

**"THE MYSTERY OF THE SMUGGLERS' CAVE!"**

*A sensational long school-adventure yarn of dramatic interest and exciting action—introducing the famous CHUMS OF ST. FRANK'S and JIM THE PENMAN, master forger—complete in this issue.*

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**GLIDING PERIL!**

# The MYSTERY of the

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**THE SCHOOLBOY SLAVES!**  
Prisoners in an underground cavern . . . Forced to work by their mysterious captors . . . Such is the fate of seven St. Frank's schoolboys.

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### CHAPTER 1.

#### The Missing Schoolboys!

"**H**E'S through!"

"Go it, Nipper!"

"Shoot—shoot!"

Wild yells of excitement arose on the wintry afternoon air. The Junior football ground of the River House School was crowded with spectators, and a great many of these were St. Frank's boys. It was the Saints who were now yelling themselves hoarse.

For the result of the game was in the balance.

There was but one minute to go, and both sides had scored two goals in a thrilling, keenly-contested, exhilarating match. It was one of the fixtures in the St. Frank's Junior League—a game, in fact, which should really have been played before the Christmas holidays, but which had been postponed.

"Shoot, Nipper—shoot!"

It was becoming a mighty roar. Nipper, the St. Frank's Junior skipper, had suddenly and unexpectedly made a clean break through, and now he was raiding the River House goal with grim determination. The match had been regarded as an inevitable draw.

Nipper's last-minute effort was as brilliant as it was unlooked-for. He had seen the opening, and he had taken instant advantage of it. With uncanny skill, the St. Frank's skipper had already beaten two of the opposing half-backs. Now the River House backs were dashing at him in a panic. It seemed any odds that the crisis would pass, for Nipper was making as though to pass the ball across to Reggie Pitt, who was standing hopelessly off-side.

But at the last second, to the bewilderment of the backs, Nipper swerved, circled round them, and was on his way goal-

wards again, leaving the dazed pair in his rear.

"Hurrah!"

"Oh, well done, Nipper!"

Slam!

Nipper made no mistake about it. The shot he sent in was a crashing winner. The goalie did his best, but he hardly saw the leather at all.

"Goal!"

"Well played, Nipper!"



Twenty seconds later the final whistle blew, and Hal Brewster, the River House skipper, ran across to Nipper and thumped him on the back.

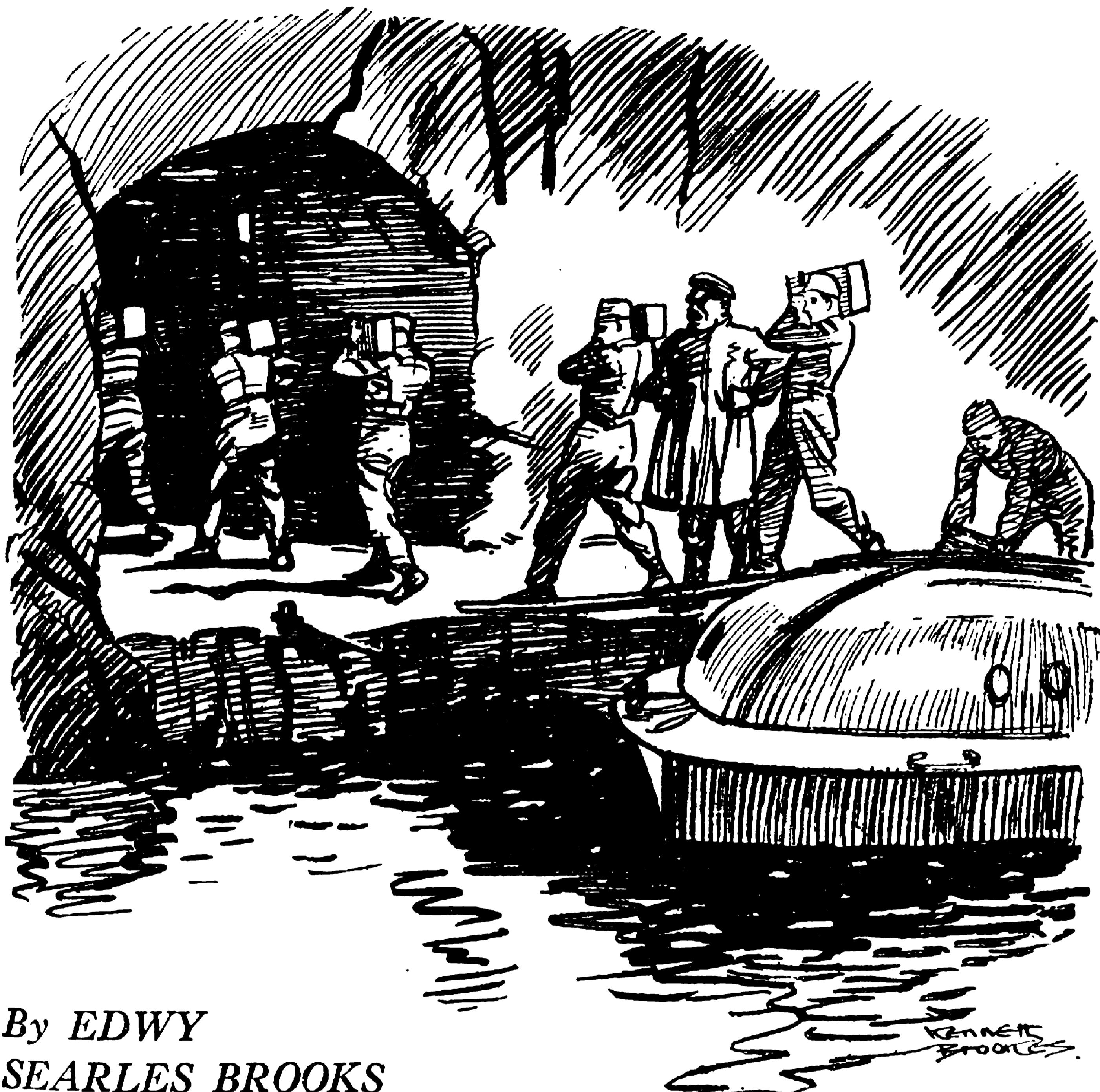
"Hard lines on us, but you jolly well deserve the match," he said handsomely. "That goal of yours, old man, was a corker!"

"Rats! It was a gift," replied Nipper. "Your defence slackened up a bit, and I took advantage of it—that's all."

Brewster frowned.

and St. Frank's schoolboys! Amazing long complete yarn!

# SMUGGLERS' CAVE!



By **EDWY  
SEARLES BROOKS**

"Yes, by Jove! I shall have something to say to those half-backs!" he exclaimed darkly. "It was all their fault for letting you through."

"Don't you kid yourself!" shouted Handforth, the St. Frank's goalie, bustling up. "Nobody could have stopped Nipper that time. Even I couldn't have saved that ripping shot. Jolly good, old son!" he added, delivering a slap on Nipper's back which nearly knocked the Junior skipper headlong. "This victory keeps us well at the top of the League table."

All the Saints were delighted at the result; and even the River House boys

could not grumble, for they were sporting enough to recognise the fact that they had been well and truly beaten.

The St. Frank's spectators all went crowding off across the fields, back to St. Frank's for tea. But Hal Brewster and his merry men took possession of the St. Frank's team and carried it off into Bannington—and here Hal Brewster & Co. treated their conquerors to a first-class spread in the Japanese Café, a favourite resort.

"Looks like being foggy," remarked Glynn, of the River House, during the feed.

"It's foggy already," said Handforth,

glancing through one of the blurred windows into the High Street. "It started coming on before the end of the game. It's as thick as pudding now."

"Not so bad as that," said Hal Brewster. "Anyhow, the buses are still running, thank goodness!"

"All the same, we'd better be in good time at the stopping-place," said Nipper. "We're catching the five-forty-five, don't forget. There's not another one until six-forty-five—and that may not run at all, if this fog gets any worse."

"Heard any more about those missing chaps of yours?" asked Ascott suddenly.

"Not a thing," replied Nipper, shaking his head.

Football was instantly forgotten, and most of those boys, who had been chattering gaily, became silent.

"It's a staggering thing," said Brewster, at length. "I mean, six of your Fourth-Formers disappearing off the face of the giddy earth. They vanish without leaving a trace. Even the big nobs of Scotland Yard, who are down here investigating, can't find a clue. It's—it's almost uncanny."

"Those Fourth-Formers weren't the only ones, either," put in Handforth. "What about Joe Spence, the Bellton stationmaster's son? And other young chaps of the district? There have been all sorts of mysterious disappearances lately. Still, something may come out soon—something sensational."

Nipper gave him a quick, warning glance.

"There's no need for us to bother our heads over the problem," said the Remove captain. "The local police are doing all they can—and they are helped by Scotland Yard. My guv'nor, too, is keeping his eyes pretty wide open."

"That's a comfort," remarked Hal Brewster. "You chaps are pretty lucky—having a famous detective like Mr. Nelson Lee for a headmaster."

And during the remainder of the meal, which had lost some of its earlier gaiety, the boys discussed the amazing mystery of the vanished Fourth-Formers. Over a week had elapsed since the six had been spirited away, and, day by day, the school had expected to hear of some news.

There were all sorts of theories. Perhaps the boys had been put aboard a steamer, bound for some distant foreign port—perhaps they had been kidnapped by some madman, or perhaps they had voluntarily bolted, influenced by circumstances which were unknown to their friends or relatives. But most of these theories, after all, were little better than wild, random guesses. The fact remained

that the police had drawn a complete blank.

It was a disquieting fact, but those schoolboys had vanished without trace.

## CHAPTER 2.

### The Men in the Fog!

"CRUMBS! It's thick!"

Crowding out into the High Street, after the feed, the rival teams were astonished by the density of the fog. It was not yellow, or acrid, but a thick white mist. The opposite side of the High Street was invisible; only a dim blur of radiance indicated the brightly-lighted shops.

"What an evening!" said Reggie Pitt, with a shiver. "Ugh! I shall be glad to get home."

"You chaps are more lucky than us," remarked Hal Brewster, as they all strode off down the High Street towards the bus stop. "You go right through to Bellton, and—"

"And we have to walk from there," nodded Nipper. "Practically a mile, too."

"Yes, but you'll be on the road," said Brewster. "We get off half-way between Bannington and Bellton, and then we've only got a little country lane. Still, who cares? Fogs aren't so bad."

At any ordinary time the boys would not have been particularly perturbed. But just now—although they would not have admitted it for worlds—they were nervous and uneasy. They could not forget those strange disappearances. And each boy, independently, wondered if it would be his turn next. For it was an undeniable fact that there was a mild reign of terror in the district.

Much to their relief, the big double-decker bus, brightly illuminated, glided up out of the fog prompt on time. There were already a good few people aboard, and others were waiting.

"Crumbs! I hope there's room for all of us," said Church anxiously.

"Don't worry—we'll get aboard," replied Handforth, with his usual confidence.

Most of the fellows climbed to the top deck, which was covered in. The conductor ran up and down the stairs hurriedly. Only a certain number of passengers were allowed to stand.

"You're lucky, young gents!" said the conductor. "Just room enough for you, and that's all."

"Then why worry?" asked Nipper.

The conductor ran downstairs, and he was about to give the bell three rings—

signifying to the driver that the bus was full up—when a breathless figure arrived out of the thick mist.

"Hold on!" it panted. "Thought I'd missed you."

"You might just as well, sir," said the conductor. "Sorry; you can't get on!"

"Can't get on? Why not?" demanded the newcomer indignantly. "Don't be an ass! Of course I'm getting on!"

The juniors recognised the voice of Cuthbert Chambers, of the Fifth. Chambers had a big idea of his own importance, and he used the wrong tactics with that harassed conductor. The man was human, and it was a wretched night. Rubbed the right way, he might have stretched a point. But Chambers was celebrated for rubbing people the wrong way.

"Like your nerve!" he said, as he made to get on the bus. "I've a jolly good mind to report you to the company, my man!"

"Oh!" said the conductor, nettled. "Think I care? You can report me if you like, sir—but you're not coming on this bus. I'm full up!"

He rang the bell with a firm hand.

"Hi!" yelled Chambers wrathfully. "There's not another bus for an hour. I shall have to walk!"

"That's your trouble, sir," said the conductor. "Now then—none of that, please!"

Chambers had made a leap, and he was attempting to get on the now-moving vehicle.

"Take your arm away!" he bellowed. "You—you silly rotter! I'll have you sacked for this!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a yell of laughter from the top of the stairs, where a number of the juniors were watching.

"Poor old Chambers!"

"Hard lines!"

"Better luck next time, Cuthbert!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

By now Cuthbert Chambers had been definitely prevented from getting aboard; and the bus was gathering speed, its yellow fog-lights efficiently piercing the mist.

"You—you cackling young blighters!" shouted Chambers. "You wait until I get to St Frank's! I'll take it out of you for this!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hope you enjoy your walk, Cuthbert, old son!"

"You'd better start now—there may not be another bus this evening!"

Chambers gritted his teeth with anger. He fell back on to the pavement as the bus disappeared into the mist. He failed

to notice a dark, shadowy figure which was standing back, almost hidden by the gloom. This man had heard everything; and after a moment or two he turned on his heel, and, walking noiselessly, he proceeded some little distance up the High Street—until he came to a saloon car which was standing motionless against the kerb.

Another man was sitting in the car, and for some moments the two talked in low, confidential tones.

"Quite sure the young chap is alone?" murmured one of the men.

"Yes—and he's walking," said the other. "Starting now."

"Well, we're not going to take any chances," said the first man. "We'll wait a bit. He seems to be the right sort—and we might work it if we're careful. Better go back and see if he's still there."

The other nodded, and disappeared into the mist.

### CHAPTER 3.

#### Rough on Chambers!

CUTHBERT CHAMBERS was thoroughly fed up

He had counted upon catching that bus; and would, indeed, have caught it easily. But to be turned off because of an unexpected crowd of noisy juniors—well, somebody was going to hear something about it!

Chambers boiled. His dignity had been upset. If those juniors had had an ounce of respect for him—which was his due, considering that he was a senior—one of them would have got off the bus to make room for him. But Chambers' estimation of his own importance, and the school's estimation of his importance, were two vastly different things. Indeed, there could be no real comparison, since the school did not consider Chambers important at all.

"Bother and blow and rats and dash!" he ejaculated. "Now I've got to walk! And it's foggy. And getting thicker!"

