

NIPPER & CO. IN NORTHESTRIA

Smashing
DOUBLE-LENGTH
St. Frank's yarn inside.

NELSON LEE

2^d



DAREDEVIL'S DROP!

One of the many exciting incidents from this week's thrilling schoolboy-adventure yarn
introducing the famous Chums of St. Frank's.

New Series No. 69.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

May 16th, 1931.

Thrilling double-length yarn featuring Nipper and Co. in Northestria!



IN THE ENEMY'S CAMP!

**Nelson Lee enters as a hero—
and departs as a hunted spy!**

CHAPTER I.

The Council of War!

THE scene was impressive and dignified.

The lofty chamber, with its undecorated stone walls, its flagged floor, was the banqueting hall of Ixwell Castle. But it was now being used as a Council Chamber, and on a raised platform sat the fair Princess Mercia, with Ethelbert the Red, her regent and adviser, on her right hand.

Grouped about was a number of stalwart men, some middle-aged, some young; and

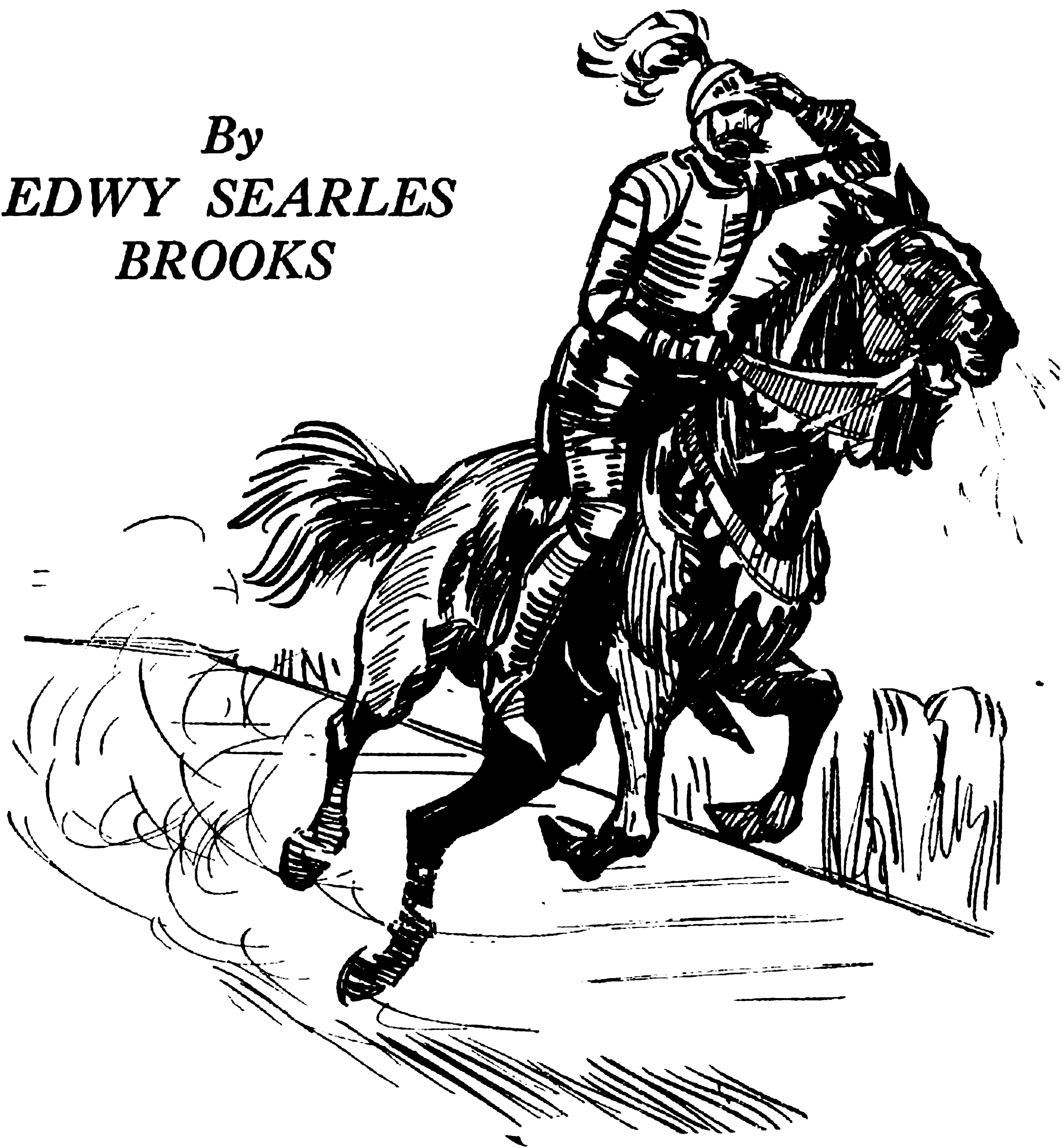
all were attired in glittering chainmail. They were the generals and other officers commanding the Northestrian forces.

In direct contrast were some other men. There was Nelson Lee, the famous schoolmaster-detective of St. Frank's, airily attired in travel-stained shorts and an open-necked shirt; Lord Dorrimore, the millionaire peer, in similar attire; Mr. Alington Wilkes, the breezy Housemaster of the Ancient House, in his inevitable baggy, flannel trousers and Norfolk jacket; Sir Hobart Manners, the inventor and designer of the submarine Pioneer, in

The most amazing series of schoolboy-adventure stories ever written!

LEE the LIONHEART

By
**EDWY SEARLES
BROOKS**



a neat, white drill suit; Captain Williams, the skipper of the submarine, formally dressed in his neat blue uniform.

The proceedings were about to commence, for the last of the Northestrian generals had just entered, and now the great doors had been closed, even the castle attendants being excluded from the secret conclave.

"We are all here, I think, good Lee the Lionheart," said the young princess gently. "It is for thou to voice thy counsel."

"Ay," came a murmur from the assembly.

For it was generally acknowledged, here in Northestria, that Nelson Lee was the virtual monarch; he was the commander-in-chief. His word was law.

"There is but little that I can say," commented Nelson Lee quietly. "You all know the position, and I think I am correct in saying that the odds are in our favour. The time is ripe for a sweeping, determined advance upon Dunstane."

"On to Dunstane!" shouted one of the generals. "By St. Attalus! We have Cedric at our mercy, and once the capital is in our hands the tyrant will be over-

thrown. Let us cast Cedric and his hordes into the lake!"

"Ay, 'tis our opportunity!"

There were many shouts of assent, and all the Northestrian generals—most of them powerful overlords—were flushed with excitement.

"With thou to lead us, Lee the Lionheart, naught can go amiss!" declared one of them. "Victory is assured!"

THESE were thrilling times in Northestria.

This strange little nation, direct descendants of Anglo-Saxon stock, living nearly a thousand years behind the times, was in the midst of a great War of Liberation. In Northestria, everything was typical of the Middle Ages; it was a land of feudal castles, overlords, serfs, and noble knights. The country was overrun by the arrogant, brutal Gothlanders, who, led by Cedric the Cruel, had obtained a stranglehold on the land.

Tucked away in the icy wastes of the Arctic, these tiny countries of Northestria and Gothland were practically unknown to the rest of the world. The brutal enemies were direct descendants of the Ancient Goths, and during the course of the centuries they had lost none of their ruthlessness and arrogance. Time had stood still in this unknown oasis of the Arctic.

Although hidden by eternal blizzards and everlasting mists, although a mere speck in the trackless wastes of the snowy Polar regions, the oasis was actually of considerable size.

Northestria extended for more than two hundred miles, a fair land of rolling meadows, forests, and cultivated areas, bordered on one side by the great lake which filled the centre of the oasis, and bordered on the other side by the impassable mountain barriers.

On the other side of the lake lay Gothland, a much smaller country—a more rugged land. And nearly a year earlier the Gothlanders had swept across the lake in their war galleys, they had fallen upon Northestria, and they had conquered. Cedric the Cruel had proclaimed himself King, and his rule had been ruthless and brutal.

Then the super-submarine, Pioneer, had found its way into this amazing land—not by chance, but by deliberate intent. Lord Dorrimore, setting out from England, had proclaimed his intention of reaching the Pole by travelling underneath the Arctic ice. But actually the genial Dorrie had intended coming here, for he had been seeking adventure.

Quite a crowd of St. Frank's boys and Moor View girls were on that submarine, too, and they had been having a somewhat hectic time during these wonderful days. Many of them had been in Northestria before; they had taken part in an earlier adventure, and thus they had thrilled at the thought of returning.

This oasis was surrounded by active volcanoes—great craters of white-hot fire which everlastingly boiled and bubbled tens of thousands of feet above the fertile basin, providing the twin countries with warmth and light.

Lord Dorrimore's real object was to open up this oasis as a wonderful new winter resort for the benefit of the world at large. By organising a regular service of submarine liners, Northestria could become a second Riviera—a valuable addition to the British Empire. The Northestrians would be glad enough to place themselves under the protection of the Union Jack.

But, first of all, the warlike Gothlanders had to be driven out and sent back to their own country across the lake. While Cedric the Cruel maintained his stranglehold on Northestria, Lord Dorrimore's idealistic plan could never reach fruition. Quite apart from all that, Nelson Lee and Dorrie were keenly anxious to help the suffering Northestrians.

THE position can be quickly stated, princess," Nelson Lee was saying, in that stately council chamber.

"There are many thousands of loyalists ready to give battle to Cedric and his hordes. Your valiant volunteers have already seized the towns of Yeldham, Tey and Lidgate. Now comes the news that the important town of Yaxley has also surrendered, the Gothlander defenders being completely overwhelmed. Victories are continuous, and the Northestrians sweep onwards with relentless determination."

"By my faith, 'tis sweet news thou tellest me, Lee the Lionheart," said the princess, her blue eyes agleam.

"The spirit of victory is in the people," continued Nelson Lee. "Thus it is the fittest moment for a general advance—for a concentrated attack upon Dunstane."

"'Twill be a grim enough battle, methinks," said the princess, a little sadness creeping into her voice. "For Cedric's grip upon my fair capital is deadly. Cedric holdeth his court in Dunstane; there he hath concentrated his greatest forces."

"And for that very reason, good princess, the fall of Dunstane will inevitably

mean the fall of Cedric himself," retorted Lee.

"Thinkest thou, good friend, that this battle will befall as thou sayest?" asked Mercia. "What if Cedric should prevail?"

"We think not of defeat, sweet Majesty—but of victory!" put in one of the generals fiercely.

"Ay, victory!" echoed the others.

"A fine spirit, i'faith," muttered Ethelbert the Red. "With such spirit, defeat is impossible."

"Cedric is in fear," continued Nelson Lee. "His armies are more or less disorganised. As you all know, Cedric's commander-in-chief, Guntha the Crafty, is in our hands—a prisoner aboard the great vessel which lies in the lake. Guntha was the brains of Cedric's army."

"Ay, 'tis true enough," said Ethelbert, nodding. "When thou seized Guntha, good friend, thou dealtest a blow to Cedric from which he hath never recovered."

"Cedric himself is a bully, a braggart—and, in an emergency, a weakling," said Lee. "We have but to strike now—and to strike hard—and victory is assured. When Dunstane falls, then Cedric will either surrender, or scuttle back across the lake to his own country. The storming of Dunstane, and the seizing of the city, will bring this war to an end. Other battles may develop in distant parts of the land, but the Gothlanders will be inevitably defeated."

"Then on—to Dunstane!" went up the cry.

"Let me say that this attack will be fraught with much bloodshed," warned Nelson Lee. "I am advising a general attack upon Dunstane; yet you must all know that hundreds—perhaps thousands—of men will fall in the battle. Cedric will not surrender easily. He will put up a titanic struggle, and his grip on the capital is like that of a vice. His greatest soldiers are there. Dunstane will only fall after a fierce, determined struggle. But the spirit of victory is in your people, Princess Mercia, and thus I advise the attack."

Lord Dorrimore, who had been silent so far, stirred uneasily.

"Am I allowed to put in a word here?" he asked.

"Speak, good Dorrimore the Brave," said the princess.

"Then why talk of bloodshed and the loss of thousands of lives?" asked Lord Dorrimore. "We know that the people are willing to lay down their lives for their country. But is it right that they should be thus sacrificed? We Britishers

are on your side, princess, and we did not come to Northestria unprepared. We have modern methods of warfare. We have two powerful tanks, armed with machine-guns. These tanks can smash through the gates of Dunstane, and create terror and havoc. We have two aeroplanes, which can fly over the city and drop bombs upon Cedric's soldiers. And the Pioneer herself can approach from the lake and shell the city with devastating effect. A concentrated attack like that would mean the surrender of Cedric almost within an hour. He can never stand against these modern methods of mechanised warfare. Why didn't you suggest it, Lee?"

"I agree, Dorrie, that Dunstane could be taken by such methods," said Nelson Lee quietly. "But I am not altogether sure that it would be advisable."

"But, man alive, where is the objection?" asked Dorrie, staring. "We came here to help the Northestrians, didn't we? And now, when you are proposing the vital battle of the campaign, you suggest that our tanks and aeroplanes and guns should be left out of it."

"If 'twill mean the saving of thousands of lives, then I agree with Dorrimore the Brave," said the princess, her eyes shining. "Let these wondrous methods of warfare be utilised."

There were many murmurs among the Northestrian generals and officers. Then one of them, a tall, elderly overlord known as Cadwallon the Fair, advanced towards the platform. He was the most powerful of all the Northestrian generals.

"Thou hast put forth a tempting suggestion, Dorrimore the Brave," he said quietly. "I'faith, 'tis an obvious suggestion, if thou wilt forgive me for so saying. But methinks 'twould render our victory bitter in our mouths. Such a triumph over Cedric would be but hollow."

"Why, what sayest thou, Cadwallon?" asked the princess, in surprise.

"Already Cedric claims that the Northestrian victories are due to the help of these good strangers from Beyond the Great Ice," replied Cadwallon the Fair. "Should we use these wondrous weapons of warfare, and drive Cedric into the lake, what then? 'Tis true that he and his hordes would be driven back into Gothland. But would Northestria really benefit? By the soul of Sarus, I doubt it! We cannot expect these good people to remain with us for ever, and after they have departed, to return to their own world, the Gothlanders will again become arrogant."

"Ay, truly spoken," murmured one of the other generals.

"By such methods of victory we should prevail, and the Gothlanders would for ever claim that it was the strangers who had defeated them," continued Cadwallon. "This great battle—this vital attack upon the capital—must be accomplished by the Northestrian soldiers, unaided by the good strangers. Thus, and only thus, can victory be truly gained. Many men will fall, but I vow they are willing enough to die for the great cause. This onslaught upon Dunstane must be undertaken by methods of which we in Northestria know. And should we drive Cedric out, then the Gothlanders will be for ever humiliated and defeated."

"Thou hast spoken truly, Cadwallon," said Ethelbert the Red. "Her Majesty can perceive that thou art right."

"Ay, 'tis true," admitted the princess sadly.

"You see, Dorrie," murmured Lee, turning to his lordship, "it's no earthly use our utilising the tanks and aeroplanes in this vital battle. It wouldn't really be a fair fight—the Gothlanders would be hopelessly defeated. And, afterwards, the whole trouble would start over again."

Dorrie nodded.

"Well, it's a bit of a dirty trick," he said gruffly. "I was expecting some fun in the storming of Dunstane. Still, you're right. I see the point. But I gather there's nothing to stop me getting into a suit of armour, grabbing a sword, and doing my bit in the old mediæval style?"

"We might try to stop you, but I doubt if we should succeed, old man," replied Lee, smiling. "You're a beggar for fighting, aren't you?"

CHAPTER 2.

The Spy!

"**B**UCK up, Archie; stir yourself!" Handforth, of the St. Frank's Remove, dug a forcible finger into the aristocratic ribs of Archibald Winston Derek Glenthorne. Archie, who was reclining on a lounge in the Pioneer's luxurious saloon, opened his eyes and gave a yelp.

"Good gad!" he gasped. "You frightful blighter! What's the dashed idea of sticking me in the bally midriff?"

"Rats! I only dug you in the ribs," said Handforth. "Get off that couch. We're going."

"You can dashed well go as soon as you like—and you can go as far as you like," retorted Archie coldly. "But I'm stay-

ing here. I've come to the conclusion, old earthquake, that this priceless ship is an absolute haven of peace and quietness. I mean to say, a bit of a change after the strife ashore."

And Archie allowed himself to sink back once again amongst the soft cushions. It was certainly peaceful in this beautifully appointed saloon—a vast contrast to the mediæval atmosphere which prevailed ashore.

The Pioneer was no ordinary submarine; she was, in fact, an under-water liner. Her cabins and state-rooms were the last word in luxury; her saloon and her lounges were like those of a private yacht.

Archie Glenthorne had found it very restful to come aboard now and again for a change. It was like jumping hundreds of years out of the past. In Ixwell everything was quaintly mediæval; here, on the Pioneer, were all the marvels of modern civilisation.

Stewards flitted about calmly; officers remained on duty, and the whole atmosphere of the place was restful. To make it more attractive to Archie, his invaluable valet, Phipps, was aboard. Phipps was ever ready to rally round with iced lime-juice and similar trifles. At the moment, Archie was dreamily thinking of a cup of tea.

"Why bother about the ass, Handy?" asked Church. "If he wants to stay here, let him stay."

"But he'll miss the fun," objected Handforth.

"Absolutely," put in Archie, without opening his eyes. "And a dashed good miss, too. I must remark, Handy, old thing, that your fun is too blightingly energetic. All I require now is a slight spasm of the good old dreamless, to be followed by a hot cup of the mixture as before."

"Lazy beggar!" said Handforth disdainfully.

Quite a few of the St. Frank's fellows had walked the two miles from Ixwell to the coast, and had come aboard the Pioneer. The fellows, in fact, were always making this trip—for they liked to keep in touch with headquarters, as it were. Most of their personal belongings were aboard the submarine, for there had been no object in removing them.

The party now included Handforth and Church and McClure, of Study D, Archie Glenthorne, Nipper, Tregellis-West, Watson, and Vivian Travers. They had all changed into clean flannels, and were feeling in good spirits.

"You chaps ready?" asked Nipper briskly, as he came into the saloon. "We want to get back to Ixwell. Mr. Lee and Dorrie are having a pow-wow with the Northestrian generals, and we're keen on finding out what's been decided. Personally, I think there'll be a big attack on the capital soon."

"The Battle of Dunstane," grunted Handforth. "And we shan't be in it!"

"Well, it's not our fight, old man," said McClure. "We're only spectators."

"I don't see any reason why we couldn't help," growled Handforth, whose war-like spirit could never be subdued. "Why shouldn't we get into chainmail and armour, and do our bit?"

"My only sainted aunt! He's off on that argument again," groaned Nipper. "Come on, you chaps! Let's be going. Got that gramophone, Handy?"

Handforth recovered his spirits, and grinned.

"Rather!" he said. "And, by George, we're going to surprise the giddy natives!"

"They'll be giddy enough after they've heard your precious gramophone," grinned Church.

"Listen to this one," said Handforth, as he opened a neat portable gramophone, and started it up. "The very latest red-hot fox-trot."

The music started with a blare, and Archie Glenthorne started as though he had been stung.

"Oh, I say!" he protested feebly, as he sat up. "Is this unearthly racket really necessary?"

"Ass! It's one of the latest fox-trots," said Handforth.

"Good gad! I thought it was a cat-fight," said Archie. "Will somebody be good enough to chuck that record overboard? And while they're about it, they might as well sink the gramophone, too!"

Handforth stopped the record, and closed the machine up again. It was quite a good one, and undeserving of Archie's condemnation. It was beauti-

fully encased in red leather, and Handforth was proud of it.

"This is going to surprise the natives all right!" he declared. "They've never heard a gramophone in this benighted land! They don't even know what a gramophone is. And when they hear a human voice coming out of a machine, they'll think we're dealing in black magic."

"You'd better go easy, dear old fellow," warned Travers. "These people have queer ideas about black magic. For two pins they'll grab you and burn you at the stake!"

Handforth ignored the jocular comments. As he and the others had come aboard the submarine, he thought it a good opportunity to take this gramophone back into Ixwell. He was convinced that it would create a sensation—and Handforth liked sensations.

They all went on deck—except Archie, who remained in the lounge, with Phipps rallying round with a steaming cup of "the mixture as before"—otherwise tea.

