yet. Try to get back from Bhuristan, across the deserts as you came. Whether I die or not, your men will never see England again. You are all trapped!"

Thurston Kyle's lips curled at the boast.

"But then—so are you, Tagore!" he whispered smoothly.

Wild eyes searched vainly for an avenue of escape—there was no hope. By his own cunning Ram Tagore had cut himself off from help. The knowledge, flooding his brain, stung him into action, and, foam flecking his lips, he leapt forward, his hand streaking to his sash.

"Then make an end now, you ghoul!" he screamed, and hurled himself at the Night Hawk.

Crashing to meet him, Thurston Kyle caught the flashing knife in a grip of iron, tore it from Tagore's grip and knocked the breath from his lungs in two lightning blows. The Indian collapsed on his back, but his agile opponent was on him the moment he fell.

"Make an end, Ram Tagore?" he laughed. "Not I, you dog! Vengeance belongs to that boy below—the cousin you have thrice attempted to kill!"

Mad with terror, the Indian put forth all his frantic strength, but he might as well have struggled with steel bands as the arms of Thurston Kyle. Helpless as a child, he was picked up and searched for weapons. An icy laugh sounded in his ear as the glorious Dagger of Blood flamed in the Night Hawk's hand.

No further sound came then save the gasps of the captured man. A swift end to fighting, a straight road to victory, was in his captor's grasp. Lifting him easily from the roof, the Night Hawk spread his wings, beat twice and, in a graceful glide, went sailing above the big white dome and down over the stricken courtyard below. Ram Tagore, unable to move a muscle, went with him.

DOWN on the battleground, the palace guards had just thrown away their arms in complete surrender. Their foes, in two jagged lines, still confronted them across the intervening space. The truth concerning the false Dagger of Blood and the discovery of the dead rajah's sacrilege had taken all the fight from his soldiers and filled their hearts with bitterness.

A strange hush brooded over the scene.

It was the sudden, long-drawn cry from both sides, and a host of upturned faces that first drew Nelson Lee's attention to the sight of his dazzling, winged ally, dropping down from above the palace. The cry spread through the armies as Ram Tagore, too, was seen, limp and beaten, in the arms of the great human bird.

"The winged lord! The winged lord!" roared Lala Bagheera.

Silent and irresistible, the Night Hawk came on, sinking lower till, regardless of his identity, he was in full view of all, a bare twenty-five feet above the ground. On tilted wings he swerved majestically, holding his

prisoner above the grim-hued fountain. His voice thundered across the courtyard.

"Greeting, Budrudin—Rajah of Bhuristan!"

In a whirl of arms and legs Prince Ram Tagore shot from those vice-like arms and hurtled into the fountain, unhurt, to face his doom.

"Nelson Lee!"

The detective stiffened at his ally's hail, then sprang quickly to the fore as a streak of fire fell through the sunlight. His cupped hands shot up the moment he realised what the missile was. They closed safely about the falling ruby.

In silence he turned and proffered it to Budrudin, who took it with a low salaam, first to the detective and then to the Night Hawk, hovering aloft. Bagheera's men danced in shrill tumult as the boy gravely and tenderly fixed the fiery gem to his turban. The Dagger of Blood was restored to its rightful owner at last.

And Ram Tagore crept out of the fountain.

Slit-eyed, vicious as a snake, he stood between the two forces, glaring at his cousin while his chest rose and fell in shuddering gasps. The tense pause came again, while men in both armies glared at him hatefully. It was broken by a unanimous shout from the hillmen—an answer to a swift yet unspoken judgment.

"Death!"

With that word echoing in all hearts, Lala Bagheera sprang forward, tulwar raised. And at his shoulder sped Nelson Lee, bare hands crooked, to wipe out his score with Tagore.

But while the two were yet some strides away, they were thrown aside as by a whirlwind. A strong arm sent the Panther reeling: Nelson Lee was thrust away. Straight at Tagore's throat, cheery mouth a-snarl and murder in his blue eyes, sprang—Scrapper Huggins!

"He's mine, I tell yer—mine! Now, Ram Tagore, you boy-drownin' scum—it's you an' me!"

Like raging wolves the two met breast to breast; the Indian's fist crashed on the Briton's jaw and his knee rose swiftly. But the giant burst through as though both blows had never been. And his arms enveloped Ram Tagore in a peculiar, ugly grip.

Once again a great shout slashed through the courtyard. Struggling and panting in that bear-hug, Ram Tagore was being forced backwards—farther—farther, his eyes bulging, lips babbling meaningless words. Back and back went his head, his shoulders followed—but his waist was held in a vice. Before that host of tense, tight-lipped watchers, the traitor was bent over like a twig. And then the Scrapper's great muscles swelled under the tattered sleeves and jerked once.

Ram Tagore crumpled to the ground; twitched convulsively; lay still.

CHAPTER I.

Rajah of Bhuristan.

RAM TAGORE was dead; his father, the Usurper, was dead also. Budrudin's victory, after perils, long journies and bitter fighting, was complete.

Gathering his jubilant men about him, he marched like a conqueror across the court, the ex-rajah's guard retreating before him in low salaams to the flaming ruby in his turban.

"Mercy, great rajah! Mercy, O Splendour of Bhuristan!" they cried, huddled against the palace wall; and Lala Bagheera, the Panther of the Mountains, chuckled at them scornfully, drawing a lurid picture of the fate in store for traitors.

Budrudin's slim hand waved the grim old warrior aside. It was difficult for Snub and Nipper to recognise the boy who had been their eager chum and follower during the past long weeks: the new rajah's young face seemed older, more dignified already.

"Mercy will I give thee, soldiers!" he cried to the guards. "And the same to all men of Bhuristan who shall swear loyalty to me before to-morrow's sunset. Let heralds proclaim this, Bagheera, throughout the town and the plain. And send also to the soldiers guarding the passes, commanding them to return to Jhadore in peace. But"—sternly—"if they still desire war, the guns that shatter shall destroy them swiftly. That is my royal command!"

"Wah!" grunted old Bagheera approvingly; while a cry of praise and gratitude swelled from the hollow ranks of the guards, who had expected exile at least, if not death.

And so, while messengers thrust their way out into the town to spread the news of the young rajah's clemency to a fearful populace, while others went thundering across the plain on horseback towards the distant passes, Budrudin Ananda, followed by his war-worn companions, passed into the palace of Jhadore again—the palace from which he and his father had once fled for their lives.

Through the great hall, past cowering slaves went the procession, and into the sumptuous throne-room. There, sheathing his tulwar at last, old Bagheera, his great shoulders stiff with pride, led his young ruler to the magnificent throne. Proudly the boy took his seat, the Dagger of Blood shining with savage glory above his brow.

Then Bagheera's blade shrieked from its scabbard again as he waved it to its full height in a glittering circle.

"Hail to Budrudin Ananda—Rajah of Bhuristan!"

The high, rolling shout in answer, with the Kittens' crashing cheer as a stern undertone, shook the windows of the palace and echoed into the courtyard, where a packed and joyous crowd of townsfolk took it up. To an ovation that blazed throughout Jhadore the boy rajah came into his own.

(Continued on page 44.)



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 and bumper books are also offered as prizes. Address your jokes to "Smilers," Nelson Lee Library, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4.

BRAINY BOBBY.

Teacher: "Bobby, I don't believe you have studied your geography."

Bobby: "No, miss. I heard Pa say that the map of the world was always changing, so I thought I'd wait a few years till things got settled."

(R. A. Jones, 284, St. Benedict's Road, Small Heath, Birmingham, has been awarded a handsome watch.)

THE REASON WHY.

Mother: "Jimmy, why are you crying?"

Jimmy: "I dreamt that my school had closed down."

Mother: "Never mind; it hasn't really."

Jimmy: "That's why I'm crying."

(J. Hadfield, Seaford House, Littlehampton, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

RACY.

Jack (to Bill, who is running hard): "Hallo, Bill! Training for a race?"

Bill: "No, racing for a train."

(W. Gudgin, 78, Fairway, Old Southgate, London, N.14, has been awarded a penknife.)

ON THE TRAIL.

Budding young private detective (phoning to chief): "Mr. McFlint, the wanted man has left for Penzance. Shall I follow him to-day, or wait for the cheap excursion on Saturday?"

(E. Smith, 16, Holly Street, Horton Bank Top, Bradford, has been awarded a book.)

LUCKY INDEED.

Tom: "I wish I had Alfred's good luck."

Dick: "Is he so lucky, then?"

Tom: "Lucky! If he walked out of the window in his sleep at dead of night there would be another man going by below carrying a feather bed!"

(T. Hickin, 6, Leslie Road, Park Village, Wolverhampton, has been awarded a pocket knife.)

THE MYSTERY EXPLAINED.

Jones (appearing over the garden wall): "Smith, do you realise that you've been digging a hole in the back of my coal cellar?"

Smith: "Good gracious, no! And after all these years I've been telling myself how lucky I am to have a coal-mine in my garden."

(H. Brigg, 37, Dorset Way, Heston, Middlesex, has been awarded a book.)

THE PROBLEM.

Mother: "Jimmy, you are a naughty boy! You will go to bed without your tea."

Jimmy: "But, mother, what about the medicine I've got to take after meals?"

(D. Petheridge, 31, St. George's Road, Reading, has been awarded a penknife.)

COMPLETING THE CIRCUIT.

A young man was arrested for assault and battery, and was brought before the judge.

"What is your name and occupation," asked the judge, "and what are you charged with?"

"My name is Sparks," replied the prisoner. "I am an electrician, and I am charged with battery."

The judge looked sternly at the man in the box, and in a stern voice cried:

"Officer, put him in a dry cell!"

(G. Thame, 104, Clydesdale Road, Romford, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

RIDICULOUS.

The Irishman was applying for a job on board ship, and he was being questioned by the captain.

"Have you ever been to sea before?" he asked.

"Begorrah!" was the reply. "Do ye think Oi came across from Oireland in a cab?"

(A. Kerr, 26, Dundonald Road, Ramsgate, has been awarded a penknife.)

SUMMED UP.

Willie: "Dad, help me out with this sum, please."

Dad (reprovingly): "No, no, my lad: it wouldn't be right."

Willie: "Oh, well, you could have a good try anyway."

(J. McDonnell, Foreman's House, Liffey Junction, Dublin, has been awarded a book.)



NO TIME.

Billy: "Boo-hoo! I've just fallen in the mud, ma."

Mother: "What, in that new suit?"

Billy: "Yes, ma; I hadn't time to take it off."

(Gladys Gunn, 90, Riddons Road, Grove Park, S.E.12, has been awarded a book.)

Archie Glen thorpe—the Winner of a Thousand Pounds!

ARCHIE THE

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

ARCHIE PAINTS THE TOWN RED — AND THEN GETS THE BLUES !

CHAPTER 1.

Pulling Archie's Leg!

A RCHIBALD WINSTON DEREK
GLENTHORNE swept into the
Junior Common-room of the Ancient
House at St. Frank's so briskly that
fellows paused in their talk and looked at
him in astonishment.

"Where's the fire?" asked De Valerie, grinning.

Archie took no notice. The elegant Removite, in fact, was moving from table to table, evidently searching for something. There was an eager gleam in his eyes, and his monocle was jammed firmly home. He looked business-like.

Which was all very astonishing, for Archie was generally languid and leisurely in his movements. It was his habit to drift into the Common-room, yawn once or twice, and to lower himself into the easiest available chair. Then he would beam genially upon all and sundry, make one or two inconsequent remarks, and then drop into a light slumber.

His present briskness was therefore noticeable.

"What's the idea, Archie?" asked Vivian Travers, laying his paper aside. "Lost something?"

"Absolutely not, old bean," replied Archie promptly. "I've found it. As soon as you've finished with that priceless periodical, kindly hand it over."

Travers looked at the paper in his hand.

“ ‘ Weekly Bits ’ ? ” he asked. “ This is the new issue—only came in half an hour ago.”

"Absolutely," nodded Archie. "That's why I've just tottered in, old trout. I'm rather frightfully keen on giving it the once over."

He seized the paper and turned the pages eagerly. Then the gleam gradually died out of his eyes, and his monocle dropped listlessly to the end of its cord.

"I say, this is rather blighting!" he protested. "There's no dashed list of prize-winners."



"Well, well," said Travers gently. "Is it possible that our champion slacker, our languid lizard, has been going in for competitions?"

Archie surveyed him coldly.

"I trust, dash you, that you are not referring to me?" he asked.

"I really believe I was," murmured Travers.

"Then kindly refrain from calling me a languid lizard, you blighter," said Archie severely. "I mean to say——"

"Hold on!" interrupted Handforth, striding forward. "What's this about a competition? You didn't go in for that big two thousand pound picture puzzle, Archie, did you?"

"Absolutely!"

"Then, my dear, hopeless ass, you might as well resign yourself to the worst," said Handforth. "Didn't you read the particu-

Laughs and Surprises in this Rollicking Complete St. Frank's Yarn.

SPENDTHRIFT!



lars? The prize-winners will be announced this week, but not in the paper. The list of names won't come out until the next issue."

"Where will they be announced, then?" asked Archie mildly.

"Oh, I don't know. In the newspapers, perhaps," replied Handforth. "In the particular localities where the prize-winners live. Anyhow, you don't stand an earthly chance. The first prize of a thousand quid is mine."

"Good gad! Is that official?"

"It will be soon," said Handforth confidently, whilst the other occupants of the Common-room grinned. "I went in for that competition, my son, and it's a cert. that I've won the first prize."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Handy!"

"Always the giddy optimist!"

"You can laugh!" said Handforth, glaring round. "I've been expecting a letter from 'Weekly Bits' for days, telling me that I'm

the winner of the first prize. I can't understand why they haven't written yet."

"Ahem! Very careless of them," murmured Church.

"So our own little Archie has caught Handy's craze," said Kirby Keeble Parkington. "When and how did you summon sufficient energy, Archie, to tackle the great task?"

"Energy?" repeated Archie. "Oh, I see what you mean! Energy, what? But you're absolutely wrong, old cheese. A picture puzzle competition requires no energy—merely brains."

"That makes the mystery all the deeper," said K. K., shaking his head.

"What mystery, dash you?"

"The mystery of your entering."

"If you are attempting to be funny, you blighter, allow me to say that your remarks are merely drivelling," retorted Archie icily. "In any case, I'm not loony enough to expect the first prize of a thousand quid—

or even the second prize of five hundred. Absolutely not! But it did occur to me, in a way, that I might be ripe for a camera, or a set of books, or even a silver pencil."

"You're too modest, Archie," said Nipper, the genial Remove skipper. "You've just as much chance of bagging the first prize as anybody else."

"That's where you're wrong," put in Handforth promptly. "There's no chance at all. That first prize is mine."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But supposing a miracle happened, and Archie got it?" asked Travers. "Upon my Sam! What a situation! Archie rolling about with a thousand quid in his pocket! What would you do with so much money, Archie? I hope you'd give the Form a big feed?"

Archie smiled.

"I'd give a feed, old scream, that the Form would remember for generations!" he replied. "A feed that would absolutely go down in St. Frank's history as the Feed of All Feeds. But kindly understand that I am not counting my dashed chickens before they trickle out of their eggshells. I rather think we had better dismiss the dashed subject altogether, laddies. It's really a frightful waste of time to——"

"A waste of time be blowed!" interrupted Parkington. "Why shouldn't you win that first prize? You stand as good a chance as anybody else. For all you know, that cheque might arrive by to-morrow morning's post."