He listened dolefully to the last murmuring sound of the bus as it vanished into the mist. Well, he wasn't going to walk. Not likely! He'd wait for the 6.45, and when he got back to the school he would make it jolly hot for those cheeky juniors.

Of course, by walking, he could be home in just over half an hour—but he dismissed the thought. Why should he walk? Why waste a perfectly good return ticket?

He ambled back along the High Street, and even if there had been no fog at all he would not have known that a certain

man was vastly interested in his movements.

He saw a figure by the kerb, a little farther on, hazy in the mist. He hurried forward, dimly recognising a St. Frank's cap. There was a powerful motor-cycle here, too—and the big electric headlamp was already turned on.

"Hallo!" said Chambers breathlessly.

"Hallo!" said Bernard Forrest, of the St. Frank's Remove.

He was about to give the kick-starter a push, and he only gave the Fifth-Former a casual glance. Chambers, with an inward whoop of satisfaction, saw that the rear of the machine carried a comfortable-looking pillion.

"Going home?" asked Chambers eagerly.

"Just starting."

"Good man! I was wondering—"

"This mist is a bit of a nuisance, but there's a good headlight on this machine," said Forrest. "I think we'll get through without any trouble."

"I say, that's awfully decent of you," said Chambers, warming towards this Removite, whom he had always hitherto scorned.

"What's decent of me?" asked Forrest, staring.

"Why, I thought you were going to give me a lift home—"

"You'd better think again, old man," said Forrest.

"Eh?"

"You heard me."

"But—but—"

"What's the matter with you—a hulking senior?" asked Forrest. "Missed the bus, I suppose? You're not afraid to walk, are you?"

"Afraid?" roared Chambers.

He saw that he had been wrong about Bernard Forrest. The cad of Study A was in all truth, a cad. He always had been, and he always would be.

"Don't bark at me," said Forrest, with a sniff.

"You can go to the dickens—you and your blighting motor-bike, too!" said Chambers warmly. "I was an idiot to ask a favour of you. I'll wait for the next bus—and be independent."

"You'd better find a night's lodging, then," chuckled Forrest. "I bet there'll be no other bus to-night. This fog's getting thicker, and the service will be cancelled."

"What!" yelped Chambers, in dismay.

"What's the matter with your legs?" asked Forrest. "It's not much of a walk for a strong chap like you. But I dare say you're afraid. Perhaps you think somebody will come along and

spirit you away on the journey?" He laughed derisively. "Not that St. Frank's would mind much if you disappeared!"

"You—you cheeky young sweep!" said Chambers thickly. "I'll show you whether I'm afraid to walk home or not! By Jove! I'm not going to have you saying—"

"Sorry, old man—can't stop," interrupted Forrest. "Jump on, Gully. I must say you've been a deuce of a time."

Then Chambers understood why there was no room for him on the motor-cycle. Gulliver, one of Forrest's pals, had just emerged from a shop, and he promptly climbed on to the pillion-seat.

"This big ass trying to bag a lift home?" he grinned. "Hard luck, Chambers! You can run behind if you like."

And the motor-cycle purred off, both the Removites chuckling. Chambers fumed afresh.

Forrest, as it happened, had hit him on the raw. He had indeed been thinking of those mysterious disappearances, and because of his thoughts he had decided to wait for the next bus. But that was all changed now. He wasn't going to have Bernard Forrest spreading a story about the school to the effect that he was funky of the dark.

He pulled his muffler more tightly about him, and strode off into the mist. His mysterious shadower, who had heard every word which had passed between Chambers and Forrest, went back to the stationary saloon car.

"O.K.!" he muttered briefly. "He's walking. Just our meat."

"Good!" said the other. "Hop in!"

Chambers felt much better now that he had made up his mind. There is nothing quite so disconcerting as indecision. And the walk, he found, once he was fairly out of the town, was not half so bad as he had anticipated.

In fact, the mist seemed thinner on the open road. He scorned his earlier misgivings. How could anything possibly happen to him on this quiet, respectable country road? What rot!

All the same, his senses were on the alert. He kept telling himself that he was acting like a big kid—and then, the next moment, he remembered the extraordinary circumstances in which six boys of the Fourth Form had vanished. There were others, too. And they had all disappeared during the hours of darkness.

Chambers' thoughts were abruptly interrupted. He could hear the sound of an approaching motor-car. Halting, he turned and stared. He could see the



With a feeling of dismay, Chambers watched the bus disappear into the fog. He would have to walk to St. Frank's now. And he did not see the mysterious stranger who was watching his every movement.

radianee of the headlights, and he waited, filled with a sense of great relief.

Far better to have hidden behind the hedge, allowing that car to pass on!

#### CHAPTER 4.

##### Another Victim!

"I SAY! Hi! Hold on!"

Chambers, waving his hands wildly, stood revealed in the glare of the approaching car's headlamps. He took care to keep to the side of the road, in case the driver failed to respond. The car pulled up at once, however, and a cheery voice sounded.

"Hallo! What's the trouble, young man?" it asked, with a touch of amusement. "Want a lift?"

"By Jove! That's awfully decent of you," said Chambers eagerly, as he ran up to the driver's window. "I missed the bus—or, rather, the bus was full, and the fool of a conductor wouldn't—"

"That's all right," said the driver good-naturedly. "Plenty of room at the back. Hop in, and make yourself comfortable."

Chambers could see two figures in the front; but in the darkness it was impossible to gain even a hazy impression of their features. The cordiality of the

driver's voice was good enough for the Fifth-Former.

"I'm a St. Frank's chap," he said, as he made for the rear door. "If you'll give me a lift as far as Bellton—"

"That's all right—we'll take you right to the school," said the driver cheerily.

"I say, that's most frightfully sporting of you," said Chambers gladly, as he opened the door. "By Jove! I shall be home before those confoundedly cheeky juniors! Thanks again!"

"Rubbish!" laughed the driver. "You're perfectly welcome."

Chambers jumped in and slammed the door. He sank back luxuriously into the soft cushions. He saw that the car was different from an ordinary saloon. It was not a regular limousine, yet the front seat was completely partitioned off from the back by plate-glass.

"Better than all your mouldy old buses," murmured Chambers complacently.

The car was bowling along well, in spite of the mist. It seemed to Chambers that the exhaust was making a curious noise. It was unusual—a kind of low, powerful hiss. That was funny, too. For the hiss seemed to be right inside the car, as though something had sprung a leak. Just like a gas-pipe being turned on—

A sudden choking sensation assailed Cuthbert Chambers by the throat. Startled, he sat forward, gulping.

"Here, I say!" he gurgled. "There's—there's something—Help! I—I can't breathe—"

His senses reeled. He clutched helplessly at the air, and the next moment he sprawled back, motionless. Blackness had enveloped him; he had had a sensation of falling, and then oblivion.

The light from an electric torch played through the glass partition for a moment. The car stopped.

Both men sprang out, and all four doors were pulled wide open. One of the men operated a hidden lever, and the glass partition sank noiselessly into the upholstery of the front seat. The saloon was normal again.

"All right now!" muttered one of the men. "Better hold your breath, though."

It was the work of a moment to pull Chambers off the rear seat, and to lift up the seat. Within another five seconds Chambers had been thrust down into a surprisingly large cavity. A thin lid of three-ply wood was placed in position, and then the cushions. The car drove on, apparently empty save for the two men.

And well it was that these precautions had been taken. For at the cross-roads, in Belton, a uniformed figure stood out with upraised hand. The car immediately pulled up.

"Sorry, sir, but we're keeping a watch on all cars," said the constable, as he approached the driver's window.

"Why, what's wrong?" asked the driver. "Any more disappearances?"

"None reported yet, but on a night like this anything might happen," replied the constable.

He flashed a powerful light into the car, and upon the two men. Then he suddenly recognised them.

"Why didn't you tell me you were from Crag House?" he asked. "No need to examine your car, Williams."

Williams, the driver, looked amusedly at the constable.

"You're one of the Caistowe men, aren't you?" he asked.

"Yes—there's two or three of us on extra duty," said the officer. "All right; you can go ahead. Sorry to have bothered you. Wretched night, isn't it?"

The car drove on, and after a while Williams chuckled.

"Dead easy, Jim," he murmured. "As the Chief often tells us, there's nothing like cool cheek."

"All the same, Shorty, we mustn't do it too often," said the other.

"My dear chap, we're known in this district—we're highly respected," said Shorty Williams. "And don't forget we get a tenner each for the recruit in the back."

And so, openly, on the public highway, practically under the eyes of the police, Cuthbert Chambers had vanished as though into thin air.

It was, of course, several hours before the Fifth-Former's disappearance was reported—first to his Housemaster, then to the headmaster, and, later, to the police.

Such things necessarily take time. At St. Frank's, nobody was interested in Chambers except his immediate friends. Phillips, who shared a study with him in the Ancient House, did not even know that Chambers had failed to return from Bannington. For Phillips had attended a lecture—one of Mr. Wilkes' "specials."

At calling-over, when Cuthbert Chambers failed to call his name, a few inquiries were made; and once they were started, other facts came out. It became known that Chambers had gone into the town; that he had lost the bus; that he had tried to get a lift on Forrest's motorcycle; and, finally, that he had commenced walking.

After that—no trace! Chambers had started out from Bannington in the mist, and he had not arrived at St. Frank's. Somewhere along that murky road he had met his strange fate.

## CHAPTER 5.

### Without Trace!

**C**HAMBERS, eh? Phew! Poor old Cuthbert!"

Everybody was saying the same thing. So Chambers was the latest! Of course, all sorts of alternative theories were expounded. Perhaps Chambers had not commenced walking home after all; perhaps he had gone to the pictures. Perhaps he had waited for the next bus, and the next bus had got ditched, or something.

But when bed-time arrived, and exhaustive inquiries had been made, proving that nothing had happened to any of the buses, and that Chambers was certainly not at the pictures—then, indeed, the worst was feared.

Nipper went into Study D just before bed-time, and he found Handforth and Church and McClure looking unusually grave.

"Any news?" asked the three, in one voice.

"Nothing," said Nipper, as he closed the door. "Chambers has gone—like the rest. It's not exaggerating much to say that the school is almost in a panic."

"What the dickens for?" growled Handforth. "Nothing's going to happen at St. Frank's."

"I don't mean that the chaps are afraid of that," replied Nipper. "But they're all scared of going out, and—— Hallo! What the dickens is that?"

"Sounds like the bell!" ejaculated Church, startled.

It was, indeed, the great bell—calling the school together into Big Hall. Such a move was almost unprecedented.

"By George, I wish we could slip out—and do some investigating," said Handforth breathlessly. "We know more than the other chaps, don't we? I'll bet my term's pocket-money that Chambers has been taken along to Crag House."

"Shush!" warned McClure. "You know that Mr. Lee didn't want us to breathe a word."

"Better leave it to my guv'nor, you chaps," said Nipper, nodding. "This case is big—it's something out of the common. And if we give the crooks a hint—well, things might go badly with those poor chaps who have been kidnapped."

These four boys were the only ones in the school who had the faintest inkling of the truth—and even their knowledge was hazy. They had ventured out on the night when the six Fourth-Formers had disappeared; and certain clues had led Nelson Lee to Crag House, the lonely old mansion belonging to Admiral Sir Rodney Carrington, which stood on the cliffs near Shingle Head.

On that never-to-be-forgotten occasion, Nipper and Handforth & Co. had rescued Nelson Lee from a tight corner—in the old smugglers' cave which extended far into the cliff, below.

Nelson Lee and the boys had established, then, that there was something mysterious—something sinister—going on at Crag House. But even Nelson Lee himself knew nothing definite.

Admiral Carrington was away—wintering abroad, as usual. Crag House was shut up, except for Crowson, the butler, and one or two menservants. On the surface, Crag House was above suspicion.

"Come on!" said Nipper briskly.

They went into Big Hall with all the others. Everybody was excited. Prefects were hurrying about, rounding up the stragglers. At last the entire school had collected; and the headmaster lost no time in coming upon the platform.

"You all know what has happened," said Nelson Lee quietly, amid the hush. "Another boy of this school has vanished in mysterious circumstances. Chambers, of the Fifth, set out to walk from Bannington to St. Frank's this evening, and since then he has not been seen. The police have made the closest inquiries, but unfortunately Chambers' whereabouts still remain a mystery."

"Now, I do not intend to beat about the bush," continued Lee, his voice becoming grim. "There is an enemy at work in this district—a man, or an organisation—and young people are being seized. We cannot even guess for what purpose. But we must not get into a panic; we must remain calm, and carry on as usual."

There were murmurs of assent.

"There is one precaution we must take, however," went on Nelson Lee. "I do not like imposing restrictions upon the school, especially if they curtail the school's normal liberties. But the situation is so grave that, for your own sakes, I must give definite orders that all boys, juniors and seniors alike, are to remain within gates after dark."

"Oh!" went up a little murmur.

"There is not much danger of any boys being interfered with during the daylight hours, and I shall try to compensate you by giving you extra liberties—but you will learn more of this later," continued Nelson Lee. "Let it be thoroughly understood, however, that no boy, in any circumstances whatsoever, is to leave the school premises after dark. To-night's unfortunate affair has shown us that we must be careful. I want the school to take this restriction in the right spirit, and I feel sure that it will do so. That is all. You may dismiss."

The school, throbbing and buzzing with excitement, dismissed, and went to bed.

Nelson Lee, going straight to his library, found Chief Detective-inspector Lennard, of Scotland Yard, awaiting him.

"Nothing—absolutely nothing!" said the inspector gruffly. "We've searched every inch of that road, and there's not a ghost of a clue. Hang it, Lee, this case is rattling me."

"Don't let it," advised Nelson Lee crisply. "Before long, perhaps, I shall be able to put you on to something startling. I won't give any promises—but I have certain suspicions."

"What are they?" asked the Yard man eagerly. "For the love of Mike, Lee, don't hold out on me!"

"I'll not hold out on you a moment longer than is necessary," promised the schoolmaster-detective. "When I have

facts, Lennard, you shall have them. But I'm certainly not going to take you into my confidence regarding mere suspicions."

Lennard sighed.

"And it's not a bit of good pressing you," he growled. "You always were an obstinate beggar, Lee. Well, go your own way. And good luck!"

"I can't help thinking that a car was employed in kidnapping the youngster," said Nelson Lee slowly. "A car, or a commercial van. Some such method, at all events, must have been used to get him away."

"I can't see it," replied the inspector. "I've got men stationed in Bellton, in Bannington, and in Caistowe. Every private car—and every private van—was stopped, and the drivers were questioned."