"Going ashore, boys?" asked one of the young

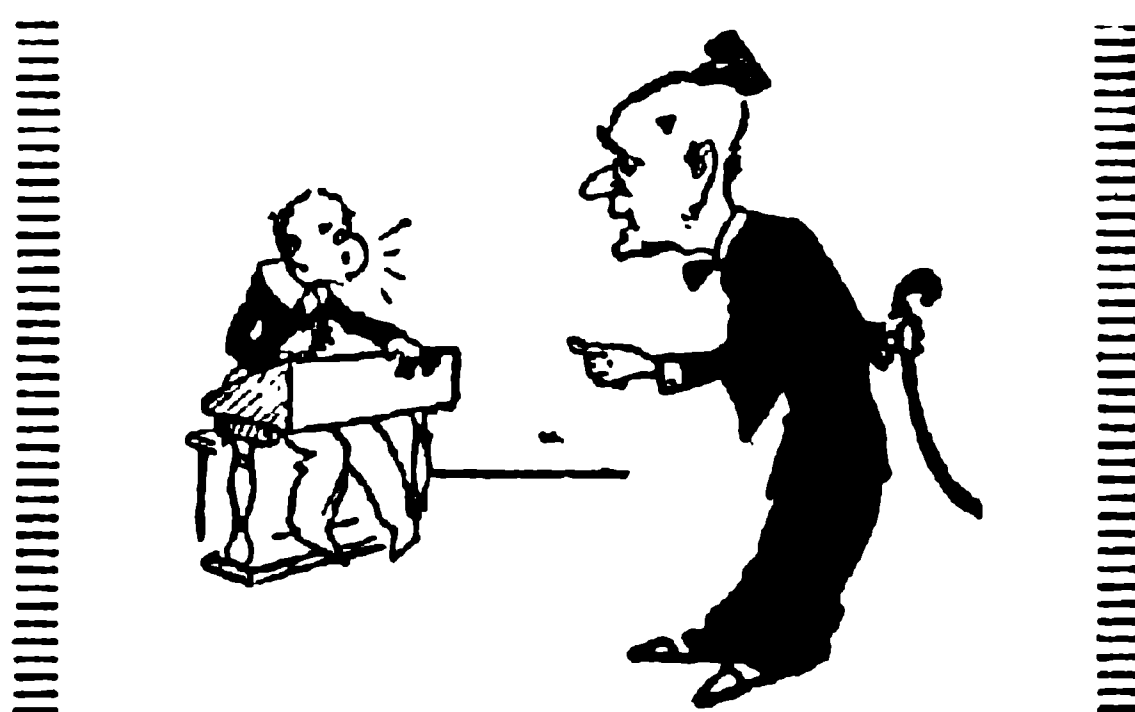
officers smilingly. "The launch is all ready, if you want it. Lucky young beggars! You're free to go where you like, but I've got to stay here on duty."

"Hard cheese!" said Nipper. "I dare say your chance will come before long. By the way, how's the illustrious prisoner?"

The young officer grinned.

"Guntha the Crafty?" he said. "Oh, he's as sullen as ever. I've met a few sulky, miserable men in my time, but this Gothlander brute takes the cake. He does nothing but grumble and rave, and he's as difficult to feed as a bear in the Zoo. We have to keep two men constantly on guard outside his cabin. For two pins he'd break up the whole show and make a dash for liberty. Not that he'd have the slightest chance of getting away."

This Joke Wins A Prize!



NOT TRANSFERABLE!

Teacher (to Tommy): "Give me what you have in your mouth!"

Tommy: "I wish I could, sir—but it's the toothache."

(H. Jones, 75, Grosvenor Road, Ilford, has been awarded a bumper book.)

A good joke wins a good prize. Easy, isn't it, chum? Have a go at winning one yourself now. See page 28 for details.

"He's the Gothland commander-in-chief," said Handforth, with a chuckle. "I don't wonder he's a bit peeved. Ready, you chaps?"

They tumbled into the waiting launch, and were soon gliding across the intervening stretch of water to the white, sandy beach. Here stood the two whippet tanks which Dorrie had brought with him—also the two fighter 'planes.

These tanks and 'planes had already been used to good purpose, for on one occasion a tank had been used to seize Guntha the Crafty, and thus deprived Cedric the Cruel of his most valued general. On another occasion Dorrie had flown into Gothland and had rescued some of the Moor View girls by 'plane, after they had been tricked by Cedric's spies.

The boys, however, hardly gave these modern war machines a glance. They were well accustomed to them, and, in any case, they were far more interested in the quaint, old-time atmosphere of Northestria.

There was no danger in this part of the country from the Gothland invaders. They had been cleared right out of this district, the Northestrians being in full command. There was a fairly good road between the coast and Ixwell—good, that is, judged by the standards of this picturesque land. Actually, it was narrow and exceedingly dusty.

"This giddy walk is a bit thick, you know," grumbled Handforth, as he and the others set out. "It's a pity I didn't bring my Morris Minor; she'd have been invaluable now."

"Don't be lazy," said Nipper. "Walking is the best exercise in the world."

They trudged on, keeping mostly to the grass verge of the road. And when they presently descended into a little dip, and turned a bend in the road, they beheld a native wagon approaching, drawn by oxen. The wagon itself was piled with a great load of hay, and perched on the front were two Northestrian farm-workers.

At sight of the St. Frank's boys, the peasants jumped hastily to the ground and halted the wagon. They stood aside, bowing their heads with deep deference and respect. Throughout Northestria the "Strangers from Beyond the Great Ice" were regarded with awe. Even the boys were looked upon as demi-gods.

"Here's a chance!" grinned Handforth. "We'll try the gramophone on these merchants! I bet they'll have a fit!"

"Better warn them in advance," murmured Church.

"Not likely! I want to see the effect," said Handforth.

He halted as he drew level with the men, and he nodded cheerfully.

"Hail, good comrades!" he said boisterously. "Forsooth, art in a mood for tarrying for a couple of ticks?"

"Greetings, young lords," said one of the men falteringly. "Did we but know of your coming, we would not have obstructed the road."

"That's all right," said Nipper, with a smile. "Plenty of room for us to get by. I wish you good people wouldn't be so jolly scared of us. There's no need to kowtow."

The Northestrians scarcely understood; they certainly had no knowledge of the modern schoolboy slang.

"Leave this to me, you chaps," said Handforth, as he set down his gramophone on the roadway, and opened it. "Now, good brothers, what thinkest ye of this? Marry, but I'll bet a quid thou art mightily surprised."

Handforth, unlike the other fellows, insisted upon talking what he fondly believed to be the "native lingo." As a rule he got himself hopelessly mixed up, much to the amusement of his chums.

"Behold!" continued Handforth, striking an attitude, and pointing dramatically at the gramophone. "Here, within this small, leather-covered box, there is hidden a man. Dost believe me, knaves?"

"Thou are surely joking, my lord," said one of the peasants.

"I jokest not, my lad," replied Handforth. "At least, not in the way you mean. Wilt believe me if thou hearest the voice of the man cometh from the box? 'Tis plain to see that no ordinary man could squash himself into such a limited space. Yet the voice will prove! Behold!"

He had slipped on a talking record—a dramatic monologue entitled, "The Green Eye of the Little Yellow God." It was quite a well-known thing, and an excellent record, particularly for the purpose in hand.

For no sooner had Handforth started the gramophone than the deep, impressive voice of the artist rolled forth. Handforth and the other boys stood by, listening amusedly, and watching the two Northestrian peasants.

They had expected something funny, for, as yet, a gramophone had never been heard in Northestria. But the actual result was startling. The two men actually turned pale, and their eyes rolled with fear. They seemed to be transfixed to the ground with sudden terror.

"Well?" asked Handforth triumphantly. "Wasn't I right? Didn't I tell you that there was a man in that box?"

The sound of the gramophone brought a terrified man popping out of the hay. "Grab him, you chaps!" yelled Nipper. "He's a spy!"



"By my bones!" wailed one of the peasants. "'Tis magic! I am affrighted by this terrible thing!"

He fairly took to his heels and bolted; and the other peasant, no less scared, followed suit. In a moment, they were running down the road, crying aloud in their terror.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Handforth blankly.

"You silly chump!" said Nipper. "We warned you, didn't we? You ought to have explained the thing to them first—and they wouldn't have been so frightened."

"But—but I never imagined they'd get the wind up like this!" said Handforth. "It's only a bit of fun——"

He broke off, for another startling thing happened just then. There was a heaving of the hay, and a wild, dishevelled figure appeared into the open. A face that was eloquent of terror stared at the gramo-

phone; the man's eyes were aflame with apprehension.

"A box that speaketh!" he croaked. "Ay, 'tis magic—black magic!"

He fought free of the hay, tumbled to the ground, and at the same moment Nipper and Travers fell upon him.

"Quick, you chaps!" shouted Nipper. "Lend a hand here! Hold him!"

"But—but what's the idea?" asked Handforth blankly.

"You're not blind, are you, Handy?" snapped Nipper. "This man is no Northeonian! He's a Gothlander!"

CHAPTER 3.

A Record Bluff!

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH jumped.

"A Gothlander!" he ejaculated. "By George!"

He snapped off the gramophone, and a moment later he was helping the other fellows. Nipper's keen eyes had immediately detected the racial difference in the terrified man's features. He was bigger, coarser, than the Northerners. And now, finding himself firmly in the grip of the boys, he partially recovered.

"Mercy, my lords!" he panted. "Spare my life!"

"Don't worry about your life—we're not going to kill you," said Nipper. "But what were you doing, hidden in that hay? You, a Gothlander—and a soldier at that!" he added, as he glanced at the man's clothing. "You're a spy, aren't you?"

"Great pip! A spy!" roared Handforth indignantly.

As he well knew, the Northerner countryside was infested with Gothlander spies. The boys themselves had been on more than one spy hunt, and had met with some success, too. But it was generally felt that most of Cedric's spies had been cleared out by now.

"You ought to be jolly pleased with yourself, Handy," said Church. "This spy would never have been discovered but for your wheeze of starting up that gramophone."

"That's right, too!" said Handforth with a start. "My only hat! Doesn't it just show you how one thing can lead to another? But what a fool the man was to show himself!"

"He was so terrified by the 'voice from the box' that his only desire was to flee," said Nipper.

The man, who had been listening—and partially understanding—was now fraught with a new kind of fear.

"My lords, you are wrong!" he said hoarsely. "I am no Gothlander spy! 'Tis my misfortune that I resemble those dogs from across the lake!"

"Well, you can tell that to Mr. Lee," said Nipper. "We're going to take you into Ixwell, and hand you over to the Guard."

"Nay, not that!" gasped the man, freshly terrified.

His very attitude proved that Nipper's first judgment had been correct. The fellow probably knew that his fate would be death. As a spy, he could expect no mercy.

"Thou art dotty!" said Handforth with a sniff as he looked at the man. "Thinkest thou, ass, that there is really a man in this box? Thou were frightened over nothing, for 'tis only an ordinary gramophone."

He turned it on again, and the Gothlander spy was treated to another spasm of "The Green Eye of the Little Yellow God." He almost crumpled up under the ordeal, all his former panic returning.

"Unhand me!" he screamed. "Let me get away from this devilry!"

He became limp in the hands of his captors, falling to the ground, sobbing, a pitiable wretch.

"Shut it off, Handy," said Nipper quietly. "We thought these people would be a bit surprised—but this is beyond a joke."

Handforth had a sudden idea—and for once it was a good one.

"Wait!" he said impressively.

Letting the gramophone continue, he pulled at the prisoner and forced him back.

"Speak the truth, knave, and the magic box shall be silenced," he said. "Thou are a dirty Gothlander, aren't you?"

"My lord, I but obey orders," faltered the spy.

"What were you doing here—in this part of the country?" asked Handforth sternly. "Why were you hidden in that hay? What was your object, thou scullion?"

The man's eyes were fixed in terror upon the gramophone.

"I beseech thee, my lord, to still the magic tongue of—"

"Speak!" thundered Handforth. "Why were you in the hay-wagon?"

"I was ordered, my lord, to approach the strange vessel upon the lake," gasped the spy. "I was to keep watch upon it, in the hope of communicating with my lord Guntha. 'Tis King Cedric's desire to effect the rescue of my lord Guntha!"

Handforth stopped the gramophone, and he looked triumphantly at the other fellows.

"There you are!" he said. "A confession! Not a bad wheeze for forcing it out of him, eh?"

"Yes, Handy, it was a good idea," said Nipper. "There's no doubt about the man now. He has told us all we want to know. Anybody got any string or rope? We'll tie him up and take him along."

THE council of war was over when the boys reached Ixwell Castle.

They had caused quite a sensation in going through the town. The people had soon known that the stranger youths had captured a Gothlander spy, and the boys had had some difficulty in forcing their way through the crowd, for the Northerners had attempted to capture the Gothlander as

he passed. Feeling ran high in Ixwell, and the hatred against King Cedric and his hordes was overwhelming.

Nelson Lee was pleased when he heard the boys' report. The prisoner was taken without delay to the dungeons, and later Nelson Lee questioned him. With the fear of death in his heart, the man was a craven wretch, and he freely told all he knew.

He had been sent into the Northestrian territory on this special mission, and by skulking about in woods he had at last seized the opportunity of hiding himself in that wagon of hay. His object had been to get near the coast, where he could closely watch the Pioneer.

His orders were to make careful observations, and then to get back into the Gothlander country and report. It was general talk among the Gothlanders that Cedric was thinking of making a bold attempt to raid the submarine and seize the captive commander-in-chief. Quite a large number of men had been picked, and were ready to perform this special service.

"You have done very well, boys," said Lee approvingly, when he told the fellows of what had transpired. "The capture of this spy is important."

"I hope I get a reward, sir," said Handforth eagerly. "Don't forget that I collared the man, really."

"Rats!" said Tommy Watson. "It was only that gramophone record that made the fellow show himself. You can't claim any credit, Handy."

"Well, I think I deserve a reward," said Handforth. "I don't want much, sir. I only ask permission to help in this battle against Dunstane."

"Oh, is that all?" asked Lee drily. "Well, Handforth, I am very much afraid that there's nothing doing. For one thing, this is not our fight, and for another, your father might have some very awkward questions to ask me if I returned to England without you."

"They couldn't kill me, sir!" said Handforth scornfully.

"Well, they won't get the chance—because you are certainly not going into that battle," replied Nelson Lee. "Try to think of some other reward, young man. I am glad this spy has been captured, because we now know that Cedric is becoming daring. And that's another way of saying that he is desperate."

He suddenly became thoughtful, and Handforth grunted with disappointment.

"It might be quite a good idea to remove Guntha from the submarine," continued Lee slowly. "Yes, we could bring him back to Ixwell Castle. He would be

much more secure in the dungeons—for this castle is well-nigh impregnable."

LATER, during a meal, Nelson Lee congratulated the boys once again on their smartness.

"Dorrie and I have been having a discussion, you fellows," said Lee. "We have talked with some of the Northestrian generals, too, and we have come to the conclusion that it will be as well to have Guntha removed from the submarine and brought here to the castle."

"Is it really necessary, gov'nor?" asked Nipper, in some surprise. "The Gothlanders could never hope to raid the Pioneer!"

"They might," replied Lee slowly. "The Pioneer, you must remember, has only a skeleton crew aboard. Many of the officers and men are with us here, helping in the general preparations for attack. A sudden swoop by hundreds of Gothlanders—with perhaps several galleys—might easily succeed. In any case, I don't see why the Pioneer should be subjected to any such attack. So Guntha is to be brought to Ixwell to-morrow."

The meal continued, the boys quite interested. It was enjoyable at this great, solid table, partaking of the simple but wholesome foods of the country, and attended by the well-trained serving-men.

One of these serving-men, now engaged in cutting meats at a great sideboard, was listening intently—and striving, at the same time, to hide the excitement which gleamed in his eyes.

"Yes," continued Lee, "our friend Guntha is to be brought to Ixwell under guard to-morrow. Once he is placed in the dungeons, he will be safe enough. The Gothlanders will never rescue him—and so much the better. Guntha is a clever man—a crafty soldier. Cedric misses him sadly, I suspect."

The talk went on, and the boys themselves kept up the discussion for some time. They were all pleased at the outcome of that gramophone stunt. Handforth had merely brought the machine ashore as a kind of joke, never dreaming that anything really valuable would come of it.

Presently the serving-man who had been at the sideboard sought an excuse to leave the apartment; he carried a laden tray of soiled dishes. Thus he made his way to the kitchens of the castle.

He was a lean, middle-aged fellow, and one of the best servants in the castle. But his activities now were somewhat peculiar.

Instead of going back to the dining-hall he sought out a disreputable-looking

scullion who, attired in a leather apron, was engaged in cleaning a pile of pots and pans.

For some minutes the serving-man engaged the scullion in close, whispered conversation. Excitement showed in the scullion's eyes as he listened.

"So go thou, Odo, and do as I bid thee," murmured the serving-man. "'Tis a matter that will brook of no delay."

The scullion went. It was easy enough for him to get out of the castle. By devious methods he reached the town, and very soon he was passing down a narrow, dingy alley. Presently he entered a low doorway.

The place was apparently the establishment of a cobbler, and Odo sought out this cobbler, took him into an inner room, and talked earnestly. Having done this, he returned to the castle. And the cobbler made haste out of Ixwell.

There could be only one meaning of all this hole-and-corner work. Spies were active!

And that valuable information concerning Guntha the Crafty's removal from the submarine to Ixwell was being passed on from spy to spy!

CHAPTER 4.

The News from Ixwell!

CEDRIC THE CRUEL, in Dunstane Castle, stood at a window, looking out upon the wide moat and courtyard. He could see half across the flourishing town—this great town which was the capital of Northestria.

In the courtyard soldiers were drilling, and in the streets beyond other soldiers were patrolling. From end to end of Dunstane, the place was a veritable hive of activity.

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But Cedric did not seem in any way pleased. He was a big brute of a man, and his heavily-bearded face was distorted with a sullen, burning rage.

"Preparations — preparations!" he said, with an impatient wave of his great arms. "By my marrow and bones! Of what use these preparations against the thousands of inflamed Northestrians? I vow I am sorely tried!"

He turned and glowered upon the nobles and overlords who attended him. For days they had jumped at his word, fearful lest they should be sacrificed in his rage.

For Cedric, as supreme King of Northestria and Gothland, was the lord of life and death. One word from him was enough to send a man to the block. And in his present state he was ready enough to have any man's head chopped off.

For, truth to tell, King Cedric was at his wits' end.

He knew that the rebels—the loyal Northestrians—were preparing for an immense attack upon the city of Dunstane. They were massing in their thousands all along the line, not very many miles from the capital.

Town after town had fallen, village after village had been cleared of the Gothlander defenders. The loyalists were advancing continuously, and the more they advanced, the greater became their enthusiasm for the mighty battle of Dunstane which would decide the issue.

"Well, Attawulf, hast thou any good news?" demanded Cedric mockingly, as one of his nobles approached. "A murrain upon ye! Thou bringest me naught but ill, evil tidings! Another town hath fallen into the enemy's hands, eh? Speak, and let me know the worst!"

Attawulf the Terrible, one of Cedric's chief advisers, shook his head.

"Thou art surely beset with ill-conceived fears, sire," he said, with some dignity. "The news that cometh into the castle is, indeed, grave. Yet we have naught to fear. The Northestrian vermin can never take Dunstane!"

"Can they not?" retorted the King savagely. "By the bones of Calwold! Thou are confident, my friend!"

"With reason, sire," replied Attawulf. "Redwold is even now seeing to it that the city defences are made secure. Rodolf the Mighty is massing his men outside the city, so that in the event of an attack they will take the first brunt of the blow."

"And when will this battle develop, think ye?" asked the King, almost eagerly. "I am fraught with fears, Attawulf! I can neither sleep nor eat. Since the coming of these strangers into this land there hath been no peace. All Northestria is rising and defying my rule!"

"Yet, sire, when they have been beaten in this battle of Dunstane they will lose their fire," replied Attawulf. "'Twill be the end of the rising, and thou wilt once again reign supreme."

The King grunted.

"Ay, I could believe that were Guntha here," he growled. "Guntha the Crafty! A fitting name, forsooth! For of all my generals, Guntha is verily the craftiest. And he lieth a prisoner in the hands of these stranger dogs! I'faith, Attawulf, I would give my right hand for the return of Guntha!"

Attawulf was silent. He knew well enough that the loss of the Gothlander commander-in-chief had more or less demoralised the entire Gothlander forces. And his return would have almost precisely the opposite effect. He would put heart into the soldiers, he would instil them with confidence.

But of what use to talk? How was it possible for Guntha to be rescued? It was well known that he was imprisoned aboard the queer craft which rested on the lake. A strange craft indeed—a vessel that could sink under the surface of the water, and yet come to no harm! How could any of Cedric's galleys attack such a craft and hope to succeed?

"To-day, sire, I made a round of the city walls," said Attawulf, striving to get the King into a better humour. "I marvel at the work that hath been accomplished. 'Tis impossible, I tell ye, for the Northestrians to win this battle. Dunstane will remain firm. Were there ten times the number of rebels, never could they take the city!"

The King grunted again. He was somewhat reassured. Like all bullies and tyrants, he was at heart a weak man; his ravings and stormings were so much "hot air." Like a weakling, too, he preferred to skulk in the security of his castle, letting others do all the work. This attitude of his, in fact, was being talked of throughout the Gothlander forces, and his own men were losing faith in him.

If Guntha the Crafty were back, however, Guntha would be the first to go amongst the soldiers, to hearten them and to instil them with fire for the coming battle.

"I will tell ye, sire, that when the Northestrians attack our walls they will meet with many wondrous surprises," said Attawulf gloatingly. "Ay, we have some tricks ready for them! Redwold is a man of resource, and he hath developed many ideas which have even surprised me. 'Twould do ye good, sire, to go out and to see with thine own eyes what hath been accomplished."

"Nay, I remain here," grunted King Cedric. "I have no stomach for venturing abroad."

"And yet 'tis an ill policy," urged Attawulf. "The men are beginning to wonder —"

"How now?" thundered Cedric, flying into one of his rages. "Who are the men to question the movements of their King? And thou, Attawulf! Think ye that thou canst speak like this to me? Am I not thy King?"