"Good gad!"

"Other people win the top prizes in these competitions, so why not you?" went on K. K., with a wink at the others. "And it isn't always the brainy people who win the first prizes, either."

"That's true," admitted Handforth. "Look at the competitions I've gone in for—and look at the times I've failed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You never know," said K. K. sagely. "We're amused at the idea of Archie winning a thousand quid in a competition, and yet it's quite likely, you fellows, that he may be the very chap to click."

"Odds possibilities and visions!" said Archie dreamily. "I mean to say, a somewhat dazzling prospect, what?"

"I hope you'd buy me a new bike, Archie," said Tommy Watson. "Mine's nearly falling to bits."

"Oh, rather!" replied Archie promptly. "Absolutely! In fact, I'd buy new bikes for all the chappies who need them, what?"

"I'd like one of those with chromium plating," said Watson, grinning.

"Oh, rather! Anything that suited your fancy, old scream," beamed Archie.

"Perhaps you'd give me your super wireless set?" asked Handforth, with sarcasm.

Archie considered.

"Why not?" he said. "I mean, it's a priceless set, and all that, but I've had my eye on a better one for some weeks. Naturally, if I won the good old thousand quid, I'd

spread myself a bit. You'd be quite welcome to my old radio, Handy."

"It's a pretty safe promise," said Handforth, grinning.

"What about your furniture?" asked Travers. "If you won this thousand quid, you wouldn't keep all that old junk in your study, would you?"

Archie surveyed him stiffly.

"Old junk?" he repeated.

"Just my way of putting it," said Travers cheerfully. "Of course, it's the best furniture in the Remove passage—but with a possibility of buying new stuff, surely you would regard it as old junk? I hope you'd let me have your lounge?"

Archie dreamed. It was a pleasant occupation. Recently he had seen some spanking new furniture in a big Bannington stores—furniture with highly coloured upholstery, which appealed to his exotic taste. He realised, with a start, that his present furniture did seem like old junk in comparison with that new stuff in the Bannington window.

"Oh, rather!" he said brightly. "You could have the good old lounge, Travers. And I'd give the easy-chairs to Fullwood, or some other chappie—and the desk to Gresham—and the carpet to Potts. Russell could have my portable gramophone, what?"

"I'd take it, just to oblige you," grinned Russell.

Archie had never cared about that portable gramophone of his. Phipps had chosen it—and it was a dark, sombre-looking affair. Archie had recently seen one in red leather, and he had set his heart on it. Gaudy colours attracted him as a flame attracts a moth.

Nipper suddenly laughed.

"I think we'd better come down to earth," he said amusedly. "All this is very well in theory, but in practice it would be a different thing. If you did click, Archie, you'd conveniently forget these little promises."

"Oh, I say!"

"Of course you would," went on Nipper. "It's one thing to give your goods away when there's not an earthly chance of the dream coming true. It's easy enough to be generous in such circumstances."

"Really, Nipper, dash you, I resent that frightful statement," said Archie, with some warmth. "I mean to say, it's a bit of a slight."

"No offence, old man——"

"I'll admit that the whole dashed thing is a dream," continued Archie, "but what I've said, I've said. What? That is to say, the word of a Glenthorne is absolutely his bond."

"Good old Archie!" chuckled Nipper.

"Oh, rather!" said Archie stoutly. "If I win that thousand quid, I'll absolutely keep my word."

Archie Glenthorne strode stiffly out of the Common-room, and a roar of laughter followed him. He found Phipps in his study, and he fixed Phipps with an indignant glare. Phipps was Archie's valet. In fact, he was

more than a valet. He was Archie's guide, his adviser. Without Phipps, Archie would have been like a lost sheep.

"A dashed crowd of disbelieving young blighters," said Archie complainingly. "I mean to say, Phipps, the young master is wounded."

He explained the recent discussion in the Common-room.

"I shouldn't let it worry you, Master Archie," said Phipps gravely.

"But, dash it, they doubted my word!"

"Can you quite blame them, sir?" asked Phipps. "You must admit that your promises were—er—sweeping."

"And why shouldn't they be?" demanded Archie frostily. "If I win that thousand pounds——"

"A very big 'if,' sir, if you will allow me to say so," interrupted Phipps gently.

"Oh, well, of course, I dare say you're right," admitted Archie.

"If you will take my advice, sir, you will forget all about this competition," murmured Phipps. "I have no desire to discourage you, but you will remember that I looked over your entries before you sent them in. And I must remark, Master Archie, that I regard your chances as slim. I told you so at the time."

Archie flung himself on to the comfortable lounge.

"Dash the beastly competition," he said, yawning. "You're absolutely right, Phipps. The young master is weary of the subject. I fancy that forty winks are clearly indicated."

And while Phipps glided round the study, tidying up, Archie Glenthorne dozed off—to dream, perhaps, that he was the winner of a thousand pounds.

CHAPTER 2.

A Surprise for St. Frank's!

"**W**HAT is it?" asked Handforth curiously.

"Looks like a car," said Church.

"I can see it's a car, you dummy!" frowned Handforth. "But why all the decorations?"

"Perhaps there's an election on somewhere, and the car has come to collect some voters?" suggested McClure. "Some of the masters, most likely."

It was the next morning, and breakfast was over. That little discussion in the Common-room, which had happened overnight, was completely forgotten. Even Edward Oswald Handforth, after a momentary disappointment at finding no letter from "Weekly Bits," had dismissed the subject.

The morning was fine and sunny, but a blustery, chilly wind was blowing, reminding the school that March was near at hand.

The car which had attracted the attention of Handforth & Co. had stopped just inside

the gateway, the driver being uncertain, perhaps, as to whether he was allowed to drive into the Triangle. It was a smart saloon. A triangular flag was waving bravely in the front, attached to the radiator cap. Gay streamers and other decorations were stretched from the roof to the wing lights. The sides of the car were plastered with highly-coloured placards.

"Yes, it must be an election car," said Handforth, nodding.

The saloon was in motion again, and it glided smoothly across the Triangle towards the School House. A number of other juniors were watching it now, and they could see two alert young men in the front seats.

Suddenly Handforth made a gurgling sound in his throat.

"Look!" he panted. "What—what's that on the side of the car?"

Church and McClure had turned red with excitement.

"'Weekly Bits'!" shouted Church. "Oh, my hat! And it's got 'Weekly Bits' on that radiator flag, too!"

"Great Scott!"

There was a rush. Removites and Fourth-Formers bore down upon the car in dozens, and the driver was compelled to come to a standstill. All the fellows could now plainly read the legends on the car's sides. Right across the body, from front to rear, were the plastered words: "Weekly Bits." And there were several front covers of the periodical pasted here and there.

The two alert young men, finding that they could make no further progress, got out. They were looking quietly amused. One of them opened a rear door, and took out an imposing-looking camera and tripod.

"Easy, you youngsters—easy!" protested the man who had been driving. "What's all the excitement?"

Handforth came bursting through, wild with excitement.

"I say! Are you looking for me?" he shouted breathlessly.

"I don't think so," said the driver. "In fact, I'm sure we're not."

"My name's Handforth!"

"Not a bad name, as names go," admitted the alert young man.

"But you're from 'Weekly Bits,' aren't you?"

"You must let me congratulate you upon your remarkable powers of observation," said the young man gravely. "Allow me to introduce myself. I am Mr. James Townrow, representing that well-known and popular weekly periodical, 'Weekly Bits.'"

"Then you must want me!" roared Handforth. "I went in for that big picture competition, and my name's Handforth! I've won the first prize, haven't I?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cheese it, Handy!"

Mr. Townrow took some papers from his pocket, glanced at them, and shook his head.

"Handforth isn't the name," he said. "You're not on the list anywhere, young 'un."

"Not—not on the list!" ejaculated Handforth, dismayed. "Not even for the second prize—or the third?"

"Not even down for a silver pencil or a pocket-knife," said Mr. Townrow sadly. "Not that we're interested in the minor prize-winners at the moment. We're here to interview the winner of the thousand pound prize."

"My only sainted aunt!"

"Then a St. Frank's chap is the winner!"

"Great Scott!"

"Hardly a St. Frank's chap," said Mr. Townrow, shaking his head. "One of your masters, I expect. Perhaps you boys can tell us where we can find a gentleman named Mr. A. W. D. Glenthorne?"

Handforth rocked on his heels, and the other fellows went dizzy.

"Glenthorne!" repeated Travers, speaking with difficulty. "Did—did you say A. W. D. Glenthorne?"

"Yes, I did," said Mr. Townrow. "What's the matter with you? Mr. Glenthorne lives at St. Frank's, doesn't he?"

"Mr. Glenthorne, be blowed!" roared Handforth. "Archie Glenthorne is one of us—he's in the Remove!"

Mr. Townrow looked astonished, and then whistled as he glanced at his colleague.

"One of the boys, eh?" he said. "Well, that makes it all the more interesting. We ought to get a heap of publicity out of this, Robson."

"It looks good," said Robson, nodding. The boys' excitement increased.

"What does this mean, exactly?" asked Nipper. "You say you want A. W. D. Glenthorne? What do you want him for? Has he won a prize?"

"Well, we shouldn't be here with the official 'Weekly Bits' car unless he had," said Mr. Townrow indulgently. "I'm surprised to hear that A. W. D. Glenthorne is a boy. All the better. Good luck to him! He's the big winner."

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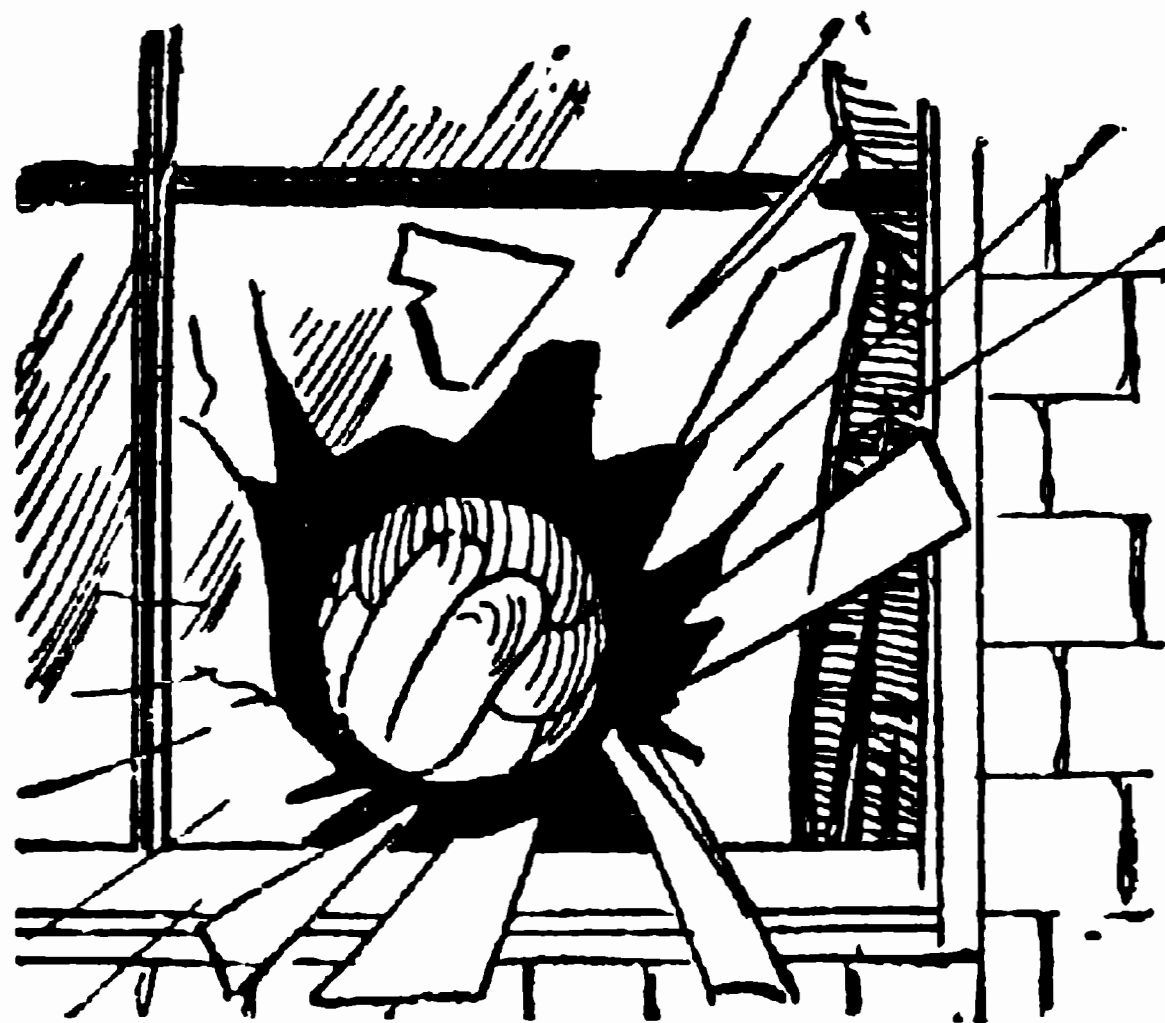
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"You—you mean he's won the thousand pounds?"

"That's it," said Mr. Townrow, smiling.

His listeners were struck dumb for a moment, and then pandemonium broke out.

"Archie's the winner!"

"Oh, my only aunt!"

"He's won a thousand quid!"

"Good old Archie!"

Everyone was shouting at once; every face was flushed with excitement, and all eyes were ablaze. The thing was almost unbelievable. The previous evening, in the Common-room, the fellows had chipped Archie—they had pulled his leg—taking it absolutely for granted that his entry into the "Weekly Bits" competition had been a joke. And now this bombshell! Archie, the slacker, the duffer, was the big winner!

"Isn't it extraordinary?" asked Bernard Forrest sourly. "That lazy idiot—that insufferable duffer—wins the big prize!"

"Rats!" said Travers, grinning. "You're jealous!"

Forrest sniffed, and walked away without replying. Very obviously Travers had scored a bull.

Meanwhile, Handforth was standing like a fellow in a daze.

"Are you sure there isn't some mistake?" he managed to blurt out at last. "I mean, I'm jiggered if I can understand how it is that I haven't won the first prize."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ahem! It isn't always a matter of cleverness that wins these competitions," said Mr. Townrow diplomatically. "No, young fellow, there hasn't been a mistake. Young Glenthorne is the winner all right, and I shall be obliged if one of you boys will direct me to him."

"Are you going to hand him the money?" asked Potts eagerly.

"We're here to interview him and to take his photograph," said Mr. Townrow. "If any of you other boys care to be in the snap, so much the better."

The excitement increased, for naturally large numbers of Removites were eager to be in the photo. But nobody could get over the startling fact that Archie had actually won that thousand pounds! It was too staggering for words.

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CHAPTER 3.

Interviewing the Winner!

"GOOD gad!"

Archie Glenthorne, dozing on the lounge in Study E, was startled into wakefulness by the sudden arrival of an invading mob.

The door had burst open, and Handforth, Nipper, Parkington, Travers and a crowd of others came surging in. Most of them were yelling at the top of their voices, and the peace of Study E was shattered.

"I say!" bleated Archie, sitting up and grabbing for his monocle. "Odds cyclones and bombshells! I mean to say, what's all this frightful frightfulness?"

"You've won, Archie!" yelled somebody.

"Won?" repeated Archie, puzzled. "Oh, I see what you mean! I've won? That's frightfully good! But what have I won?"