"Have you the full particulars of every car and van which was stopped?" asked Lee, looking up quickly.

"Not at the minute, but I shall have when all the reports come in," replied Lennard. "I can't help feeling, Lee, that you are barking up the wrong tree. If that boy had been knocked on the head and shoved into a car, he would have been found."

"Do you happen to know what cars were stopped in Bellton—cars coming into the village from the direction of Bannington?"

The chief inspector consulted a notebook.

"That's easy," he replied, smiling. "Leaving out the buses, only four other vehicles came into the village between the hours of six and eight—that is, the critical hour," he replied. "This fog put a stop to nearly all motoring. Those four cars were above suspicion."

"All the same, I would like to know about them."

"Well, one of them belonged to Dr. Brett—a personal friend of yours, I believe," said Lennard dryly. "Another was Farmer Holt's milk-van; a third carried a couple of Admiral Thingummy's servants; and the fourth was a commercial traveller, with a load of drapery, bound for Caistowe. You see how impossible it was for that boy to be in any of those cars."

But Nelson Lee did not reply; he had heard all he wanted to know.

## CHAPTER 6.

### Quarry Quest!

AFTER the chief inspector had gone, Nelson Lee sat thoughtful for some time. It was an interesting reflection that the Yard man, for all his astuteness, thought so little of Crag House

as a possible field of investigation that he referred to that car—the vital car—as containing "two of Admiral Thingummy's servants." The local police were every bit as unsuspicious.

Admiral Sir Rodney Carrington was a local resident of unimpeachable character; Crowson, the butler, was well known and highly respected, too. A car going to Crag House, or coming from Crag House, was, in the eyes of the police, essentially above suspicion.

And Nelson Lee could not blame the police. They had not the slightest inkling of the startling truth. But Nelson Lee, by reason of his investigations a week ago, had definitely narrowed down the search. Incredible as it seemed, he knew that Crag House was the vital nerve-centre in this baffling mystery.

Until he knew something more definite, however, the detective had no intention of taking the police into his confidence. He knew their methods, and while he agreed with those methods in the main, he also appreciated the necessity for caution. Seven St. Frank's boys were in the grip of these unknown crooks, and premature action by the police might endanger their very lives.

If Lee told all he knew about Crag House, it was likely enough that the police would obtain a search warrant—and make a sudden raid. Such a raid might succeed; on the other hand, there was a distinct chance that it would prove a dismal failure. Thus, the crooks would be warned, and after that there would be no hope of trapping them. Far better to go slowly—and surely.

At about midnight, when St. Frank's was sound asleep, a figure passed noiselessly out into the dense mist. Nelson Lee was on the trail!

He would have undertaken this trip earlier, but he had not been prepared. But that day a bulky parcel had arrived for him by registered post. That parcel was now tucked under his arm, and in Nelson Lee's heart there was a sense of quiet confidence.

He wore rubber shoes, and he was well equipped for a night expedition. In one pocket he carried a powerful electric torch; in another pocket a fully-loaded automatic.

The seizing of Cuthbert Chambers had added to the great detective's zest for this adventure. To-night he would make definite discoveries! He was determined. And he was glad of the fog. It helped him enormously.

He did not go anywhere near Crag House, however. He had visited that lonely mansion on a former occasion—and



Dressed in a weird-looking rubber suit, Nelson Lee investigated the tunnels beneath Crag House. Wonderingly he saw two men pass a number of cubicles built into the solid rock.

he had come within an ace of falling into the hands of the enemy. This time he made his way to the beach, down a steep, rutty lane which was locally known as the Gap. It was so foggy that he could see no sign of the beam from the Shingle Head lighthouse; but the mournful note of the giant fog-horn came to his ear with monotonous regularity.

The sea was calm, and the tide nearly at the full. It was possible to walk along the beach almost as far as the headland. Just beyond, perched on the cliff top, was Admiral Carrington's home. And below it, almost concealed by a little inlet, lay a black cave entrance. There were many such caves along this coast; and in the old days they had been much used by smugglers.

Nelson Lee proceeded as far as he could go without actually plunging into the water. The strip of beach narrowed, and soon he found himself at a point where the waves came right up to the cliff face.

The big cave lay beyond—and could only be reached by boat, or by swimming.

Nelson Lee chose the latter course. On the previous occasion he had been forced to swim, and he had found the water uncomfortably cold. To-night he was well equipped for such an adventure.

THE parcel which Nelson Lee had brought with him contained something remarkably interesting.

It was, in fact, a loose-fitting suit of the finest black rubber. It was almost as light as silk, but as tough as leather, and inside it was warmly lined with fleece. Nelson Lee had had this suit made to his especial order, and during the evening he had locked himself in his own bath-room, and had given the suit a thorough testing by immersing himself for thirty minutes in icy-cold water. He had emerged as dry as a bone, and perfectly warm.

With every confidence he proceeded to don the suit. It enveloped him completely—even to his feet and hands. The fastenings were absolutely watertight.

He presented a grotesque appearance when he was ready; for the equipment included a rubber headgear, which covered his head, and converted him into a kind of black gnome. There were little square, celluloid windows for the eyes, and a cunningly devised apparatus so that he could breathe freely.

There were also some cleverly designed pockets—in which he carried his electric torch and his automatic. He knew that he was going on a hazardous enterprise, but it was all the more attractive because of its dangers.

Stepping off one of the rocks, he slid noiselessly into the sea, and the sensation was novel. For he soon found himself swimming easily—and yet he remained perfectly warm and dry. The icy coldness of the wintry sea had no effect upon his body.

Thus, swimming steadily, he found his way through the mist round the frowning rocks; and ahead of him lay the dark cave entrance. At high tide the water filled the cave completely; at low tide the cave remained half-choked with wet seaweed.

From his former experience, Nelson Lee knew that there was some way of communication between the old smugglers' cave and Crag House, far above. Tonight, if possible, Nelson Lee intended to probe the secret.

Swimming into the cave, he became cautious. More than once he clung to the rocks, listening. His hearing was by no means impaired by that strange headgear. For, incorporated in the rubber helmet, were two microphone-like instruments. Whilst being watertight, they conveyed all sounds direct to the wearer's ears. The slightest whisper, the merest murmur, reached Nelson Lee.

There was no hurry; he had most of the night in front of him. He was taking no chances. He spent the better part of half an hour in that cave, feeling his way about, climbing upon a slippery ledge, halting, listening.

At last, having satisfied himself that he was utterly alone, he switched on his powerful electric torch. The light revealed to him a great rocky cave, where the water moved restlessly, swishing and swirling against the rocks. There was a long natural ledge, forming an almost perfect dock. This ledge ran towards the rear of the cave.

Nelson Lee only kept his light switched on until he reached the low entrance of a mysterious tunnel. Having got his bearings, he put out the torch and darkness shut down once more.

He proceeded with the same caution. Foot by foot he passed along the tunnel,

and he could tell that it was rising steeply—taking him upwards into the very centre of the cliff. There were turns now and then, some of them gradual, some sharp.

All the while his senses were on the alert. At any moment somebody might come—perhaps from the rear, perhaps from the front. He was ready, in either case. By advancing in the darkness he had all the advantage. The men who used this tunnel would certainly carry lights and, warned of their approach by the betraying glow, he would have plenty of time to make himself scarce.

At length he came to a spot where he felt nothing. Until now he had kept in contact with the tunnel wall; sometimes he had been obliged to stoop, for the tunnel had narrowed down so that there was not sufficient height to take his tall figure.

Now he had the impression of being in a vast cavern. He walked forward cautiously, feeling both with his feet and hands. Whichever way he felt, there was nothing. He listened for a full minute, and not a sound of any kind came through to his ears. The detective ventured to switch on his torch again.

He found himself within a yard of a blank wall, facing him. Then he saw that he had walked out of the narrow passage, and had strode forwards across a great quarry working, the walls and roof of which were shored up by uneven, ancient beams.

He flashed his light up and down the tunnel. He knew, at once, that it was a long-forgotten working of the old quarry—which scarred the countryside near Bannington Moor. Nelson Lee had had no idea that there was a working extending as far as this. He realised that there must have been a fall near the better-known workings, and this part was therefore completely shut off—and its very existence had been forgotten for many years.

"H'm! Most interesting!" he murmured keenly. "But where are we now—exactly?"

He felt that he was on the verge of a big discovery; yet he hardly knew which way to turn. The old working looked the same in both directions. The floor was of rock, and although there was plenty of dust, Lee could not distinguish any footprints. The air was evidently pure enough, for he felt no sense of discomfort in breathing.

He switched off his light, and took the left-hand direction. A moment later he caught in his breath. Only in the nick of time had he plunged himself into darkness.

For abruptly, unexpectedly, a portion of the solid rock wall, twenty yards down the tunnel, had opened out like a door, and a white glow dispersed the gloom.

He saw black moving shadows; heard the sounds of footsteps—and voices!

— — —

## CHAPTER 7.

### Discoveries!

NELSON LEE slid noiselessly behind one of the great wooden supports which shored up the tunnel. There was no time for him to dodge back into the narrower passage. He must take his chance.

His heart was thumping a little faster than usual. He had been right! Already he was making some interesting discoveries.

To his relief he found that there was a deep recess just at this point—so deep, in fact, that he could squeeze himself into it and become practically invisible, for the recess penetrated behind the heavy baulk of wood.

Yet he found, a moment later, that there was no emergency. Two men had come forth from that secret door into the quarry working; and they were now walking in the opposite direction. Instead of coming towards Nelson Lee, they were going away from him.

Nelson Lee emerged; and even if those men had turned and looked down the tunnel, they would have seen nothing, for Lee's black suit merged into the surrounding blackness. Cautiously, he crept after the pair.

The men were talking freely, quite confident in their privacy. One of them carried a powerful petrol-vapour lantern, which cast a dazzling light all around.

Presently they halted, and one of them put forward a hand. Another section of that solid rock swung back. Nelson Lee watched with breathless interest. The place seemed to be honeycombed with these cunningly-concealed side-tunnels!

The men had vanished, and now only the glow from their lamp could be seen. Lee crept up, and he found himself looking into a low tunnel—and this, clearly, was of comparatively recent construction. Along one side there were doors—and wooden partitions. As far as Lee could make out, there was a number of cubicles, and each door was provided with a powerful lock. The two men had proceeded to the far end.

"No need for us to have come down at all," one man was grumbling. "But you know what the Chief is. Must have everything so-so."

"He's right, too, Shorty," said the other. "We can't be too careful. How's that new kid—the one we grabbed this evening? Has he come round yet?"

"Long ago," said the man, Shorty. "He's sleeping like a baby now—and tomorrow he'll be as ready as the others for hard work."

"Well, hard work won't do the kids any harm," chuckled the other man. "It seems to me that that stuff does 'em good. They're as fit as fiddles, they eat like horses, and they work like Trojans. An ideal kind of life, if you ask me. Happy as babies from morning till night; they sleep like tops, and they haven't any worries. What more could you want?"

Both men chuckled as they vanished round an angle of the tunnel. Lee heard the scratch of a match, and then the sounds of a chair being moved on the rock floor. He guessed that the men had entered a chamber—probably a guard-room. And in all these cubicles the prisoners were accommodated. They were sleeping.

It was an amazing discovery, but one for which Nelson Lee had been fully prepared.

The words he had overheard so opportunely were reassuring. So the boys were happy—they were sleeping like babies—they were working like Trojans.

But all these points were significant. What had been done to those kidnapped youngsters? Why were they so contented? And what was that suggestive reference to "stuff"? What "stuff" had been given to them—to make them so content?

Nelson Lee was urged to venture forward, and to make closer investigations. But he controlled himself. Far better to wait until these men had gone. He did not doubt that he would be able to discover the secret of the hidden doorway. Then, alone, he would do some exploration work.

The "Chief" he judged to be Crowson, the highly-respectable butler of Crag House. These other men were servants—a footman and an outdoor man—probably a gardener, or a chauffeur. Yet, although they appeared to be respectable servants, Lee knew that they were members of a criminal gang.

Astute as Lee was, however, he could not think why those boys had been kidnapped—why they had been brought here. For what purpose were they being used? The mystery, instead of becoming clearer, was deepening.

So engrossed was he in his thoughts—so intent upon the men in the side tunnel—that he did not hear, until too late, a

footstep from behind him. He spun round, realising that somebody had come up that steep tunnel from the smugglers' cave.

The light of an electric torch played fully upon him, and an amazed curse, uttered in a choking voice, came to the detective's ears. He could well understand the newcomer's stupefaction, for Lee was a startling sight in his weird-looking suit.

Nelson Lee acted instantaneously. Like a panther he leapt.

Crash!

His fist rammed home into the face of the stranger, and, with a gasping cry, the man collapsed. That blow had been a knock-out.

Lee fled for the exit, but as soon as he reached the narrow side tunnel he halted.

And there he awaited further developments.

"WHAT was that?"

Shorty Williams and Jim, smoking and chatting in the "guard-room," had heard the peculiar sound from the quarry working. They were startled.

"Better go out and see," said Shorty. "It must be Slaney—he's late already."