"Indeed, sire, I meant not offence," protested the overlord, with dignity.

"Yet thou wert offensive!" retorted the King. "I please myself, Attawulf, what I

do. I stay in the castle, and I think. Do ye hear? I think! And, ere long, I shall arrive at some solution to this plaguey problem. How to secure the return of Guntha!"

The thought troubled him.

Not so long ago he had captured four of the Moor View girls, and at that time Princess Mercia, seconded by Nelson Lee, had offered to return Guntha the Crafty in exchange for the girls. Cedric had contemptuously refused—and then the girls had been rescued by Lord Dorrimore. What a chance he had missed! The thought enraged him afresh.

"Am I so poor, then, that I have no men to advise me?" he shouted, with sudden unreasoning fury. "Pah! What good are ye?" he went on, turning upon the nobles. "Ye live in my castle, ye eat my meat and bread, and ye share my wealth. And what return do ye give? Naught!"

And thus he raved on, almost like a madman. It was fortunate, indeed, that a visitor was announced—a hot, dusty man, attired as a peasant.

This man was Bafra, the chief spy, under Cedric's orders, of the Ixwell district. He was a Northestrian, a traitor, a wretch who had sold his soul for gain. And post haste he had ridden hard for the capital with great news. In fact, so important was his news that he had been brought straight into the King's presence. The King turned upon him, glaring.

"Well?" he snarled. "Thy news had better be of great import, rat, or thou wilt go to the headsman! I am in no mood for trifles!"

Bafra was startled; he had expected rather a different reception.

"But, noble sire, I have news of wondrous value!" he protested. "'Tis news which concerns the great commander, Guntha the Crafty."

"What!" shouted Cedric. "Ho! Come ye here, knave! Thou hast news of Guntha, say ye? Out with it, then!"

Bafra, trembling, gave his information.

"It seemeth, sire, that one of our spies was captured by some of the stranger youths," he said eagerly. "And because of that Guntha is to be removed from the strange ship on the morrow. He is to be brought to Ixwell, there to be thrust down into the dungeons."

"And thou callest this good news?" snarled the King. "Dog! Thy head shall be removed——"

"But, sire," gasped the unhappy spy, "think ye what this means! 'Tis a chance to make a desperate effort to rescue Guntha from the hands of these strangers! Guntha is to be brought ashore, and thence taken by road to Ixwell. I have men ready, and if Guntha can be seized during that brief journey——"

"The man speaketh truly, sire," put in Attawulf quickly. "Canst not see the possibilities? While Guntha remained aboard that craft we were helpless, but now he is to be brought into the open, and taken on

this short journey. 'Tis our opportunity."

The King took a deep breath.

"Perchance thou art right, Attawulf," he said, his eyes gleaming. "By my bones! Can we but save Guntha, and victory will be certain! For the return of Guntha will mean the absolute triumph of my forces!"

His whole attitude changed, and now he bestowed an almost kindly gaze upon Bafra.

"Heed not my tempers, fellow," he said. "I vow I am not myself these days. Thou shalt be richly rewarded for what thou hast done."

"A thousand thanks, sire!" murmured the spy.

"But thy work is not yet accomplished," continued the King. "There is much to be done. Let me hear this information once again. Let me know exactly how matters do stand. Then will we take measures."

— —

CHAPTER 5.

The Ambush!

GUNTHA THE CRAFTY was an awkward prisoner.

Ever since he had been imprisoned in one of the lower cabins of the Pioneer he had caused trouble. He had objected to his food, he had cursed at his gaolers, and he had generally made himself as disagreeable as possible.

Guntha was a big man—as big as Cedric himself—and not unlike him in appearance, for he had the same kind of bristling black beard. But whereas King Cedric was only confident in victory, Guntha was a man of infinite courage and resource. He was, in all truth, the power behind the throne.

There was quite a little ceremony aboard the submarine the next afternoon.

Members of the officers and crew were lined up, and Lord Dorrimore personally escorted Guntha the Crafty on deck. Guntha was looking suspicious and rather bewildered. Dorrie had said nothing to him, and had no intention of giving any explanations.

"What is toward?" asked Guntha, as he saw the men lined up on the deck and the launch waiting handy by the vessel's side.

"You'll see soon enough, my friend," replied Dorrie easily. "In fact, you ought to know what's toward. Kindly lower yourself into that launch."

"I'faith, I suspect treachery here!" muttered Guntha into his beard.

Lord Dorrimore took no notice. Guntha, well guarded, was escorted down into the waiting boat and swiftly taken ashore. Here twenty-four Northestrian mounted soldiers were waiting, and there were empty horses for Dorrie and Guntha. The Gothlander commander-in-chief was bidden to mount. He did so sullenly.

"Whither art taking me, stranger?" he demanded, looking at Dorrie with glowering eyes, his great bushy brows raised in disdain.

"Come on!" said Dorrie. "No questions."

Guntha mounted his horse, and at a word from Dorrie the little cavalcade started off. A dozen men rode in advance, then came Dorrie and the prisoner, and another dozen men followed.

The road to Ixwell was fairly open, but there was one spot where it wound its way down into a small gully, on both sides of which grew dense trees. And here it was that the surprise came.

Although Lord Dorrimore was obviously unsuspecting of any ambush, he nevertheless kept his hand very near to his revolver—more by instinct than anything else. And when a crowd of roughly-attired peasants suddenly sprang out of the trees on either side of the road, his hand gripped the gun tightly and his finger hovered on the trigger.

There were scores of these peasants, and it was significant that they were armed with swords. They sprang out in front of the Northestrian guards, they swarmed on either flank, and everything was confusion.

"Gothlanders!" went up a startled shout.

"Great Scott!" yelled Lord Dorrimore.

"Steady, men! It's a trap!"

The Northestrians, completely taken by surprise, were thrown into hopeless confusion. Their horses reared, and many of the animals bolted in all directions.

Even Lord Dorrimore's own horse galloped madly away, and all Dorrie's efforts to pull the animal up were futile. Dorrie saw that the armed peasants were making an attempt to surround Guntha the Crafty.

"Look out!" yelled his lordship. "They're after Guntha! Don't let them get him! Swing round, men!"

He loosed off his own gun, but in his haste the bullets went wide. He could see now that the attackers were, indeed, disguised Gothlanders, and their object was obvious.

Fighting, it seemed, was the last thing they desired. They swarmed round Guntha the Crafty, and when at last Dorrie got his horse under control he noted that there were fully four score of them.

The very strength of the force rendered it successful. The Northestrians, in spite of Lord Dorrimore's urgent shouts, were so bewildered and scared that they were galloping in all directions. The escort was shattered. And Guntha the Crafty, the valuable prisoner, was left practically in the midst of the raiders.

Guntha himself, looking utterly amazed and dazed, was allowed no time to speak or ask for explanations. He was seized by a motley crowd of the Gothlanders and rushed helter-skelter into the wood.

"By my bones!" he gasped. "What manner of madness is this?"

"My lord, we take you from the Northestrians!" panted one of his rescuers. "Hasten, we beseech thee!"

"I'faith, I think I understand!" said Guntha breathlessly.

He allowed himself to be carried on, and he could hear the confused shouts and noises of the conflict on the road. So great

had been the surprise that the Northestrian guard had not yet recovered itself, and Lord Dorrimore alone could do nothing against this overwhelmingly superior force.

Guntha, rushed through the belt of trees, found a large number of saddled horses ready, waiting in a neighbouring hollow. He leapt upon one of them without any bidding. His rescuers followed, and a full score of them went dashing off, Guntha in their midst.

"Heed not the fate of the others, my lord," said one of the riders nearest him. "By St. Attalus, we have rescued thee! All dependeth now upon speed!"

The dumbfounded Guntha, understanding, rode hard.

"A smart piece of work, by my soul!" said the Gothlander commander-in-chief. "I vow, I knew not what it could all mean! Is't possible that we can win clear of these accursed Northestrians?"

"All is arranged, my lord," replied the man who was riding next to him—clearly an officer. "Do thou ride in our midst, and all will be well. Our other men are purposely tarrying, their object being to gallop off in a different direction, thus laying a false trail."

"A marvel of strategy, in very sooth!" muttered Guntha, his eyes gleaming with excitement. "I can scarce believe that the bold move will succeed!"

They were still riding hard, and by now they had won clear of the narrow valley and were galloping hard across fair meadowlands. Cunningly, the leaders led the way into a belt of woodland, and, skirting this, they went deep into another valley. Thus, by taking a long, circuitous detour, they planned to defeat any pursuit.

Towns and villages were avoided, and only a few gaping countryfolk were encountered. In this way, by riding hard towards the rougher country, the rescue was rendered successful.

"Fools!" gloated the Gothlander officer, who rode beside Guntha. "Are ye not amazed, my lord, that those dogs of Northestrians should not have provided thee with a stronger escort?"

"They had no reason to fear that an attack would be made," said Guntha. "The poor vermin believed that all was safe with them."

"Methinks they believe differently now, my lord," gloated the officer. "We are well clear of pursuit, and by hard riding we will ultimately gain a strip of territory which is held by our own men-at-arms. Thence, to Dunstane, the journey will be free from peril."

"Dunstane!" echoed Guntha. "I'faith! Say ye that we are for Dunstane?"

"Aye, my lord!"

"Then ye have done well, indeed!" growled the Gothlander commander-in-chief. "Oh-ho! 'Twas an ill plan, methinks, to remove me from the vessel on the lake."

"'Twas our chance to wrest ye from the Northestrian dogs, my lord," replied the

officer. "Ere long we will be in the midst of our own soldiers. 'Twill mean hard riding, but that, to a man of thy determination, will be as naught."

"Truly spoken, good friend," shouted Guntha, with a great roar of laughter. "On—on! I vow I am impatient to meet King Cedric!"

THE coup had been all the more satisfactory in the eyes of the Gothlanders because of the ease with which it had been accomplished. Bafra, the spy, in making his arrangements had fully expected that a dozen or a score of men would fall to the swords and lances of the Northeistriars.

Yet not one man was even wounded! The completeness of the surprise had so disorganised Guntha's escort that the raiders had virtually walked off with him.

It was hardly possible to blame Lord Dorrimore. With the escort scattered, and with his own horse badly frightened, Dorrie had been helpless.

And thus the great Guntha had gained his freedom.

Fresh horses and a new escort waited back in the Northeistriar hills, for this part of the country was still strongly held by the invaders. There was no need for subterfuge now. All danger of pursuit and recapture was over.

Guntha found a glittering cavalcade of his own picked men waiting, stalwart fellows in chainmail and armour. A brave, stirring picture to a man who had been for so long inactive.

"Hail, Guntha!" went up the great cry, and all the men raised their swords in salute.

"I'faith! I thought not to join ye so soon, good men!" laughed Guntha. "Who are these fools of Northeistriars who play at being soldiers?"

"Ay, my lord, thou art surely right," said the officer of the escort. "They are such pitiful soldiers that they cannot even hold their prisoners!"

Only a brief halt was made for refreshments, and then the brave cavalcade started for Dunstane. These soldiers were not men of Guntha's own bodyguard, but that mattered little. Guntha himself, of course, was a powerful overlord, and he had his own army. Indeed, but for his continued support during the invasion of Northeistria, Cedric could never have prevailed.

It was a triumphant ride.

Through towns and villages galloped the great general and his escort, and everywhere the acclamations were wild and enthusiastic. Like magic the word had gone on in advance—"Guntha is free! Guntha comes!"

The flagging spirits of the Gothlander soldiers were revived. The return of Guntha was hailed as the turning point in the whole campaign.

And so at last into Dunstane itself.

Cheering crowds of soldiers lined the streets. Guntha's return was a veritable

triumph. The cavalcade could hardly make its way through to the centre of the town owing to the enthusiasm of the soldiery. And the people—the Northeistriars—stood by, watching fearfully, helplessly. They regarded the return of Guntha the Crafty as a terrible disaster.

The castle was reached, and riding in front of his escort Guntha thundered over the drawbridge, and so on into the wide courtyard. Here, standing upon a great flight of steps, Cedric the Cruel himself was waiting.

CHAPTER 6.

On the Battlements!

"BY my bones, 'tis a glad day, this!" exclaimed the King gloatingly.

He and Guntha the Crafty were face to face. And whereas Cedric was hot and flushed with excitement, Guntha remained cool. It was just the difference between the two men.

"I return, sire, at an opportune moment, it seemeth," said Guntha. "I know not whom I have to thank for the wondrous thing that hath happened."

"Do ye not?" shouted the King. "What of thanking me, my good Guntha? 'Twas I who schemed this plan, and thus ensured your return."

So triumphant and arrogant was the King that he did really believe it was he who had organised Guntha's rescue. And there was none, of course, who dared to contradict or correct him.

Amid tumultuous scenes of joy and excitement Guntha the Crafty was escorted into Dunstane Castle by the King. And round about hovered Attawulf the Terrible, Redwold the Ruthless, and other overlords and nobles. The rescue of Guntha and his return to Dunstane was an occasion for general rejoicing.

"Come, good Guntha, a rich feast is prepared for thee," said Cedric jovially. "I knew of your coming some hours past, for special couriers rode hard into Dunstane with the great news. So come, my good friend. Let us eat and drink!"

"With your Majesty's permission, I would prefer to confer with my generals," said Guntha, almost contemptuously.

Cedric lost some of his gaiety.

"Faugh! Time for that later!" he protested. "'Tis an occasion for feasting—"

"Yet, sire, with your permisison I would prefer to confer with my generals first and feast later," insisted Guntha in that cold, decisive way which was so well known to his soldiers. "Perchance thou hast forgotten that I have been incarcerated aboard that strange craft for many days. I know naught of what is happening here, except, indeed, that the Northeistriars are preparing to attack the city."

"Let them attack!" sneered King Cedric. "Now that thou hast returned, Guntha, I

can snap my fingers at these dogs of Northestrians!"

Guntha smiled rather grimly.

"I am honoured, sire, by thy faith in me," he said. "But, knowing that Dunstane is in danger, that thou art in danger, I must acquaint myself with the measures which are being taken for the defence of the city. By St. Attalus, could I eat with any appetite else?"

"Always t h e soldier, good Guntha," laughed the King. "Do thou confer with thy generals, t h e n . Thou shalt have thy way. As my commander-in-chief, thy word is as powerful as mine own."

And instead of going into the banquetting-hall to partake of the royal feast which Cedric had prepared, Guntha retired into one of the smaller apartments of the castle, and here he received the reports of Redwold the Ruthless, Rodolf the Mighty, and other Gothlander generals.

It was a peculiar council meeting in its way.

For Cedric was boastful and arrogant, his loud voice and his raucous laugh dominating all. In direct contrast, Guntha was cool and even cautious. He heard the various reports, but he was not entirely satisfied.

"I must needs go round the city, examining the defences and seeing with mine own eyes what hath been accomplished," he said, at length. "Thou, Redwold, wilt provide me with the necessary escort."

"But, good Guntha, the feast, the feast —" began the King.

"The feast, sire, can wait," said Guntha coldly.

"Ay, and so can this business of thine!" retorted the King. "Why, man, art alarmed? Think ye that the rebel vermin can menace Dunstane?"

Guntha looked at the King steadily.

"'Tis ill, sire, to regard these Northestrians as vermin," he said. "I will grant that confidence is necessary if we are to prevail. But



Armed peasants sprang from hiding into the roadway. Lord Dorrimore and the soldiers had been ambushed.

over-confidence is like to lead to disaster. The Northestrian rebels are in great force, they are led by determined men, and they are fired by a spirit which is the spirit to conquer. Ay, and the rebels are massing in vast numbers, they are preparing to hurl themselves upon Dunstane. In all truth, sire, this is no time for feasting and rejoicing. I desire to be escorted round the city walls, so that I may acquaint myself with the inner secrets of the defences that Redwold hath prepared."

"By my soul!" growled the King. "Thou art a worker, Guntha!"

"Let me, first, go upon the battlements," continued Guntha. "I would be alone, sire—so that I may view the city and turn over various plans that are in my mind. I seek not feasting, but solitude. Later, I go on this round of the city, so I desire the escort to be made ready."

Guntha had his way. Neither Cedric nor the others could understand why Guntha

desired to go upon the battlements in solitude; but since Guntha desired this, he was permitted to indulge his whim.

Once upon the lofty battlements of the great castle, he dismissed his attendants. He walked round, staring abstractedly into the distance, gazing over the roof-tops to the great city walls.

From here, the highest point in Dunstane, he could obtain a bird's-eye view of the entire city. And he was impressed by the feverish activities which were visible on every hand.

However, Guntha the Crafty now proceeded to act in a somewhat peculiar manner.

Having assured himself that he was absolutely alone—having walked to the far extremity of the battlements, where none could see, and none could hear—he unfastened his great doublet. From within he drew forth a most curious piece of mechanism. His first task was to slip some tiny earphones over his head and to cover them quickly with his hair. In front of him, connected with wires to the earphones, was a smallish metal box, with dials and knobs. Guntha proceeded to turn these knobs gently, cautiously.

And soon a voice sounded in the earphones. Guntha had just consulted a gold watch—a curious feature in itself—noting the exact time. He bent his head, so that his mouth came near to the little microphone in the centre of the instrument.

"Hallo!" he murmured. "That you, Dorrie?"

"Gad!" came a clear voice in the earphones. "I can't believe it, Lee! Is it really you? Is this wireless actually working?"

"Didn't you expect it to work?"

"Well, Manners said that it was a cert within a twenty-mile range, but I found it hard to credit," came Lord Dorrimore's eager voice. "It's absolutely uncanny! I tuned in at the exact minute we arranged, and I'm hanged if your voice didn't come through almost at once!"

"Merely a matter of pre-arrangement, Dorrie," said Guntha the Crafty coolly. "Luckily, I was able to tune in at the appointed minute. Now, listen to me, old man; I've lots to tell you."

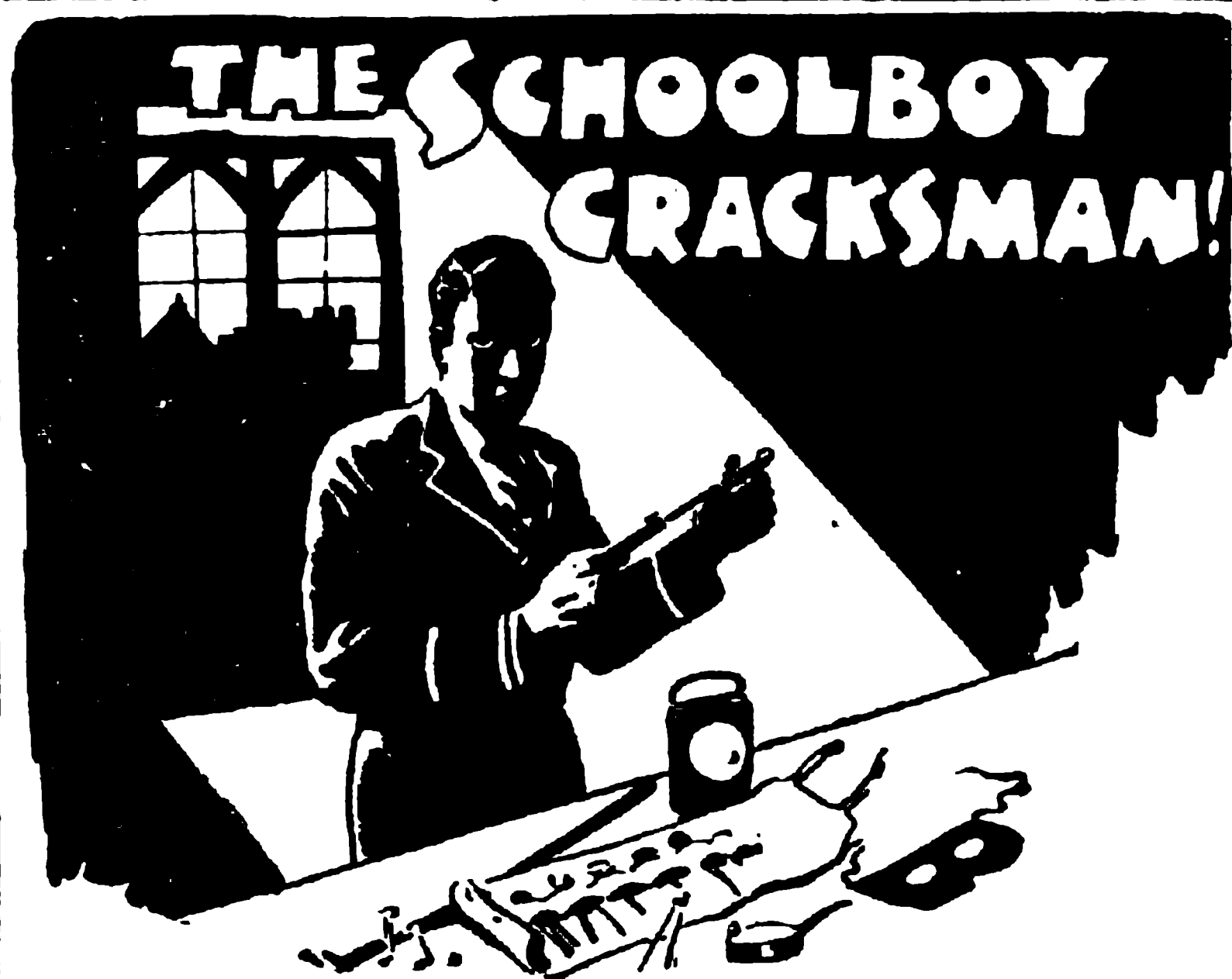
G UNTHA THE CRAFTY?