"The thousand quid!"

"Oh, rather! I've won the thousand quid, what?" said Archie. "This is all dashed exciting, but I'm dashed if I understand what you mean. What thousand quid? If you're trying to pull my leg, you blighters —"

"We're not trying to pull your leg!" shouted Handforth, seizing Archie and shaking him. "It's true! Don't you remember, you ass? 'Weekly Bits'!"

"Eh? 'Weekly Bits'?" said Archie feebly. "Oh, I see what you mean! 'Weekly Bits'? And I've won? I've won the thousand quid——"

He suddenly broke off, an expression of blank amazement on his face. Then he leapt to his feet as though the lounge had suddenly become white-hot. His eyes were afire.

"I've won?" he yelled. "Oh, I say! Not—not really?"

The truth had come to him in all its dazzling brilliance. But it was rather too much. His wave of excitement was supplanted by a feeling of suspicion.

"I say, you know, this is rather frightfully rotten!" he protested. "I wish you chappies wouldn't play these practical jokes!"

"If you don't believe us come outside—and see for yourself!" said Fullwood. "The 'Weekly Bits' car is in the Triangle, and a couple of journalists are waiting to interview you and to take your photo."

"One moment, laddies—one moment," said Archie, pulling himself together. "Is this absolutely true? Honour bright?"

"Honour bright!" yelled a dozen voices.

"Good gad!"

Archie sat down again, limp. He groped aimlessly for his monocle, jammed it into his eye and looked round somewhat dazedly at the juniors who had invaded his study. It took him some seconds to recover from his surprise; indeed, he only came back to earth, so to speak, when Travers reminded him that the "Weekly Bits" representatives were waiting to interview him and to take his photograph.

"What-ho!" beamed Archie. "In that case, laddies, grease out of the picture, and Archie will prepare himself for the ordeal."

"You're coming with us, aren't you?" asked Handforth.

"Good gad, no!" said Archie. "I can't see these chappies like this, can I? I mean to say, a certain drastic transformation is indicated. If you'll tell them I won't be long. I'll stagger upstairs and adorn the good old person with suitable raiment. Where's Phipps? I shall require Phipps to rally round——"

"Grab him!" said Travers.

"I should think so!" added Handforth. "You silly ass, Archie! You can have your photograph taken as you are."

"My dear old teacup, the idea is prepos!" said Archie. "I simply can't—"

"We'll show you whether you can't!" said Handforth aggressively. "Why, you chump, it'll be time for lessons soon! We know what you are, once you get upstairs changing your clothes! Come on!"

"Oh, but I say— Dash it, dash you!" protested Archie, as many hands grabbed for him. "Help! SOS! Phipps, you blighter! Where are you? Phipps!"

"You require me, sir?" asked a smooth voice.

Phipps was in the doorway.

"Oh, there you are, Phipps?" said Archie. "Be good enough to chuck these blighters out of the young master's study."

"Don't take any notice of him, Phipps," said Nipper. "He's won the thousand pounds prize in that 'Weekly Bits' picture competition, and they want to interview him and take his photograph. He insists upon changing, but we won't let him."

Phipps did not seem to hear the latter part of Nipper's statement; he had been far too thunder-struck by the first part.

"I beg your pardon, Master Nipper," he said, "but did I understand you to say that Master Archie has won the first prize?"

"Yes."

"There is no—er—error in this?" asked Phipps. "It is not, by any chance, one of your little jokes?"

"Not this time, Phipps," smiled Nipper.

"Then you must allow me to congratulate you, Master Archie," said Phipps readily. "I am very pleasantly surprised."

"Rats!" grinned Handforth. "We always knew that Archie was a brainy merchant, of course—but I wouldn't mind betting that you helped him in that giddy competition."

"I may have given the young master one or two hints, sir," said Phipps modestly.

Archie bristled.



Optimistic Handforth was staggered to learn that he wasn't the winner of the £1,000 prize. "We're looking for a fellow named A. W. D. Glenthorne!" announced the representative.

"Why, you dashed blighter!" he protested. "I mean to say, what are you talking about, Phipps?"

He glared at his valet indignantly.

"Well, sir, you may remember that I pointed out one or two slight errors—"

"Absolutely!" interrupted Archie. "Hints, what? How many of those dashed hints did I adopt? And where, I ask you, should I have been if I had adopted them? Oh, no, Phipps! In this instance, the young master takes all the credit!"

"I can only say, Master Archie, that I am slightly surprised—and pleased, of course," said Phipps. "It only goes to prove that it is not always the painstaking competitor who wins."

"Well, never mind that, Archie," said Handforth briskly. "Those people are waiting for you."

The juniors would not hear of Archie going upstairs to change his clothes. There was precious little time, even as it was.

When they all went crowding out into the lobby, they encountered Mr. Alington Wilkes, the Housemaster. Mr. Wilkes was peering about him with mild inquiry.

"Do you boys know what all this commotion is about?" he asked. "What is this car? Who are these enterprising young men?"

"That's easy, sir," said Handforth. "Archie has won the first prize in the 'Weekly Bits' competition."

"Splendid!" beamed Mr. Wilkes. "Congraters, Glenthorne, old man."

"Thanks most frightfully, sir."

"The prize must be an important one, judging by all this fuss," went on Mr. Wilkes, as they went out together. "What is the value of the first prize?"

"A thousand pounds, sir—in cash," put in Harry Gresham.

"Good heavens! Not really?" ejaculated Mr. Wilkes. "A thousand pounds—won by a St. Frank's junior! Remarkable!"

Mr. Townrow stepped up briskly.

"I understand you are the Housemaster, sir?" he said. "I hope you don't mind our being here? I'll give you my word that we won't stay long. We

merely require Master Glenthorne's photograph, and a short interview. We shall do nothing to interfere with the boy's lessons."

"Go ahead—give the youngster a good time," said Mr. Wilkes amiably. "And take my advice, Glenthorne, old son, and be careful with that money. A thousand pounds is a large amount. You ought to get your father to invest it for you."

And Mr. Wilkes went off—feeling that it had been his duty to give that gentle hint. Not that he believed that it would be acted upon. A thousand pounds, in the hands of a schoolboy, was not likely to remain intact for long.

"Hallo, Glenthorne!" said Forrest, coming up. "Lucky bargee! Congraters!"



Archie frowned.

"I'm not sure that that isn't a frightfully deep remark," he said suspiciously. "I trust, Phipps, that you are not attempting to belittle the young master's achievement?"

"By no means, sir," said Phipps gravely. "No matter what I say, the winning of a thousand-pound prize is an achievement indeed."

And Phipps quietly glided away.

"Dash the blighter!" said Archie uneasily. "I mean to say, even that last remark wasn't absolutely lucid, what? I can't help having a suspish that the old boy is a bit peeved. You see, I turned down several of his suggestions with the requisite amount of scorn."

"Thanks," said Archie coldly.

"I'm not a bit surprised," went on Forrest. "I always knew you were a brainy lad."

"Rather!" said Gulliver and Bell enthusiastically.

Archie disengaged himself, and regarded the cads of Study A with disdain.

"You've become dashed friendly of a sudden, haven't you?" he inquired. "I mean to say, only a few days ago we were scrapping. weren't we?"

"Oh, I'm willing to let bygones be bygones," said Forrest, with a wave of his hand.

"You can jolly well clear out of it!" roared Handforth indignantly. "We're not going to have you rotters wangling yourselves round Archie just because he's come into money! You'd better be jolly careful, Archie. You'll find that you've got scores of new friends all at once."

Mr. Townrow gently but firmly pushed himself forward.

"I think your name is A. W. D. Glenthorne?" he asked crisply.

"Absolutely!" said Archie.

"You entered for the 'Weekly Bits' Two Thousand Pounds Picture Puzzle Competition?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Then I am glad to inform you, Master Glenthorne, that you are the winner of the first prize of one thousand pounds," said Mr. Townrow. "If you will be good enough, I should like a few words from you on the subject of what you intend to do with this money—what your sensations are upon hearing this result. Just a short interview, if you don't mind."

"Go ahead, Archie!" grinned Travers. "It'll all come out in next week's 'Weekly Bits'—with your photograph, too."

"Good gad!" ejaculated Archie. "Not my photograph, really?"

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Townrow.

"But, dash it, photographs come out frightfully badly in those weekly papers, don't they?" asked Archie, with concern.

"That's all right," said Travers. "They'll probably pose you beside the fountain, and they'll mark you with a cross, to show which is which."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Archie was ready enough to supply the necessary information. He answered all Mr. Townrow's questions, but, truth to tell, he was so excited—although he tried outwardly to appear unconcerned—that, afterwards, he scarcely remembered what he had said. Not that it mattered.

After that came the photographs. He was posed in various positions, and several exposures were made. One by himself—one with his Form captain—another with a whole group of Removites. But at last the ordeal

was over, and Archie found himself free once again.

He was still worried about his personal appearance, and he had an awful suspicion that his tie wasn't straight—and that meant that it would come out crooked in the photograph. As soon as the opportunity arose, he slipped away, and dodged indoors to his study.

He opened the door, strode in, and then halted. His monocle dropped from his eye, and dangled limply at the end of its cord.

"Good gad!" he ejaculated bleakly.

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CHAPTER 4.

Taking Archie at His Word!

STUDY E was empty!

It was literally empty, for nothing but the four walls and the bare floor met Archie Glenthorne's gaze. His carpet, his rugs, his lounge, his other choice articles of furniture—all gone!

"Odds shock and bombshells!" bleated Archie. "I mean to say, what's happened? Phipps! I say, Phipps, you frightful blighter! What have you been doing to the young master's goods and chattels?"

But Phipps was not in evidence. Archie continued to look round the study in a semi-dazed condition; then he reeled out into the passage. He had completely forgotten his personal appearance by now.

Noisy talk and laughter from Study H attracted his attention. He steered in that direction, hoping that some of the fellows would be able to tell him where he could find Phipps. He reached the door, took one look inside, and shied like a horse.

"Odds gad and good life!" he babbled. "I mean to say, odds life and good gad!"

"Hallo, Archie!" said Vivian Travers cheerily. "Come in, old man! Always welcome in this study, you know."

Travers was sprawling luxuriously on Archie's own lounge. There it was, against the window, in all its splendour. And Jimmy Potts was pressing one or two rucks out of the carpet, which apparently had just been laid. Archie's carpet; the soft pile carpet which had always been the envy of every other study.

"I say!" exclaimed Archie. "I say!"

"Say on!" invited Potts.

"You—you noisome chunks of uselessness, what does this mean? What, I mean, is the dashed game?"

"Game?" repeated Travers, puzzled. "I'm afraid we don't get you, dear old fellow."

"What are you doing on my lounge, Travers, you horror?"

"Your lounge?" repeated Travers politely.

"Yes, my lounge!"

"Haven't you made a mistake, dear old fellow?" asked Travers. "This isn't your lounge. It's mine."

"And you, Potts!" went on Archie, waxing wrathful. "What are you doing, straightening my carpet?"

"This isn't your carpet, Archie," said Jimmy Potts kindly. "It's mine."

"You—you funny frights!" shrieked Archie. "You know dashed well that this lounge and this carpet were boned from my study."

"Not boned, Archie," disagreed Travers. "We took them, if you like, but we didn't bone them."

"I trust, Travers, old fashionplate, that you are not attempting to be funny?" asked Archie frigidly. "I mean to say, this is no time for quibbling, what? I find you lolling on my lounge——"

"Rats!" interrupted Travers. "Don't I keep telling you that it's my lounge? Where's your memory, Archie?"

"My memory?"

"Yes, your memory," insisted Travers. "You haven't forgotten last night, have you?"

Archie started, and passed a hand over his fevered brow.

"Last night?" he bleated. "Good gad! What are you getting at?"

"My dear fellow, we were discussing the competition in the Common-room," said Travers. "We were wondering what you would do if you won the first prize. Don't say that you've forgotten what you promised."

"Promised?" whispered Archie, in a hoarse undertone.

"Didn't you say that you'd clear all the old junk out of your study, didn't you give me your lounge, and didn't you give Jimmy Potts the carpet?" asked Travers mildly. "Well, as soon as we found out that you had won the first prize we saved you the trouble of getting people in to move your old furniture. We've been doing you a good turn, Archie. We moved it ourselves."

"Oh, rather!" said Archie, in a thin, feeble voice. "I see. You've been giving me a helping hand, what? How frightfully decent of you chappies!"

"Oh, it's nothing," said Potts, with a wave of his hand. "Anything to oblige you, Archie."

"I can't tell you, old bean, how frightfully obliged I feel."

"You haven't forgotten that promise?"

"Good gad, no," said Archie, trying to pull himself together. "I remember now. Absolutely. Carry on, laddies. Who cares? The word of a Glenthorne is his bond. Carry on."

He drifted out, and found the door of Study I open. Ralph Leslie Fullwood was sprawling in his—Archie's—splendid easy-chair. Clive Russell was putting a record on his—Archie's—portable gramophone.

"Come in, Archie—always welcome!" sang out Fullwood. "I must say this is a ripping chair. Thanks awfully for it!"

"Oh, rather!" said Archie, holding on to the doorpost. "I trust, Russell, old maple leaf, that the gramophone meets with your approval? If there aren't enough records, kindly let me know. I'll buy you a few hundred."

As he dithered past the open door of Study J he found Harry Gresham arranging his books and papers on his—Archie's—magnificent mahogany desk.

"Just the thing I've needed for months!" Gresham was saying, to the envious Duncan. "A desk like this is a real luxury. Good old Archie. There's not a more generous-hearted fellow in the world."

"He kept his promise, too," said Duncan.

"It rather seems to me," murmured Archie, as he went down the passage, "that these chappies have kept my word for me. I mean to say, they might have waited a bit. Like a pack of dashed wolves, pouncing on the spoils while my back is turned."

He couldn't stand the sound of music from Study D, knowing full well that it came from his own late radio, and he went back to his own study with his mind still in a whirl. He found Phipps there, looking round him with a melancholy air.

"Oh, here you are, Phipps," said Archie with severity. "I mean to say, dash it, Phipps, why couldn't you have stopped it? What the dickens were you doing? I trust you to look after me, Phipps, and what do I get? I am disappointed in you, dash you!"

"I am sorry, Master Archie, that this has happened," said Phipps gravely. "But you are unjust when you accuse me of being slack."

"Unjust?" repeated Archie sternly. "Couldn't you have stopped these bright lads from shifting their goods?"

"Their goods, sir?" repeated Phipps.

"Oh, rather! I distributed the good old goods and chattels last night," explained Archie. "That is to say, I gave the stuff away, here and there, and this way and that way, and all that. You understand, Phipps?"

"I'm afraid not, sir."

"Well, we were supposing what we would do if I won the thousand quid," said Archie. "The young master became generous, and these lads haven't wasted any time in collecting their odds and ends."

"You are quite right, sir," said Phipps feelingly. "I wasn't absent for more than ten minutes, and during that brief period the study was completely cleared. I am very much afraid, Master Archie, that you have been exceedingly rash."

Archie was recovering by now.

"Oh, I don't know, Phipps," he said. "After all, with a thousand quid we can easily buy some fresh stuff, what? I already have my eye on the very materials. Some spanking Oriental-looking stuff in one of those Bannington shops."

Phipps, a level-headed man, was now looking anxious.