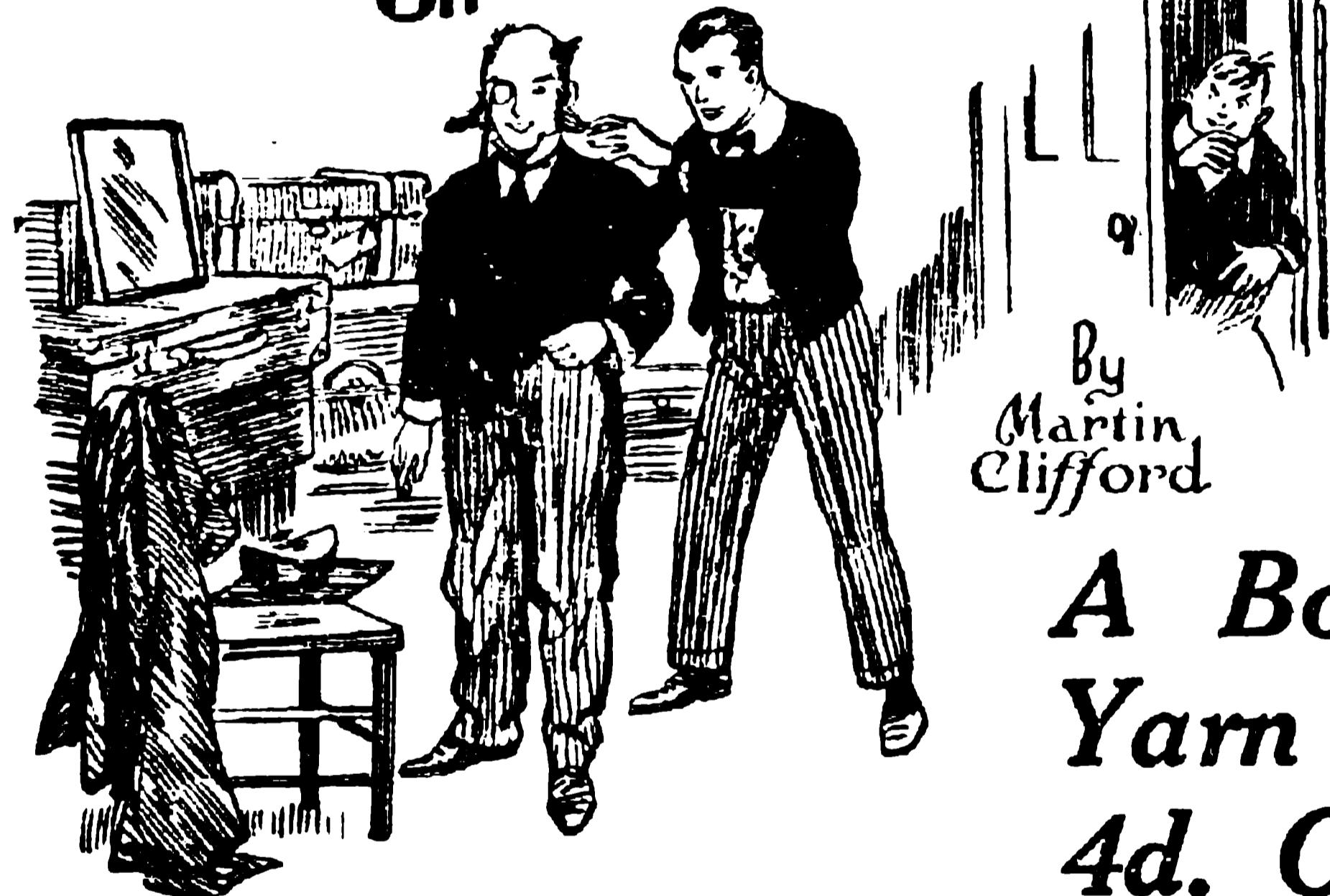
"Come on!" said the other.

One of them picked up the lantern, and they hurried out. This, then, was the reason for their visit to this hidden tunnel. They were awaiting the arrival of a confederate; and that confederate had come unexpectedly upon Nelson Lee.

"Gosh!" ejaculated Shorty, startled.

They had arrived in the quarry shaft, and there, sprawling on the rock floor, was the

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still figure of a man. He was a rough-looking customer, wearing oilskins and heavy boots. A greasy, peaked cap had fallen from his grizzled head, and was lying near by. The man himself was a powerful, square-shouldered individual, with a weather-beaten countenance.

"Thought so—Slaney!" said Jim, bending down, and shaking the unconscious man. "Been drinking again, too!"

"Looks like it!" agreed Shorty, with a whistle. "Must have stumbled and hit his head, or something. The fool! How many times has the Chief warned him?"

Nelson Lee, waiting in the blackness of the side tunnel, heard all this. It was reassuring. These two men, at least, had no suspicion of the real truth. But when Captain Slaney recovered his wits—

"Hold him up a bit—that's right," Jim was saying. "Hallo! He's bleeding a bit—from the mouth. Must have fallen on his jaw."

He grabbed Slaney by the shoulders and shook him roughly.

"Hey! What the—Leave me alone, you swabs!" muttered the captain, as he began to recover. "I'm all right! What the blazes—"

"Take it easy, Slaney," said Shorty. "What happened? Did you stumble, or something? Seems to me you're carrying too much cargo—as usual."

Captain Slaney, opening his eyes wider, suddenly grimaced. He felt his jaw tenderly.

"Split me!" he grunted. "Where's that—that thing?"

"What thing?"  
"It was here—it sprang at me!" panted Slaney, suddenly staring round with wild eyes. "Gosh! Is that you, Shorty? Didn't you see him?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," said Shorty. "Jim and me saw nothing."

"I—I can't figure this out," muttered Slaney, passing a hand over his brow. "A queer-looking crittur—all in black. So black that I couldn't see him proper, even with my torch."

"You're dreaming," said Jim roughly. "There's nobody here except us."

"I tell ye there is!" exclaimed Captain Slaney, staggering unsteadily to his feet. "I saw it—a figure in black—without no proper head. Only a couple of flat-lookin' square eyes!"

The tale sounded fantastic.

"Cut it out, Slaney," said Shorty angrily. "What do you take us for? We're not fools! A man in black, without a head, and with square eyes! You've been drinking again!"

"Gosh!" panted Slaney, staring round in a frightened way. "I saw it—just near here!" he muttered. "It came at me, too; but I don't seem to remember—Something hit me. Gosh!" he repeated. "It's durned funny!"

"Nothing funny about it," growled Jim, catching a whiff of the captain's breath. "You're a fool!" he added contemptuously. "You know what the Chief said about drinking."

"And you'd better forget the black figure," added Shorty. "You can count yourself lucky that you didn't see crimson tadpoles!"

"Mebbe it was just fancy," said Slaney slowly. "Perhaps I fell. I don't seem to recollect, proper. Yet I could swear—No, I couldn't, though," he added lamely. "It's all so mixed."

Nelson Lee experienced a sense of overwhelming relief. It was lucky for him that Captain Slaney was in the habit of drinking heavily. The other two had no doubts whatever; they were quite convinced that Slaney had imagined the incident, and that he had fallen, knocking himself unconscious.

Slaney was full of doubts now. The more he thought of that weird figure, the more unreal it seemed. Yes, he must have imagined it—he must have fallen.

"Better come straight along to the Chief," said Shorty Williams bluntly. "And pull yourself together, Slaney. If he sees that you've been drinking he'll probably give you a 'shot' of the stuff, and turn you into one of the workers!"

"Don't be funny!" snarled Captain Slaney.

"I'm not funny—I mean it," said Shorty. "You know Crowson as well as I do. He'll not stand any nonsense. You've been warned once, and you won't be warned again."

They all went off, after closing the secret door of that second tunnel. They entered the other passage, farther along, and a minute later Nelson Lee found himself alone in the darkness and the silence.

## CHAPTER 8.

### Trapped!

OPTIMISTIC as Nelson Lee had been when he started off on this adventure, he was overjoyed at his success. Even his unlucky encounter with Captain Slaney was not likely to have any serious consequences. But it made the detective realise more than ever the need for extreme caution.

He was beginning to understand. Shorty and Jim had come down from Crag House--how they had come down, Lee could not guess--and they had come to await the arrival of Captain Slaney. That meant that the strange motor-boat was in the cave, below.

Lee had seen that motor-boat once before--a black, low craft, almost like a submarine. But why had the boat come? What cargo had it brought, if any? It seemed feasible that such a boat, coming so secretly, would contain contraband. Yet, somehow, Lee could not reconcile himself to the fact that this gang was engaged in commonplace smuggling.

For Lee never lost sight of the fact that many young people had been kidnapped, and they were being held prisoners. Not merely prisoners, but they were being used as workers. Again, there had been a reference to "the stuff." Crowson, it seemed, would even give Captain Slaney a "shot," and convert him into one of the workers. It was all very baffling.

Nelson Lee felt that he had a clear fifteen minutes, at the least. Those men had gone up to interview the Chief. Lee had marked the exact spot where that secret door existed in the quarry working. And now he went to it, and flashed his light upon the rock wall.

He was startled.

At a first glance there was not the faintest sign of any door. The rock looked solid--as, indeed, it was. There was no visible crevice, no opening, so cunningly did the door close into place. Yet, upon closer inspection, Lee detected the faintest of crevices. They were uneven, formed so that they looked exactly like the natural rock.

But having progressed thus far, he could get no further. There was a secret way of opening this door, and he knew, instinctively, that it might take him hours to make the necessary discovery.

Ten minutes passed--fifteen--twenty. Lee took no further chances. At any moment those men might return. He must delay this investigation for a future occasion. There was no hurry. He was satisfied, now, that the boys were alive and well.

He went back to the narrow side tunnel which led down to the cave, and, extinguishing his torch, he proceeded cautiously.

At last he reached the exit, and now he moved like a shadow. For he knew that the mystery motor-boat was here; and it was certain that a man had been left in charge. On that former occasion Lee had known that there were two men with the

boat--Captain Slaney and a rough customer known as Jed.

In spite of his headgear, Lee's nostrils were assailed by the faint odour of rank tobacco smoke. And as he paused in the tunnel exit, he saw a faint glow in the darkness--a glow which showed clearly for a moment, faded, and then showed again. Jed was sitting there--either on the ledge, or in that boat--and he was smoking a pipe.

Not that Nelson Lee was in the least disconcerted. He had expected this, and he was ready. He had even expected more, for he had had an idea that there would be a light. The darkness helped him.

He knew that he would be able to slip silently into the water, without Jed knowing. Even if Lee made a sound, it would not matter. For the water was swirling and gurgling all the time.

Lee was on the point of emerging from the tunnel when the unexpected happened. Suddenly, from his rear, came the sound of voices--and footsteps. Glancing quickly round, he saw a glow of light from a nearby bend. The formation of the tunnel had prevented Lee from hearing until the last moment. But he knew--now--that Captain Slaney and the others were practically upon him.

He was trapped. He had enemies behind him, and Jed was in front. Jed, hearing the approaching men, had turned on a softly-glowing, but powerful electric lamp.

"About time, too!" Lee heard the man mutter.

It was a moment for quick thinking. Lee was caught between two fires. He could not retreat, for he would fall into the hands of Captain Slaney and the others. If he advanced, Jed would see him. And for Jed to see him would be fatal, for the man would immediately corroborate Captain Slaney's own story, and then the crooks would know that there was a mysterious intruder lurking in their lair. That would inevitably cause them to abandon all their plans--and Lee was very anxious to catch them redhanded at whatever nefarious work they were undertaking.

If the detective hesitated, it was only for the fraction of a second. Then his mind was made up. He sacrificed his automatic. Whipping it from his pocket, he threw it with all his strength across to the far side of the cavern--near the exit. He aimed at the roof; and his aim was true.

The pistol struck the rock, making a noise which sounded like a splintering

crash, and the sound echoed astonishingly in that confined space. Then came a loud splash as the automatic fell into the water.

"S'welp me!" ejaculated Jed, spinning round and staring.

It was the opportunity Lee wanted—the opportunity he had made. Without a sound he lowered himself over the ledge, and slid like a fish into the dark water. A second later he was practically concealed, for a couple of strokes took him to some tangled seaweed, and here he remained motionless, holding easily to the rock near by.

## CHAPTER 9.

### The Human Machines!

"HERE, I don't like this!" said Jed, in alarm.

"What's the matter?" asked Shorty Williams, staring.

"Didn't you hear that just now?"

"Hear what?"

"Why, a chunk of rock split up there in the roof of the cave, and it fell into the water," replied Jed, gazing uneasily at the black void over his head. "Makes a feller feel jumpy. If that rock had fallen on my head it wouldn't have done me any good."

"There's no danger," said Captain Slaney gruffly. "This cave has stood for centuries—so we needn't be afraid of falling rock. Be unfastenin' them hatches, Jed. We're unloading straight away."

And the incident was dismissed. Nelson Lee had expected it. He had been sure from the first that Jed would believe that a piece of rock had become loosened.

The detective now edged himself deeper into the friendly shelter of the tangled seaweed. He took care not to get mixed up in it, but he arranged a festoon of the wet, clinging stuff round his head. Thus he was completely concealed. In the full glow of the light he could remain there—and watch. And none would suspect his presence.

He now witnessed a sight which held him spellbound.

Jed, assisted by Captain Slaney, was removing the metal hatches from the mystery boat. The craft was much larger

than it appeared at first sight. The bulk of it was nearly submerged, and so it was difficult to form any estimate of its actual size. When the hatches had been removed, a great cavity was revealed, and a powerful lamp, like a miniature search-light, was directed downwards into the hold.

At the same time Jim had appeared from the tunnel, and behind him came a dozen extraordinary figures. They were all dressed exactly alike—in drab-coloured suits, tight at the ankles, and tight at the wrists. These costumes included a



While Nipper & Co. searched the grounds of Crag House a dignified butler appeared. "You are trespassing," he said severely. Little did the boys suspect that he was a notorious crook wanted by the police!

headgear of the same material, and at first sight every figure looked exactly the same. They walked the same, too; they held themselves the same. They moved like automata.

Nelson Lee watched with mingled wonder, anger and pity.

"There!" said Jim, speaking distinctly, and pointing. "Go across that plank and

unload that boat. Understand? Go ahead! Sharp's the word!"

The "human machines" said nothing. They obeyed orders mechanically. And as they set about their task, Lee saw that their faces were expressionless. He was irresistibly reminded of helpless rabbits. They did not seem to resent the orders, or the work. They commenced the task with machine-like precision.

As they came into the radius of the light, Lee recognised them, in spite of their similarity of attire.

"Harron!" murmured Lee grimly. "Yes, and Turner—and Freeman—and Steele. And here's Spence, the stationmaster's boy."

Some of them were unknown to him—youngsters who had been kidnapped from various parts of the district. But his own boys—those Fourth-Formers—were as willing and as meek as tamed animals. Yet they looked healthy enough.

"Upon my word!" murmured Lee. "This is an ugly business. The boys have been treated in some way—drugged, I suspect. The fact that the drug is harmless does not excuse the culprits."

A great rage surged within him, and relief, too. All these boys were safe and well. That, indeed, was a great—a won-

**Alfred Edgar's latest adventure-thriller.**

derful—discovery. Although Lee would not yet be able to give anxious parents any information, he knew, at all events, that there had been no tragedy.

He determined to rescue these boys at the earliest possible moment. But he could not act too drastically—for he was also determined to discover the exact nature of this grim enterprise, and to expose the criminals.

Another surprise awaited him—a bewildering one.

For he now saw the nature of the cargo which was being unloaded by these automata. As each boy crossed from the boat to the ledge and vanished into the tunnel, he carried a block of granite.

At first Lee suspected that the granite was a fake, and that each block contained, secreted in its interior, something of value—something which was being smuggled.