Yes, Guntha the Crafty in looks, in bearing, in voice—but actually Nelson Lee in disguise!

The famous detective, a master of impersonation, had achieved one of his greatest triumphs. As tall as Guntha, but much slimmer, he had made up the deficiency by skilful padding. His facial make-up was a triumph; for hours he had sat opposite the glowering, restless Guntha, converting himself into the Gothlander's double.

The whole thing had been deliberately, skilfully planned.

And all because of a chance glance which Nelson Lee's quick eyes had detected. When



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the St. Frank's fellows had brought that spy into Ixwell—the man who had leapt from the load of hay—Lee had happened to detect a quick glance of recognition between the spy and one of the Court servants. Thereafter, Lee had taken much interest in that servant.

He had purposely spoken of his plans regarding Guntha's removal at the meal-time, knowing that the servant was listening. There never had been any plan to remove Guntha from the Pioneer; it was merely a dodge to deceive the enemy.

The Court servant, a spy, had passed the news on, as Lee had supposed. Lord Dorrimore, in charge of the escort, had purposely allowed his horse to get the better of him; the escort, in just the same way, had pretended to gallop away in confusion. Everything, in fact, had been made easy for the Gothlanders to rescue their supposed commander-in-chief.

All the Gothlanders imagined that the Northebian escort had been weak and feeble. It had—of a purpose! But it was the Gothlanders who were fooled, for instead of re-capturing Guntha the Crafty they had blindly taken Nelson Lee into their midst. And now Lee, as a master-spy, was in Dunstane itself; would soon know from King Cedric himself the secrets of the city's defence!

“CAN you hear distinctly, Dorrie?” asked Lee, his voice a mere murmur as he spoke into the wireless transmitter.

“I can hear you as plainly as though you were standing beside me.”

“Splendid! I'm standing on the battlements of Dunstane Castle, and I am supposedly taking a look at the city defences,” said Lee. “Everything has gone well, Dorrie. Cedric has greeted me like a long-lost brother, and I have been acclaimed everywhere by the enemy.”

“Gad! I'd love to be with you!” came Lord Dorrimore's envious voice.

“That's impossible, old man; this is a one man job,” replied Nelson Lee. “We are giving the Gothlanders a taste of their own medicine. Their spies have been very busy of late, so it is only right that we should return the compliment. I fancy I shall gain some very valuable information; and as soon as I have learned the exact strength of the city's defence, I will get in touch with you again.”

“You say you're standing on the battlements?” asked Dorrie, over the ether. “Man alive, aren't you taking an awful risk? Supposing you're spotted?”

“I am Guntha the Crafty, and I am a more powerful man, at this moment, than King Cedric himself,” replied Lee smoothly. “If I am seen, or even if I am overheard, it will not matter in the least. I am pacing up and down, with my hands behind my back, my chin bent upon my chest, apparently muttering to myself. Quite a normal thing for a puzzled commander-in-chief to do, Dorrie.”

“You wily old beggar!” came Dorrie's chuckle. “Your chin sunk on your chest, eh? So that you can get your mouth fixed to the microphone? Infernally clever!”

“Listen carefully, Dorrie,” said Lee. “I want you to go along the entire Northebian ‘front line,’ and get in touch with the various generals and commanders. Warn them to be ready for the advance as soon as I give the word. I am now to be escorted round the city walls, and I shall soon be in possession of the exact details of the defence. If there are any weak spots, I shall know of them. Hold yourself ready to receive another message from me at exactly three o'clock.”

“I'll be on the wave-length, waiting for you, at one minute to three,” promised Lord Dorrimore.

“Good man! Then, when I tune in, I shall find you without any delay—and it may be necessary for me to be brief,” said Lee. “If you hear nothing, don't worry. Just keep listening in. Circumstances may compel me to wait until three-fifteen—or even three-thirty. Hang on, Dorrie, and don't worry about me. But I'll try to get the next message through at precisely three o'clock. So good-bye until then.”

“Good-bye, old man—and good luck!”

CHAPTER 7.

The City of Slaves!

NELSON LEE found a noble escort awaiting him when he arrived in the great courtyard. Not only were Attawulf the Terrible and Redwold the Ruthless to attend him on this tour of inspection, but King Cedric himself had decided to go.

The King was in a gay, boisterous mood.

“Come, good Guntha!” he shouted. “A murrain upon thy moods! We await!”

“I crave thy indulgence, sire,” said Lee gravely. “After so long in the hands of the accursed strangers, I scarce know where I am. Dunstane seemeth not the same city, for wondrous activities prevail. I am pleased with all that I have yet seen.”

“Thou wilt be better pleased ere long,” my lord Guntha,” said Redwold, with confidence. “I' faith, thou wilt find that there is but little thou canst do.”

Redwold spoke almost coldly. He had been in charge of the defences of Dunstane, and privately he held the view that Guntha the Crafty could not improve upon the work which was so actively in hand. Redwold was not so pleased at being brusquely thrust aside.

But the return of the supposed Guntha was an event of paramount importance. Without doubt, the moral effect upon the Gothlander rank and file was tremendous. The news had spread like wildfire throughout the city—and beyond, to the other units of Cedric's forces, which were nervous under the menace of a rising populace. The very knowledge

that Guntha had returned put heart and spirit into the men.

For the soldiers knew, as King Cedric knew, that the coming battle would be the vital factor in this struggle. Dunstane was the key to the situation. The fall of the city would inevitably mean the fall of Cedric. Once Dunstane was in the hands of the Northestrian loyalists, the whole country would be theirs. Cedric's cause would be lost, and he and his hordes would be packed off to Gothland.

But Cedric refused to consider this possibility. He was certain of victory—more certain than ever now that Guntha the Crafty had returned. The idea of Dunstane falling was, in the King's view, fantastic.

And, certainly, he had good reason for his confidence. The capital was a walled city with formidable fortifications. North, south, east, and west, Dunstane was protected by enormously-high walls, on the top of which thousands of soldiers could be accommodated. There were only four main gates, and these gates were fortresses in themselves.

Even without any special preparations, Dunstane was protected against the advance of an enemy. But very special measures were now taken. Redwold was a man with ideas.

It was an extraordinary cavalcade which passed over the great drawbridge, out of the castle. Extraordinary, because the man who was being honoured was an impostor, a spy! Nelson Lee had been truly and rightly named "Lee the Lionheart" by the Northestrians!

For only a man of lionhearted courage would have braved the dangers of this unique adventure. Discovery would not mean a prison cell—but swift death. Lee was surrounded by thousands of the enemy, and were they to learn his true identity his end would be inevitable.

But his heart beat no faster than usual as he rode proudly beside Cedric the Cruel. His eyes were restless, taking in every detail of all he saw.

"I' faith, sire, there art many men at work in the city," commented Lee, as he rode forth. "I vow the streets are overcrowded."

"Thou wilt understand, good Guntha, when we reach the walls," said the King. "Northestrian vermin, as thou seest. Slaves, serfs, and the like."

The city was, indeed, a buzzing hive of activity. Very few women and children were to be seen, for they kept within the houses, frightened and nervous.

The streets were given up to soldiers and slaves—mostly slaves. Everywhere were the big, brutal Gothlander men-at-arms. From all parts of Northestria Cedric's troops had poured into the city.

The slaves were unfortunate Northestrians, the majority being harmless citizens of Dunstane—traders, and so forth. They had been augmented by strong, husky peasants from the surrounding countryside. And all

were being used in the feverish strengthening of the city's fortifications.

At times the King's cavalcade found it difficult to proceed, for the roads were blocked by great gangs of men who toiled along, hauling great loads of stone blocks, barks of timber, crude wagons filled with the materials for making mortar.

Nelson Lee was impressed. He had expected to find a good deal of activity, but he was compelled to admit to himself that the Gothlanders were making a stern bid for victory. It would not be easy to storm this city and reduce it to surrender.

There was an even greater surprise for Nelson Lee when he found himself escorted to the outer walls. For the activities in the town itself were as nothing compared with the activities here.

Thousands of men were labouring with that same feverish haste. Inwardly Lee was startled. He could see that great portions of buildings had been demolished, and the materials were being used for the erection of a vast inner wall. Lee could now understand why men were constantly bringing fresh supplies of stone blocks and other building materials. Almost round the entire city this great new wall was nearing completion. The outer borders of Dunstane were completely changed.

"By my soul!" he growled, with a pretence at being impatient. "What now, Redwold? Think ye that one wall is not sufficient?"

Redwold was looking triumphant.

"An inner wall, Guntha, will serve well to keep out the dogs of Northestrians," he replied.

"Ay, and mayhap the two walls will be a hindrance rather than a help," commented Lee. "I vow, Redwold, I see not the reason for this monumental labour. Surely 'tis a vast waste of energy?"

"So it would seem," agreed Redwold. "But when I tell ye the true reason for the measure ye will confess that the expenditure of energy is not wasted. And who are the men who exert their energy so vastly? Northestrian slaves, my lord! What matter if they labour until they die of exhaustion? There are other vermin of the same breed to take their place!"

Lee could see that Redwold the Ruthless resented the return of Guntha. He could also tell that Redwold was reluctant to give away his secrets. But give them away he must, since Lee had come here as a spy. Redwold needed goading.

"Faugh!" exclaimed Lee contemptuously. "I' faith, 'tis time I returned, methinks! Thou speakest of Northestrian vermin, Redwold; but even such vermin need feeding, else their labour is feeble. Think ye that the cost will be justified?"

"Ay, doubly!" retorted Redwold, with a glare. "Thou wilt be serving his Majesty the better, Guntha, if thou leavest the defence of the city to me. Go thou out amongst

(Continued on page 24.)

LINE UP HERE FOR A GOOD LAUGH. LADS!

HANDFORTH'S Weekly



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EDITORIAL STAFF.

MAY 16th, 1931.

THE EDITOR'S CHIN-WAG

Editor-in-Chief E. O. Handforth
Editor E. O. Handforth
Chief Sub-Editor E. O. Handforth
Literary Editor E. O. Handforth
Art Editor E. O. Handforth
Rest of Staff E. O. Handforth

INQUISITIVE INTERVIEWS

No. 3. Archie Glenthorne.

HALLO, everybody!

All bright and sparkling, eh—ready to revel in another wonderful issue of the “WEEKLY”? Actually, you can thank your lucky stars that this number has ever appeared. If that silly idiot, Church, had had his way, the whole of this issue would have gone to feed the flames of our study fire.

I’ve never known such rank carelessness. I was writing this week’s copy on odd scraps of paper—as is the way with us clever authors—when old Churchy grabbed hold of it.

“What’s all this rubbish?” he wanted to know. “How the dickens can I set the table for tea with this tripe littering up the place?”

Tripe! Rubbish! My “WEEKLY” copy. I boiled over with indignation like a giddy geyser, and leaping across the room in the best style of a prize kangaroo, was just in time to prevent Churchy chucking my literary efforts into the fire.

Anyway, I’m positive Church will never be rash enough to repeat the performance. I literally *impressed* upon him the fact that my work comes before his tummy.

BRIEF REPLIES TO READERS.

GEORGE (Sydenham) asks: “Why is it that, although the earth is round and revolves on its axis, people don’t fall off?” The answer, according to Newton, is an apple, not a lemon.

T.P. (Leicester.) I wish you wouldn’t worry me with such potty questions as to why do gates have five bars? Why shouldn’t they have five bars? In any case, if they had twenty, I don’t suppose that would stop you from jumping over them if you were chased by a bull.

“SQUASHY” (King’s Cross) states that my hints are destructive. I guess that’s just a little slip, and that he really means instructive. Thanks for the compliment. On second thoughts, if he does mean destructive I shall proceed to squash “Squashy” very squashily.

(This interview was obtained with difficulty. The interviewer had to shake Archie for ten minutes before the lazy slacker was sufficiently awake to answer any questions.)

Have you a motto?

Forty winks during the day keeps the doctor away. (One yawn.)

Have you an ideal?

A world wearing toppers.

Do you like sport?

In my dreams—yes. (One double-sized yawn.)

How many ties do you possess?

Odds shocks and staggers! I’ve got two dozen shirts, and I always have half a dozen ties to each shirt—work it out and I’ll have a spot of dreamless while you’re doing it. (Snore.)

Hi, wake up, you ass! Where do you keep all your clobber?

Ask Phipps. He keeps a filing index system of everything in my four wardrobes.

What would you do without Phipps?

Get another valet. (More yawns.)

Can you suggest any improvements at St. Frank’s?

There should be a weekly mannequin parade, demonstrating the latest suitings, etc.

What would you like to be when you grow up?

An armchair or settee tester—preferably the latter. (Three yawns lasting three minutes.)

Do you know you’re called the champion slacker of St. Frank’s?

That’s better than being called the champion prize idiot.

Who’s that?

If you don’t know, nobody else does. Now drift away, you human pest, and allow me to have a peaceful forty winks. (Yawns, followed by gurgling snores.)

HANDY'S HINTS—No. 4

How to Keep Fit

Author's Note: The author has studied the subject of keeping fit from A to Z and one to ten, upside down and inside out, so he knows what he's talking about. He offers the following hints by way of an experiment. He hasn't tried them out himself, but he wants readers to do so and then to write telling him the results.

Editor's Note: The editor of the NELSON LEE requests readers not to take the following hints seriously. E. O. Handforth's nonsense has been allowed to appear solely to demonstrate what a complete chump Handy can make himself when he likes.

EARLY to bed and early to rise should be the motto for all would-be Samsons. By early to rise I don't mean getting up at six-thirty. That's the hour for slackers. No. Get up at a sensible hour—say, five o'clock.

Upon leaping out of bed, chuck yourself straight away into a tub of icy-cold water. The idea of this is to bring a

sn'ice glow on the body, and to harden it.

After revelling in the water for half an hour, jump out, dry yourself, and then have a few light exercises, including skipping. I maintain that everybody should skip a thousand times before breakfast every morning. If they did so all doctors would be on the dole.

By the time you have scored your ten centuries with the rope it will be about six o'clock, just a nice time for a run into the country. Don't do too much to start off with—say, ten miles, increasing this to twenty later on.

Returning full of beans, another cold bath is indicated, after which you will indulge in more exercises, including the lifting of ton weights and standing on your head to strengthen the neck muscles.

An hour of this will suffice to make you fit enough to fight an army. Repeat this programme every morning for a few weeks and you'll be as tough as nails and nearly as strong as I am.



TRACKETT GRIM, the famous detective, receives a visit from Knock-kneed Nesbitt, the king of London's underworld. He demands the valuable Bilton jewels, but Grim outwits him, and disguised as the crook, goes to his lair in Limehouse. Nesbitt escapes with the jewels, and Trackett Grim is made a prisoner.

TRACKETT GRIM gnashed his teeth with such fury that it sounded like the roar of surf beating upon shingle. He was jolly upset to think that he, the famous Trackett Grim, had been outwitted by a villainous chump like Knock-kneed Nesbitt. He felt he wanted to kick himself hard in the place meant for kicking, but as he wasn't a contortionist he decided to leave it until some later date.



But how had Nesbitt escaped? When the detective had left him the crook had been bound and gagged

in a cellar, and Splinter, looking like a young armoury, had been outside on guard. Nesbitt himself answered Grim's mental questions.

"You're wondering how I escaped, eh?" he leered, from the edge of the trapdoor. "Well, it was your own boneheaded fault. You don't think, you big sap, that I came to your house unguarded, do you? Outside I had my bodyguard waiting for me in hiding, and I arranged that when I left you I would signal them. You didn't know that—you didn't signal them. They immediately suspected that something was wrong and rescued me. Your idiot of an assistant is now nursing a large-sized bump on his napper, and he's counting the stars in your cellar."

Trackett Grim bowed his head in shame. He had blundered badly. He decided that, contortionist or no,

Out of the chimney soot, shot a strange Splinter

EXCHANGE AND MART

REMARKABLE OFFER. Large stocks of toffee to be disposed of. Would have been the finest toffee in the world, only salt was inadvertently used instead of sugar. It is now put on the market as glue—a wonderful super-glue which makes all other glues like water. What offers?—Fatty Little.

BERNARD FORREST had two hundred cigarettes confiscated by Fenton of the Sixth. He will present a tanner to anyone who retrieves gaspers without Fenton knowing anything about it.

LOST. Valuable "Easy-write" fountain-pen; black, gold nib and pocket clip. The howling thief who has bagged it will be rewarded with two black eyes and a

thick ear from Vivian Travers.

FOR SALE. Valuable "Easy-write" fountain-pen; black, gold nib and pocket clip. Teddy Long will be pleased to receive offers.

NOTEPAPER printed at reasonable prices. "Fine-type" printing outfit used, and nobody with more than four "e's" and three "a's" in his name need apply. Call at the Watson Press, Study C.

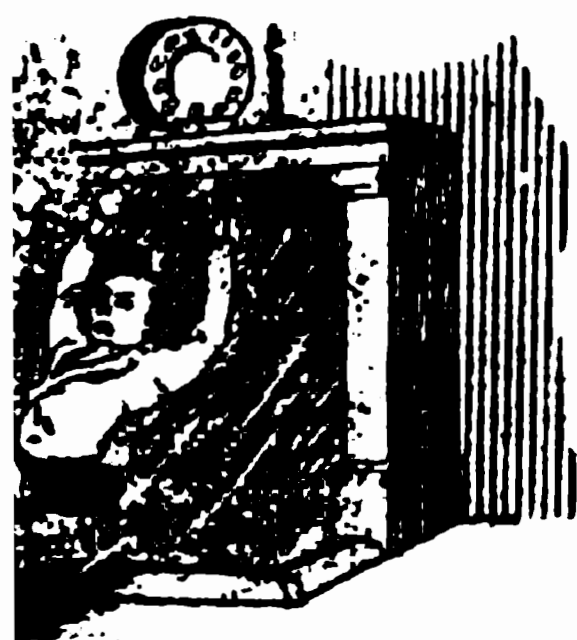
TIMOTHY TUCKER wishes to announce that on Friday evening next at five-thirty he is giving a lecture on "The habits and customs of a green-eyed grasshopper." Admission free; everybody welcome. Stink bombs, ripe tomatoes, bad eggs, etc., strictly taboo.

TRACKETT GRIM—MASTER CRIMINAL!

A super-super detective-thriller story,
Specially written by the world-famous
author, E. O. HANDFORTH.

he would kick himself at once. He proceeded to do so, and got his legs in such a tangle with his body that he came an awful cropper, sat upon the floor with a bump and burst the gas-bomb which he had been carrying in his pocket, and which in the stress of the moment, he had completely forgotten.

A billowing cloud of bluish vapour filled Grim's underground prison, a terrible odour arose. Coughing like an aged horse with asthma, Nesbitt promptly closed the trapdoor, and the detective was left to die. But he didn't die. Powerful as was the gas,



Trackett Grim had a special super gas-proof constitution, and he merely became unconscious.

When he recovered he found himself padlocked to a chair by means of iron bands. He was in a vast chamber, which was filled with hundreds of awful-looking men—the scum of the

underworld, Nesbitt's gangsters—and they were all assembled to watch the torturing of Trackett Grim.

"Ah, the rat's coming to! Now for some fun!"

Through the thick blanket of fog which swirled round Grim's brain, the detective heard Nesbitt's dread words.

The gang-leader was looking terribly vicious. He had caught a whiff of that awful gas-bomb himself, and he had been violently ill as a result. He thrust his ugly dial within an inch of the detective's handsome features.

"Trackett Grim, this is the end for you, you dirty dog. You've tried to mess about with me, and there's nothing doing. You're going to die the death of a thousand tortures. Na Poo, commence the works!"

(Continued at foot of next column.)

CLASS-ROOM CLIPPINGS

SOMEbody asked Johnny Onions to give us a demonstration of his acrobatic powers the other day. Jerry Dodd provided a rope—apparently he always carries one wound round his waist, in case his braces bust, I suppose—and Johnny did his stuff. He tied one end of the rope to the door-handle and the other to the radiator. Then he clambered on it and gave an exhibition of a Zulu war-dance.

Now came the fly in the ointment. The fellow who was supposed to be on guard became so interested in Johnny's antics that he forgot to keep his eyes skinned for trouble, and trouble entered in the person of Mr. Wilkes. Of course, when he opened the door the rope became loose and Johnny crashed into the blackboard, which promptly collapsed on Mr. Wilkes' head. Needless to say, the cane did overtime.

An amusing incident happened yesterday. Mr. Crowell was reading from his grammar book. "Now, boys," he said, "I want you to parse this sentence: 'The

mine exploded with a thunderous detonation.' " At that very moment there was a loud bang. Vivian Travers wasn't at all interested in parsing and he had been passing (excuse pun) the time away by blowing up a football bladder, and the fellow sitting next to him had obligingly stuck a pin in it at the appropriate moment. Unfortunately, Mr. Crowell, who's got about as much sense of humour as a lump of coal, failed to appreciate a grammar lesson with realism, and presented Travers with an imposition.