"I urge you, Master Archie, to be careful," he said earnestly. "Before you select any new furniture you must allow me to inspect—"

"Nothing doing, Phipps!" interrupted Archie. "As a valet you are priceless—a wonder of wonders. But your ideas of colour are dashed sombre—too sombre for the young master's taste. So if there is any choosing of new furniture to be done the young master will choose it alone. Kindly get that, Phipps, and get it good."

Phipps did not move a hair.

"Very well, sir," he said quietly. "But you will at least let me point out that the situation at the moment is entirely unsatisfactory. You have given your goods away, and as yet there are no new goods to take the place of the old."

Archie nodded.

"I will grant, Phipps, old thing, that the lads have been slightly speedy," he said.

"I would further point out, Master Archie, that your talk of buying new goods is, so far, only talk," went on Phipps gently. "Money will be required. A considerable amount of money."

Archie surveyed Phipps through his monocle.

"And haven't I got a considerable amount of money, dash you?" he asked. "Don't you call a thousand quid a considerable amount of money?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then why all this dashed quibbling?"

"Have you got the thousand pounds actually in your possession, sir?" asked Phipps evenly.

Archie started, and his jaw sagged.

"Good gad!" he ejaculated.

"These brisk young gentlemen have interviewed you, sir; they have taken your photograph; but have they presented you with the prize money?"

"I say, that's a nasty stab in the sirloin!" said Archie anxiously. "Good gad, Phipps! It's rather an important point, what?"

He hurried out, and before he got to the lobby he was surrounded by swarms of juniors. Everybody was very friendly. He saw beaming faces on all sides, and fellows, who usually had very little to do with him were eager to pat him on the back or take him by the arm.

"Kindly make way, chappies," said Archie firmly. "There's a matter of vital importance that needs immediate attention."

"Anything we can do for you, Archie?" asked Hubbard eagerly.

"Thanks all the same, but this is a matter which must receive my personal attention," replied Archie. "You don't happen to know if those 'Weekly Bits' merchants have trickled away yet?"

"Oh, no—they're still in the Triangle," sang out Duncan. "One of them was asking for you a minute ago."

"Well, I'm glad to hear that, anyhow," said Archie.

Mr. Townrow was just outside the Ancient House door, on the step. He was lighting a cigarette and looking very pleased with himself.

"Oh, hallo! So here you are, what?" said Archie, confronting him. "Here you absolutely are, old bean! What about it?"

Mr. Townrow smiled.

"Well, I think everything has gone off very smoothly," he replied. "Don't you?"

"Not quite so smoothly as it might," said Archie. "Isn't there something you have overlooked, old fruit?"

"I don't think so."

"No?" said Archie frigidly. "Didn't I understand you to say that I have won the thousand quid prize?"

"Why, yes."

"Then where is the cheque?"

"The cheque?" repeated Mr. Townrow, his face breaking into a smile. "Oh, I see! The cheque? You needn't worry about that, Master Glenthorne. That is all being arranged."

"Oh, well, as long as it's all being arranged, it's all serene with me," said Archie. "So far, so good, what? Am I to take it that the cheque is being posted on?"

Mr. Townrow laughed again, and put a hand on Archie's shoulder.

"Well, hardly that," he replied confidentially. "We want to give you a little more honour than that, old man. A public reception, in fact—or, to be more exact, a public presentation."

"Oh, I say! Really?"

"At the Bannington Town Hall—tomorrow afternoon," said Mr. Townrow smoothly.

"Eh?"

"The presentation," said Mr. Townrow, "will be made by the Mayor of Bannington himself."

"Good gad!"

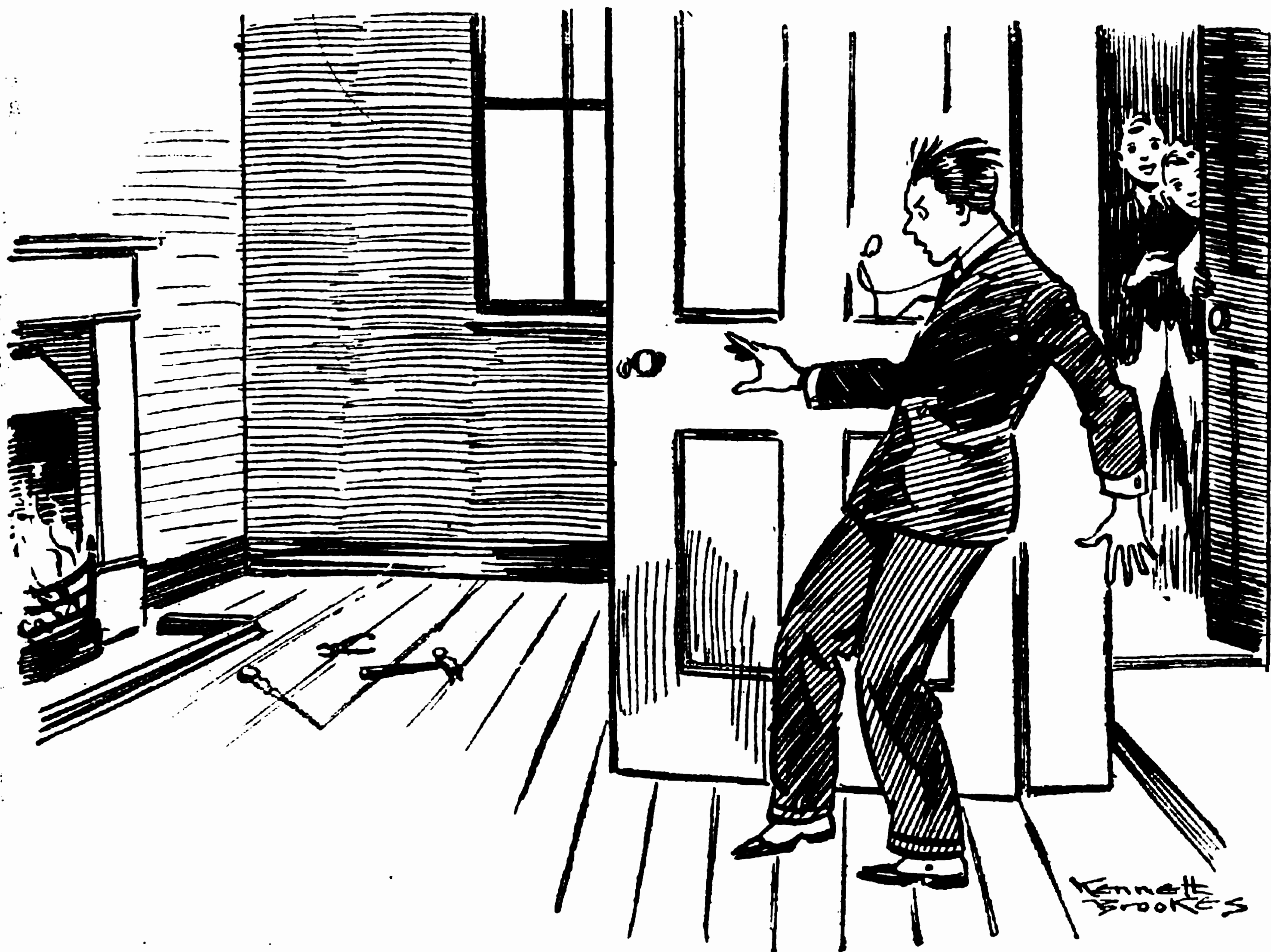
"Everything is arranged," said Mr. Townrow, with business-like briskness. "There will be flashlight photographs, and there is just a chance that the entire proceedings will be broadcast. I need hardly mention that your cheque is absolutely safe; it will be presented to you to-morrow. And I am sure. Master Glenthorne, that Bannington and the entire surrounding district will be proud of you."

Mr. Townrow shook hands warmly, Mr. Robson shook hands, and then the two alert "Weekly Bits" men took their departure. They left Archie slightly puzzled.

"But, I mean to say, why all the fuss?" he asked. "If I've won the prize, why can't I have it at once?"

Nipper grinned.

"Don't you understand, old chap, that the 'Weekly Bits' people are after some publicity?" he asked. "And a public presentation by the mayor himself at the Town Hall is sure to interest other readers of the paper in Bannington."



Archie opened the door of his study, and then blinked in amazement. For his study was completely bare of furniture.

"Well, yes, I suppose there's something in that," admitted Archie.

"It won't be much of an ordeal, Archie," went on Nipper. "You'll simply have to go on the platform, the mayor will hand you the cheque with a few suitable words, and you'll have to make a graceful reply."

"I say, what a beastly fag!" complained Archie. "I'm a frightful ass when it comes to making speeches."

"Rats! You're a prominent local character now—a public man of great importance," said Nipper briskly. "Good old Archie! We never thought you had it in you!"

CHAPTER 5.

Painting the Town Red!

MR. CROWELL, the Remove Form-master, had trouble with his class that morning; but, knowing the circumstances, he turned a deaf ear to a great deal of whispering, and a blind eye to much irregularity. Mr. Crowell wasn't such a bad old stick.

It was a half-holiday, anyhow, and by midday Archie Glenthorne had fully recovered himself. His initial excitement had gone, and his dismay at the clearing of his

study was tempered by the thought of what his prize money could buy.

"It's rather a swindle, having to wait until to-morrow," said Handforth after dinner. "The least those chaps might have done was to give you fifty quid on account."

"What's the odds?" asked Travers. "Everybody in Bannington knows Archie—and everybody in Bannington knows that he has won the thousand quid. Or, if they don't know, they jolly soon will after we get into the town."

"By George, yes!"

"And Archie's name is good, anyhow—even without that thousand," continued Travers. "He can get anything he likes on tick."

Archie shook his head.

"Absolutely not, old tempter," he declared. "The Glenthorne blood runs cold at the thought of getting things on tick."

"But, you chump, it won't really be on tick, for you'll have the cheque to-morrow," said Travers. "And you needn't think that you'll have to ask the tradesmen for credit. They'll be swarming round you, eager enough to supply credit. They'll be after that thousand quid like wasps round a honey-pot."

There was a dreamy look in Archie's eyes.

"Odds visions and temptations," he murmured. "Why not? Let's make up a

dashed party, what? We'll trickle into Bannington and paint the town red!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good old Archie!"

"We'll help you!"

Archie went indoors, and was unfortunate enough to run into Phipps. He had been rather hoping that he would avoid Phipps. Some intuition, perhaps, had told him what to expect.

"When shall we be going, sir?" asked Phipps smoothly.

"Going? We?" repeated Archie vaguely.

"Oh, I see what you mean! When shall we be going?"

"Yes, sir."

"As a matter of fact, old article, we shan't be going at all," said Archie. "I shall be going, but you'll stay here. I trust you understand the young master, Phipps?"

"I think it will be far better, sir, if I accompany you," said Phipps firmly. "I understand that a number of the young gentlemen will be with your party, and, with no disrespect to them, I fear that they might persuade you to be rash."

Archie jammed his monocle into his eye and surveyed his valet coldly.

"When a chappie has a thousand quid to splash about, dash you, he's justified in being rash," he replied. "Oh, no, Phipps! Nothing doing! I shall enjoy myself a lot more if you are not hovering somewhere in the offing. For once the young master is going to plunge."

"You will at least allow me to advise you with regard to the study furnishings, sir——" began Phipps.

"Now that," said Archie, "is the one thing I shall not allow you to do. No more sombre-looking lounges and easy-chairs, Phipps. This time I am going in for something pricelessly bright. You may order our tailor to supply the young master with dingy-looking spring suitings, but I'm dithered if you're going to mess about with the furniture. And that, Phipps, is that. Kindly allow it to sink in and obtain a firm anchorage."

He strode on firmly, leaving Phipps with a sad, anxious look in his eyes.

The party which set out for Bannington soon afterwards was a big one. Handforth took his Morris Minor, and in some extraordinary way he carried no less than five passengers. Nipper and Parkington and two or three others went on their motor-bikes.

Archie had ordered a special car for himself. He arrived in Bannington in state, with crowd of Removites jammed in the back and even overflowing on to the running-boards and roof, and one sitting astride the bonnet. It was very much like a triumphal entry. The town sat up and took notice.

If the fellows had had any doubts regarding the genuineness of Archie's good fortune, those doubts were quickly dispelled. For Bannington was plastered with great placards, announcing to all and sundry that "Weekly Bits" would make a public presentation of the first prize of one thousand

pounds in the recent picture puzzle competition to the lucky winner at the Town Hall at 3 p.m. on the afternoon of the morrow.

Rumours had already reached Bannington, of course. It had quickly become known, early in the morning, that the "Weekly Bits" official car had gone to St. Frank's. Archie Glenthorne's name had been freely mentioned, and now that the Remove invaded the town there was no longer any secret about it. People paused in the High Street, and gazed upon the lucky schoolboy.

Bannington was delighted that Archie Glenthorne, of all the St. Frank's fellows, should be the winner. For Archie was a real local resident. Glenthorne Manor, his ancestral home, was only just outside the town. Colonel Glenthorne was one of the town's greatest benefactors. The very Town Hall itself, an imposing building, had been presented some years ago by the colonel.

"Now, you chappies, we ought to do this shopping business in some sort of order," said Archie as he stood in the wide High Street, surrounded by crowds of Removites. "How about a few suggestions? Where shall we go first?"

"Well, you promised me a new bike, Archie," said Tommy Watson, with a grin.

"Good enough!" said Archie promptly. "Order it, old dear. It's yours!"

Watson stared.

"You—you mean it, Archie?" he ejaculated.

"Absolutely!"

"I say, I don't want to take advantage of you——" began Tommy.

"Kindly refrain from being ridic.," protested Archie. "What's a new bike? Five quid—six quid—seven quid! Why, dash it, a dozen new bikes would only cost seventy or eighty pounds!"

"Only!" gasped Watson.

"Who wants new bikes?" asked Archie, beaming round upon all and sundry. "This is rather a priceless idea. Let's dash into the bike shop."

He went in, surrounded by fellows who could legitimately say that their existing machines were in sad need of replacement. He ordered bicycles as though they had been new laid eggs, and the shopkeeper—knowing the circumstances and when once he was convinced that the order was genuine—eagerly agreed to supply the machines. They would all be delivered on the morrow, without fail.

"Well, that's that," said Archie complacently, as he went out. "I must say it's frightfully decent of these tradesmen chappies to trust me like this."

"Not much trusting about it, Archie," grinned K. K. Parkington. "All the town knows that you're going to be presented with that thousand quid cheque to-morrow afternoon. There's no risk about it. As the Americans say, it's cream in the can."

"The town's yours," said Handforth. "You can do as you like with it, old man! Go into any place you please, order what you fancy, and it'll be supplied."

"How about a few refreshments to start off with, what?" asked Archie genially. "What price the Japanese Café? Come on, laddies!"

CHAPTER 6.

Going the Pace!

THE bill for refreshments in the Japanese Café came to over seven pounds, for even lemonades and pastries and cakes run into big money when there are hosts of hungry fellows to supply. Archie whacked out in cash, using practically all he had. But what did it matter? Plenty more to-morrow!

Before leaving the Japanese Café, he made arrangements for the big feed at St. Frank's—a tremendous spread, that evening, to celebrate his good fortune. The entire Junior School was to be catered for; the Remove, the Fourth, and the Third. The manager was suave and smiling as he made careful notes of the instructions.

"You are very lavish, Master Glenthorne," he said. "We shall be glad to provide this—er—feast. But I would point out that if we are to make the feast as elaborate as you suggest, the charge will be nearly ten shillings per head, quite apart from the cost of decorations, service, and so forth."

Archie waved an airy hand.

"Go ahead, old bean," he said. "Who cares?"