Yet it was hardly feasible that such a clumsy disguise should have been adopted. And when one of the boys accidentally dropped a block of granite into the water, scarcely a comment was made. Shorty merely spoke a sharp word and told the culprit not to be so careless. If that block had contained anything valuable,



## "Bai Jove, deah boys . . ."

**Says Arthur Augustus d'Arcy.**

Look at this fwrightful sight! Weally I think it extwemely disgustin' that any fellah should be seen at St. Jim's looking so tewwibly disreputable! Aftah all, deah boys, clothes make the man, don't you know, an' I always considah that the first wesponsiblity of a gentleman is to be dwessed pwoperly.

"Meet me in this week's GEM, an' learn all about cowvect dwess. There is a pwoper dwess for evewy occasion, an' I assuah you that I know all about it. This week I have to pay special attention to my clobbah, because I wish to attwact the notice of the Head's niece, who is a simply stunnin' girl!"

**THE GEM**

**2d.**

**Every  
Wednesday**

there would have been a very different scene

Granite—plain, honest granite! And it was being brought secretly to this cave, and carried into the mysterious depths of the cliff by these "human machines."

What could it all mean? Granite could be bought cheaply and openly. Why smuggle it secretly, by night? The only solution that occurred to Nelson Lee was that the people in Crag House were building something of which no outside soul must know.

But what? Rack his brain as he would, Nelson Lee could not arrive at any feasible solution. Fiercely he told himself that he would use every resource to probe the real secret of Crag House.

The work occupied about an hour; then the captives were marched away. Captain Slaney and Jed exchanged a few words with Shorty, then they got aboard their craft, and it slid noiselessly away into the blackness of the fog—presumably to get another cargo.

Nelson Lee took no further action that night.

He swam noiselessly out of the cave, worked his way round, removed his admirable suit on the beach, and walked back to St. Frank's through the mist. He went to bed a very puzzled man.

## CHAPTER 10.

### Hare and Hounds!

"THIS way!" said Reggie Pitt crisply.

It was afternoon, and Pitt and Castleton, in running-shorts, and with satchels slung over their shoulders, were trotting comfortably along the Caistowe road. A minute earlier they had broken through the hedge, after dodging and zig-zagging across country.

It was a Junior paper-chase, and the two West House juniors were the hares. The mist had cleared away by now, and the afternoon was pleasant. Somewhere in the rear, following the trail, were the Ancient House hounds.

"We've got them nicely muddled up by now, I fancy!" chuckled Castleton.

They were running up the narrow lane, at Pitt's suggestion, which led towards the cliffs—and, ultimately, to the coastguard station and the lighthouse. Incidentally, that lane led past Crag House.

All unconsciously the West House boys were laying this train near Admiral Carrington's residence—which, unknown to the school in general, was so closely connected with the disappearance of the missing boys.

"Better than being stewed up in the class-room," said Reggie Pitt cheerfully, as they ran. "Hard lines on the other chaps."

It was not a half-holiday to-day, and those engaged in the paper-chase were excused from afternoon lessons. The school, however, would be out in good time to witness the finish.

There had been some talk of cancelling the paper-chase altogether; but the Remove had protested so vigorously that it had been allowed to carry on. The boys had strict instructions, however, to be back at the school in full daylight. After all, there was not much danger. It was very unlikely that any of the boys would be interfered with during the day.

"I thought Grey would be with us to-day," said Castleton, as they came within sight of Crag House. "What's the matter with him—getting lazy?"

"Just the opposite," grinned Pitt. "He's dotty on that glider of Waldo's. They've nearly got it ready for the trials, and they're hoping to put the finishing touches on the giddy thing to-day. They're going to experiment to-morrow afternoon."

"Unless they're jolly careful, they'll kill themselves," said Castleton. "I've got nothing to say against gliders—good ones. But I'm jiggered if I'd risk my life on a home-made affair."

"Oh, it's sound enough, I think!" said Reggie, as they laid some more trail. "They're making it of sound materials—and from first-class designs. By Jove! This wind's getting pretty strong. Our paper scraps are blowing everywhere."

"All the harder for the hounds to trail us, grandmamma," grinned Castleton. "Come on! We'd better dodge round here, hadn't we? We can cut across the downs, skirt round the coastguard station, and then get back by way of the moor and the golf links."

"Not a bad route," agreed Reggie. "We might as well dodge down into the old quarry while we're at it—there are plenty of tricky places there where we can confuse the trail."

At that very moment the leaders of the hounds were turning into the little lane off Caistowe road. They gave each other a significant glance.

"Funny!" said Nipper.

"The hares laying the trail along here, you mean?" asked the other hound. "Jolly good, if you ask me. We can have a look at Crag House in the daylight—without anybody being suspicious. I say, it's a lucky thing that we're the leaders of the hounds."

They were Nipper and Handforth—two of the boys who knew something of the sinister secret which was locked within the walls of Crag House. As they drew near to Crag House they paid far more attention to that picturesque mansion than to the trail. They saw a quiet gentleman's residence, standing amid trim, well-kept grounds. A high wall surrounded the property, and it was difficult to gain an entry into that enclosed garden without making oneself extremely conspicuous.

As the hounds were passing the main gates of the property, Nipper suddenly had an idea.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, pausing. "Look, Handy! The wind has blown a lot of paper scraps over that gate—into the drive!"

"What of it?" asked Handforth, staring.

"Well, why shouldn't we be a bit confused—why shouldn't we be muddled by the trail?" asked Nipper keenly. "Come on! It's a jolly good excuse for us to hop over into that garden."

"But—but—I mean, we might be collared—"

"In broad daylight?" said Nipper. "With the other hounds close behind us? Don't be dotty! Come on—it's a chance in a thousand! We might be able to spot something."

The next moment they were vaulting over the high gates—which were padlocked—and the other hounds, running up, followed their leaders.

"Hi! You chaps have gone wrong!"

Two or three of the white-clothed figures had remained outside in the lane; and they had seen that the trail led past Crag House and on towards the coastguard station. Nipper and Handforth took no notice; they were scouting about eagerly, like bloodhounds in search of a lost trail. The other hounds who had followed were scouting about, too, dodging in amongst the bushes, running on to the lawn, and down the path.

Nipper and Handforth deliberately crossed the lawns, for, on that eventful night when they had visited this place in secret, they knew that Nelson Lee had fallen over a cunningly-concealed trip-wire. But there were no trip-wires now. Everything was normal—respectable—ordinary.

"They must take those wires in during the day," murmured Nipper, as he and Handforth pressed close together. "I think we've done enough, old man. Better confess that we blundered, and carry on."

"By George, yes," said Handforth. "The other chaps are getting wild. This

looks like giving the hares a thundering good start, too!"

"Can't be helped—we're after something more than hares," replied Nipper.

At that moment the great front door of the house opened, and a quietly-dressed, dignified figure emerged.

"Just a moment, you boys—just a moment!" said the figure severely. "What do you think you're doing, running all over these grounds? You are trespassing, and if the Admiral knew anything about this he would complain very strongly to the school. You're from St. Frank's, aren't you? It's a lucky thing for you that the Admiral is away from home."

Nipper ran up, and Handforth was by his side. Handforth's heart was thudding. This man, he was convinced, was a crook—although he looked extraordinarily like an ultra-respectable butler.

"I'm sorry, sir," said Nipper earnestly. "We thought the trail came over into your drive—but we must have been mistaken."

"The trail?" repeated the dignified man, puzzled.

"Yes—we're the hounds," explained Nipper. "A paper-chase, you know."

"Oh! Ah!" said the butler, nodding. "A paper-chase. To be sure! Very interesting. I remember, when I was a boy, that I revelled in paper-chasing."

"You're Mr. Crowson, aren't you?" asked Nipper.

"That is my name," replied the other, smiling. "Well, boys, I can't be cross with you. I was a boy myself once, eh? If you think the—er—hares are hiding somewhere in the garden, you can go ahead and search."

"Thanks very much, sir, but—"

"There are some outbuildings at the rear, too," continued Mr. Crowson calmly. "You might like to go round there and have a look. But be careful by that wall on the other side of the garden—it overlooks the sheer cliff, and I warn you not to jump over it."

The man was genial, kindly. He was as open as anybody could possibly be. Clearly this meant that he had nothing to hide—for it was quite inconceivable that he could have any suspicion of the real reason for Nipper's and Handforth's move. He really and truly thought that the boys had blundered into the grounds of Crag House by chance. And he was acting just as any normal butler would act. Nipper secretly admired him—for

(Continued on page 24.)

*Smile and be happy by reading this week's tonsil-tickling issue of—*



# HANDFORTH'S Weekly

No. 38. Vol. 2.

## THE "GROUSE" SEASON

By the Editor.

### EDITORIAL STAFF.

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

January 9th, 1932.

## LAST WORDS

By

Vivian Travers.

ONE of these days, I feel sure, a reader is going to write something nice about me. More unlikely things have happened, though not many. Why it is that every fellow and girl who reads my ripping WEEKLY finds something nasty to say to the Editor is more than I can puzzle out.

The other day the Editor of the NELSON LEE rang me up at St. Frank's.

"I'm sending you some more letters from your readers, Handy," said he.

"Anything insulting in 'em?" I asked apprehensively.

The Editor coughed.

"Well, of course, I haven't read the letters," he said, "but there are several postcards which I've glanced at, and—and—"

"And what?" I demanded.

"And—and—well, anyway, I'm sending them," he said finally.

And, of course, they turned out even worse than I expected. And, by George, that's saying a lot!

One girl reader from Ashby-de-la-Zouche—I think that's in Franco—writes on a postcard:

"Dear Ted,—Will you please send me your photograph"—(I smiled. This was more the kind of stuff. I read on)—"as I want to frighten my little brother when he is naughty."

"Yours truly,

"ISABEL STRANGEWAYS."

All I can say is that Isabel has strange-ways of being complimentary.

Here's another doubtful compliment:

"Dear Editor,—I look forward to your WEEKLY every week, as I still live in hopes that one day there will be something funny in it."

By George! Some fellows would be discouraged by this kind of thing. But not me. I'm getting used to it.

Yours resignedly,

THE EDITOR.

ANY men are famous for the last words they uttered. Old Cardinal Wolsey, with his, "Had I but served my God as I have served my king, etc.," and King Charles, who was an "unconscionable time a-dying," and Sydney Carton, who said, "It is a far, far better thing I do, etc."

I have been trying to imagine what will be the last words of prominent St. Frank's fellows. I think it is possible that the following examples won't be far wrong.

**Handforth** : "You talk rot, Mac. There's plenty of room to steer the car over that bridge."

**Nipper** : "You villain! Surrender! You can't bluff me. I know jolly well that gun isn't loaded."

**Archie Glenthorpe** : "Odds sprockets and plugs! There's only one objection to driving a car, and that is that it makes a cove feel dashed sleepy. Yaw-aw-aw!"

**U. S. Adams** : "Now, way over in the Yewnited States, we—"

**Cornelius Trotwood** : "Eh?"

**Willy Handforth** : "Yes, I know the tiger looks savage, but with my marvellous power over animals—"

**Clarence Fellowe** : "Now I'll read you one of my poems—"

**W. N. Browne** : "I am sorry you came out for a duck, brother. Now listen to me, and I'll tell you exactly where you went wrong. Put that bat down first—"

**Teddy Long** : "There's a strong smell of gas in this study. I wonder what's wrong? Where's my matches—"

**REGGIE PITTS bubbles a lot of guff about Caesar.**

## A.D. in B.C.

I OFTEN wonder exactly how it was that ancient books like Virgil and Caesar first came to be published.

These are books that will live (worse luck) as long as the world lasts, I suppose ; and yet I'm willing to bet they didn't make half so much fuss advertising them as they do nowadays with an ordinary detective novel.

If there had been one really good advertising agent in ancient Rome while old Caesar was writing his commentaries, what a splash he would have made. First of all he would have placarded Rome with posters :

**GREAT SENSATION !!!!**

Read J. CAESAR'S own story of  
**THE WAR WITH THE GAULS.**

Written specially for  
**YE ROMAN SUNDAY TRIBUNE**  
by  
**H.M. JULIUS CAESAR.**

**S.P.Q.R.**

Order your **TRIBUNE** to-day.  
Price 1 drachma per week.

After that he would have had the sandwich men out with boards placarding what a great guy Caesar was. Then he would have arranged for another magazine to print an exclusive interview "with Mr. Caesar in the atrium of his palatial residence near the river," etc.

When the Gallic War had finished running as a serial in the newspaper, it would be printed as a novel, and sent out with a highly-coloured dust jacket, depicting J. Caesar careering along in a chariot, while all his soldiers waved their banners with S.P.Q.R. and other rot on them.

Then the publishers would have their little advertisement on the paper cover, with press cuttings thoughtfully arranged by the advertising agent.

**DE BELLO GALLICO.**

by  
**JULIUS CAESAR.**

Price 2 drachmas.

(Bound in leather, with illustrations by  
**PAINTINA CULLA—5 drachmas.**)

"Mr. Caesar's first novel is a delightful story for young and old. That it will become a literary classic is certain. The plot is strong in dramatic situation, and the interest is well sustained throughout. Mr. Caesar is well known as the pontifex maximus, and this gripping story shows him in a new light—as a first-rate author. Readers will eagerly await further efforts from this talented pen."



Then follow the press reports.

**SCRIBULA COLUM, ESQ.**, in the "Diei Epistola," writes : "A work of great promise. One of the finest novels of the decade."

**TALCINUS SILLI, ESQ.**, in the "Nuntius Romae," writes : "This work will be the favourite of all schoolboys for ages yet to come."

**CAIUS CASSIUS, ESQ.**, in the "Drachma Dreadful," says : "One of these days that old idiot Caesar will be bumped off. We are tired of his twaddle." (This, of course, is mere jealousy.)

The ancient writers don't know what they have missed in not having their books properly advertised. On second thoughts, though, perhaps it was just as well for them. Somebody would certainly have slain old Virgil for his rot if he hadn't kept it awfully dark while he was alive. He saw what happened to Caesar, you see.

### Poet's Corner.

#### A GREAT EXAMPLE

**I** KNOW a certain boy  
Whose ways are rather crazy ;  
He takes no lasting joy,  
In being very lazy ;  
Impots he never bags,  
Nor bends to take his "sixes".  
In things like japes and rags  
He never, never mixes.

He will not say a word  
Impertinent or saucy ;  
He never has preferred  
Companions low and "horsey" ;  
In fact, this model man  
Is a credit to this planet ;  
(His name is Peter Pan,  
And he's sculptured out of granite.)

(C. de V.)