Have you chaps ever tried to stand on your hands? Then don't, if there are such clumsy beggars as old Churchy watching you. I was showing the class how to do it when the idiot trod on my hand. Of course, I fell over and hit my cranium such a wallop on the floor that a bump as large as a duck's egg came up. Mr. Crowell's caustic remark when he saw it was: "If your bump of knowledge was as large, you might nearly be an intelligent boy."

Na Poo was a hideous-looking Chinaman. He was a giant specimen of repulsiveness, standing six-foot six on his feet, and seven-foot on his toe-nails, which he hadn't cut since he was born.

With a ghastly grin of joy splitting his face in half, Na Poo came forward. Trackett Grim eyed him defiantly, bravely, but within him his heart felt as if it was swinging a ton weight about inside him. He knew what was coming. The torturer was going to tickle his feet with a thin bamboo cane, and Grim was frightfully ticklish about the pedal extremities.

The terrible ordeal began. Na Poo lightly touched Trackett Grim's feet with the cane.

"Tickle, tickle, tickle!"
"Ho, ho, ho! Ho, ho, ho!"
"HO, HO, HO!" guffawed Grim, and so infectious was his

laughter that soon the whole of that vast concourse was laughing till the ceiling trembled and was lifted two inches off the beams. Everybody laughed till they cried tears, and the place was in imminent danger of being flooded when Nesbitt called for a halt and ordered Na Poo to give the audience a change of programme.

And then came a dramatic interruption

Crash! Bang! Wallop!
Out of the chimney, amid a cloud of soot, had appeared a blackened figure.

"Splinter!" yelled Trackett Grim triumphantly.

And following Splinter, all arriving on the scene via the chimney, came dozens and dozens of other figures.

"The cops!" yelled Nesbitt and his gangsters in terror.

(To be concluded.)

"LEE The LIONHEART!"

(Continued on page 29.)

the soldiers, heartening them by thy very presence. Thus, and only thus, can ye serve."

Cedric drew his horse nearer.

"By my bones! Do I hear ye quarrelling?" he asked angrily. "What now, Redwold?"

"It seemeth, sire, that my lord Guntha disapproves of the measures I am taking," replied Redwold bitterly.

"Nay; I merely question their value," said Lee. "For centuries the great wall of Dunstane has served to protect the city. Why, then, this inner wall? 'Tis but a replica of the original, and as far as I can see it serveth no good purpose."

The King laughed.

"'Twas my opinion, too, good Guntha," he said. "But thou hast not credited Redwold with sufficient cunning and strategy. He buildeth not this inner wall as a whim. Tell him, Redwold. Art jealous, man?"

"I am thy servant, sire, and thy wishes are commands," growled Redwold. "If Guntha thinketh that he can do better than I, then I will relinquish my task. Come, Guntha! After thou hast seen what is being done to the outer wall, perchance thou wilt give me the credit which is my due."

He urged his horse on, and soon they were leaving the city by one of the main gates. Soldiers and slaves scurried out of their way. Lee now found Attawulf the Terrible riding next to him, and Attawulf was leaning over his horse.

"Methinks my lord Redwold resenteth thy coming, Guntha," he said, with a chuckle. "He hath a mighty pride in his scheming, and feareth, perchance, that thou wilt pass unfavourable criticism upon it."

"If it is a good scheme, my lord Redwold shall have the full credit," replied Lee. "But if I deem it scatter-brained, as it seemeth to be at the moment, then shall Redwold have the full measure of my tongue!"

They rode out of the great medieval gateway, and now Nelson Lee was vastly interested in the activities which were in progress on the outer side of the city walls.

Upon entering Dunstane, he had noted that there was a great deal of work going on, but he had not understood the meaning of it. Further hordes of Northestrian slaves were labouring here, digging great trenches at the foot of the city wall; but in many places these trenches had been covered in, leaving hardly any trace.

"'Tis a scheme of my own," said Redwold, pointing. "For centuries these great walls have stood, my lord Guntha. The rebels, when they attack, will storm the walls. That, I think is to be taken for granted?"

"Ay, to be sure," nodded Lee gruffly.

"The flower of the Northestrian forces will be hurled at this wall, on every side of the city," continued Redwold, his eyes now gleaming with triumph. "Hundreds, nay,

thousands of men will be engaged in the conflict. And now, Guntha, observe the cunning of my device."

He pointed triumphantly to the filled-in trenches.

"The outer walls of Dunstane are undermined," he said tensely. "When the battle is at its thickest, when the rebels are attacking in their hordes, then will these walls be permitted to collapse."

"By St. Attalus!" ejaculated Lee, startled.

"The walls seemeth as strong as ever—but they are so undermined that the knocking away of a few supports will cause them to collapse outwards," continued Redwold. "Canst thou not see the result, my lord? The rebels, in their thousands, will be caught in the collapse; they will be buried. And what of those who escape? They will find themselves under the devastating menace of our picked archers, who will be waiting, ready, on the newly-erected inner walls. I tell ye, Guntha, that when this attack comes it will be dealt with speedily and effectively. We shall wipe out these Northestrian dogs, and our victory will be such that the rising will collapse."

CHAPTER 8

In the Enemy's Camp!

NELSON LEE was silent for some moments while he gave himself up to rapid thinking.

He was certainly startled.

Redwold's plans for the defence of Dunstane were masterly. Lee had expected to make a few important discoveries, but this one was absolutely vital.

For, with this information in his possession, he could save the Northestrian forces from almost certain annihilation. Forewarned, they could avoid the danger of the collapsing walls.

In those moments Nelson Lee pictured the scene as Redwold imagined it; the grim attack of the loyalists, the storming of the walls—and then the sudden dramatic crashing of the walls. Caught in that unsuspected trap, the unfortunate attackers would be all but wiped out.

"Thou art silent, my lord," said Redwold abruptly.

Lee turned, and found that Redwold was looking anxious and truculent. Lee uttered a deep growl in his throat.

"Ay, my lord Redwold—silent because of the admiration which hath all but bereft me of speech," he replied. "By my marrow and bones! I vow, Redwold, 'tis a mighty scheme!"

"Then 'tis to thy liking?" asked Redwold eagerly.

"'Tis a scheme of which I can say naught but praise," replied Lee. "Had I planned it myself, Redwold, I could not have done better. Thou hast a valiant man in Redwold the Ruthless, sire!" he added, turning to the King. "I vow my return was all but un-

necessary. For what can I do? Redwold hath done all!"

"Ay, I thought, perchance, ye might approve," said King Cedric, nodding.

Redwold was looking a changed man now. Such praise from the mighty Guntha—when he had anticipated criticism—tickled his vanity. All his resentfulness evaporated.

"I am glad, my lord, that all is well," he said contentedly.

"By the soul of Sarus, this will be no battle—but a massacre!" gloated Nelson Lee. "When the Northestrian dogs attack, they will be trapped. In their thousands they will die! And, with such a defeat, their spirit will die; their blood will turn to water. 'Twill be the end of the rising, sire. Once again Northestria will be thine."

The King openly gloated.

"I fear not the Northestrians," he said. "Yet 'tis well to remember these accursed Strangers from Beyond the Great Ice, Guntha. They have wondrous weapons and magical powers."

Lee laughed contemptuously.

"They are but human, and they are a handful," he replied. "Did they succeed in holding me a prisoner, sire? What of their magic? Against the might of Gothland they can do naught!"

It was part of Lee's policy to belittle the "Strangers from Beyond the Great Ice." He desired to put a spirit of over-confidence into the enemy. Thus, when the hour of the great battle came, the task of the Northestrian loyalists would be the lighter. For there is no more certain road to defeat than over-confidence.

NELSON LEE soon became Redwold's greatest friend.

He praised Redwold wholeheartedly, giving his full support to all the measures which Redwold had inaugurated. And in acting like this Lee also gained the approval of King Cedric and Attawulf. They were all mightily pleased at his attitude. For Guntha was the commander-in-chief, and his word was prized.

"All is well," said the King, as the cavalcade rode back into the city. "Thou hast seen, Guntha, and thou art pleased. Let us, then, return to the castle, where the feast awaits."

"I think not of feasting—yet," said Lee shortly.

"Beshrew thee for a knave, Guntha!" retorted the King, with some anger. "Art not satisfied, even yet?"

"More than satisfied, sire," replied Lee. "But I would fain make a complete tour of the city, inspecting the defences on all sides. Thou wilt remember that I have only seen a trifle. I am anxious to know more of good Redwold's brilliant work."

"Then go ye with Redwold," growled the King. "I vow I grow weary, and I am a man hungered, too. Come to the feast, Guntha, and let the defences wait."

But Nelson Lee was firm; he wanted to go round now, and Redwold, of course, was only too willing to escort him. For Redwold was now mightily pleased with the supposed Guntha. He was eager to act as escort.

The King went back to the castle, accompanied by Attawulf. Lee and Redwold continued their tour; and thus, by flattery and praise, Lee obtained every scrap of available information from Redwold.

He asked no direct questions—he was too old a hand at the game for that—but he led Redwold on, and bit by bit learned the facts he most desired to know.

He learned the full strength of the Gothlander forces; exactly how many men were available for battle in Dunstane; how many reinforcements were due to arrive.

He learned that great cauldrons of molten lead were to be placed handily on the top of that inner wall, so that the deadly stuff could be poured down upon the Northestrian attackers if it ever came to a hand-to-hand fight. There was not one detail of the defensive measures which Nelson Lee did not obtain. His visit was a triumphant success.

Lee kept his eye on the time. He had completed his business far earlier than he had expected or hoped, and it yet wanted an hour or so before Lord Dorrimore would again tune in.

Yet, much as Lee desired to hasten out of Dunstane, his movements were leisurely. Every minute he spent here was a minute of peril. He knew quite well that the Gothlanders might easily trip him up on some trifling, unforeseen detail. But his coolness, his air of command, carried him through victoriously.

His general plan was to get in touch with Dorrie again, give him all the necessary information, and then make some excuse to visit the outer defences of the city. And once in the open country, Lee knew that he could trust his own ingenuity to get him away from any possible escort. Then it would be a simple matter for him to cross over into the Northestrian lines, and thus regain his own people.

It wouldn't matter if the Gothlanders discovered the deception after that—for they would be too busily engaged in battle with the rebels. Lee's exit from Dunstane would be the signal for a massed attack upon the capital.

"I'faith, good Redwold, it seemeth that there is naught left for me to do," laughed Lee, as he and Redwold rode back towards the castle. "While I have been held by the enemy strangers, thou hast worked. And, by St. Attalus, thou hast worked to good purpose!"

"I but serve the King," said Redwold modestly.

Lee inwardly smiled. Redwold, like all the other great Gothlander overlords, possessed great lands in Northestria. They had no desire to be kicked out, neck and crop, and sent packing back to their insignificant estates

of Gothland. Redwold, similar to the others, was working for himself.

"Ay, and his Majesty is well pleased with thee, Redwold," was Lee's smooth reply. "And I, too. I'faith, thou hast done so well that I do not intend to interfere. Do thou continue to have full command of the city's defences, Redwold."

Redwold was overwhelmed with delight.

"My lord!" he ejaculated. "Thou art over-generous!"

"Nay, 'tis not my plan to displace a good man when he proveth his worth," replied Lee, with a grandiloquent wave of his hand. "Do thou continue with this excellent work, Redwold."

"And thou, my lord?"

"There is much for me to do, too," replied Lee. "After a brief rest I will venture forth to the outer defences, and there encourage the men with my presence. I have plans of my own, too, good Redwold. Perchance the attack upon the city wall will not be a formidable one. Can we but beat the enemy back in good time, then Dunstane itself will not be in much need of protection."

In this way, by vague hints, Lee gave the impression that he had some great plans of his own in mind; and by leaving Redwold in full charge of the Dunstane defences, Redwold was won over completely.

Nelson Lee returned to the castle; but all his thoughts were for escape. His work was done, but he had yet to get clear.

CHAPTER 9.

Handy's Blunder!

IN Ixwell all was peace.

For many days now the town had teemed with the eager volunteers who came pouring in from all parts of the land. Round and about Ixwell they had been trained, and consequently the town had been in a fever of noise and activity without cessation.

The Princess Mercia held her Court here, too; the castle was being constantly visited by Northestrian lords and ladies, who came to pay their respects to the young princess.

But now everything had changed.

Ixwell had once more become the quiet, sleepy country town of yore. No longer did soldiers ride or march through the picturesque square. For, with the driving back of the Gothlanders, the "front" had been advanced for some miles. The feverish activities which had characterised Ixwell were now being enacted in Yeldham, Lidgate and Yaxley.

The St. Frank's fellows and the Moor View girls, who remained in Ixwell, were none too pleased. The girls, who were serving as ladies-in-waiting to the princess, were far more satisfied than the boys. At least, there was something for them to do.

But the boys found time hanging heavily on their hands. There was so little to see. Ixwell had become empty and stagnant now

that the centre of activities had been moved nearer to Dunstane.

"Look at it!" said Edward Oswald Handforth, with a grunt.

He and Church and McClure had strolled down from the castle, resplendent in white flannels. They were looking across the market square. It presented a sleepy appearance, with but a few stalls here and there. Scarcely anybody was to be seen.

"Yes, it looks a bit different now," said Church.

"As quiet as Bellton on a Sunday afternoon," said Handforth, with a sniff. "Bellton, by George! Doesn't that name make you think, you chaps?"

"Rather!" said McClure, a sudden gleam coming into his eyes. "Bannington—with the latest talking picture at the Palladium! Bellton lane, leading up to St. Frank's—Little Side, with a crowd of white figures dotted round the pavilion. The clack of a cricket ball as somebody gives it a mighty swipe——"

"Chuck it!" interrupted Handforth furiously.

"What's the matter—homesick?" grinned Church.

"No, not exactly—but I'm as keen as mustard on a game of cricket," said Handforth. "Why the dickens don't they have cricket in Northestria? Why can't we do something? That's what's eating me up, you chaps! Here we are, stuck here, mooning about and growing mildewed! Every time I walk I can hear my joints creaking like a rusty gate!"

"Well, it's Mr. Lee's orders," said Mac. "There's plenty of fighting developing near Dunstane—but we mustn't be in it."

"Poor, fragile creatures!" said Handforth sarcastically.

"Yet Mr. Lee is right," said Church. "It's not our war, is it? It's up to these Northestrians to drive the invaders out. We're only visitors."

Handforth suddenly burst into a roar of laughter.

"That's a good one!" he grinned.

"What do you mean?"

"We mustn't take any part in the fighting—but Mr. Lee himself can go right into Dunstane and spy out the lie of the land!" roared Handforth. "And there's Dorrie, up in the lines, working like a Trojan training the rustics! Old Wilkey, too—to say nothing of Sir Hobart! They're all at it, including lots of the officers from the Pioneer. But we're only boys, and we mustn't be naughty!"

"Oh, do dry up!"

"I'll dry up when I please!" continued Handforth, more loudly than ever. "Just think of Mr. Lee! By George! What a nerve, you chaps! Disguising himself as Guntha, getting himself collared by the Gothlanders, and——"

"Steady, Handy!" interrupted Church, in some alarm.

"Rats! Mr. Lee is taking his life in his hands," said Handforth, almost fiercely.



Standing in the stirrups, Handforth charged between the two spies and dragged them both from their horses.

"He's in Dunstane now, posing as Guntha! And every minute he's there he's asking for trouble! But it's a cert he'll come through with flying colours. He always does! It's only a matter of nerve."

"For goodness' sake be quiet, you ass!" said Mac urgently.

"Eh?"

"Haven't you any more sense than to stand here in the middle of the market square, yelling?"

"What the dickens——"

Nipper and Vivian Travers and William Napoleon Browne came up rather breathlessly.

"Who let this lunatic out of the padded cell?" demanded Nipper angrily.

"Lunatic?" asked Handforth, looking round.

"I mean you!"

"Why, you silly idiot——"

"Alas, Brother Handy, where are your wits?" said Browne, of the Fifth. "We heard every word you said at twenty yards' range!"

"Well, what of it? Supposing you did?"

"Have you forgotten that Mr. Lee's trip into Dunstane is to be kept strictly quiet?" demanded Nipper. "We were only told in confidence—on the understanding that we

would keep it to ourselves. You're dotty to start talking about it openly so that everybody can hear!"

"There's nobody here that matters," replied Handforth gruffly, as he looked round.

"Even walls have ears," said Church.

"Fathead! There aren't any walls near us!"

"But there are plenty of these North-estrians—not so many now, because they've moved off," said Nipper. "I'm not blaming you, Handy—but, for goodness' sake, be careful. You know jolly well that we've collared lots of spies in Ixwell. There may still be others. And if the word gets through to Dunstane that Guntha the Crafty is not Guntha at all but Mr. Lee in disguise, it'll be the end of him! They'll chop his head off like a shot!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Handforth guiltily.

He looked round in some alarm, but was reassured when he saw that there were no Northestrians within earshot. He had momentarily forgotten that he had been shouting, and that his voice carried strongly.

"I say, I'm awfully sorry, you know," he went on contritely. "I was a fearful ass to talk about it at all. It never occurred to me that it might be risky."

"Well, don't do it again, old man," urged Nipper. "Don't forget that silence is golden."

The boys strolled about, but they were soon satisfied that Handforth's incautious remarks had done no harm.

"In any case, these Northeistrials wouldn't understand Handy very well," said Church. "Their language maybe similar to ours, but we often have to repeat things—especially when we speak quickly. Our modern lingo is beyond 'em."

"All the same, brothers, it is the same language," remarked Browne, "and it therefore behoves us to have a care."

It had been Lord Dorrimore who, in a flash of exuberance, had told the boys of Nelson Lee's daring exploit. But he had made them promise he would keep it strictly to themselves. Naturally not one word should have been spoken within hearing of any of the Northeistrials—for, as Nipper had pointed out, and as Handforth well knew, there were still many of Cedric's spies about.

"I say," exclaimed Church, with a sudden note of anxiety in his voice, "look at those two men over on the other side of the square."

"What two?" asked Handforth, with a start.

"There's a short one, and another fellow just a little over middle height," said Church. "Can't you see them? The short one is dressed in a kind of dull green suit, with

knee-breeches and a tunic. The other is shabbier, in plum-coloured clothing."

"I can see 'em," nodded Handforth. "They're hurrying a bit, and just now they looked back in this direction."

"I know," said Church. "That's what's worrying me. I hope to goodness, Handy, that everything's all right."

"What do you mean?" asked Handforth. "Are you trying to put the wind up me, you ass?"

"All I know is that those two men were in charge of this egg-and-cheese stall," replied Church, indicating a stall some little distance away, which was now deserted. "It's a cert. they heard every word you said about Mr. Lee. And now, while our backs have been turned, those two men have gone."

"Crumbs!" said Handforth, intensely worried.

"There may be nothing in it—they may have gone for some fresh supplies," continued Church. "But don't you think it's a bit queer that they should go off, leaving their stall absolutely unattended? How do we know they aren't spies? It's the very sort of thing they would do—get here in the market square and pretend to be ordinary traders."

Handforth was reluctant to believe that his incautious words could have been heard by any spies. Yet the abrupt departure of those two men was significant.

However, at this moment a little diversion occurred, for a horseman who came gal-



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 House, London, E.C.4.

ALWAYS WRONG.

Mother: "Well, Frederick, do you think your teacher likes you?"

Frederick: "I think so, mum. She always puts a big kiss against my sums!"

(W. Forbes, 156, Hewitt Avenue, Wood Green, N.22, has been awarded a handsome watch.)

IN THE NEGATIVE.

"My brother Jock sent me his photo this morning," said the man from Aberdeen.

"Did he?" asked his friend. "May I see it?"

"Oh, no," replied the Scot. "I haven't had it developed yet."

(E. Woodroffe, 210, Fort Road, Bermondsey, S.E.1, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

ALL IN STOCK!

Lady Customer (at large store): "Can I see some ranges, please?"

Shop Assistant: "Kitchen, rifle or mountain ranges, ma'am?"

(J. H. Cairns, 1, Westfield Avenue, Gorgie, Edinburgh, has been awarded a penknife.)

TOOTHsome.

"Casey," said Pat, "how do yez tell the age of a fowl?"

"Oi can always tell by the teeth," said Casey.

"By the teeth!" exclaimed Pat. "A fowl has no teeth."

"No," admitted Casey, "but Oi have."

(E. H. Davison, 616, Factory Road, Templeton, Christchurch, New Zealand, has been awarded a book.)

A BLANK.

Teacher (eyeing empty exercise book): "Tommy, you have not done your poetry homework."

Tommy: "Yes, I have, miss—it's in blank verse."

(E. Crompton, 88, Astley Street, Tyldesley, Lancs, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

HOW TO DO IT.

Little boy (in grocer's shop): "One pound of butter at one and threepence, two pounds of tea at two shillings per pound, and six pen-orth

loping from the direction of the North Gate was recognised as Mr. Alington Wilkes.

Normally, Old Wilkes was the House-master of the Ancient House at St. Frank's; he still wore his baggy flannel trousers and his shabby Norfolk coat. But he had a sword-belt strapped round his middle, and there was a sword by his side. He rode his horse perfectly.

"Any news, Mr. Wilkes?" asked the boys, as they crowded round.