Outside the restaurant, K. K. Parkington gave Archie a nudge.

"That feed's going to cost you about fifty quid, Archie," he said, after some quick mental calculations.

Archie looked rather startled.

"Fifty quid!" he ejaculated, staring.

"I'm afraid so."

"What do you mean, dash you, you're afraid so?" retorted Archie. "I had already ear-marked a hundred quid for that feed."

"Oh."

"We'd better go back and alter those instructions. We'll make the feed slightly more elaborate."

"No, we won't!" declared Nipper firmly. "You're too jolly generous, Archie! If you spend fifty pounds on the Lower School, it's more than the Lower School will expect. We don't mind helping you to celebrate, and to celebrate in a fitting way, but we're not going to make hogs of ourselves."

"Oh, well, just as you like," said Archie, who was thoroughly enjoying himself. "Let's dash along to that big furniture store—Hallo, hallo! What's this? Odds visions and sights for sore eyes! A somewhat snappy radio, laddies!"

He and the crowd were just outside a big wireless dealer's. In the centre of the window was a magnificent inlaid mahogany radio. It was one of those massive super-super affairs.

"Drag him away, you chaps," said Travers. "That set's not for sale. There's nobody in Bannington with enough money to buy it!"

"Pray refrain from being a frightfully frightful ass!" protested Archie. "Why, the price is only eighty pounds."

"Only!" yelled the juniors.

"And that inlaid mahogany is absolutely the thing," went on Archie. "I'm dashed if it doesn't match the furniture I have in mind. Make way, laddies."

He strode into the shop, ordered the super-radio, and while he was there he chose a portable gramophone in brilliant red morocco at ten guineas. Both instruments, he was informed, would be delivered on the morrow; a specialist would be sent to instal the radio.

"We're getting along nicely, you chappies," said Archie, as he emerged into the street once more. "Now, what about that furniture? Pray remember that the good old study is as bare as Mother Hubbard's cupboard. Something has definitely got to be done."

He had the time of his life in the furniture shop.

Assistants sprang forward to attend to him; the manager, hearing a rumour as to the identity of this customer, personally took charge; and before Archie had started choosing anything, the proprietor himself came along.

Only a few of the Removites had joined Archie on this quest; the others were not particularly interested. They were making whoopee, as it were, in the High Street, to the amusement of the townspeople.

Archie went the whole hog in the matter of furniture. He selected a magnificent lounge, covered with gaily-coloured, richly-patterned Oriental brocade, at sixty guineas. He chose a glorious Oriental carpet—priced at fifty pounds—which went one better, in the matter of colour, than the lounge.

He chose a sumptuous desk, a book-case, lounge chairs, and other odds and ends—all more or less Oriental in design, and dazzling in colour. When Archie allowed himself to run wild, his taste in colour was startling.

"You're a giddy spendthrift, you know, Archie," said Alf Brent anxiously. "You'll have to put on the brake."

Brent was the fortunate junior who shared Study E with Archie; and, to tell the truth, he was rather frightened of all this splendour. He could not see much comfort for himself in the newly furnished study. He would be afraid to sit down—or even to tread on the carpet. Alf was the son of Sir John Brent, the chairman of the St. Frank's Board of Governors, but he had a hankering after plain things.

"Spendthrift?" repeated Archie. "And why not? I mean to say, I'm out to spend that thousand, aren't I?"

"Not all of it," protested Brent.

"There's heaps left yet, old scream."

"Don't you be too sure," said Brent uneasily. "Have you reckoned up? This furniture—just enough to furnish one small room—will come to about two hundred and fifty pounds. It's—it's riotous!"

There was a dreamy look in Archie's eyes.

"All my life I've longed to get things like this," he murmured. "Phipps is a frightfully decent chappie, but Phipps has narrow ideas. Why shouldn't I indulge my fancies for once? Good gad! The money's mine, and I'm entitled to spend a good deal of it on myself, what?"

"Yes, but——"

"Kindly refrain from 'butting,' Alf, old dear," interrupted Archie. "I'm having the time of my life, so be good enough to let me enjoy it."

Alf Brent gave it up.

Later on, Archie revelled whole-heartedly in a visit to the outfitter's. With a sangfroid which made the outfitter his friend for life, he ordered four or five new suits—choosing the materials personally. It is unnecessary to add that Archie's choice was exotic in the extreme. There was a positive orgy of sock and shirt and tie buying. He ordered them by the dozen. In the outfitter's alone, he ran up a bill for something like one hundred pounds. He hadn't enjoyed himself so much for months.

He happened to spot Phipps in the High Street, and after a momentary stab of uneasiness, he smiled serenely. Why should he worry about Phipps? Dash Phipps! This was the one great occasion when Phipps could go to the dickens!

With excessive rashness—even courage—he plunged into a ladies' shop, having spotted some priceless frocks in the window. He ordered half a dozen of his own choice for Marjorie Temple, of the Moor View School. Marjorie was his special girl chum, and it was hardly right that she should be left out of this slice of good fortune. Half a dozen new frocks would please her feminine heart. Once within the shop he was incredibly rash enough to order a couple of new hats for her.

And, thinking of Marjorie, he naturally drifted towards a jeweller's. Here he purchased her a gold wristlet watch, studded with jewels—twenty pounds. Just a trifling little present to go with the frocks and hats!

"Look here, Archie, you'll have to call a halt!" said Parkington firmly. "Burn me, but you can't spend all that thousand quid in one afternoon!"

"I'm trying my best, old dear, to do it!" beamed Archie.

"But—but it's not right!" protested Parkington. "Besides, you may have gone over the thousand by now."

"Over the thousand?" asked Archie, with his first pang of uneasiness. "I say, not really?"

"You're pretty safe, so far," said Nipper, consulting a scrap of paper. "Up till now, roughly, you've incurred debts for about six hundred and fifty pounds."

Archie took a breath of relief.

"What ho!" he chirruped. "Then we've still got pots of money left."

"Don't forget the hundred pounds you've promised to charity," warned Nipper.

"Good gad! That's right," said Archie. "Well, we're still safely within the limit."

However, perhaps it would be a priceless idea to heed the timely warning, what? A trifling surplus wouldn't be such a mouldy idea, would it? A spot of cash for a rainy day, what?"

The juniors were glad enough that Archie was ready to call a halt. He had taken their breath away. As a spendthrift, he had broken all records.

Phipps buttonholed him soon afterwards, and the astute valet chose a moment when Archie was alone.

"I am intensely worried, Master Archie," said Phipps. "After what you said to me at the school, I have not presumed to accompany you on this—er—shopping expedition. But I have been a pained observer. I urge you, sir, to reconsider——"

"Too late, old dear," interrupted Archie, smiling. "The cry goes up—too late! Frightfully sorry, and all that, but the deed is done."

"It can be easily undone, sir," urged Phipps. "Fortunately, you have not paid for any of these things. With your authority, I could easily cancel that atrocious furniture."

"That what furniture, Phipps?" asked Archie frigidly.

"Atrocious, sir—I repeat it deliberately," said Phipps, with deep meaning. "I have nothing against it personally, and in some surroundings it would be admirable. But in your study, Master Archie, such furniture will be totally out of place. The colours!" He shuddered quietly. "The colours, sir, are appalling."

"Merely a matter of opinion, Phipps," said Archie stiffly. "In the young master's opinion, the colours are charming in the extreme."

"And those suits you have ordered, sir," went on Phipps, in agony. "You must, at least, allow me to know best in the matter of your personal attire. You cannot possibly wear those suits, sir."

"What do you know about those dashed suits, anyhow?"

"I took the liberty, Master Archie, of entering the shop after you had left, and viewing the materials——"

"Then you took a dashed liberty which was a—a liberty," said Archie sternly.

"I am only acting in your interests, sir," said Phipps quietly. "Again, I would point out that you have been unduly precipitate. Would it not have been better, sir, to have waited until the thousand pound cheque was actually in your hands? There is many a slip 'twixt——"

"Be good enough to keep your proverbs to yourself," interrupted Archie icily. "I loathe proverbs, Phipps. It strikes me, old lad, that you're talking too much. A still tongue showeth a wise head—Hallo! Good gad! That's a proverb, isn't it? Oh, well, you shouldn't start me off, dash you!"

He disengaged himself from Phipps' restraining hand.

"One moment, Master Archie," entreated Phipps. "I beg of you, sir, to reconsider

this decision. I urge you to let me cancel —”

“Positively nothing doing, Phipps!” said Archie, stalking away.

CHAPTER 7.

The Hero of the Hour!

MR. ALINGTON WILKES, being a sportsman, readily gave his permission for the Ancient House Lecture Hall to be used as the banqueting chamber.

But when Archie invited Mr. Wilkes to the feed, Mr. Wilkes pleaded a previous en-

With such a feast coming, the fellows wanted to have their best appetites in good fettle.

At half-past five loaded vans arrived, with seven or eight men. They took possession of the Lecture Hall, and juniors hovered about, anxious to get a peep within. But the doors were locked.

While the excitement was at its height—whilst half the juniors were busy upstairs arraying themselves in their best—further guests arrived. Irene & Co., of the Moor View School, turned up.

Over a dozen of the girls had been invited, and Archie was in the Ancient House lobby



In a triumphant procession, the St. Frank's fellows escorted Archie the prizewinner into Bannington, where they all proceeded to “make merry.”

gagement. He really had no previous engagement, and, personally, he would have enjoyed the spread. But, popular as he knew himself to be, he also knew that his presence would mar the festivities. Archie's guests would never be able to let themselves go if he were present. This was distinctly an occasion when masters and prefects should efface themselves. However, Mr. Wilkes promised to look in for a few minutes during the celebration, and Archie was satisfied.

Needless to say, the genial ass of the Remove was the hero of the hour. Always popular, his popularity now soared to dizzy heights. Rivalry between the Red-Hots and the Old-Timers was forgotten; just as rivalry was forgotten between the Remove and the Fourth. The Third Form fags were noisy and more boisterous than ever.

Nobody turned up for tea in Hall that day, and tea in the studies was a farce.

to greet them. He was nearly bowled off his feet by their greetings as they surrounded him in a laughing crowd.

“We heard all about it this morning, of course,” said Irene. “We think you're wonderfully lucky, Archie.”

“Oh, I don't know, old dear,” said Archie. “I mean to say, luck possibly plays a part in these competitions, of course; but at the same time, a chappie needs a certain amount of skill and judgment, what?”

“Oh, of course, Archie,” said Marjorie Temple stoutly. “We think it was brilliant of you to get the first prize.”

“Did Phipps help you at all?” asked Doris Berkeley mischievously.

“I say, everybody seems to think that Phipps won this dashed prize!” protested Archie. “Kindly let me inform you, dear old girl, that Phipps did nothing! He made all sorts of frightfully absurd sugges-

tions, but I turned them down. All the answers I sent in were my own."

"I was sure of it, Archie," said Marjorie. "Didn't I say so, girls? Didn't I tell you that Archie is a dark horse?"

She managed to get him aside.

"There's something I want to ask you, Archie," she went on confidentially.

"Anything you like, dear girl."

"Some big boxes and parcels arrived for me this evening—from Bannington," said the girl gently.

"Oh, I say!"

"Do you know anything about them, Archie?"

"Well, I didn't expect them to deliver the dashed goods until to-morrow," said Archie, in some confusion. "It's nothing, old dear. Merely a few frocks and hats and things. I thought you might like them."

"They're too charming for words, Archie—"

"Splendid!"

"And I thank you very, very much——"

"Oh, I say, no!"

"But, Archie, I can't possibly wear them."

"Eh?"

"Oh, please don't misunderstand me, Archie," said Marjorie uncomfortably.

"But—but—— Well, really, they're not the sort of frocks that suit me at all."

"Good gad!"

"And the hats are too elaborate—to say nothing of being terribly expensive," went on the schoolgirl. "Those hats are designed for middle-aged women. And the frocks don't suit my colouring in the least."

"Your colouring?" repeated Archie blankly.

"Girls have to choose their clothes very carefully," said Marjorie, with tact. "I know you meant well, Archie, but I do hope you'll let me send those things back. In any case, I couldn't possibly accept them. Really, I couldn't!"

"But why not?" asked Archie bleakly. "I say, this is frightfully disturbing, Marjorie, old girl. It's a blow. Couldn't you wear them—for my sake?"

"Let's talk about it another time," said the girl gently. "I sent the things back with the man. Come on—let's join the others."

Archie could not help himself. He badly wanted to discuss the matter further, but Marjorie wouldn't let him. He was genuinely upset, and for a time his happiness was completely marred.

A little later, however, when the doors of the banqueting hall were thrown open, he forgot all else but the feast. He was the host, and, as such, he had to take his place at the head of the main table.

The juniors were amazed at all the splendour.

There had been feeds and feeds at St. Frank's, but never a feed like this! It transcended everything in the school history. The tables were covered with snowy linen and glittering, gleaming silver. Glassware scintillated, flowers were in abundance. It

was so grand, in fact, that many of the Third-Formers hesitated before sitting down. All this grandeur was liable to spoil their appetites.

William Napoleon Browne, of the Fifth, accompanied by Stevens, crashed in with all his usual "nerve." He hadn't been invited, but this was a mere detail.

"Don't apologise, Brother Archie," said Browne gracefully. "I know you fully intended to include me in your guests. But with so much on your mind——"

"Well, as a matter of fact, old thing, the Fifth wasn't actually supposed to be——" began Archie.

"I accept your apology," said Browne smoothly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What I mean to say is, the Fifth——"

"I quite agree that the Fifth, as a whole, had no justification for expecting an invitation," said Browne. "But there are exceptions to every rule. Brother Horace and myself are the exceptions in this particular case. Brother Nipper, be good enough to shift up. Splendid! Brother Horace, we are in."

The juniors did not regard the arrival of Browne and Stevens as an intrusion. Browne was a good fellow, and he always had a partiality for mixing with the juniors. On such an occasion as this he was one of themselves, and at any party he was a distinct acquisition.

The feast went splendidly. It was a triumph. Archie, beaming upon all, spent one of the happiest evenings of his young life. Later he was required to make a speech, and he promptly rose to his feet and surveyed the guests through his gleaming monocle.

"Well, of course, I suppose I'd better say a few words——" he began.

"Hear, hear!"

"Go it, Archie!"

The guests were in that happy condition, after a good meal is over, when they were feeling comfortable and lazy. The wine had been flowing freely—ginger, orange and raisin wine. Nuts were being cracked somewhat noisily.

"This occasion, of course, is a priceless one," said Archie genially. "I mean to say, it isn't every day that a St. Frank's chappie wins a thousand quid, what?"

"You've made history, Archie!"

"Rather!"

"I should like to take this opportunity of announcing that I have come to a certain decision regarding the balance of my prize money," continued Archie. "Roughly, I shall have, perhaps, three hundred pounds left."

"Great Scott!"

"Then he must have spent seven hundred!"

"My only sainted aunt!"

"Two hundred pounds of that money will go to charity," said Archie stoutly.

"Hurrah!"

"A fair proportion, I think," continued Archie. "The other hundred pounds will be kept by myself as a nest egg for a rainy day. It has been hinted by many stalwarts that I should have been more careful—that I should have locked the doubloons away. But I regard that as a somewhat foul proposition. I trust, old things, that I am not a miser."

"Rather not!"

"Certain blighters have said that I am a spendthrift," continued Archie. "But, dash it, when a chappie comes into a thousand quid, why not? To be perfectly candid, I'm dashed if I can understand how I won this prize. I mean to say, I hadn't the faintest idea that I should click."