### OUR DICTIONARY

(This great work has 10,000 entries and 10,000 illustrations.)

**CABBAGE** : A plaything for children in greengrocers' shop, and in tobacconists' shop. Price 3/6d. per 100.

**CABIN** : A small house (and letters) about a cabin and a cabinet.

**CAD** : Any fellow who has been scolded when his team scores.

**CADUCIBRANCH** : A frog.

**CASE** : A wooden box used by detectives, lawyers, and is tried at the trial being passed for going.

**CALAMITY** : What scores.

**CAMEL** : An animal which can do without time, and in other ways is ridiculous.

**CANE** : An object which boys have come into.

**CANNIBAL** : One who eats his "inner man."

**CAR** : A vehicle for carrying people. Fellows Pippy say, "Home travelling by car." merely say, "A pony."

**CARPET** : To be is a prelude to a good time.

**CATCH** : If you catch cricket, you often catch wickets.

**CLAUSE** : The short feet of a cat. (See feet of a cat.)

**CERT** : A "dead cert" term for the horse.

**CONTINUED** in extracts.

**JUST PUBLISHED**

"Grave Hints for Boys"  
By A. J. B.

**TESTIMONIAL** : recommend this book not been for the time in on this splendid convinced that I should from the school in off with a flogging. B.

**SHYNESS, SELF-CONFIDENCE & TIMIDITY** : Be bold and courageous man who is not afraid of difficulties. By my simple and possible to overcome nervousness. Writ. EDWARD L.

All you DON'T want to know about wireless.

## HANDY'S WIRELESS

By Walter Church.

**L**IFE in our study is never monotonous while Handy is present. He can't do the simplest thing without a terrific lot of fuss. The other Saturday evening he wanted to get the football results on the wireless. Mac and I know nothing at all about wireless. When we want to get things over the waves, we simply pull a lever and turn a knob, and music floats out.

We can see now that this is not the correct way of doing it.

Handy begins by examining the aerial lead-in. If that is O.K. he puts his ear to the loud speaker and moves everything within reach. He turns all the knobs, fiddles with the batteries, disconnects the accumulator, knocks down the bookcase and nearly falls out of the window. After that he stands back and scratches his head.

"What the dickens is wrong with it?" he bawls. "It was all right this morning. Perhaps the accumulator has given out."

He puts a thing like a watch with two wires on it to the accumulator, and an electric shock knocks him backwards on to the carpet.

He then hops all round the study, nursing his injuries, and knocks over the tea-table on the way. After this, he takes the set up, wrenches off the back, and all the works drop out on the floor.

"Dash it! Hang it! Blow it!" he bawls, glaring at Mac and me. "Come over here and give me a hand, can't you, you stuffed dummies?"

We go over and extricate him. We get the works put back and screwed in and then Handy hangs it with a hammer. Finally, he clenches his fists and rave.

"If I had six quid I'd get a dashed eliminator," he yells. "These silly, idiotic accumulators——"

In the middle of his remarks a loud voice, singing a popular song, rings brassily through the study.

"Die stunden, dir allein geweiht——" roars the voice.

"Stuttgart!" snarls Handy, gritting his teeth. "Blow it! I always seem to get that beastly German station."

He twiddles a knob. Immediately a heart-rending shriek fills the study. Mac and I turn pale and grip each other convulsively.

"Here's a powerful station," says Handy. "This must be London."

He twists another knob. The thing speaks again:

"Ich zuhle siegar oft in Einsamkeit——"

Handy snorts like an irritated whale. He twiddles and fiddles with every knob in sight; pulls levers; adjusts gadgets and



shakes the set. Groans, shrieks and wailings pierce our ears. Finally we hear the announcer's voice.

"Stand by for one moment for the football results."

Handy turns to us with a face of triumph. As he does so a voice of brass rings out a popular song again:

"Und jere Perle ein Gebot furs Herz, das sich nur——"

There is a crash as the wireless set lands in the wastepaper-basket, and then we get on with our prep.

## TRACKETT GRIM'S FAILURE

NOT By E. O. Handforth.

**T**RACKETT GRIM had spent a busy morning.

He had found the Crown Jewels which were stolen by a gang of Chinks. He had made a tireless search and brought to light the headquarters of Bill Bangem, the notorious gunman.

Without a single clue he had discovered the infant son of the Prince of Xlfantyrgh, who had been kidnapped by Corsican bandits.

He had found out the secret cypher used by the dreaded Chinese Ting Tong. He had combed all London and brought to light the treasure-house of a society of expert burglars.

He had recovered the Tarant Tiara from the depths of the sea, and had found a coiner's den which had eluded the police since the days of Boadicea.

But now, in the afternoon, he was utterly baffled.

He had searched everywhere without result. He was tireless in his investigations.

It was no use.

He simply could not discover where he had put his slippers.

## The MYSTERY of the SMUGGLERS' CAVE !

(Continued from page 20.)

inwardly Crowson must have been alarmed by all these boys overrunning the place in this way. Crowson, without question, was a consummate actor.

"I don't think we'll waste time by searching the grounds," said Nipper, smiling. "Thanks all the same, but we'd better be pushing on."

"I don't know," said Handforth. "We might as well look round—"

"Go ahead!" invited Crowson, spreading his hands.

Nipper knew that any search would be absolutely barren. Crowson's very readiness to let the boys overrun the place was proof enough that everything was normal. Whatever secrets this house held, they were well hidden from the ordinary visitor.

"A paper-chase, eh?" went on Mr. Crowson reminiscently. "Well, well! It positively makes me feel young again. I am very glad to have met you boys—and you mustn't hesitate to pay me a call, when you feel in the mood. Come to tea one afternoon."

"Thanks!" said Nipper, marvelling.

"It's lonely here during the winter months, with the master away," continued Crowson, shaking his head. "There's nothing I'd like better than a little liveliness now and again. Don't forget, young gentlemen—have pity on a lonely man, and come to tea now and again. As many of you as you like. Just ring me up during the morning, if you can, so that I can get some special stuff in for you."

He was very cordial, and the boys thanked him warmly. Only Nipper and Handforth, among the hounds, saw the grim humour of the situation.

"Walk into my parlour, said the spider to the fly," whispered Handforth, as he and Nipper moved off together.

"No, old man." murmured Nipper. "You're wrong there. Crowson wouldn't touch any of us if we went to tea—he'd give us a great time. He's out to gain our confidence—more than ever now. It's clever. And you can bet that if we went to tea, we shouldn't discover anything."

The hounds had arrived back in the lane, and Crowson had come to the gate to seem them off. They heard the hum of an approaching car. Nipper glanced round. He was startled to see that it was Nelson Lee's car—and that Lee himself sat at the wheel!

## CHAPTER 11.

### Jim the Penman!

NELSON LEE pulled the car to a standstill just before it came opposite the gateway of Crag House.

"Handforth!" he called urgently. "Here, I want you!"

"Me, sir?" shouted Handforth. "But—but I'm one of the hounds, sir!"

"Never mind that—you are to come back to the school at once!" said Lee sharply. "You are wanted. I can't tell you here, but there is a family matter—Come!"

Handforth, considerably startled, ran up to the car and jumped in. Clearly, Nelson Lee had come out in a hurry, for he was still wearing his gown and mortar-board, and he looked rather incongruous seated thus at the wheel of his car.

"You other boys can carry on with the paper-chase," sang out Lee crisply. "That's all right—go ahead!"

Lee reversed the car, and it went bowling off down the narrow lane. Crowson, who had heard everything, was walking back towards Crag House. And Crowson was smiling quietly to himself. He considered that he had handled the situation satisfactorily.

"What's wrong, sir?" asked Handforth breathlessly, as the car sped along. "Is my pater at the school? Is somebody ill, or something?"

"I'm sorry, Handforth, if I gave you a fright, but there is nothing wrong at all," said Nelson Lee dryly.

"You said something about a family matter, sir—"

"That was merely for the benefit of our excellent friend, Crowson," said Lee. "I thought of it on the spur of the moment—to provide a plausible reason for my presence."

"Oh!" said the burly junior, still confused.

"It was my original intention to drive slowly past the property, and then visit the coastguard station," continued Nelson Lee. "If anybody in that house had been watching they would have suspected nothing. But as I saw Crowson at the gate, I changed my plan. I hope you don't mind being forcibly kidnapped, Handforth."

"Oh, I say, sir!" protested Handforth. "I'm—I'm only too jolly pleased! I'd rather be with you, doing some investigating, than chasing those giddy hares. What are we going to do, sir?" Skirt round and scout a bit?"

Nelson Lee chuckled.

"I am very satisfied with my afternoon's work," he replied calmly. "I had

a very good look at Mr. Crowson, and he interests me vastly."

"But you never even turned your head in his direction, sir," protested Handforth.

"Nevertheless, I observed him quite closely," said Lee. "I don't think he was aware of the fact—I hope he was not. I tried to appear completely disinterested in the gentleman."

"And so you did, sir," said Edward Oswald. "I'll swear you didn't look at him at all."

But there he was wrong—for Nelson Lee had given Mr. Crowson an inspection which would have startled that man could he have realised its thoroughness. Lee, in fact, was delighted at the success of his casual visit. He was more than delighted, too, that the boys had become so friendly with Crowson—for this, more than anything else, would deceive the man into believing that those in authority at the school were in no way suspicious of him.

Handforth found himself back at St. Frank's, and, in order to keep up the little pretence, Nelson Lee took him straight for his own study and kept him there for a while.

When the leader of Study D went back to his own House, there were all sorts of curious inquiries.

"What was the idea, Handy?" asked two or three voices.

"Why did Mr. Lee bring you back?"

"What about the paper-chase?"

"Oh, dry up!" said Handforth impatiently. "Don't make a mystery out of nothing—there's quite enough mystery in the district already. My pater was anxious about me, and rang up. Thought I'd disappeared, like some of those other chaps, I suppose. He might have waited until the paper-chase was over, though."

He was speaking the perfect truth. Sir Edward Handforth had rung up—but during the morning, and Nelson Lee had satisfied him regarding the safety of Edward Oswald and Willy. However, it served Handforth as a good excuse for explaining his unexpected return.

Apart from that, Handforth was dissatisfied. Nelson Lee had spoken of being pleased, but Handy couldn't see anything to be pleased about. Even the paper-chase disgusted him. For the West House hares got home easily—long before the most energetic of the hounds. The delay at Crag House, of course, had resulted in this West House victory. Nipper and Handforth came in for a good deal of adverse criticism—which they suffered with singular calmness.

Everybody was in well before dark, and a new regulation had come into force. Calling-over was held before tea, instead of after. In fact, the roll was called a clear half-hour before darkness—so that the school authorities should be satisfied that all boys were safely within gates. The gates themselves were locked, and there was also a police-officer on duty.

The St. Frank's boys were beginning to feel like prisoners. However, there were compensations. The news became general that afternoon that while these temporary restrictions were in force, lessons for the day would end half an hour earlier than usual.

As soon as Nipper had changed into his ordinary clothes he hurried down to Study D. He found Handforth breathlessly relating the events of the afternoon to Church and McClure, who were also "in the know." Handforth explained to Nipper why Nelson Lee had carried him off, and Nipper was puzzled.

"Jiggered if I can understand it," went on Handforth. "Mr. Lee said he took a good look at Crowson, and he seemed jolly pleased about it, too. But I'll swear he never looked at Crowson at all."

"That's nothing," said Nipper. "The guv'nor looks at people, and they don't even know it. So he was pleased, was he? I wonder why?"

He saw no reason why he should wonder for long, and he made a point of hurrying along to the Head's house almost at once. He was admitted to Nelson Lee's study, and he found his guv'nor bending over one of his privately-compiled books of reference.

"Why were you pleased about Crowson, sir?" asked Nipper bluntly. "Handy tells me that you seemed awfully bucked."

"I made an interesting discovery, Nipper, that's all," said Nelson Lee, looking up from the book. "In fact, I might say an astounding discovery. As you know so much, I think I'll tell you a little more."

"Good egg, guv'nor!" said Nipper eagerly.

"Look at this photograph," continued Lee, indicating the book on his desk. "I think, Nipper, that you will recognise this gentleman?"

Nipper looked, and immediately nodded.

"Why, rather, sir," he said. "That's Sutcliffe, the forger."

"Douglas James Sutcliffe, better known to the police as 'Jim the Penman,'" nodded Nelson Lee slowly. "We've had many a tussle with that clever crook, eh? I have his complete record here—up till a year or so ago, when Sutcliffe apparently

ceased all his activities. I assumed that he had gone abroad, probably to America. But look again, Nipper."

Nipper looked; he closely inspected the clear-cut, refined features of the man in the photograph—who looked no more like a criminal than Nelson Lee himself.

"Well?" asked Lee gently.

"I—I don't understand, sir," said Nipper helplessly.

"I didn't think you would, for the disguise is an astonishingly clever one," said the great detective. "Most of it, I feel sure, is natural. The side-whiskers are real enough, and although the hair may be dyed, and cunningly-made false teeth may alter the shape of his mouth—"

"You—you mean—" Nipper paused, staring dazedly. "Crowson! Great Scott!" he gurgled. "You mean that Crowson, the butler at Crag House, is—Jim the Penman!"

"Exactly!" said Nelson Lee, his voice becoming hard and crisp. "I'll swear it, Nipper! I gave the man one clear, searching glance without his realising it. But I don't forget faces, young 'un—and even when those faces are disguised and altered—"

"Jim the Penman!" broke in Nipper excitedly. "Masquerading at Crag House as a butler! But he's been there for months, sir—over a year, I believe!"

"Sutcliffe was always thorough," agreed Nelson Lee. "I believe he was employed for eight months as a butler in another household before he came to Admiral Carrington—a characteristic example of Sutcliffe's methods. This game is even bigger than I first suspected. If Sutcliffe is mixed up in it, we can be quite sure that it is something novel—and something big."

"What are you going to do, guv'nor?" asked Nipper breathlessly. "Have you told Mr. Lennard?"

"Not yet—and I'm not going to," replied Nelson Lee. "I may be able to use you later, Nipper, but for the present you must be patient. I'm playing a waiting game—and I have all the advantage."

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## CHAPTER 12.

### The Glider Enthusiasts!

"**S**HE looks a bit spidery!" said Handforth critically.

It was the afternoon of the following day—a half-holiday. Nothing had happened in the meantime, and both Handforth and Nipper were just a bit disappointed. Nipper, at least, after Nelson Lee's disclosure, had been half-

expecting that something dramatic would take place. But life at the great school had proceeded smoothly and with just the normal routine.