"Everything's going fine," replied Mr. Wilkes. "The Northestrian forces are massing for the great attack upon the city, and by the look of things Dunstane is certain to fall."

"Heard anything of Mr. Lee, sir?" asked Nipper in a low voice.

"Who told you that Mr. Lee wasn't with us?"

"Dorrie, sir," murmured Nipper. "We know that he's on a special job—that he deliberately got himself 'rescued' disguised as Guntha. And we're all mighty anxious, sir."

"Well, you needn't be," said Mr. Wilkes. "Lord Dorrimore has been talking to Mr. Lee—over the wireless. Perhaps you didn't know that Mr. Lee took a special portable wireless with him, concealed in the padding underneath his chainmail."

"By Jove!" said Nipper, his eyes shining. "So everything's all right?"

"Mr. Lee reports that he has been accepted without question, and that he is gaining

quite a lot of valuable information," said Old Wilkey. "That's all we know. Dorrie is now waiting to get in touch with Mr. Lee again. I fancy his visit to Dunstane will be of inestimable value to the Northestrians."

Mr. Wilkes rode on, and the boys eagerly discussed the news. Handforth was tremendously relieved.

"After all, it doesn't matter much if I was overheard just now," he said. "By the time any news can get to Dunstane, Mr. Lee will have slipped out."

"You can't be certain of that," said Nipper. "Mr. Lee may be compelled to remain in Dunstane for some hours yet—he'll have to seize his chance to get out."

Handforth looked across the square anxiously.

"I wish I knew more about those two men," he murmured, turning to Church and McClure. "We were asses not to go after them at once. I was going, but Old Wilkey came along, and now it's too late."

"Who's this coming?" asked Church, staring.

Another horseman had come into view—a Northestrian officer—and he was urging his steed to its utmost. The horse was galloping madly, and making straight for the drawbridge which led to the castle courtyard. Instinctively, the boys ran across so that they would cut the officer off. He was obviously the bearer of urgent tidings.

of salt—how much would I have left out of seven and sixpence?"

Grocer: "One and ninepence."

Little Boy: "Thanks—that's my homework."

(*R. P. Sunderland, 22, The Grove, Benton, Newcastle-on-Tyne, has been awarded a penknife.*)

DIFFICULT.

Father: "When have you got to take this medicine, Johnnie?"

Johnnie: "The doctor told me to take it half-an-hour before my headache starts."

(*L. Marshall, 12, Glentworth Road, Radford Boulevard, Nottingham, has been awarded a penknife.*)

FOOLPROOF.

Mistress: "Did you water the rubber plant, Mary?"

Mary (in surprise): "Why, no, ma'am. I thought it was waterproof."

(*L. P. George, "Nutfield," Douglas Road, Surbiton, has been awarded a pocket wallet.*)

NEXT STOP.

Jakes: "I think every man should know his station in life."

Rakes: "Yes; it's so beastly annoying to be carried on to the next and have to walk back."

(*J. Adams, 1, Charlotte Terrace, Dalkey, Co. Dublin, has been awarded a book.*)



SUPER LAZINESS.

First Tramp: "Bill, I'm going to wait till they get a machine that does the work when you press a button."

Second Tramp: "And I'm going to wait till they get a machine that presses its own button."

(*L. Smith, 126, Hoof Street, Grafton, New South Wales, Australia, has been awarded a book.*)

NOT TRUE.

Jimmy: "Mummy, does an apple a day keep the doctor away?"

Mummy: "I suppose so, dear."

Jimmy (tearfully): "But, mummy, I've eaten enough to keep eleven doctors away, and I'm afraid I want one now."

(*R. Runcles, 50a, Fulham Park Gardens, Fulham, S.W.6, has been awarded a pocket wallet.*)

UNLUCKY.

"Sonny!" called a man in the train. "Here's twopence—get me two buns and you may keep one of them."

The boy ran off to the buffet, and came back munching a bun contentedly.

"Sorry, guv'nor," he said, handing the man a penny, "but they only had this one bun."

(*E. Perrin, 103, Dyers Hall Road, Leytonstone, E.11, has been awarded a pocket wallet.*)

"Anything wrong?" sang out Handforth, who was nearest.

The Northeonian reined in, pulling up his steed abruptly.

"We know not what it meaneth, young lords," he panted. "But two rough looking men rode out of the northern gateway at the gallop, ignoring all commands to halt. They rushed the guards, and were off before we could stop them."

"Two rough-looking men!" gasped Handforth. "You say they rushed the guards? What were they like? Was one of them dressed in a green sort of suit, and the other in reddish-brown?"

"Ay, they will be the two," said the officer quickly. "What knowest thou of them, good youth?"

But Handforth took no notice; he had swung round on Church and McClure.

"Those two men we saw hurrying out of the square!" he panted. "Those two men who were in charge of that stall! And now they've dashed out of the city on horseback!"

"They were spies—and they overheard you, Handy!" ejaculated McClure tragically. "Oh, my hat! They're off to pass the word through to Dunstane!"

"They mustn't!" roared Handforth. "They've got to be stopped! Oh, why the dickens couldn't these Northeonian soldiers have stopped them?"

Handforth was fraught with wild alarm. His incautious words had been overheard by spies! And Nelson Lee's life, in consequence, might be forfeited!

Handforth was ever a fellow of action. He acted with characteristic swiftness now. Dashing up to the Northeonian officer, he grabbed hold of him and pulled him from his horse.

"Sorry!" panted Handforth. "But I need this horse!"

He leapt into the saddle, grabbed the reins, and swung round.

"Handy!" yelled Church. "What are you going to do?"

"Do?" bellowed Handforth. "I am going to capture those spies before they get beyond the Northeonian lines!"

CHAPTER 10.

Handforth's Lone Hand!

NIPPER and Travers and Reggie Pitt and a number of other fellows came running up, and so great was Handforth's haste that he nearly charged full tilt into them. They scattered wildly, and he tore across the square at a full gallop.

"For the love of Samson!" ejaculated Vivian Travers.

"Mad! Mad as a hatter!" gasped Pitt.

"Is that anything unusual—in Handy?" asked Nipper. "What's really the matter with the chump?"

They turned to Church and McClure, who were standing stock-still, with anxious eyes and flushed faces. The Northeonian officer

was just picking himself up, dazed and bewildered.

"By the soul of Senlao!" he exclaimed. "Methinks the youth must be bereft of his wits!"

"You see?" said Reggie Pitt. "There's no mistaking the symptoms."

"No, he's not mad," said Church. "Not ordinarily mad, I mean. He's just stark, staring, raving mad!"

"He's gone after a couple of spies," explained McClure, to the mystified juniors. "You know what a reckless ass he is! Goodness only knows how this affair will end!"

Church and McClure, between them, quickly explained the situation. The others were freshly startled.

"Good old Handy!" said Nipper, when he had heard. "He knew he was rash in talking about Mr. Lee, and when he heard that those two men had galloped out of the city, he did the best thing he could. Any waste of time would have been fatal. And Handy, by acting on the spur of the moment, might be in time."

"But they'll kill him if he tries to stop them!" protested Church.

"Handy's a pretty tough customer to kill when he's aroused," replied Nipper, with confidence. "Good luck to him!"

But Nipper was only talking in this way to hide his real, inner feelings. He was beset with dreadful anxiety concerning Nelson Lee. Unquestionably, those men who had deserted their market stall were spies. They had heard the vital information and had acted immediately. Nipper inwardly prayed that Handforth would overtake them in time—and prevent them passing on their information.

"There's one thing to be thankful for in this country," said Nipper fervently. "They've no telephones or telegraphs. So if only Handy overtakes those fellows, he'll repair the damage."

HANDFORTH could ride well. He was daredevil and reckless, perhaps, but he knew how to handle a horse.

And now, crouching low in the saddle, he galloped like the wind through the northern gateway. The guards, who saw him coming and who recognised him, made no attempt to stop him.

He sped through, and out upon the narrow, dusty road which led to the village of Thaxted and the small town of Yeldham.

In the first flush of the chase, he was hoping to overtake the rogues almost immediately; but he soon realised that many precious minutes had been lost. And minutes, in such a case as this, were vital. The men were probably riding as hard as he was, and that meant that they were a considerable distance ahead of him.

Not until he was thundering into Thaxted did he realise the futility of dashing on like this without making inquiries. Seeing a group of countrymen standing outside the picturesque doorway of an inn, he pulled up, his horse rearing up under the sudden jerk of the rein.

"Ho!" shouted Handforth, who, in spite of his excitement, believed in speaking the language of the country as far as possible. "A word, knaves! Hast seen aught of two horsemen who buzzed through here?"

"By my soul! 'Tis one of the stranger youths!" went up a cry.

"Never mind me!" said Handforth. "What about those two horsemen? I'm in a hurry!"

"They galloped through but a couple of minutes ago, young lord," said one of the men, running up. "See! They took not the road to Yeldham, but went off to yonder woodlands, taking to the meadows. We thought, perchance, that the horsemen were couriers of her Majesty with urgent messages."

"They're spies!" roared Handforth. "They went towards the woods, you say? Thanks!"

He spurred on his horse, and a moment later he was galloping away at full speed again. And now he was anxious and troubled.

"Idiot!" he muttered. "I might have known it! Those rotters wouldn't keep to the road—and it's only my luck that I got hold of any information at all!"

Yeldham, as he knew, contained quite a number of Northestrian soldiers in training—reserves, ready to be sent to the fighting line later. The spies would naturally avoid that town.

As Handforth rode, he kept his eye on the countryside, taking in the nature of the hills, woodlands and valleys. He skirted the wood which had been pointed out to him. He would only waste precious time by venturing into its depths.

The spies, of course, had made for the wood so that their movements would be concealed. But if they were bound for the Gothlander lines, it would be necessary for them to cover a great deal more country.

Urging his horse to its utmost speed, Handforth galloped on, mounting now to the top of a grassy hill. He was going some distance out of his way by making the ascent, but he considered that it was worth the chance. From that elevated hilltop he would have a clear view of the country for miles. And if only he could catch a glimpse of his quarry—

"By George!" he panted exultantly.

His horse had topped the rise, and Handforth's keen eyes immediately detected two horsemen in the distance, riding hard and just vanishing into the end of a deep valley.

The men were about a mile ahead, and even at this distance Handforth could see that they were riding desperately. Clearly, they were the two men who had made such a dramatic dash out of Ixwell.

"On, Tishy!" he panted, as he urged his steed. "By George! I believe I can do the trick!"

Again, as he rode, he noted the nature of the countryside. The valley was almost broadside to him, and he suddenly realised that the other end of the valley was almost

as near him as the end which the two horsemen had entered. By altering his direction there was just a chance that he might be able to cut off the spies completely.

The one thought which surged through Handforth's brain was to stop these men, to fight them to insensibility, and to drag them back to Ixwell. Owing to his folly they had gained that vital information; well, it was up to him to put things right!

There was not much of the schoolboy about Edward Oswald Handforth now. He was a born fighter, and he seemed to have taken on years during the last quarter of an hour. He was going singlehanded into this desperate affair, but he had no doubt as to the result.

Handforth, for all his faults—and they were legion—was a fellow who quickly admitted his mistakes. And that one characteristic endeared him to his chums more than anything else.

He rode on, his jaw set, his eyes gleaming.

IN the narrow valley, a mile ahead, the two horsemen penetrated a thick belt of trees, and came out into a small clearing. Here they drew rein, and let out some vigorous "Hallo's!" At first there was no response.

"Is the fool not here?" panted one of the men, after a pause.

Before the other could reply, a bent, ragged figure appeared in sight from the trees, a hundred yards ahead. He was a typical woodman, a simple charcoal burner. Many of his type were to be seen in and about the Northestrian woods.

"Ho, Sigwulf!" shouted one of the horsemen. "Hither, sluggard!"

Sigwulf, running up, proved to be a bearded, grimy-looking rogue. He recognised the two horsemen at once, and his manner indicated that they were his superiors.

"Thou hast a horse ready, Sigwulf?" asked one of the men.

"Ay, master."

"Then get ye to it, and take this message through to the next Gothlander agent."

"But, master, 'tis impossible!" protested Sigwulf, in fear. "The Northestrians are in full force towards Yeldham and Tey!"

"Let them be," said the other harshly. "Ye must ride through, Sigwulf. Who will suspect ye? And even if thy life pays forfeit, this message must be taken."

King Cedric's spy system was anything but medieval. It was a very complete, cunningly-arranged organisation. Men who seemed beyond suspicion were placed at regular intervals throughout the Northestrian countryside; one could communicate with another, and thus information of paramount importance could be passed on.

Sigwulf, the charcoal burner, was one of these agents, but nobody suspected him of being anything but a harmless woodman.

"Listen, Sigwulf," said one of the men from Ixwell. "Thou hast heard, no doubt, that my lord Guntha hath been rescued from

the strangers, and that he is already within the walls of Dunstane?"

"Ay, i'faith, I have!" said Sigwulf. "And the news hath heartened me——"

"Thou are to ride to the next agent and tell him that a foul trick hath been played upon us," interrupted the other grimly. "Guntha is not Guntha, but one of these strangers from Beyond the Ice!"

"Art mad, master?" panted the woodman.

"With my own ears I heard this story of foul treachery," retorted the Ixwell spy. "The man who is in Dunstane, the man who pretendeth to be Guntha, is none but Lee the Lionheart—so cunningly altered in appearance that his likeness to Guntha is beyond belief!"

"'Tis well said, master, that these men are wizards," faltered Sigwulf, awed.

"Lee the Lionheart is in Dunstane—a spy!" went on the other fiercely. "Get ye gone, Sigwulf! If ye fail to get this message through, then shalt thy life be forfeit! His Majesty must be warned, for Lee the Lionheart is the most dangerous man of all. He must be seized before he leaves Dunstane, and thus the danger will be averted. Go, Sigwulf! Ride as thou hast never ridden before!"

CHAPTER 11.

The Conquering Hero!

HANDFORTH'S horse was a noble steed; never once did it falter. He galloped hard with scarcely any urging from his rider, seeming to know by instinct that the need was urgent.

It was with good reason that the Northeonian people had called this burly junior "Handforth the Bold." For he was bold enough now. Attired only in flannels, without a weapon of any kind, he was determined to catch the two spies, and to carry them back to Ixwell with him.

He almost yelled with relief and triumph when he thundered into that valley—at the further end. For, in clear sight, were the two horsemen he sought. They had halted, apparently uncertain of their direction.

Handforth was not to know that they had already passed on their vital information, and that Sigwulf, the charcoal burner, had sped off on his errand. Handforth assumed that the two spies had had no opportunity of speaking with another of their clan. Everything had happened very quickly.

"Thank goodness!" breathed Handforth. "I've headed them off! Now then, Tishy, it's up to us!"

He galloped on full tilt. He did not know whether the men were armed, neither did he care. He just rode blindly into the fight.

The spies, startled by Handforth's unexpected appearance, attempted to turn their horses. But it was too late.

Handforth thundered down upon them with devastating ferocity. At the last moment, their horses parted, and Handforth swept on

between them. He stood up in the stirrups, grabbing madly with each hand. He clutched at the two riders, and the next second there was a hopeless confusion of humanity and horseflesh.

The shock of the impact was terrific. Handforth himself was hurled from his galloping horse, and the two men, dragged from their own steeds, tumbled heavily to the ground. The three of them lay in a tangled heap; the horses galloped away, frightened.

"Now!" panted Handforth savagely. "By George, I've got you, you blighters!"

Thud! Crash! Thud!

He hammered away with all the strength of his powerful fists. The spies, attempting to struggle to their feet, were beset by this whirlwind schoolboy.

Ordinarily, Handforth might not have been able to tackle them single-handed; but the very nature of his attack had robbed the fellows of half their fighting spirit. Dragged from their horses in that way, they were bruised by the fall. And they knew nothing about modern boxing.

"My lord," panted the leader of the two, "what meanest this onslaught? We are but simple countryfolk——"

"Simple spies, you mean!" roared Handforth. "Take that, you rotter!"

Crash!

The man took it—a clean right-hand swing to the jaw. Although Handforth's knuckles were bruised by the impact, he felt a thrill of sheer joy pass through him. The man, who was half on his feet, reeled back and fell to the ground, dazed.

"Now, thou dirty dog, I have a special packet for thee!" bellowed Handforth, turning upon the other man. "How do thou likest this?"

Crash!

Again his famous right came round, and the man, attempting to dodge, was a shade too late. He received the full force of that blow on the side of his head, and he toppled over, groaning.

"A murrain upon ye!" panted Handforth. "Curs and scum! Think ye that ye could get away from Ixwell with the big news? Not jolly likely!"

Handforth was not satisfied yet. As the men feebly attempted to rise, he battered them mercilessly. One after the other they fell back, knocked out.

And Handforth, leaping to his feet, panting hard, stared down at his victims. He was a conqueror, as he intended to be. Triumph surged through him.

"Huh!" he growled. "And they were fools enough to think that they could get away!"

But it had only been Handforth's whirlwind methods which had brought him such success. Any attempt to fight these men in the ordinary way would have meant disaster for him. He had blindly thrown himself into the fight, and his shock tactics had won him victory.

Handforth was not fool enough to let matters rest. These fellows were tough,



Through the streets of Dunstane thundered Nelson Lee, pursued by the Gothlander soldiers.

and they would soon recover. He might not come out so well in a second scrap.

Dragging strong creepers from the neighbouring bushes, he used them as ropes. Even then, he was only just in time. The men were recovering their wits rapidly—only to find that their hands were bound behind them, and their ankles similarly fastened.

Having rendered them more or less helpless, Handforth now proceeded to complete the good work. He took the harness from the men's horses and, using the strong leather straps, he quickly augmented the creepers. Not until he had trussed the fellows up like chickens did he stand back to take a breather.

"Well, you're pretty helpless now, you rotters!" he said, with satisfaction. "Just try to escape. Thou scullions! Thou rats! You thought you'd get clear away, didn't you? But I heard how you had dashed out of Ixwell, and I chased you. By George, you won't pass your story to anybody else!"

"Young lord, thou art wrong!" panted the leader of the spies. "We are naught but simple peasants——"

"Don't tell lies!" interrupted Handforth gruffly. "I've captured you, and I'm going to take you back to Ixwell. Thank goodness you haven't done any harm!"

The spies quickly exchanged glances. They knew, by Handforth's words, that he had not seen Sigwulf, the woodman. He had no knowledge of Sigwulf's dash to the next spy.

And the pair resolved to keep silent. Nothing could alter their own position now. But if Handforth guessed that they had passed their information on, he would take steps to have Sigwulf stopped. These men were loyal to King Cedric. They suffered their fate stoically—knowing, all the time, that their own mission was successfully accomplished.

But Handforth, unfortunately, did not know that.

WITH Mr. Wilkes at the head of a strong cavalcade, Nipper and Travers and most of the other St. Frank's fellows rode out of Ixwell.

There were twenty or thirty soldiers in the cavalcade, and they were bent upon following Handforth and, as Browne put it, picking up his pieces. For they were all gravely concerned regarding Edward Oswald's fate.

"He was mad to dash off like that," said Church, in an agony of suspense. "Those two men are desperate spies, and they'll kill Handy! You know what a reckless ass he is!"

"Well, we're doing our best," said McClure soberly.

They were all riding hard. In Thaxted they learned that Handforth had left the road and had taken to the open country, riding towards the neighbouring woods. So the searchers spread out, arranging a system of signals if any of them should catch sight of the daring junior.

As it happened, they did not find it necessary to ride far.

Before they had spread out to any great extent, a solitary horseman appeared on the top of a neighbouring hill. There was something unusual in his appearance. He was riding slowly, and his steed was very heavily burdened.

"Look!" ejaculated Nipper, pointing. "That fellow is dressed in white! And Handy was wearing white flannels! Great Scott! I wonder——"

"It is Handy!" yelled McClure, spurring his horse.

They all galloped up, closing in upon the solitary horseman. Mr. Wilkes, who was leading, soon satisfied himself that the horseman was, indeed, Handforth. Old Wilkey was intensely relieved—but puzzled, too.

As they drew nearer they made an astonishing discovery. Across Handforth's horse, slung there like a couple of sacks, were two men, both of them tightly bound.

"Hallo, you chaps!" sang out Handforth, as they all closed in on him.

"What's — what's happened?" asked Church.

"Can't you see?"

"Yes, but——"

"These are those two rotten spies who escaped from Ixwell," interrupted Handforth coolly. "I told you I was going to chase 'em, didn't I?"

"But what's happened?" demanded Nipper. "These fellows are bound hand and foot!"

"You must be jolly dense," said Handforth, with a sniff. "Can't you see that I've knocked 'em out and captured 'em?"

"You, and who else?" asked Travers, looking round.

"Nobody else, fathead!" retorted Handforth. "I overtook the beggars in a wood, about a mile back. Thank goodness they hadn't been able to get through with that information! Well, we had a bit of a scrap. It was hot while it lasted, but I soon knocked

the rotters sideways. Then I bound them up, slung them over my horse, and here we are."

"Good old Handy!" shouted Church excitedly. "My only hat! He's collared them singlehanded!"

"Well, not exactly," said Handforth modestly. "I had to use both my hands, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Everybody was intensely relieved. They had been anticipating all sorts of dreadful things. Never had they believed it possible that Handforth would return, unscathed, with the two spies as his prisoners.