"That first prize ought to have been mine, really," said Handforth, who even now hadn't completely recovered from the shock of discovering that he wasn't the winner of the thousand pounds. "I'm jiggered if I can understand why my entry wasn't the winner!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I expect I shall get one of the other prizes, anyhow," said Handforth hopefully. "A hundred quid perhaps."

"And perhaps not," murmured Travers.

"We have, I think, enjoyed the occasion," said Archie, as he prepared to sit down. "I can only trust that you have obtained as great a kick out of this good fortune as I have. So let's continue the merrymaking. It's rather a pity I didn't order an orchestra, so that we could have a dance to finish up with."

"That's soon remedied, Brother Archie," said Browne promptly. "Am I mistaken in assuming that your new wireless has arrived?"

"It's not coming until to-morrow," said Archie, shaking his head.

"A trifling difficulty," said Browne. "There are other radios in the school, to say nothing of gramophones. If it is music you require, music you shall have."

Within half an hour of the caterers clearing away the good things—or what little remained of them—the guests were indulging in an impromptu dance.

The celebration, from start to finish, had been a huge success. And when the Junior School went to bed that night it felt more happily tired than it had felt for whole terms.

Archie Glenthorne, in particular, was serenely content.

CHAPTER 8.

A Shock for Archie!

NEXT day most of the juniors had that "morning-after-the-night-before" feeling. Breakfast appetites were meagre. Fatty Little, of the Remove, was about the only fellow who did justice to the meal.

If anything worried Archie—and it took a good deal to worry him—it was the

thought of Marjorie Temple. He wanted to hurry off to the Moor View School to "have it out" with her about those frocks and hats. He was convinced that the dear old thing had been deliberately spoofing him. How could those frocks and hats be wrong? He had chosen them personally—he liked them better than any frocks he had ever seen. Of course, Marjorie was merely reluctant to accept them. There could be no other explanation. Archie, poor fellow, was as yet very ignorant of feminine caprices.

It wasn't a half-holiday that day, but as lessons would be over at two-forty-five, there would just be time to get to the Bannington Town Hall by three o'clock.

Some of the fellows wanted Archie to obtain special permission to get off early, but he disdained this. As long as he got there by three o'clock everything would be all serene. A House match had been arranged for this afternoon, but it was postponed by general agreement. It was far more important to escort the triumphant Archie to Bannington.

During morning lessons a little excitement broke out. Vans were coming and going, and Handforth, venturing to stand upon his seat, could see parcels being carried into the Ancient House. Mr. Crowell, who had been at the blackboard, turned round just in time to see Handforth's acrobatics.

"You are not, by any chance, trying to find China, Handforth?" asked Mr. Crowell tartly.

"China, sir?" gasped Handforth, and in hurrying to resume his normal position he trod on a fellow's head in front of him much to that worthy's discomfort.

"I understood that you were studying China in this geography lesson," said Mr. Crowell. "I know quite well that motor-vans have been coming and going for some time; but we are in this room to work."

"It's—it's some of Archie's goods arriving, sir," said Handforth in self-defence.

"I am concerned about these goods of Glenthorne's," said Mr. Cowell, fixing Archie with a stern gaze. "I am grieved to hear, Glenthorne, that you have been throwing your money about so recklessly."

"But, dash it, sir, I've spent it on good, honest stuff!" protested Archie. "I mean to say, I haven't blued the cash in riotous living, so to speak."

"What do you call that orgy of gluttony which took place last night?"

"The banquet, sir?" asked Archie. "Oh, I say! Orgy of gluttony, what? Isn't that a bit over-ripe, sir?"

"How much did that banquet cost you, Glenthorne?"

"Only about fifty pounds, sir."

"Good heavens! I have never heard of such outrageous lavishness!" said Mr. Crowell, shocked. "Fifty pounds on a mere meal! However, it is too late to say anything now, and in any case, we are interrupting the lesson. But I will add that I am

disappointed in you, Glenthorne. I thought you were a more level-headed boy."

Archie looked distressed. He made no reply, for the simple reason that he was feeling a few pangs on his own account. Now that the first excitement had worn down he was troubled. Would it not have been better, after all, to have invested that thousand pounds? It was certainly rather horrifying to realise that within twenty-four hours he had spent the bulk of it. Second thoughts are always wiser, but it was too late now.

As soon as lessons were over he hurried to his study, and he found that the super-wireless had been fixed. The gramophone had arrived too, to say nothing of boxes and boxes of collars and shirts and ties. The suits would follow later, of course, as they had to be made.

Outside the Ancient House a van had drawn up which contained rows of glittering new bicycles, and the lucky new owners seized upon them gleefully, and put them to the test. Archie was overwhelmed with fresh thanks.

"Don't mention it, old beans," he said, with a graceful wave of his hand. "It's absolutely nothing. Only too jolly glad to——"

He broke off as the biggest van of all rolled into the Triangle. It came from the furniture stores, and it contained Archie's new study furniture. As the stuff was being carried in Mr. Wilkes found Phipps in the lobby, looking troubled and anxious.

"I am inclined to agree with you, Phipps," said Old Wilkey.

"I—I beg your pardon, sir?"

"You are uneasy, are you not, Phipps?"

"I must confess, sir, that I am," said Phipps, startled to find that his expression, usually so immobile, had given him away.

"I am not altogether sure that I approve of Glenthorne's reckless expenditure," went on Mr. Wilkes. "I gave my permission for the banquet, because I believed that it would do the boys good to have a celebration. But I really had no idea that Glenthorne had been spending money so recklessly. This new furniture, for example."

Phipps shuddered.

"Terrible, sir—terrible!" he murmured.

"The furniture itself is not so bad, but I must agree with you that it will not be in keeping with a junior schoolboy study," said Mr. Wilkes. "I am rather surprised, Phipps, that you did nothing to avert this."

Phipps looked hurt.

"Really, sir, you are doing me an injustice," he protested.

"I always understood that you had a great amount of influence over young Glenthorne," went on Mr. Wilkes. "Is that not so, Phipps? Could you not have dissuaded him from this orgy of spending?"

"I did my best, sir—I did everything that was humanly possible," said Phipps almost

fiercely. "I begged of my young master, I entreated him, but all in vain."

"Well, perhaps we mustn't be too hard on him," said Mr. Wilkes, with a chuckle. "We don't know quite what we would do ourselves, Phipps, if we won a thousand pounds. The most level-headed men do surprising things on such occasions."

Phipps went into Study E soon afterwards, and he bore it like a man.

That apartment had been converted into a miniature representation of an Oriental palace. The carpets and rugs were superb, but dazzling in their brilliant colour. The furnishings were equally lavish and gay. Phipps, who liked quiet colours, was horrified. Archie, sprawling on the splendid lounge, was supremely happy.

"Not so bad, eh, Phipps, old spot of trouble?" he asked genially. "Come, come! You must admit, Phipps, that the young master's domain looks perfectly priceless."

"Were you an Eastern prince, sir, I should say that the apartment was fitting," agreed Phipps. "But as you are not an Eastern prince, I would prefer to keep my opinion to myself."

"I'm frightfully sorry, Phipps, to displease you, but for once the young master is having his own way," said Archie contentedly.

"Very good, sir," said Phipps.

He made his exit, and breathed with relief when he got outside. He was a sad man. Life, for him, had lost much of its charm. The prospect of tidying up that room, several times a day, appalled him.

Afternoon lessons were notable, mainly, for the small amount of work which was accomplished. Mr. Crowell, while lamenting the excitement which gripped his Form, understood it; and, being a patient man, he was lenient. He mentally resolved that he would make the Remove catch up during the remainder of the week.

Knowing how anxious the boys were to get to Bannington by three o'clock, Mr. Crowell released them six or seven minutes before time. There was a wild rush into the Triangle.

Handforth's Morris Minor was ready; Archie's specially-hired car was waiting, complete with the driver. Bicycles had been set handy, and within a minute or two the entire crowd was off to Bannington. Archie's car led the way, with Handforth's close behind. Then came motor-cycles, and a whole stream of bikes in the rear. It was another triumphal procession.

And this, if anything, was more important than yesterday's. For now Archie was to receive his big cheque. He was to be honoured by the mayor himself, in the Bannington Town Hall. It was certainly a great occasion.

In Bannington there was plenty of excitement, too. There were crowds in the High Street, and outside the Town Hall there was a big congestion. With difficulty Archie managed to get through the crush, escorted



Handforth made to sit down, but lost his balance and succeeded in treading on the head of the fellow in front of him.

by Handforth and Nipper and Parkington and many other prominent Removites. They were under the impression that they would be admitted without question; but uniformed attendants barred their way.

"Now then, young gents!" said one of these gentry. "You ain't supposed to push in like this. You've come to the wrong entrance, anyhow. Only the gents who go on the platform come in this way."

"Well, dash it, I'm going on the platform, aren't I?" asked Archie. "Wait a minute, laddie! Here's a 'Weekly Bits' representative. We'll soon set this dashed thing straight."

He caught the arm of a brisk, business-like man who wore a prominent steward's badge, with the words "Weekly Bits" emblazoned upon it.

"What is it, young 'un?" asked this gentleman.

"Perhaps you'll be good enough, old dear, to inform these attendants that we are entitled to go upon the good old platform?"

said Archie, beaming. "My name, in case you do not know it, is Glenthorne."

"That's very interesting," said the gentleman. "But even now I can't quite see why you should be entitled to go upon the platform."

"But, good gad, I'm Glenthorne—A. W. D. Glenthorne."

"And I am still at a loss," said the "Weekly Bits" representative.

"Oh, come!" protested Archie. "I mean to say, come, come! I'm the winner of the first dashed prize, aren't I? You, a representative of 'Weekly Bits,' ought to know that, dash it!"

The man with the armlet looked suspicious for a moment, and then he smiled.

"What are you trying to do, young 'un—kid me?" he asked. "What gave you the idea that you are the winner of the first prize?"

Archie blinked, and his monocle dropped. "What—what gave me the idea?" he repeated. "But, I mean, everybody knows it!"

Didn't your official car come to St. Frank's yesterday, and didn't your men take photographs of me——"

"Steady, steady!" interrupted the man with the arnlet. "You're going a bit too fast, young man. No official 'Weekly Bits' car went to St. Frank's yesterday."

"What!" gurgled Handforth, who was near by.

"There's some mistake, boys," went on the man. "The winner of the thousand-pound first prize is a Mrs. Murphy, of Bannington. Where on earth did you get the idea that you had won it, kid? Sorry, but somebody must have been pulling your leg!"

CHAPTER 9.

Archie Settles Accounts!

ARCHIE GLENTHORNE turned pale. "Odds shocks and disasters!" he babbled. "In fact, good gad! I mean, this is absolute rot! You know dashed well that I'm the winner of the first prize."

The man lost some of his good humour.

"I've been as patient as possible with you, but if you choose to remain obstinate I shall have to adopt a different tone," he said firmly. "I tell you that no official car belonging to 'Weekly Bits' went to your school yesterday. No St. Frank's schoolboy has won a prize. The thousand pounds is to be presented to Mrs. Murphy by the mayor this afternoon. So the sooner you realise that, the better. Some funny practical joker has been having a game with you."

"Is—is this true?" asked K. K. earnestly. "I mean, honour bright, sir?"

"Yes, of course—honour bright," said the man.

Archie Glenthorne felt that the whole world had crashed about his ears. The thing was incredible—unbelievable. It was too ghastly for words.

Archie never knew how he got down those crowded steps, escorted by Handforth, K. K., Nipper, and the others. The next thing he knew, in fact, was finding himself confronting a great placard, which was plastered on one of the walls outside the Town Hall. Nipper was pointing to it.

And there, in black and white, was the dread announcement—that Mrs. Martha Murphy, of Belmont Terrace, Bannington, was the lucky winner of the "Weekly Bits" one thousand pounds prize.

"Some rotter has played a filthy trick on poor old Archie," said Nipper grimly. "But even now I can't understand it."

"It's—it's unthinkable!" said Handforth dully. "I mean, that car coming yesterday with those two men! They interviewed Archie, and took his photograph——"

"It was a spoof car, and those men were spoof 'Weekly Bits' representatives," said

Nipper. "That's as clear as daylight—now. But how could anybody possibly guess?"

"Buck up, Archie—it's tough on you, old man, but you'll get over it," said K. K. encouragingly.

Archie started, and seemed to come to himself.

"Laddies, be good enough to fetch the ambulance," he murmured. "The old bones have not only turned to water, but the old sinews are in rags."

"Goodness only knows what's going to happen now," put in Nipper, looking serious. "There are all those goods you bought—and they're not paid for."

Archie leapt into the air.

"Odds life!" he yelled. "What are we going to do? Laddies, kindly rally round! If ever Archie needed assistance——"

He broke off, the words choking in his throat. He was staring across the road—staring fixedly.

The others, following the direction of his gaze, saw three elegant Removites standing there, laughing uproariously. They were Bernard Forrest, Albert Gulliver and George Bell, of Study A. Forrest & Co., for some reason, were highly amused.

"Poor old Archie's had a shock!" Gulliver was saying.

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled the others.

"Don't take any notice of them, Archie," growled Handforth. "For two pins, I'd go over and wipe them up! They must have seen this placard about Mrs. Murphy—and that's why they're so tickled. The cads! After you treated them to that feed last night, too!"

Archie did not say a word. He broke away, ran across the road, and faced the Study A trio. There was something very dangerous-looking in Archie's bearing, but Forrest & Co. were too hilarious to take any notice.

"Forrest, you slab of nastiness, what do you know about this dashed affair?" demanded Archie fiercely. "Out with it, dash you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Forrest.

"You're too frightfully amused to know only that Mrs. Murphy is the prize-winner," went on Archie ominously. "You know something else!"

"Do I?" gurgled Forrest.

"And, dither you, you're going to tell me!" continued Archie, seizing him. "It was you who worked this rotten trick, wasn't it?"

"Was it?" mocked Forrest.

His very manner gave him away. Bernard Forrest was one of the worst cads at St. Frank's; a cunning, scheming bounder, and unscrupulous, too.

"Wait a minute—we'll deal with this chap!" said Nipper, as he came up with Travers and Handforth and Parkington and a few more. "Forrest, out with it! Did you play this filthy trick on Archie?"

Bernard Forrest shrugged.

"Can't you mind your own infernal business?" he sneered.

Archie spun round on them.

"Kindly leave this to me, laddies," he said, with a strength and determination which surprised them. "We won't think about the frightful difficulties of the situation until later. First things first, what?"

"I'm glad you thought of the difficulties, Archie," grinned Forrest. "You're in a bit of a mess, aren't you?"

"I fancy," said Archie ominously, "that two of us will be in a mess soon. What about it, Forrest? Was it you who sent that car to St. Frank's yesterday?"

Forrest laughed outright in his face.

"You might as well know," he said contemptuously.

"Yes, I'm the chap who worked the trick."

"You—you dirty rotter!" roared Handforth.

"Rotter be hanged!" said Forrest. "It was only a jape. I haven't forgotten the way Glenthorne knocked me down last week. One good turn deserves another, eh?"

Forrest was of a vindictive nature. Now that he was reminded of it, Archie well remembered the occasion, last week, when he had given Forrest a good hiding. It had been quite a private affair, and nobody else in the

Remove had known of it. Quite by accident, Archie had come across Forrest tormenting a sparrow—which he had previously brought down by a stone from a catapult.