Now a number of juniors were on the downs adjoining the St. Frank's private golf links. They had been helping Stanley Waldo, of the Remove, with his new glider. The contraption had been built almost entirely by the occupants of Study I—Waldo, Fullwood and Russell. And they were mightily proud of their achievement.

"What do you mean—spidery?" demanded Waldo, with a glare. "You wait until you see her in the air."

"It won't go far, that's a cert," said Nipper. "If she gets ten feet up, she'll do wonders. She's what they call a primary glider, isn't she?"

"Of course," replied Waldo. "Good enough to learn on, isn't it? We can build one of the more advanced gliders when we've gained some experience."

"If you live!" said Travers, shaking his head. "Which I doubt, dear old fellow. I hate to be pessimistic, but if this frightful thing doesn't fall to pieces in mid-air, I'll eat my hat!"

Waldo did not take much notice of the chipping. The glider certainly looked fragile, but she was a workmanlike job. The three young enthusiasts had been working hard, and they had spent all their pocket-money on its construction.

The glider was of the biplane type, with the pilot's seat perched on the front of the lower plane. The machine had been constructed from designs which had been supplied by a popular hobbies weekly. This enterprising journal had given full plans and details, and had even supplied, for a consideration, all the necessary materials.

It was a glider of the primary type—one which was only designed for short, experimental glides. But it promised to provide the boys with any amount of fun and thrills. Gliding is not at all dangerous—if it is indulged in with due care and precaution.

"I thought these things worked with a whacking great catapult?" asked Handforth, looking round. "I can't see any catapult."

"My poor ass, how many times must I tell you that this glider is a beginner's machine?" asked Waldo patiently. "We can go in for catapulting later. Do you realise that the whole contraption only cost us about five quid?"

"Never mind what it cost," said Handforth. "How are you going to get it off the ground if you haven't a catapult?"

Waldo grinned.



Like mechanical figures, the helpless schoolboy captives of Crag House were marched through the underground tunnel to commence their period of toil.

"Oh, that's where you fellows can make yourselves useful!" he said

"Huh!" snorted Handforth. "I thought there would be a catch in it somewhere. What are we supposed to do, then?"

"You get hold of these ropes attached to the glider, and then tow it along until the wind lifts it into the air," explained Waldo. "If you behave yourself, Handy, you can have a go in the glider later on. Come along—we'll get some fun out of this giddy thing!"

And, full of enthusiasm, the boys got busy with the tow-ropes—none of them dreaming how this apparently harmless adventure was to end!

**I**T was found that the glider fulfilled all expectations—and even more.

There was a stiff, steady breeze blowing, and when the first towed flight was attempted, the fragile machine lifted at once, and Waldo, in the pilot's seat, found that he was able to control it with ease.

Others tried, too, and they were overjoyed at the exhilarating sport. More and more glider enthusiasts were made during that first half-hour. Lots of fellows declared that

they would start making their own gliders the very next day.

A little later more ambitious flights were attempted. Just beyond the golf links there was a steep, grassy hill, which was admirably suited for this purpose.

Russell had the first "go," and after a short tow he found himself gliding gloriously, soaring up in a way which rather made him gasp. The ground seemed to drop away from him, and yells of enthusiasm came from the others. The glider came to earth three or four hundred yards away in perfect safety, and Russell was flushed with excitement.

"I say, it's just glorious!" he exclaimed. "When I get the hang of it, I can keep her up for five or ten minutes."

So the others had a shot, and Handforth beat the record, much to his satisfaction, by remaining in the air for two solid minutes, actually circling round once, and dipping rather alarmingly. When he finally came to earth there were a few gasps, for the machine landed uncomfortably near to the edge of the cliff.

But nobody cared. They were all excited and enthusiastic. Waldo felt that it was up to him to do something better than all the others. This glider, after all, had been his idea. Luck was certainly with him soon

after he had been towed off. Whether it was good luck or bad luck he could not quite determine until later. At all events, the wind blew strongly, and he found that by careful manipulation of the "joy-stick" he rose higher and higher.

Up he went—up and up, moving ever nearer towards the cliffs. He felt that at this height he was perfectly safe; for he had air room, and whenever he felt inclined he could turn back inland and make a good landing.

"Hi, mind what you're doing, Waldo!" came a yell from Russell, on the ground. "Don't go too near the cliffs!"

"I'm all right!" sang out Waldo cheerily. "I say, this is ripping!"

The wind eased somewhat, and the glider commenced to fall—gradually, smoothly. Waldo was in no way disconcerted; he had the machine under perfect control.

Banking slightly, she soared round in a graceful half-circle, gently edging down towards the ground. Then came another gust of wind, and the machine shook, tossed a little, and Waldo turned her direct into the wind. She soared up again, going farther and farther out over the cliffs.

"By Jove! This is the stuff!" muttered Waldo.

He was full of confidence. The son of famous Rupert Waldo—known as the Wonder Man—he was perfectly happy. His nerve was as steady as a rock.

It had said in the hobbies paper that it was easy to glide for several minutes at a time, at a height of forty or fifty feet. But Waldo was doing far better. He was up two hundred feet, and he had been in the air for six or seven minutes already. He felt that he could remain aloft for an hour.

What he had failed to observe, however, was that he was getting farther and farther out over the cliffs; and presently, unless he corrected this tendency, he would find himself actually over the beach—if not over the sea itself. The cliffs here were not sheer; they sloped down gradually in rugged grandeur.

Waldo was surprised to notice that the sea had become practically invisible. When the boys had started their experiments it had been possible to see for miles across the Channel. But now a dense sea mist was gathering—rolling up with astonishing, bewildering swiftness. It was coming inland, too, on the wind. But Waldo, if he noticed this at all, did so subconsciously. All his attention was concentrated upon the control of his precious new toy.

The boys on the ground were now becoming scared. They could see that Waldo was getting higher and higher—and, moreover, that he was soaring right over the cliffs, seawards.

"Better come down, Waldo!" sang out Fullwood. "There's a mist rolling in—and if it gets here before you're down you might crash."

"All right!" came a clear voice from far above.

It was at that moment that the wind suddenly dropped. There was not a complete calm, but the force of the wind decreased so much that Waldo found himself descending fairly rapidly. And now he saw, for the first time, that unless he corrected his descent, he would go right down to the beach, far below.

"Rats! That won't do!" he muttered. "It'll be an awful fag, dragging the machine up from the beach."

He altered the controls, attempting to turn the machine inland. But now he made a rather startling discovery—one which has come as something of a shock to more than one glider enthusiast.

He found that the air currents were more or less controlled by the contours of the hills and cliffs. And when he tried to turn the glider back towards the land, so that he could come down safely on the downs, he discovered that she just wouldn't do it.

Instead of gliding down towards his comrades, the air current forced him farther and farther out—and, what was more, the glider was now showing a tendency to dip and pitch.

Waldo was bewildered, puzzled—and, if not scared, he was certainly worried.

Once again he turned the glider inland, and she hovered, shuddered, and swooped. Waldo's heart came almost into his mouth—for it seemed that he must inevitably dive steeply down and strike the cliffs.

Frantically he jerked at the joy-stick, and in the nick of time the glider banked over, swung round, and went swooping down towards the sea.

"Phew! It's not so easy as it looks!" muttered Waldo breathlessly.

He had saved himself from disaster—but he hadn't landed yet, and now he was inevitably booked for the beach. Unfortunately, when he looked, the beach had gone! There was nothing below him but a dense pall of white mist.

## CHAPTER 13.

### Mr. Crowson is Interested!

**C**RAG HOUSE possessed many advantages; not the least of them being that from the high ornamental tower it was possible to obtain a wonderful view across the Channel. A large slice of the surrounding country was also to be seen from this admirable point of vantage.

That afternoon, Crowson, the butler, was up in the tower, armed with a telescope and field-glasses. Not that he had come up to observe the gliding operations of the St. Frank's boys, a mile or so away on the downs.

Crowson had other interests. Now and again he turned his glasses in the direction of the distant schoolboy figures, and he sometimes admired the graceful movements of the glider; but, on the whole, he was more interested in the gathering mist.

"What's it look like, Chief?" asked Shorty, as he came up into the comfortably-furnished tower-room.

"Getting thick—looks like being another favourable fog to-night," replied Crowson. "The wind's dropping, and if only this mist rolls up thickly enough, we shall be able to get another load in to-night."

"It always puzzles me how Slaney does it," remarked Shorty, almost admiringly. "You couldn't get another man to take on his job, Chief. He knows this coast like a book—and the way he gets about in the dark, and in the fog, is a fair puzzle."

"It may be a puzzle to you—but not to him," said Jim the Penman briefly.

For Nelson Lee had been right about the identity of this dignified-looking butler. He was, in all truth, none other than the notorious forger, Douglas James Sutcliffe, alias Jim the Penman. Sutcliffe had not always confined himself to forgery; he was one of the most dangerous crooks living. He had never been violent in his methods, however; he was a "gentleman crook."

"What's this funny-looking thing over here, guv'nor?" asked Shorty suddenly. "A sort of aeroplane, isn't it? Ain't they St. Frank's boys?"

"Haven't you some work to do?" asked Crowson sharply. "The thing is only a glider. Plenty of schoolboys are experimenting with gliders nowadays. There's nothing to stare at."

"Oh, all right!" said Shorty, in a huff.

He went out, and Jim the Penman looked first at the glider through his glasses, and then he looked at the bank of sea-mist which was rolling insistently inland. He was making quiet mental calculations, and it seemed to him that the boy in the glider would not be able to get back in time. He became interested.

He was more than interested—he was extremely alert—when he observed Waldo's difficulties in attempting to get the glider back over the downs, and when he saw that the youngster had failed and that he was gliding downwards towards the beach, he acted.

Waldo had disappeared now. He had dipped down into that dense mist, and he had been swallowed up completely. The boys were running along the cliff frantically; many of them were scrambling down the cliff itself. And the mist was now rolling in—concealing them, too.

"Yes, it's possible," murmured Crowson as a thought occurred to him.

He had become very keen. For an instant there was just a little rift in the mist, and he caught a shadowy glimpse of the glider. The unfortunate Waldo had now completely lost his bearings. This was evident enough, for the glider, instead of dropping down towards the beach, was actually going right out over the sea. The mist came thicker and swallowed it up again. There was not the slightest doubt in Crowson's mind that within a few minutes the glider would

strike the sea itself and leave the boy struggling in the water, perhaps to drown.

Crowson walked quickly across the room and lifted a telephone.

"Yes, Chief?" said a voice at once.

"Is Slaney down in the lower cave?"

"Yes, I think so—waiting for this mist—"

"Get in touch with him at once. Better still, put him through to me," said Crowson quickly. "And hurry!"

He waited, and after a few moments he heard the gruff voice of Captain Slaney at the other end of the wire.

"Is your boat all ready?" demanded Jim the Penman.

"You bet she is, Chief," said the other. "I'm thinking about pushing off—"

"Get her going at once!" ordered Crowson. "A boy in a home-made glider has just fallen into the sea—three or four hundred yards out."

"Split me!" came an ejaculation from Captain Slaney.

"If you hurry, you can't fail to find him, and the mist will completely conceal you from anybody along the shore," continued Crowson. "You know just what to do. Get that boy! Save him! When you have brought him in, telephone to me at once."

And Crowson hung up, a little smile playing round the corners of his mouth.

## CHAPTER 14.

### The Rescue!

**S**TANLEY WALDO was a victim of extremely bad luck.

His gliding experiments had been a great success—a glorious success. But for the coming of that mist he could have landed without any difficulty on the smooth, sandy beach; his glide, instead of ending in disaster, would have been a sensational triumph.

The fog was becoming thicker and thicker. An experienced aeroplane pilot, suddenly finding himself enshrouded by a cloud—which is nothing more nor less than mist—is absolutely dependent upon his instruments to put him right.

Waldo had no instruments whatever. He was, moreover, a mere novice in the art of gliding. He experienced an extraordinary sense of being lost in space. He seemed to be hovering in nothingness. The mist swirled about him, and he lost all sense of direction. He did not even know whether the glider was on an even keel, or whether it was tipping forwards or backwards. He just clung to his seat, hoping for the best.

All intention of landing on the beach had gone. He knew that he would be lucky if he landed safely at all. At any moment he expected to see the cliffs looming up directly ahead, to feel a splintering crash, to find himself going headlong.

Then something else happened.

As though from nowhere, the sea appeared. Momentarily a rift had appeared

**"THE FIGHTING 'TEC.' Brilliant mystery-detective yarn of—**

in the fog. He caught a glimpse of the water just below him—cold, grey, menacing.

Flop! Crash!

Before Waldo had time to operate the joystick, the glider nose-dived into the sea. The machine collapsed crazily; the top plane crumpled up. Waldo, flung outwards, found himself plunging into the icy water, and all about him were splintered struts and uprights, and an amazing tangle of wires.

"Great Scott!" he gurgled.

The fog had closed in again, obscuring everything. He hadn't the faintest idea how far he was away from the shore. Neither could he tell in which direction the shore lay. This was indeed an ugly problem! He was a strong swimmer, and he knew that he could keep afloat for some little time, even fully dressed and in this cold water. But if he happened to swim in the wrong direction—

He decided that he wouldn't swim at all until he was forced to. Far better to cling to this wreckage and yell. He couldn't be far from the shore, and those other fellows would probably hear him; then, from their answering voices, he would be able to judge his correct direction.

He had been under once, and now, swimmingly strongly and gasping at the coldness of the water, he clung to the wreckage. The waves were comparatively gentle, rising and falling. It occurred to Waldo, with sudden alarm, that he could not hear any breakers. He must have descended farther out to sea than he had imagined.

"Hi!" he yelled. "St. Frank's ahoy! Rescue, Remove!"

He was painfully aware of the fact that his voice sounded thin. He listened eagerly, but no answering shouts came.

Waldo had forgotten that fog is a remarkable deadener of sound. Fog, too, has most peculiar properties. A man can shout at the top of his voice, and another man, fifty yards away, won't hear a sound. Yet that shout might very easily be heard by somebody half a mile distant.

And while Waldo clung there, hoping for the best, shouting at intervals, a long black shape glided almost noiselessly through the sea. It was invisible in the mist, and even if there had been no mist an observer would have needed to look twice before actually seeing that low-built craft. It slunk through the sea like some queer monster of the deep.