COMING NEXT WEDNESDAY!



"These men did not communicate with anybody else, Handforth?" asked Mr. Wilkes.

"They couldn't have done, sir," replied Edward Oswald. "I took them by surprise. Don't forget I was hot on their heels all the time. Why, if I had wasted even a minute they would have eluded me. I only caught 'em because I took a short cut and headed them off."

With much relish, he went into full details concerning the scrap. The others listened admiringly. And the two spies, gathering a great deal of what was being said, kept silent. They knew that Sigwulf the Woodman was carrying that vital message through to the Gothlander lines!

"Mr. Lee's all right now, sir," said Hand-

forth confidently. "With these rotters colared, that story can't possibly get through to Dunstane. And, by George, I'll be careful after this! I was a silly fathead to talk like that in the market square!"

"You may have been a silly fathead, Handy, but you've easily made up for it," said Nipper cheerily. "Good man! You deserve a couple of medals."

Nipper, of course, was more overjoyed than anybody else. His beloved "guv'nor" had been in danger; and that danger now seemed to be over.

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ORDER IN ADVANCE!

But it wasn't!

As the cavalcade rode back to Ixwell, with the prisoners in their midst, and with Handforth the hero of the hour, Sigwulf was carrying out his urgent mission.

CHAPTER 12.

A Shock for King Cedric!

CEDRIC THE CRUEL, as he sat at the head of the great table in the dining-hall of Dunstane Castle, looked contentedly across at the supposed Guntha.

"'Tis generous of you, good Guntha, to leave the command of the city in Redwold's hands," he said. "Methinks Redwold was

none too pleased to hear of thy return; but now, i'faith, he is thy greatest friend."

"'Tis better for him to be my friend, sire, than to be my enemy," replied Nelson Lee smoothly. "And I vow there is naught for me to do in Dunstane. Redwold hath provided magnificently for the city's defence."

"Ay, I am pleased with the knave," said the King, nodding. "And thou, Guntha? Thou wilt apply thy talents elsewhere, perchance?"

Lee did not reply for a moment. He had felt compelled to obey the King's summons to the feasting table. He had refused again and again, but Cedric might possibly become suspicious if he refused once too often. And as there was plenty of time before the appointed hour with Lord Dorrimore, Lee went to the table.

He found Cedric in a merry mood. The King was now confident that Dunstane could withstand all the attacks of the rebels and with that feeling of security had come a reaction from his former surliness.

Lee had made his plans carefully. The meal was over, and he would now seek an excuse to go upon the battlements once more—so that he could be there at precisely three o'clock, when Dorrie tuned in on the wireless. He would briefly tell Dorrie what had happened, and after that the rest ought to be simple.

His general idea was to ride out to the Gothlander lines. There were thousands of Cedric's men all round Dunstane, their task being to bear the first brunt of the attack and, if possible, to smash up the rebels before Dunstane was reached.

Lee, by giving definite orders—and none would question the word of Guntha the Crafty—would see to it that these troops were so placed that many gaps would be left. Through these gaps the Northeistriars would pour. Nelson Lee hoped, in fact, to leave matters in such a state that victory for the Northeistriars would be certain. He would dispose the Gothland defenders in such a way that the fall of the city would become inevitable.

"I crave your Majesty's indulgence now," said Lee, as he rose to his feet. "There is still much work to be done."

"By my bones! What a dog thou art for work, Guntha!" laughed the King. "Go thou, then! If there is naught for thee to do in Dunstane, why this haste?"

"I ride out to the first defences, sire," replied Lee. "Methinks the men can be disposed to better advantage. 'Tis believed by all thy generals that the rebels will attack from the west. But 'tis known to me that the main assault will come from the east. And in the east, therefore, must our strongest forces be concentrated. Be thou of stout heart, sire, for in this coming battle the rebels will be smashed beyond recovery."

The King laughed.

"Smashed, sayest thou?" he said, almost mockingly. "I'faith, Guntha, thy sojourn with the strangers on their wondrous vessel hath taught ye strange words. Well, go,

then! Since thou art such a dog for work, do not let me detain thee."

Lee bowed, and took his departure. He had made a slight slip in saying "smashed." The wonder was that he had not used many words which were unfamiliar to the ears of the Gothlanders.

Lee found an opportunity of glancing at his watch after he had left the dining-hall. The time, he saw, was twelve minutes to the hour. He had ample time to reach the battlements, and to be alone so that he could once again get in touch with Lord Dorrimore.

He was mounting the great stone stairs, when he ran into Attawulf the Terrible.

"So thou seekest rest, my lord Guntha," said Attawulf, smiling. "'Tis well. Thou hast been active too long. The best of men are but poor wretches unless they rest."

Lee uttered a scornful growl.

"I am of iron, good Attawulf," he retorted. "There is no rest for me yet. I go to the battlements to think—to scheme! Am I not Guntha the Crafty? And when I think out the crafty plans for which I am famed, I must needs seek solitude."

He walked on, and Attawulf frowned slightly. Perhaps he noted some vague change in Guntha. If so, however, he gave it no further thought; for, with a shrug of his shoulders, he descended to the great hall of the castle.

The door stood open, with armed guards on duty. At this moment a man, breathless and excited, presented himself. He was immediately admitted, and he ran forward with a cry as he caught sight of Attawulf the Terrible.

"My lord, my lord!" he panted.

Attawulf regarded him contemptuously.

"What now, Bafra?" he asked in a cold voice. "What meaneth this unseemly entry?"

Bafra was a spy—one of the chief spies of the Gothlander "Secret Service." He had formerly been in command of the Ixwell area, but had since been transferred to Lidgate, a town much nearer to the capital.

"Think ye, dog, that ye can force your way into the castle thus?" asked Attawulf harshly. "Get ye hence! If thou hast information for his Majesty, give it to the officer of the guard."

"But, my lord, this news is of such import that there is no time to be lost!" panted Bafra. "I sought the officer of the guard, but he is not to be found. And so great is the need for this news reaching his Majesty's ears that I came forthwith."

Attawulf was impressed by the man's frantic tone.

"Is the enemy attacking?" he asked.

"Nay, my lord—but there is a spy here, within Dunstane Castle!" said Bafra, lowering his voice. "A master-spy, my lord! None other than Lee the Lionheart himself!"

Attawulf stared in amazement.

"Art mad?" he snapped. "'Tis impossible for Lee the Lionheart to be within Dunstane Castle."

He made up his mind quickly. Bafra was a man who knew his job; a man who had brought vital information on more than one occasion. But this news he brought now seemed beyond belief.

"Come!" said Attawulf shortly.

Cedric was lolling in a big chair, surfeited with food, when Attawulf and Bafra entered. The King, in fact, was taking a nap—and he detested being disturbed at such times.

"How now?" he growled fiercely. "Where are thy wits, my lord Attawulf? Why bringest this cur to me at such an hour?"

"He states, sire, that Lee the Lionheart, the master of the strangers, is in Dunstane Castle," said Attawulf. "I confess I find the story incredible——"

"'Tis a mad story!" interrupted the King contemptuously. "When came ye by this nonsense, fool?"

"I crave thy patience, sire," panted Bafra. "Would I come in such haste had I not convincing evidence of the truth? Lee the Lionheart is not here in his own person—but in the person of Guntha the Crafty!"

"Ye talk in riddles!" exclaimed the King, staring.

"The man thou hast accepted as Guntha the Crafty, sire, is none other than Lee the Lionheart," explained Bafra nervously. "'Tis a cunning plan of the enemy's. Thou hast been deceived, sire. While thou hast accorded Guntha the Crafty a royal welcome, and while he has toured the city defences, discovering all my lord Redwold's secrets, he is this wizard stranger. He is Lee the Lionheart, sire!"

"By my soul!" muttered Attawulf incredulously.

"A madness!" snapped the King. "Have I not seen Guntha? Have I not dined with him? Am I dolt to be mistaken——" He paused, a gleam coming into his eyes. "Yet, forsooth, I have noted a difference in Guntha," he muttered. "'Twas slight, but at times he puzzled me."

"I, too, sire," said Attawulf. "Now thou hast spoken of the thing, I see that Guntha is not the same. But until this suspicion was put into our minds, we thought naught."

"By St. Attalus," swore the King, at length, "mayhap there is some truth in this story! If so, Attawulf, we are undone! For Guntha has ridden out of the city, and by now the secrets of our defence will be in the enemy's hands."

"Nay, sir, Guntha hath sought solitude on the battlements," said Attawulf quickly. "I passed him but five minutes ago, ere I encountered Bafra."

"Then the matter can quickly be put to the test," said the King grimly. "Call the guard, my lord Attawulf. I will go to the battlements and face Guntha the Crafty!"

UP on the battlements, Nelson Lee was awaiting the tick of the hour.

He had fixed his earphones in readiness, and now, with his head sunk upon his chest, and pacing up and down

as though in deep meditation, he switched on. The wonderful little wireless set was already tuned in to the correct wavelength.

"Hallo, Dorrie!" murmured Lee. "Hallo!"

"Gad!" came a sudden voice uncannily in his ears. "I no sooner switch on than I hear your voice! It's only just three, old man."

"I know," murmured Lee. "Splendid, Dorrie! This thing is working magnificently. Listen carefully, for I have a great deal to tell you. I think you had better take notes."

"Go ahead!" came Lord Dorrimore's cheery voice. "I've a pad here, and a pencil. I don't mind telling you that I'm infernally relieved to hear your voice, Lee, I've been worrying like the deuce. So you're still safe, eh?"

"And I think I shall remain safe," replied Lee. "Everything has gone smoothly, and —"

He broke off, for at that moment he caught sight of a number of men farther away on the battlements.

"Wait, Dorrie!" said Lee tensely. "I'm going to switch off. Hang on—keep listening—I may not be long."

He switched off as he spoke, instinctively knowing that something had happened. For he saw King Cedric and Attawulf the Terrible approaching him, with a number of men-at-arms in their rear; and both the King and his overlord had their hands on their swords.

CHAPTER 13.

Nelson Lee's Peril!

NELSON LEE realised that he was in about the tightest corner of his entire career.

There could be no mistaking the grim, suspicious looks of the Gothlanders who approached him. Something had happened! Lee was certain that he had made no bad slip on his own account. The spies must have been at work—and word had come in that Guntha the Crafty was still a prisoner aboard the Pioneer.

Yet Lee remained as cool as ice.

"I am honoured, sire," came Guntha's well-known, growling voice as Cedric advanced.

"What doest thou here on the battlements, my lord?" asked the King. "Didst not tell me that thy plan was to visit the outer defences?"

"Ay, sire, but I meditate first," replied Lee. "Ere a man can act, he must needs think, else his acts may well be futile."

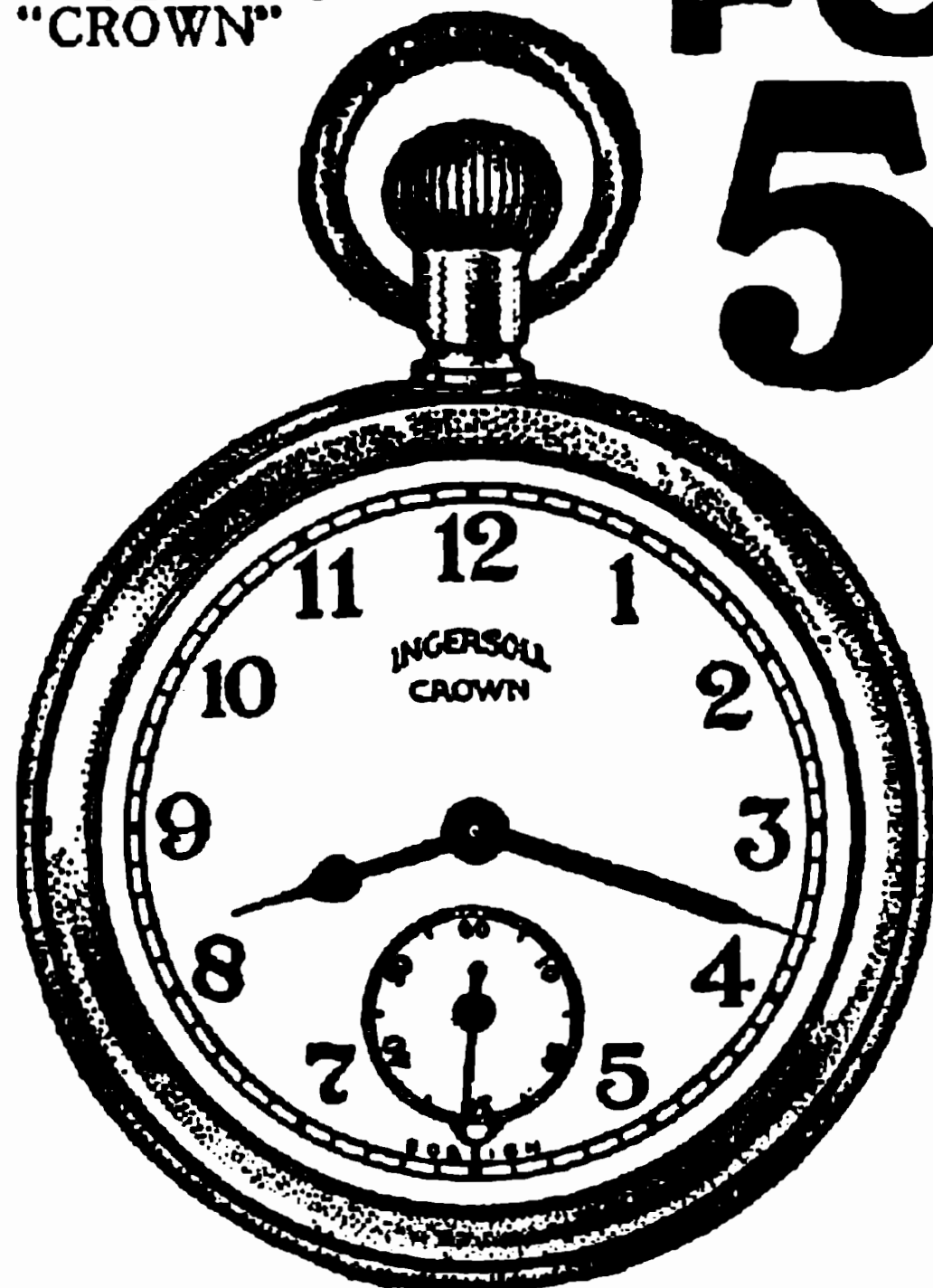
Cedric said nothing. He stood looking at Lee with a searching glance. Lee pretended to be unaffected; but he knew exactly what was taking place in Cedric's mind. Cedric was seeking to pierce through the disguise. Very definitely, he was in possession of some vital information.

Without warning, Cedric abruptly thrust out a hand, and even Nelson Lee was taken

(Continued on page 44.)

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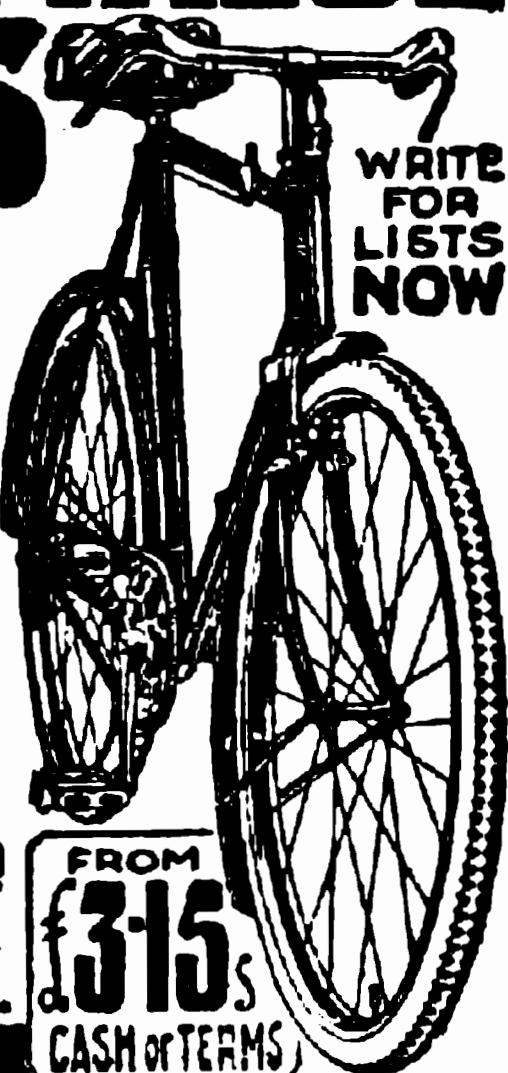
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BETWEEN OURSELVES

Edwy Searles Brooks, popular author of
the St. Frank's stories, chats with readers
of the "Nelson Lee."

THIS week's acknowledgments: Mavis Watsford* (Haberfield, Sydney, N.S.W.), H. B. Valentine (Aberystwyth), Dorothy Leonora Baber* (Plymouth), Ewart J. Bain (South Harrow.) Curiously enough, the only stars I can award this week go to girl readers. As I mentioned before in this Chat, any letters of exceptional merit will receive this little mark of special appreciation. Buck up, you boys! I hope you won't let this happen again.

* * *

It is impossible for me to answer every letter I receive, Mavis Watsford. All I can promise to do is to acknowledge every one on this page, and to reply to those which deal with matters of wide general interest. Yours, I think, falls into this latter class, for you say this: "I like whoever I am writing to, to read my letter personally. Perhaps this is a lot to expect from one who receives a great number of letters, but it is not very nice to think your letter is read by someone who is in employment to do that kind of thing, and then slips it into the waste-paper basket."

* * *

I can assure you, Mavis, that I personally *do* read every letter that is sent to me, and reply to those which bring up subjects of widespread interest. My secretary then takes the letters, but instead of putting them in the waste-paper basket, he files them all away for possible future reference. No reader need fear that his or her letter will fail to come under my direct notice. Sometimes I reply to letters through the post, but I haven't as much time as I should like to devote to this congenial occupation.

* * *

Your confusion about Handforth is perhaps excusable, H. B. Valentine. You say that he must be over 17 because he is permitted to drive a car. I know that the age-limit for securing a car-driving licence is 17; but when Handforth's fond aunt made him a birthday present of a little car she "wangled" the licence for him. It's quite a special licence, and I don't mind admitting that I had to use my own author's licence to

enable her to do it. Anyhow, Handforth is only just over 15, and there is no boy at St. Frank's as old as 20, not even amongst the lordly seniors. Eighteen is about the limit.

* * *

Yes, Dorothy Leonora Baber, that's the idea. If you want to write up about the illustrations or the serial story or such matters, address your letter to the Editor. As regards the St. Frank's stories, I can promise you that these are now definitely back as they were in the "good old days." Isn't this present series proving it?

* * *

After this series, which I hope you are all enjoying as a real example of the old-style holiday yarns, we shall have a return to the full-length, old-style school stories. With the added length, I shall have an opportunity of bringing to the fore some of the lesser characters who have been forced into the background of late.

* * *

Quite a number among you, when writing me for the first time, begin by saying: "At last I have plucked up enough courage to write," or "I should have written months ago if I had had enough pluck, and it has taken me all this time to make up my mind." Now I really do believe that hundreds of you are like that, and you are hesitating and putting it off. There's no earthly reason why you should. It requires no courage to write to me, and if you feel that you'd like to do so, grab the first available pen, and get busy.

Edwy Searles Brooks

(Edwy Searles Brooks will be pleased to hear from "N.L." readers. Send him a letter now—here is his address: c/o NELSON LEE LIBRARY, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.)

The Night Hawk for Thrills—Grand New Serial Starts This Week!

The PHANTOM FOE!



By JOHN BREARLEY

CHAPTER 1.

Twelve Wolves are Freed!

THE grim little group of warders, guarding the toiling squad of life-sentence convicts on Dartmoor, never stood a chance. When the yellow gas came, in thick asphyxiating wreathes, they were struck down in little heaps, stifled by the hand of the Phantom Foe!

In spite of their rigid vigilance—and the warders were vigilant, for they were herding a dozen of the hardest cases in the famous prison—they saw nothing but an evil yellow stain mingling with the moorland mist. Whence it came none knew. No strangers, especially any carrying gas-apparatus, could have approached undetected. Yet the gas came, and gaolers and convicts crumpled before the onslaught.

One moment, to the clink of hammers on stone and an occasional sharp reprimand, the men were busy. The next they were surrounded by thick soft fumes that caught them by the throat, stupefied them and strewed them on the ground.

One warder, stronger than the rest, turned his bulging eyes upwards as he staggered back gasping, but saw nothing beyond the swaying yellow blanket blotting out everything around him. Through the ominous fog his mates tottered, tripped and lay still; the convicts in their hideous garb dropped limply across the piles of stone they were breaking. Then unconsciousness drugged the warder's brain, his rifle fell and he with it.

From first to last, not a man had a chance to blow his whistle or even shout.

The silence of Dartmoor descended on the prostrate heap of men. And gradually, as though stirred by a sudden breeze, the

yellow gas began to disperse. The dismal grey mist returned. And with it came six powerful men, masked, soft-footed, well-armed, from—where?