Anything of that nature converted the genial Archie from a languid slacker into a miniature Carnera. He went for Forrest baldheaded; he fought him to a standstill; fought him, in fact, until Forrest had been completely "out," with a black eye, a swollen nose, and two thick ears.

Archie had said nothing about it to anybody else, and Forrest himself had managed to get indoors, and had cleaned himself up sufficiently to pass muster, without being asked awkward questions.

"I saw a good opportunity of getting my own back on you, Glenthorne," said Forrest

nastily. "The idea came to me that evening, in the Common-room, when you were talking about your 'Weekly Bits' competition entry. I knew that the prize-winners hadn't been announced—and I knew that Bannington was placarded with bills, saying that the first prize would be awarded this afternoon. And I also knew that the name of the prize-winner hadn't been published."

"Good gad!"

"You see, the fact that the prize-winner was a local inhabitant made it quite easy," continued Forrest. "So long as the spoof

was worked plausibly enough, it couldn't miss fire. So I got a couple of my pals to lend a hand. They brought their car here, having plastered it with 'Weekly Bits' notices and flags. They did their job rather well, didn't they? Of course, I needn't tell you that they only pretended to take photographs."

"You—you cunning cad!" said Nipper hotly.

"Oh, don't be a fool!" said Forrest, sneering. "You fellows are always playing japes, aren't you? Haven't you spoofed Handforth in the same way sometimes? We all thought it was rather a good joke."

"And the way Archie fell for it was a scream," added Gulliver.

"But, of course, we didn't count on what would follow. We hadn't the faintest idea that Archie would come into Bannington and spend money like water—money which he hadn't got!"

"Yes, that was rich!" chuckled Forrest. "And the way the townspeople accepted him as the first prize-winner was too funny for words!"

Archie peeled off his jacket.

"A certain amount of steam requires to be let off," he said firmly. "I hate having to do this sort of thing in the public street, Forrest, but there are some occasions when one's finer feelings must be thrust aside. Will you put up your hands, or shall I start?"

"Chuck it, Archie!" protested Forrest, alarmed. "Don't be a fool! You can't fight me here—Hi, what the—Ow!"

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Archie was fighting him already. He was boiling with rage and indignation, and he cared nothing for appearances. He went for Forrest baldheaded. And Forrest, for the second time within the space of a week, received a terrible thrashing.

Gulliver and Bell attempted to come to his assistance, and Nipper and Handforth and the others attempted to hold them back. But Archie would have none of it. He yelled for the pair to be released.

"I'll take on all three!" he sang out, as he drove his left home into Forrest's right eye. "I mean to say, I can wipe up these three worms easily enough."

And he did.

Gulliver and Bell joined in, but when Archie was fairly in the mood for fighting—as he was now—he could be a veritable terror. Handforth looked on with open admiration. Handforth's only regret was that he could not enter the scrap; but Archie was doing so well that he was compensated.

Quite a crowd gathered round, but nobody interfered. Archie's appearance grew more and more dishevelled. His collar came undone, his tie vanished, his nose started bleeding, his waistcoat became ripped; but he did not care. He carried on.

Biff! Thud! Crash!

He was like a whirlwind. Bernard Forrest received the bulk of the punishment, but Gulliver and Bell came in for a good deal. Not until Forrest was a battered wreck

did Archie desist. Then, breathing hard, he stood back.

"Well, that's that!" he panted. "Perhaps these chunks of frightfulness won't spoof me another time!"

Forrest and Gulliver and Bell had come to the same conclusion independently. Spoofing Archie was too painful!

CHAPTER 10.

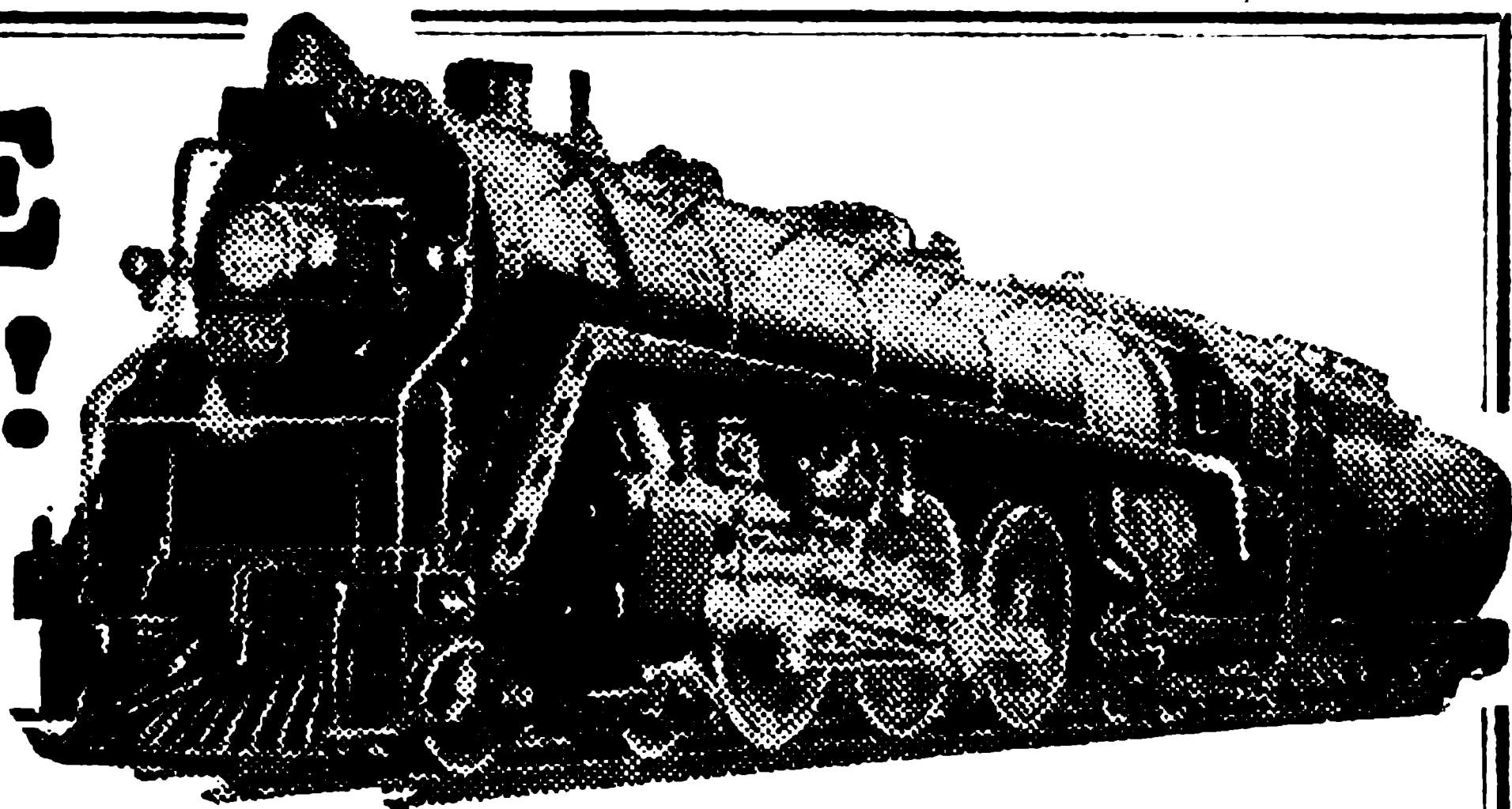
Phipps to the Rescue!

BAD news travels fast, and the bad news concerning Archie Glenthorne went round like wildfire.

All the Removites who had come to Bannington knew the worst within a few minutes—long before that scrap with Forrest & Co. was over. And after the first feeling of consternation everybody was deeply sorry for Archie. A jape was a jape—but Forrest's action was a despicable trick. Extraordinarily enough, Forrest had firmly believed that the Remove would laugh with him over the "joke."

Others, besides the juniors, heard the startling truth. By now, of course, the town was fully aware that a certain Mrs. Murphy was the prize-winner. "Weekly Bits" had kept this disclosure until the very last minute; and it was this circumstance alone which had permitted Forrest to work the wheeze.

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Handforth had his Morris Minor close by, and he promptly bundled the dishevelled Archie into it.

"We've got to get you out of here, old man," said Handforth kindly. "Half the town will be after you soon."

"Creditors, and all that sort of thing, what?" moaned Archie.

"I expect so," said Handforth. "You know what people are, especially tradesmen, when they find that you can't pay 'em!"

"I'm in an awful predic," said Archie feebly. "I mean, wouldn't it be the honest thing to dash about and explain matters?"

"You can do that later," said Handforth briskly. "You can't go into shops looking like this, Archie. You're a wreck."

Archie suffered himself to be driven home. Church and McClure rode in the back. When St. Frank's was reached, Archie was smuggled indoors, and there were plenty of fellows to rally round him while he changed his clothes, washed, and made himself presentable. He was brushing his hair, when Gresham came bursting in.

"You'd better come down, Archie!" said Gresham breathlessly. "You're wanted!"

"The Head has sent for me, what?" asked Archie mournfully.

"Not the Head," said Gresham. "The tradesmen!"

"Good gad!"

"Practically all of them!" went on Gresham. "They're swarming round like flies! There are a couple of vans here, too, and three or four men are already clearing out your study!"

"What!" howled Archie.

He rushed down, and he found that Gresham's words were only too true. Crowds of fellows were standing round, sympathetically watching. The Remove was genuinely sorry for Archie. All the splendid furniture was being cleared out of his study; the super-radio was being put back on another van. Some of the tradesmen were inclined to be incensed.

"It's no good talking like that, gentlemen," said Nipper, half-angrily. "You ought to sympathise with Glenthorne, instead of accusing him of tricking you."

"Didn't he order all these goods on the understanding that they were to be paid for to-day?" demanded one of the irate tradesmen.

"But Glenthorne was fooled—he thought he had won the thousand pound prize," replied Nipper. "We all thought so. He's not trying to swindle you, is he? You're at liberty to take all your goods back, and if any of them are depreciated, the Remove will see to it that you are paid."

"Yes, rather!" chorused the juniors.

"These bicycles aren't new now!" said the cycle dealer. "They've all been used, haven't they?"

"They're every bit as good as new—and you know it!" said Handforth aggressively. "Take 'em back! Who wants 'em, anyhow?"

Every one of the boys who had received a bicycle as a gift was only too ready to give it back. They were too sorry for Archie to feel any resentment at being deprived of their presents. The Remove, in fact, rallied round Archie nobly, and did its best to lighten his humiliation.

No sooner was Study E cleared out than Travers and Potts and many others got busy, and with lightning-like speed they put every one of Archie's own things back—much to the secret satisfaction of Phipps, who observed all from the background.

Archie received a fresh shock when he escaped to his study, after promising the tradesmen that everything would be put right. There was his study—just the same as usual—his old lounge, his old desk, his old carpet. It looked as though it hadn't been touched.

"I say, what's all this? Good gad!" he exclaimed, looking round dazedly. "I mean, the good old fairies have been at work, what?"

"We couldn't keep the things, Archie," said Travers. "They're yours, dear old fellow."

"This is most frightfully decent of you——"

"Rats! We couldn't do anything else," said Jimmy Potts. "Russell's bringing your portable gramophone back in a minute."

Archie looked at them gratefully, but he was too full of emotion to say much. His eyes kindled warmly, however, as he fell upon the comfortable old lounge, and looked round.

"After all, old beans, I'm not sure that this furniture isn't the best, in the end," he said gratefully. "I mean to say, like home, what? I'm beginning to think that Phipps——"

The door opened, and in dashed Church.

"Somebody else to see you, Archie!" he panted. "A man named Grant."

"Grant?" repeated Archie. "Never heard of him."

"He's the manager of the Japanese Café."

"Now for a few squalls, Archie," said Travers, with a sigh. "I've been expecting this merchant. He's the only one you can't satisfy!"

"By George, no!" said Handforth, with a start. "All the rest have taken their goods back, but that feed has gone for ever!"

Mr. Grant himself came striding in a second later, and he was looking anxious and worried.

"I've heard this story about you, Master Glenthorne," he said bluntly. "It's true, isn't it?"

"Absolutely, old bean," said Archie. "I'm frightfully sorry, but I'm afraid there's been a bit of a mess-up."

"Well, there's a bill here for forty-seven pounds ten," said Mr. Grant. "I should like to know what you intend doing about it."

Archie seemed to grow smaller as he sat there.

"Forty-seven pounds ten!" he babbled. "But, good gad, I haven't forty-seven pence!"

"I didn't suppose you had, young gentleman," said the manager of the Japanese Café. "I'm not an unreasonable man, and I don't altogether blame you for what has happened. But I was foolish to supply you with that catering order on the mere strength of your own statement. I'm sorry, Master Glenthorne, but I shall either have to go to your headmaster, or to your father."

Archie leapt up, frantic.

"Absolutely not!" he shouted desperately. "You can't do that, dash you! I might get expelled!"

"I can't help that!"

"And if you go to my pater, he'll have four apoplectic fits!" went on Archie. "Odds horrors and disasters! You wouldn't have my pater's blood on your hands, would you?"

"This is no time for foolish, exaggerated statements, Master Glenthorne," said Mr. Grant evenly. "Here is a bill for forty-seven pounds ten, and I want to know what you are going to do about it."

"If you'll pardon me, young gentlemen," said a quiet, smooth voice.

Phipps came gliding in, and Archie looked at him with desperate hope.

"What ho! Phipps, the good old lifesaver!" he ejaculated. "Phipps, laddie, come in!"

"I have come, sir, with reference to the shirts and neckties," said Phipps smoothly. "The haberdasher has suggested that you keep them; he is perfectly willing to grant you credit."

"Then the haberdasher is a decent chapie," said Archie stoutly.

"I would suggest, however, sir, that you return the goods," said Phipps. "They are hardly suitable for you, sir."

Archie gave in.

"Perhaps you're right, Phipps," he said. "I've come to the conclusion that you were right about this furniture, too—so you must be right about the shirts and the neckties. Go ahead! Send the whole dashed lot back!"

"Thank you, sir," said Phipps gratefully.

He looked at Mr. Grant.

"If I may venture to ask, sir, are you having some trouble with this gentleman?" he went on, looking at Archie.

"Yes I'm afraid there's a spot of bother hovering in the offing, Phipps," said Archie. "It's this catering bill, you know. Practically fifty quid—and the good old Glenthorne exchequer is empty."

Phipps took a slip of paper from his pocket.

"You will be willing, I trust, to accept this, sir?" he said, handing the slip of paper to Mr. Grant.

Mr. Grant looked at it, started, and his face lost its worried look.

"Why, certainly—of course," he said.

"What is it?" asked Archie, open-eyed.

"This is a cheque for fifty pounds, Master Glenthorne," said the caterer. "A 'Weekly Bits' cheque, I see."

"Wha-a-at!"

"Perhaps I had better explain, Master Archie, that I also entered for the 'Weekly Bits' competition," murmured Phipps respectfully.

"Good gad!"

"I was lucky enough to win a share of the second prize of five hundred pounds."

"Odds surprises and staggerers!"

"It has been divided amongst ten—therefore I receive fifty pounds," went on Phipps. "For the good of your name, Master Archie, I am perfectly willing to settle this trifling bill."

"Good old Phipps!" shouted the Removites enthusiastically.

PHIPPS, as usual, had come to the rescue.

Unlike Archie, he had kept mum about his "Weekly Bits" entry—and also about the fifty pound cheque he had received by that morning's post. He had suspected, from the first, that there had been something fishy about that thousand pounds—and he had been ready for any emergency.

In the privacy of Study E, later, Archie unburdened his soul.

"After this, Phipps, no more competitions," he said firmly. "The dashed things are altogether too unsettling for the young master's mental capacity. And now, Phipps, what about that fifty quid? I mean to say, how about paying it back?"

"I shall be glad enough, sir, to receive it in weekly payments of one pound, for the period of fifty weeks," said Phipps smoothly. "I am only too glad to have been of service to you, sir."

"Absolutely not!" said Archie stoutly. "Good gad! I couldn't hear of it, Phipps! I'll make it twenty-five bob a week for fifty weeks, if you like—but not a penny less!"

"Very well, sir, if you insist," murmured Phipps.

"I do insist—and kindly understand that when the young master insists, he insists insistently," said Archie, waving an imperious hand. "That's settled, Phipps, old lad! And if ever the young master attempts to thwart you again, kindly remind him of this evil day."

Phipps retired, smiling quietly to himself. Upon the whole, it was rather a profitable deal. He had received fifty pounds out of a clear sky—and now he had invested the money so well that the deal would net him a clear additional profit of twelve pounds ten.

Phipps, in his way, was something of a business man.

THE END.

(Another corking St. Frank's yarn next week, lads, introducing Nipper, captain of the Fourth Form! Make a note of the title: "Bucking Up the Fourth!" and order your copy now.)

A Vivid Serial Story of Exciting Adventure in a Valley of Gold!

The VALLEY of HOT SPRINGS



By
**LADBROKE
BLACK.**

(Opening chapters described
on page 42.)

The Figure of Gold!

“OBSERVE, gentlemen, the accuracy of Eric the Red’s observations.”

The professor was speaking, addressing the three other men as if they were a class.

“Here is the Valley of Hot Springs. There are the geysers which he mentions, quite the five hundred he records, I should imagine. Of the platinum which this valley contains we have already had examples. That big building I take to be the temple where religious rites—which will be an interesting study—are celebrated. If my eyes do not deceive me, the steps are constructed of gold.”

Danny nudged Eric.

“For the love of Mike, Mr. Eric, stop the gov’nor. He’ll go on like that for hours. I don’t know how you feel, but I could do with something to eat.”

Danny need not have worried. Suddenly, from the base of the temple, there emerged a procession. At the sight of it, the professor’s booming voice stopped like the turning off of water from a tap.

The leaders of the procession were small-squat men, dressed in furs, and bearing a striking likeness to ordinary Esquimaux—but as more and more of the procession appeared the men grew taller and taller. Not only did their stature change, but their type seemed to change. Though the exit from the temple was nearly a quarter of a mile away, Eric could distinguish complexions that were pure white, and, strangest of all, hair that was flaxen.

Every one of these men carried a javelin, the haft of which was yellow, with the point a dull grey colour. Presently, when nearly two hundred men had filed out into the plain, there emerged a strange, awesome figure.

**Red-hot thrills for Eric & Co.
at the Valley of Hot Springs.**

He was dressed from head to foot in what seemed golden mail worn over furs, which gave him an extraordinary, bulky appearance. On his head was a helmet of the same metal, surmounted by golden sprays. From beneath this curious head-dress a long, grim, clean-shaven face looked out.

As this resplendent figure emerged from the temple, a body of men came at a run from behind, and formed about him as a guard.

"I'm only a prisoner, and I don't suppose my opinion counts for much, but if I was handling this job I'd shoot the lot now while we've got the chance."

It was Jackson, leaning coolly against the edge of the tunnel, who spoke. Danny grunted.

"Not a bad idea that, guv'nor. We've got the reach on them here, and they can't get in on us. Seems to me the proper thing would be to plug 'em good and hard."

The professor merely made an impatient movement with his hand. The procession was drawing nearer. A hundred yards away the leading files turned outwards, forming a fan, up through the centre of which came that resplendent figure. Then everybody stood motionless. Eric had to confess to himself that he was beginning to feel nervous. There was something very terrifying in the silence of those two hundred human beings, marshalled there on the plain in front of them. And more awesome still were the eyes of that figure in the golden mail, which regarded the youngster and his companions with a relentless stare.

Eric glanced at Danny, who, he noticed, was watching the professor almost as if he were an opponent in the ring. For two minutes they stood there facing one another—the people of the mysterious valley, and the four Englishmen who had come across the seas to find them. Quite suddenly the professor stopped combing his beard with his left hand, and made a remark as it to himself.

"If the mountain won't come to Mahomet, then I suppose Mahomet had better go to the mountain."

Having uttered these words, he began coolly to walk up the slope towards the spot where that glittering figure stood. He

walked calmly, coolly, unhurriedly. He carried no weapon. Yet spread across the plain were two hundred armed men who had already shown that they resented the intrusion of these strangers.

He had not gone ten yards, however, before Danny, like one waking from a trance, had sprung after him. Slipping by him, he interposed his burly figure between the professor and the people of the valley.

"What in the name of all that's insane do you think you're doing, Danny?" the professor protested, catching him by the arm. "Get back at once, you idiot!"

Danny shook his head.

"I ain't going to let you go looking for trouble with that there pantomime guy, guv'nor, and there's no use your asking me. Besides, come to think of it, I'm sacked, and I can walk along here same as you."

As he spoke—as if at some secret signal—there was a clash of metal, and from all along the line the glittering spears, with their dull, grey heads, swung upwards as if to strike!

The Angekok!

GLITTERING in the sunlight, the golden spears with their dull grey heads hung suspended threateningly, each point directed at the figure of the professor and Danny. For one second Eric paused, dumbfounded, then, fighting down his nervousness, the boy sprang after his uncle. He could at least help Danny to protect the professor's life. To his surprise he found Jackson by his side.

"As long as they keep their line, and make it a dress parade, we needn't worry!" he exclaimed. "They couldn't hit the professor at that distance with a spear. It's only if they get the order to charge that there'll be trouble. If we back into the tunnel we can hold them."

That was so obviously the course to pursue that Eric determined to use force if necessary to compel his uncle to retreat. The same idea must have occurred to Danny, for before the boy could reach his uncle's side the old pugilist had put his arms about the professor and lifted him bodily from his feet.

"Ain't according to National Sporting Club rules, I know, guv'nor, but I ain't

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 travel to Greenland, and start out for the Valley of Hot Springs. They capture Maunsell, who has been trailing them; he gives his name as Jackson. Passing through a tunnel in the glaciers, they arrive at the mysterious valley. Confronting them is a huge, pyramid-like building, with steps paved with gold, at the top of which is a number of figures.

(Now read on.)

going to let you take the count if I can help it."

The professor was purple in the face and struggling violently as Danny, clasping him tightly, began to carry him back down the slope. He had just reached Eric and his companions, who were preparing to cover his retreat, when a curiously musical voice came echoing across the valley.

It was that strange, fantastic figure speaking, and at the first sound all the spears were lowered. With a final indignant wriggle the professor freed himself from Danny's hold.

"You brainless old idiot!" he exclaimed wrathfully. "Don't you dare ever to take such liberties again!"

He pulled at his beard, gave a snort, and then turned quite calmly to Eric.

"The runes declared that the People of the Valley spoke the language of the Skrel-lings. The fact has been confirmed. If you will have the goodness to see that I am not subjected to any more of this unwarrantable interference, I will carry out the necessary preliminaries. This man, whom I take to be the Chief Angekok, wishes to know where we have come from and what we are doing."

He flung back his head and began to declaim in the Esquimaux language. When he had finished there was silence for a moment, and then once more that vibrant musical voice spoke.

"Come on!" said the professor. "He's quite willing to receive us. You will take particular care to behave yourselves and do nothing rash. Remember, we are here on a purely scientific mission."

With perfect coolness the professor was walking towards the People of the Valley. Eric fell in by his side, Danny following his example; Jackson, gripping his Browning automatic, brought up the rear.

Soon they were within a few feet of that resplendent figure. Eric was conscious of a curious thrill as a pair of very luminous grey-blue eyes fixed themselves upon his face for a moment. It was almost as if he had been subjected to an electric shock.

The professor was speaking, evidently answering the string of questions addressed to him. Then he turned, and with a wave of his hand introduced each of his three companions.

"The Angekok is willing to receive us as friends. He has requested us to follow him so that we can partake of the feast he has prepared in our honour."

"Carry on to the cats, guv'nor!" Danny remarked cheerfully.

The Angekok raised his hand, and instantly the parade closed in behind them, and a procession was formed which moved slowly towards the big pyramid. Passing through an arched stone doorway they found themselves in a long corridor. As they proceeded the temperature rose noticeably. Suddenly the passage ended, and they were in a vast, cathedral-like hall, the roof of which was almost invisible in the half light.

Eric felt more than a little creepy. The interior was not unlike the inside of a brick

kiln of vast proportions. It was lighted by golden lamps suspended from chains, the illumination being derived from some animal oil which filled the air with a heavy odour. This huge hall, which was all of two hundred feet in diameter, was absolutely bare.

The armed men, the boy noticed, had filed in behind them, and were now standing round the walls at ordered distances. He had the feeling of being trapped.

"Don't like this, Mr. Eric," Danny whispered. "Better keep ourselves together—in case of trouble."

But the professor seemed utterly unmoved. He was looking about him with the air of a visitor to a museum, occasionally addressing questions to the Angekok very much as if he were an attendant.

"Notice the temperature, my lad," he remarked chattily, turning to Eric. "Must be due to volcanic fires. It's quite remarkably hot."

"Begging your pardon, guv'nor; but what about that grub the big noise was talking about?" Danny interrupted.

The professor frowned at him, and then turned to the Angekok.

"We are to follow him," he said. "He is about to take us to his own apartments. It seems that he is not only the High Priest, but the ruler of this valley."

The Angekok was leading the way across the great circular floor. Two of the tallest guards in golden mail raised their spears in salute as he approached a low doorway concealed by hangings of fur. Beyond these curtains was another corridor, which led them to a vaulted triangular room, evidently part of the Angekok's quarters.

Round the walls were low stone seats covered with skins. Eric noticed at once the complete absence of wood. What furniture there was—it consisted of a few stools and a table—was of metal, some of it obviously pure gold, the rest a dull-looking alloy.

The Angekok seated himself on one of the stools and clapped his hands. Instantly from an inner apartment came a little procession of girls carrying various dishes, which they placed on the table. Most of them were the Esquimaux type, but the last to enter almost took Eric's breath away.

She was tall and fair, with the white Scandinavian skin and long golden hair, which she wore loose hanging over her shoulders. She was like a picture of a Viking's daughter. She must have been conscious of the effect she produced, for suddenly a flush rose to her cheeks, and her blue eyes glanced with shy curiosity at the strangers.

Eric's eyes followed the girl as she moved towards the inner door. And then his heart gave a sudden leap. For as she passed over the threshold she flashed him a glance—and in her eyes he read a warning; a warning of impending danger!

(Many perils await Eric and his companions now that they have arrived at the Valley of Hot Springs. Don't miss reading next week's exciting instalment. chums.)

A FIGHT FOR A THRONE!

(Continued from page 14.)

THAT night, under the great flaring stars, the sweet scents from the garden drifting up on the soft, warm air, the Rajah of Bhuristan sat amid cushions with his friends on the roof of the palace, quietly, contentedly living the day's events once more.

Below them, round a companionable fire, sat Lala Bagheera and the Scrapper, surrounded by the Kittens at ease, while the Panther's brown men hovered in the background, listening with solemn faces to the cheery hum of talk.

The Panther and the Scrapper had formed a mutual admiration society of two long since; had unsmilingly swapped lies until white men and brown had roared in hilarious unbelief and delight. The giant leader of the Kittens had Bagheera's tulwar across his knees and was examining it expertly.

"Yup—it's a daisy li' cat-stabber all right, Larler, old man!" he pronounced at last. "But gimme my Uncle Dunlop for neat and tidy coshing!"

"Ah, the Un-cle Dun-lop!" Bagheera fingered the length of stuffed tyre respectfully, and bowed to his friend. "Truly thou art a great warrior, to fight with such as this, sahib. Stay with us in Bhuristan, O Slayer of Ram Tagore! Lala Bagheera and his hill-men are thy servants for ever!"

The Scrapper flung back his head in a shout.

"What, an' skip across the blinkin' Leap o' Death' every day? No thundarin' fear, Larler! But you come back with us, old hoss—and we'll make you star turn of Thurston Kyle's Kittens!"

The roar of agreement from the Kittens made the company on the palace roof smile. Budrudin Ananda alone looked wretched.

"Aye, you and the Kittens will soon depart, my friends!" he nodded sadly. "You have won back my country for me, but you will take my heart back with you to England, sahibs!"

Snub it was who broke the awkward silence that followed.

"Gosh you're all right now, kid, with Bagheera to back you. But if you ever want us, send and we'll be right over. Won't we, sir?"

He turned sharply to where Thurston Kyle sat, a quiet, mysterious figure in the starlight. For some moments the Night Hawk did not reply. Many problems were simmering in his brain.

And two stood out above all—the memory of Ram Tagore's vicious words, here on this roof when he had found himself beaten. Also—the mystery of that crooked solicitor, Jonathan Silk, the treacherous ex-guardian of Budrudin.

"Try to get back from Bhuristan—across the deserts. You are all trapped!" Thus Ram Tagore had spat. And Jonathan Silk had vanished, melted into thin air, despite close searching.

The Night Hawk smiled softly.

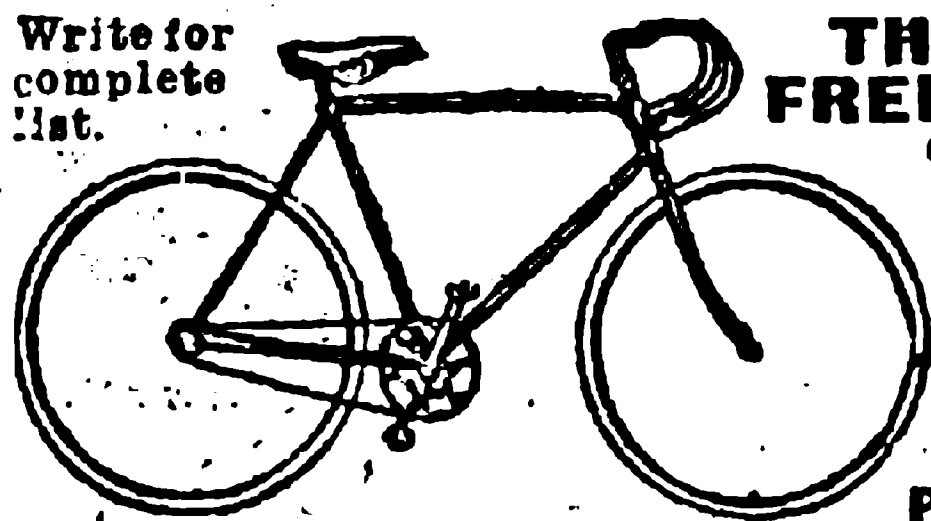
"Budrudin Ananda has conquered," he nodded. "And if he ever sends for us again, we will come. But—we are not yet back in England, Snub."

The faces of the five turned slowly towards the great mountain wall of Bhuristan—the only secret way home. What lay beyond?

THE END.

(How the Night Hawk and his allies fight their way back to England is told in next week's smashing yarn, entitled "The Night Hawk's Revenge!" One long thrill of excitement from the first line!)

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