Safe from prying eyes they glided forward, in charge of one whose orders were curt and commanding. One by one the twelve unconscious convicts were slung over hefty shoulders; quick trips were made by each masked man into the cover of a little bush-strewn hollow nearby. At last the gaol-

An Invisible Menace Strikes Terror From The Skies!



birds were all assembled there, laid out flat and quiet. And then a single vivid blue flash from the leader's hand pierced the mist.

What followed was as uncanny as the attack of the yellow gas.

Down from the skies, with silent suddenness, dropped a large square cage, of the type used in coal-pits, but made of aluminium. Strong thin cables of finest steel supported it. But the ends of the cables were lost to view.

Gently the cage hit the turf, and while three of the raiders stood on guard with automatics in each hand, the others bundled their limp captives inside. The cage vanished; came down once more; and when it ascended this time, masked men and convicts were all gone.

A good half-hour passed before the stupefied warders were discovered still on the moor, and for one hour the prison doctor worked on them with all the restoratives at his command before they struggled back to life sufficiently to gasp out their weird tale. What made the sensation more puzzling was that the head warder swore he had seen his charges go down under the yellow gas also. Yet not a trace of the missing men could be found.

The net was thrown out at once, of course. Armed men combed the moors, fast cars and telephones blocked every avenue of escape. No strangers, not even harmless tourists, had been seen on Dartmoor, for the hour of the raid had been early. Nor—though the governor made full inquiries—had anyone heard or seen aircraft of any description hovering over the desolate country. The men had literally melted into thin air.

Defeat met the searchers at every turn. Without a sound, without a clue save the coming of the yellow gas, twelve dangerous men had been stolen from under the rifles of four picked warders from Princetown Gaol. It was a Dartmoor mystery that none could solve.

CHAPTER 2.

Recruits for the Phantom Foe!

JAMES FOGERTY, late Convict 197 of Princetown Gaol, slowly opened his eyes, blinked and closed them with a sharp scream of pain. At his instinctive struggle to sit up an unseen hand pressed him roughly back; a sharp voice from an invisible course ordered him to lie still. Fogerty obeyed.

His brain felt clogged and his limbs stiff and awkward. Gradually, as memory returned, he remembered he had been working—that accursed stone-breaking as usual. The warders had been patrolling near, and he had just been reprimanded for talking. Then something had gripped his throat, he had a dim recollection of a yellow mist somewhere, and afterwards—

Again he opened his eyes and again cried out with pain. His hands went out frantic-

ally, feeling around. He was no longer on coarse grass, but in a bunk, it seemed, and men were somewhere near, for he could hear strange muffled voices. Also, he appeared to be moving, gliding along at a smooth rapid pace, and a faint rhythmical hum made a background to the voices around him.

Yet he could see nothing. And when he tried to look a blinding light stung and baffled him.

Suddenly a bottle was held to his nostrils. He sniffed, choking with the pungent fumes that rushed to his head. For a moment he thought he was dying. But when the strangling reek ebbed at last he felt his brain clearing magically, leaving him cold and wary. Again the unseen hands touched him, fitting heavy goggles over his eyes. And this time, when he sat up and opened them it was as though a stinging veil had dropped away, disclosing a scene that filled his tough heart with panic.

He was in a bunk all right, lying against the metal wall of an enormous hull, with gleaming decks of the same fabric. Once during his career Fogerty had been forced to leave England secretly by sea, and somehow he was reminded now of a great ship's cabin. But when he darted a scarred glance at the tiny window nearby he could see nothing but high, blue sky, sliding past at tremendous speed.

The explanation came to him with stunning force. He was no longer on misty Dartmoor, not even in the bleak prison hospital, but on a great airship!

And what an airship! At various points along the deck men were stationed with their backs towards him, and the apparatus they controlled was of the type Fogerty had never seen before. More astounding still, however, was the sight of the other convicts, the men who had been in his squad that morning. They lay, some in bunks and some on the deck, still in their ugly prison clothes, but each with strange goggles of thick purple crystal round their heads.

As far as he could tell, most had come to some minutes before himself. They sat up or lay prone, craning their necks to stare around, each in the grip of the same amazement.

Fogerty growled. He was of the animal type that panics at anything he cannot understand. Without thinking, he made a grab at his own goggles and lifted them. Instantly he recoiled in terror and agony. For the second his eyes were bare, men, comrades and airship vanished, and blinding pain seered his pupils. Frantically he jerked the glasses back again, and as quickly his vision returned. He crouched in his bunk, sweating with unreasoning fear.

"That's right, my friend, keep them on. You'll see nothing up here without them, I assure you. And you'll get hurt, too!"

With a half-shriek the convict swung round, cowering before the strange figure standing behind him. He almost fainted at the sight.

The stranger was tall, but the loose yellow robe that cloaked him from shoulder to feet hid his shape entirely. Like everyone else aboard he wore purple goggles, but his face was masked by a hideous face-piece of yellow silk, skin tight, and terrifying in its blankness. Although the convict could not see the spectre's eyes, he almost felt them boring into him like icy daggers. Through the mouthpiece of the deathlike mask he saw two firm lips curled in a sardonic smile.

"Where—where am I?" gasped Fogerty at last, his voice thick with fright. The stranger considered for a moment, then nodded.

"A fair question, I suppose, although questions are not encouraged here, my friend. You and your comrades are in an airship—mine. Whether you stay here, or not, depends entirely on yourselves."

"But" — Fogerty cringed and glanced at the blue sky outside again—"but, boss, it's plain daylight. Ye've taken us from stir, haven't you? Won't ye be seen? Caught?"

"That is my business!" was the stony reply; words whose grim accent shut the convict up like a clam. "You are the last to revive. Can you walk?"

"Y-yes. I guess so."

"Then come, follow me."

The same orders were rapped out to the other prisoners, and they, like Fogerty, shuffled to their feet, braced themselves against the silent motion of the uncanny ship and huddled after the masked man, staggering silently in his wake. He had turned and approached a gleaming partition across the deck in which a door slid open to the pressure of a spring. Standing on the threshold he waved them through. They filed in like sheep.

Beyond the door was a small cabin, evidently private, furnished with a wide bunk, a steel bench laden with books and instruments, stools, and a table at which two other men, dressed like the first, sat surveying the goggled captives as they shuffled in. When the party was complete the door slid into its socket again noiselessly. And the first man took his place at the table with a certain impressive dignity.



Out of the sky dropped a cage, and into this were placed the unconscious convicts.

There was a silence, broken only by the faint hum Fogerty had first heard. At last the masked chief spoke.

"I have brought you here, men, to offer you your freedom. That is, freedom from prison in return for implicit service to me. What that service will be you will find out in due course. Suffice it that it will be work after your own hearts."

At the blunt, bewildering statement one of the convicts gasped.

"You mean this is a crook lay-out?"

"Silence! In my ship men speak when they are commanded to, not unless. However, I will tell you now that I am not on the side of the law, as you may guess from the way you were liberated from Princetown this morning. In fact"—the grim lips curled bitterly—"I am very much against the law. All laws, save my own!"

The contemptuous arrogance of the man stifled further reply. The frightened men stood with downcast eyes, waiting.

"I need men like you!" went on the cold voice. "In fact, I specially picked you. I do not admire your type; most of you are stupid, vicious, too much like brutal scum. But I can use you."

A lean finger stabbed at Fogerty.

"You, my friend, were sentenced for life last June for a particularly savage robbery with violence, eh? And you had served previous sentences for similar crimes." Fogerty winced, while the pointing finger darted to the next man. "Your name is Edwardes, I believe, and you are an expert safe-breaker, are you not? A man who carries a gun at his work and shoots to kill when trapped. You were fortunate, my man, that the policeman you shot last December twelvemonth did not die. Or else, instead of a lifer, you would have hanged!"

And so the finger went down the line, while the cold metallic voice recited details of each man's crime. To an outsider it would have sounded like a reading from the Newgate Calender. This weird spectre knew the details of each human wolf present, and each man quailed in fear as his turn came.

The masked man finished at last. Chin in hand, he leaned forward, his purple goggles staring.

"Yes, you are scum; but you are desperate men in a corner, with everything to gain and nothing to lose. Therefore, I can use you."

"I am about to start a campaign against the laws of Britain. I am forming a gang, if you understand that better. There will be times when fast and accurate shooting may be necessary; and you, Edwards, I can use your safe-breaking talents. You will be well-paid, well-protected, well-armed. What is your verdict?"

Thus coolly and in a few words did the man who was to terrorise Britain, the man who was to become known as the Phantom Foe, make his proposition to twelve of the worst jackals Princetown had ever housed. And the convicts, for their part, were staggered.

Freedom, escape from life-sentences of toil of monotony. Back again to the old trail of crime they loved. But it was to be organised crime this time, under a leader whose strange power and resources were boundless, as they were to discover. No more dingy, single-handed "jobs," with a noose awaiting them if they shot too straight. The proposition was irresistible, and all the convicts were nodding eager agreement before the Phantom Foe had finished speaking.

Edwardes, the safe-breaker, ventured a timid remark at last.

"But I'm too well known at my game, boss. Fingerprints, looks, everything——"

"By the time I have finished with you, your face and fingerprints will convey nothing to the police!" snapped the Phantom Foe coolly. "The treatment may be painful for a day. But it will be successful. You will be a new man. That applies to you all!"

The mysterious but haughty reply struck Edwardes speechless. He did not understand. The rest stood dumb also. The Phantom Foe turned calmly to one of the sphinxes sitting beside him.

"Take these men forward and see to them. They have joined us and will do the rough work later. Go!"

His two assistants rose. But as they did so the Phantom spoke again to the convicts.

"Stay! One of you expressed fear concerning this airship just now, which as you can see, is sailing in plain daylight. Do not worry. Not a soul can see us from the ground, for we are totally invisible!"

There was an audible gasp. He held up his hand.

"One thing more. While you are aboard keep your goggles on. Otherwise your eyes will be burnt in their sockets. Go!"

And with that the ex-Princetown prisoners, shepherded by their hideous warders, stumbled from that strange, ruthless presence. When they had gone the Phantom rubbed his hands.

"Scum, but useful scum. My band grows apace. Soon——"

He drew a deep breath, and from the window of the airship stared down at the ground far beneath with inscrutable eyes.

— —

CHAPTER 3.

The Invisible Menace!

A WEEK later a series of outrages broke out with a breathless rapidity that left the whole world gasping.

The first of the Phantom's hammer blows was the looting of the magnificent British liner Queen in broad daylight off the coast of Ireland.

The great Queen, her three funnels smoking majestically, was smashing a stately way home to Liverpool, filled with passengers and carrying platinum and gold ingots in her strong-room to the tune of £50,000. The sun was sinking in a cloudless summer sky, and save for one small private yacht cruising at full speed a mile to leeward, the huge liner had the sea to herself.

And then the Phantom struck.

An anxious boarding-party, from a destroyer that pursued the wallowing, helpless monster two hours later, clambered aboard at last to find a scene that filled them with numb dismay and amazement. From towering fo'c'sle to broad after-deck, the Queen was littered with unconscious figures, crumpled in attitudes that showed

they had been struck down in a moment of fierce panic. More bodies lay on companion-ways, in cabins, saloons and lounges. Down in the engine room the scene was the same, and in the stokehold dying furnaces glowed untended.

At first the Navy men thought some terrific epidemic had hit the ship. But when they came to a wrecked wireless cabin their thoughts changed abruptly. And later, when they found every passenger robbed of their valuables and the ship's strong-room expertly forced and completely cleaned out, they departed swiftly for their own vessel, there to spread the appalling news and bring help back to the stricken liner.

The wild story told by the Queen's captain when he recovered eventually was at first disbelieved, until terrified passengers backed it up with their own testimony. The captain's evidence was that at six p.m. exactly a column of pale yellow gas had suddenly shot down from the clear sky, enveloping the ship from stem to stern. He had seen nothing above them save the yellow fog; no airplane, airship, nothing at all. The people and crew on deck had gone down like corn before the reaper, and in the space of a few seconds he himself had been rendered unconscious.

Remembering the small private yacht he had seen at the time of the disaster he mentioned the fact, and immediately search was made for the vessel to see if its crew could throw any light on the matter. And there the mystery took another turn. For of that private yacht not a trace could be found, though the search was rigorous. She had vanished into the Atlantic dusk.

The next stroke of the Phantom Foe was a strange one. It fell that same night on a large mansion near Blackheath Common, where the guests at a small but distinguished dinner-party, given by a prominent London solicitor, suddenly turned to find themselves covered by the automatics of four hideously-masked men.

They were backed against the dining-room wall, the men robbed of their pocket-books, watches and cuff-links, the ladies of their jewels. After that the bandits had seized one of the guests, a famous American surgeon, Professor Lawrence, who was over on a visit to England, and dragged him with them to the door. There the last raider to leave had paused for a second to throw a glass cylinder into the room, which had exploded, in a gush of yellow gas. And that was all the dinner-party remembered for some hours.

Detectives exploring the house afterwards were completely baffled. How had the bandits entered and got away? Not until they searched the roof as a last resource did they pick up a trail in the shape of foot-prints in the dust of the slates, showing that at least four men had stood there for a time. They also discovered a square patch in the dust, as though something light but bulky had rested on the slates. But seeing

that the house stood in its own grounds, and no further tracks could be found anywhere below, these discoveries only fogged the detectives still more.

The bandits had got clear away somehow, taking with them Professor Lawrence and a rich haul. And apparently they had flown from the house like birds.

Five days later the Phantom crashed home again—at Longhurst Towers, the country seat of the Duke of Meldon. And this time events became grim indeed. For a man was shot dead.

The palatial building was full of distinguished guests at the time, for one of the famous Meldon house-parties was in full swing.

The gong for dinner had just sounded when, into an attic through a roof skylight, dropped six gunmen, noiseless as ghosts, led by the ex-convict Fogerty. Each, in addition to his yellow skin-tight mask, wore a nightmare gas-helmet. They opened the attic door and waited while Fogerty, as scout, prowled softly down the stairs, pricking up his ears as the jovial murmur of voices drifted up from below.

And turning a corner he came face to face with a footman.

The man had been sent to one of the guest's room on an errand. At the ghastly sight of the armed, helmeted intruder he reeled against the wall, his mouth opened in an instinctive yell. But the cry was never uttered.

Plop! Quick as lightning Fogerty's weapon went up, aimed by a cool and vicious killer. There was a flash, the hollow report of a silenced gun. Shot cleanly and calmly through the forehead, the footman crumpled without a sound. He was pushed back into the room, the door locked. Turning, the gangster crept back to his men, and a second later a blue flashlight darted into the sky.

At which signal the yellow gas gushed down.

Like a pale evil searchlight it played on the great house, its thick fumes seeping down through open windows and chimneys. Safe in their gas-masks, the raiders waited, grinning at the sounds they heard. Muffled screams, cries that ended abruptly, the crash of a door as terrified men burst it open, only to collapse next instant. For perhaps thirty seconds the Duke of Meldon's country house was in an uproar. Then the bandits stole down at last to their work, and found only silence and huddled men and women. They went about their tasks with tigerish speed and precision.

Once again the Phantom Foe had struck. But by doing so he was very shortly to clash with Thurston Kyle, the Night Hawk, who on his fast-flying wings was the ruthless enemy of all criminals.

(How's that for an exciting first instalment, chums? This serial is going to be one of the most thrilling you've ever read—so make sure you don't miss next Wednesday's enthralling chapters.)

"LEE The LIONHEART!"

(Continued from page 37.)

by surprise. The King's fingers grasped at the black beard which adorned Lee's chin.

"Dog!" snarled Cedric. "Thou art not Guntha!"

The false beard was very firmly fixed, but it could not withstand such treatment. A smallish patch of hair came out in the King's hands—and then he knew, for certain, that this man was Lee the Lionheart.

"Seize him!" roared King Cedric wildly. "He is indeed a spy!"

With one movement he drew his sword, and at the same moment Attawulf and the soldiers rushed to the attack.

Even as the King's sword flashed towards him, Lee took a single leap. It was a gloriously-judged effort, and he soared upwards, cleared the battlements, and dropped—down, down!

Lee the Lionheart, true to his name, had leapt into the moat.

It was the one chance. Lee had remembered that moat in a flash. Like a stone he dropped, and he struck the water with a mighty splash, to the consternation and amazement of some officers and men who were in the courtyard, unconscious that anything was amiss.

As Lee rose to the surface, and as he clutched at the moat's side and hauled himself out, shouts came from the battlements.

"Seize him!" Cedric was bellowing. "A spy! Hold that man!"

Lee was out by now, and without a second's hesitation he ran forward and delivered a deadly right-hander in the face of the nearest officer. The man went to the ground with a sickening crash, hardly uttering a groan.

Spinning round, Lee reached the officer's horse and leapt into the saddle. The animal reared and then charged forward. Over the drawbridge thundered Lee before

the soldiers had recovered from their consternation.

"Clear the road—out of my way, dogs!" yelled Lee.

To the gaping crowds in the street, to the startled soldiers and slaves, he was still Guntha the Crafty, and none attempted to stop him.

In the rear came a thundering cavalcade of horsemen in chase. But Lee had all the advantage—he had a good start, and the roads were being cleared for him.

He reached one of the gates in a very short time, still going at full gallop. Shouting like a madman, his cries were heard long before he was seen. The guards at the gate watched the horseman in amazement.

"'Tis Guntha!" went up the shout. "Make way, men, for Guntha!" Thus was Lee's escape facilitated by the enemy.

"The gates—the gates!" bellowed Lee, as he rode through. "Shut them, ye fools!"

The guards heard the words clearly enough, and, thinking that Guntha was in some danger, they blindly obeyed. And so, when the pursuers came up, they found the gates closed upon them, and the delay was considerable. By the time the gates were opened again, the fugitive had vanished.

Lee the Lionheart had escaped!

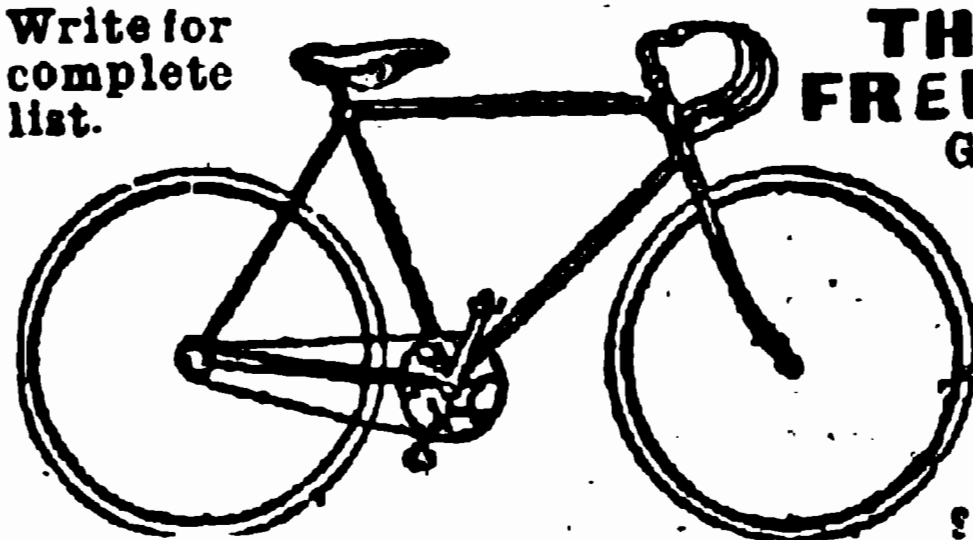
Arriving back safely in the Northestrian lines, he told his story, and immediate preparations were made by the jubilant rebels for attacking their Gothlander enemies. It was the eve of the great Battle of Dunstane.

The near future promised to be packed with thrills for the cheery Chums of St. Franks'.

THE END.

(Read about the mighty battle of Dunstane in next week's enthralling yarn featuring the boys of St. Frank's. Entitled: "Schoolboys in Armour!" Order your copy now.)

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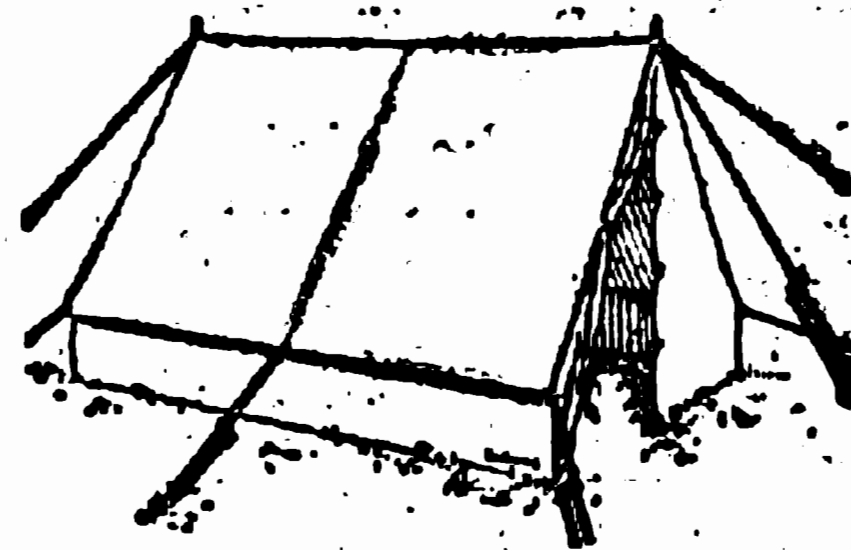
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