The boat had appeared out of the old smugglers' cave just when Waldo's glider crashed into the sea. Momentarily the mist had lifted, and although Waldo hadn't seen this craft, those on board had seen Waldo. Then the fog had swirled down more thickly than ever.

Throb, throb, throb!

On came the craft through the white pall; her engines were powerful, yet astonishingly silent. She took a zigzag course as she searched for her victim.

A man appeared on the deck now, the burly



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

#### WITHOUT FOUNDATION.

**Country Visitor:** "I see you have a college here, my boy. Tell me, who founded it?"

**Village Boy:** "I dunno, lady. Never knew it was lorst."

(J. Pendry, "Dursley," Dunston Avenue, Guildford, has been awarded a handsome watch.)

#### A FREE-WHEEL MODEL.

Sandy walked into the shop where he had recently purchased a bicycle.

"It's about the bike, mon," said the Scot.

"Hasn't it arrived?" asked the shopkeeper.

"Sure," replied Sandy. "But what about that free wheel you mentioned?"

(A. Whitehead, Lettsom Ward, R.S.B. Hospital, Margate, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

#### A SAFE BET.

**Doctor:** "I will examine you for two guineas."

**Patient:** "All right, doctor. If you find them I'll give you one."

(S. Goldstein, 27, Broughton Street, Cheetham, Manchester, has been awarded a penknife.)

#### THE FIFTH.

**Boy:** "Have you lost a wallet with five pounds in it?"

**Gent:** "By Jove, so I have! Have you found it?"

**Boy:** "No; but you're the fifth man who's lost it."

(G. Singleton, 40, Brixham Gardens, Ilford, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

#### TIME.

**Boots (knocking at bedroom door):** "Begging your pardon, sir, but the clock's stopped, and would you please tell me if it's time to wake you?"

(K. Hawkins, 9, Angel Street, Kimberley, S. Africa, has been awarded a useful prize.)

#### FALSE ALARM.

The superintendent of a certain railway insisted that station-masters should inform him immediately of all accidents in their neighbourhood. One day he received a telegram:

"Man fell from platform in front of moving train. Wiring details later."

Captain Slaney. Suddenly there came to his ears the faint, muffled sound of shouting.

"Two points starboard!" he said, looking down into the cavity where Jed was controlling the strange craft.

It altered its course slightly and moved with more caution, and suddenly, without any warning at all, the bows crashed into the floating wreckage of the glider.

"Easy! Easy!" growled the skipper.

Waldo was almost overwhelmed with relief. Hearing no answering shouts, he had begun to despair, and he knew, in fact, that the glider was rapidly disintegrating, and that it would not afford him support for much longer. He had been contemplating a swim, chancing his luck as to direction.

And now miraculously a boat of some sort had come out of the mist.

"I say—here I am!" he exclaimed breathlessly. "Thanks awfully, whoever you are!"

The mist was so thick just here that he could scarcely see anything—just a blur of an uncertain figure. He thought he caught a glimpse, too, of a glistening oilskin. Then another figure, just the same. Their faces remained obscure, partly because there was a good deal of sea-water in Waldo's eyes. Usually those eyes of his were ultra-keen.

"Here we are—take a hold!" growled a strange, uncouth voice. "Come on, lad!"

Hands reached down to him, and the next moment he was being hauled over a slippery metal deck.

Five minutes ticked by, then came another telegram:

"Everything O.K. Nobody hurt. Engine was going backwards."

(R. Longman, 161, Vigo Road, Andover, Hants, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

#### SPELT DISASTER.

Old Gent (to little boy who is crying): "What is the matter, my little man?"

Boy: "Rheumatism, sciatica, and pneumonia."

Old Gent: "Surely not at your age?"

Boy: "Oh, yes! Teacher caned me because I couldn't spell them."

(A. Chamberlain, 160, Hemsworth Road, Horton, Manchester, has been awarded a penknife.)

#### SOME "CHICKEN."

A farmer, hearing suspicious noises in his hen-coop one night, took his gun and went out to investigate.

"Who's there?" he shouted.

No answer.

"Who's there?" he roared again.

"O-only u-us 'ere chickens, mister!" a quavering voice finally responded.

(Miss G. Stapleton, Hackney Baths, Lower Clapton Road, London, E.5, has been awarded a penknife.)



"Thanks!" he panted. "I—I thought—" The arm which held him was like the grip of an iron vice. And then, to his amazement and consternation, the arm was shifted up so that his neck was encircled. A pad of some kind was suddenly thrust over his mouth and nostrils; he experienced a sense of suffocation. He struggled gamely for a second or two; then, his senses reeling, he felt that he was falling back—back! He became limp and apparently lifeless.

"He's off," murmured Captain Slaney, removing the pad. "Here you are, Jed—shove him below."

"Easy as falling off a dock," said Jed cheerfully. "The poor kid never knew nothing! You've got to hand it to the Chief, capt'n! He gets 'em good an' proper! An' this time everybody will think that the kid has been drowned!"

#### CHAPTER 15.

##### Where is Waldo?

WITHIN ten minutes the mystery craft was back in the cave. It could only just enter now, for the tide was not at the full. Waldo was quickly lifted off, and here he was taken over by Shorty and the other man. Great masses of wet seaweed were draped over the exposed portion of the motor-boat, concealing it completely.

##### VERY TRUE.

Two wrestling enthusiasts were arguing on the train whether the "nelson" was the best hold. Old Mrs. Smith, who was also in the compartment, remembered her grandson, Tommy, speaking often of a "Nelson Lee."

"You are both wrong," she said. "It's not the 'nelson,' but the 'Nelson Lee' which takes the greatest hold on anyone. Besides, my Tommy also says its grip on you is just wonderful!"

(L. Luckhoe, 5, Coburg Street, New Amsterdam, British Guiana, has been awarded a useful prize.)

##### MISUNDERSTOOD.

Dentist: "Will you have gas, sir?"

Yokel: "Of course. I don't want you fumbling about in the dark."

(J. H. Carey, The Kennels, Hewell, near Redditch, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

##### OBLIGING.

Constable (to street musician): "'Ere, you'd better stop that row unless you want to accompany me."

Street Musician: "Accompany yer mate? 'Course I will. What d'yer do—sing?"

(J. Healey, 22, Rhyl Street, Bootle, Liverpool, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

Waldo was carried quickly up the tunnel, into the old quarry working, and then through the secret door. There was a hand-controlled lift here, and up it went—up, up, until it was in the cellars of Crag House. Electric lights were gleaming here, and Crowson, the dignified butler, was waiting.

"Got him? Good!" said Crowson. "What is Slaney's report?"

"Everything O.K., Chief," said Shorty. "Nobody saw—not a sign of the other boys at all. Slaney left the wreckage to drift away."

"Which only shows, Shorty, that we must always be ready to seize our opportunities," said Crowson easily. "We have gained another recruit without any difficulty—without the slightest risk. And this will not be merely another disappearance. It will be assumed, without the slightest doubt, that the boy has been drowned. The non-recovery of his body will not excite any comment."

He watched interestedly whilst Waldo's wet clothing was quickly torn from him. He was wrapped into a large blanket, and Crowson felt his pulse and took his temperature. He was quite satisfied.

"He'll come to no harm," he said, nodding. "Just a minute."

He took a little syringe, such as dentists use, and, inserting the needle just behind Waldo's ear, he touched the plunger. It was a simple, painless operation, and scarcely a mark was left.

All the "recruits" were treated in this way. It was a harmless drug which was used—but a drug which completely deadened the brain of the victims. They became automata—their memories gone, their wits dulled. Later, when the effect of the drug wore off, they would again become normal, and would suffer no after-effects.

"He's all right—take him below, and put him with that other youngster we got hold of the other night," said Crowson. "Quite a satisfactory afternoon."

Meanwhile, all along the beach, Russell and Fullwood and Handforth and the others were frantic with alarm. They were shouting themselves hoarse. The mist was thick, and, so far, they had seen no sign of the glider; neither had they heard any answering shouts to their own loud calls.

"He's drowned—he must have drowned!" said Fullwood huskily. "Poor old Waldo! We tried to warn him, didn't we?"

"He seemed to have a lot of trouble with the glider," said Handforth. "Poor chap, he couldn't get her to come back. What are we going to do? There isn't a boat here—"

"What about the coastguard station, farther along?" asked one of the others. "We might dash there—"

"By the time we can get there and back it'll be too late for anything," said Fullwood. "Waldo—Waldo!" he yelled at the top of his voice. "Hi! Waldo!"

They all listened, but there was no answer-

ing hail. They were at the water's edge, staring out into the mist.

And then, curiously enough, a section of the fog cleared. Only for a moment or two; but they could see the sea fairly distinctly for two or three hundred yards out. And there, floating on the surface, were some curious scraps of wreckage—which looked, in the thin mist, like torn bits of sail or sheeting.

"There it is!" almost croaked Russell, pointing. "Hi, Waldo!"

"Steady, you chaps!" said Travers. "No good getting into a panic. I don't think he's there. In any case, that wreckage is drifting in—the tide's coming in pretty fast. We'd better wait a bit."

They waited—and some of the wreckage did drift in. Frantically, wading knee-deep into the sea, they dragged it all ashore. The glider was in a score of fragments, but there was no sign of Stanley Waldo.

"He can't be dead—he can't be!" said Fullwood miserably. "I believe somebody rescued him, you chaps," he added suddenly. "Didn't you hear a sort of throbbing a little while back—like a motor-boat, or something?"

"I fancied I did," said Handforth cautiously. "But it may have been our imagination."

"Waldo—Waldo!" shouted Russell, despair now eloquent in his voice.

And so the search went on—almost hopelessly now that the wreckage had been found. Ultimately the coastguards got to know, and these valiant men soon had boats out. Dusk was coming on, and flares were lit. The sea was searched over a considerable distance, but the coastguards were only too aware of the futility of their quest. Unless Waldo had swum ashore, unless he had been rescued in some way, he could not possibly be alive now.

The coastguards had telephoned to the school as soon as they had heard the news, and it wasn't long before Nelson Lee and Mr. Wilkes arrived, with a number of prefects. They heard nothing cheering.

"Afraid it's no good, sir," said the coastguard officer, who was in charge of the operations. "These boys did the best they could. But there's not one chance in a million that the poor kid lived. It's more than likely that he was stunned by the crash—perhaps killed outright, and sunk like a stone. Just look at this wreckage—that'll show you."

The coastguard officer did not know that a great deal of the damage to the glider had been done by the colliding motor-boat.

"It's bad—very bad indeed," said Nelson Lee, looking grave. "Mr. Wilkes, I want you to take all these boys back—many of them are wet, and there's no earthly sense in their remaining here. We'll do all we can."

And so the once-enthusiastic glider experts went back to the school, miserable, dejected, almost stunned by the catastrophe. There seemed no doubt that Waldo had gone to his doom.

## CHAPTER 16.

### Waldo the Freak!

"THROBBING?" said Nelson Lee keenly, and a gleam of hope shone in his eyes.

"Yes, sir," said Handforth. "Fullwood heard it, and so did Russell. I thought I heard it, too. And it suddenly struck me, after I had got back to the school, that that throbbing might mean something. I haven't forgotten that queer motor-boat that was in the old cave, under Crag House."

"Just a minute, Handforth—not so fast," said Nelson Lee, stroking his chin.

Handforth had only just come into Nelson Lee's study. It was mid-evening now, and the mist had gathered quickly. Nipper had accompanied Edward Oswald.

"I can't believe it, guv'nor—that Waldo is dead," said Nipper. "You know what he's like. He's as strong as a lion—he can swim like a fish, too. Ordinary knocks don't hurt him. It's not reasonable to think that he drowned. Something happened to him—something else! I'll bet anything you like that he was collared by those crooks—and he's there now, at Crag House."

"But we can't be sure of it, Nipper," said Nelson Lee. "I agree with you that Waldo has peculiar qualities, and it isn't likely that he would go under. You say you heard the vague sound of a throbbing engine, Handforth? That is certainly significant. Perhaps that motor-boat came out and took the boy. Certainly, it would be an excellent opportunity of getting another victim. We are the only ones who believe in this theory; everybody else in the school, and in the district, is convinced that Waldo drowned. And we only think differently because we know something of the secrets of Crag House."

"But—but aren't we going to do something, sir?" asked Handforth. "Couldn't we go and investigate?"

"I'm afraid not," interrupted Lee, with a little smile. "If there are any investigations to make, Handforth, I will make them. Thank you for coming. Don't say anything about this to any of the others. Later, perhaps, I might be able to use you."

"That's what you told me, guv'nor, but you haven't used me yet," said Nipper complainingly.

"You must be patient; the time is not yet ripe," said Lee.



A hand came out of the blackness and gripped Waldo. He saw a villainous-looking face . . . "Steady, young 'un!" said the familiar voice of Nelson Lee.

And they went, hopeful in one respect but disappointed all the same.

At just about that same time, in one of those queer cubicles in the hidden tunnel which jutted out from the old quarry working under Crag House, Stanley Waldo was gradually recovering from the drugged pad that had been put over his mouth after being rescued. That drug had been quite ordinary, merely serving to make him unconscious, whilst the more important drug—which would take away his memory—was being administered.

The others, upon awakening, had accepted their lot without a murmur of protest. They had not cared. Whilst being healthy and ordinarily active, their minds had become to all intents and purposes a blank.

They were only capable of carrying out orders; they could not think for themselves. Once they were told to do a certain task, they continued doing it. They had been robbed of their own will-power. As workers they were ideal, since they laboured uncom-

plainly, and one guard was sufficient to watch over a dozen.

Waldo, when he awoke, was dressed in one of those drab suits, just like his unfortunate companions. He was lying on a small but comfortable camp bed. It was fixed on to the wall some distance up, very much like the upper berth in a steamer. Below, on another bed, exactly similar, was Cuthbert Chambers.

A little light glowed in the roof, and in this cubicle there were two chairs, a table, a wash-basin, and so forth. It was indeed a complete little home. The door, although stout and provided with a good lock, was not in any way comparable to a prison door. There was not the need. The victims, once they were locked within, had not the desire to attempt any escape.

Waldo sat up, and he looked about him dully for some time. Everything was strange, mysterious. He stared at the light in the ceiling; he looked at the curious wash-basin in the corner, and, at length, he climbed dizzily down to the floor. With a start, he found himself looking at Chambers. Chambers was asleep, and he looked surprisingly peaceful and contented. The shock of seeing the Fifth-Former was as effective as a douche of icy water.

"Chambers!" gasped Waldo, in amazement.

He stared round him in bewilderment. Chambers here, and dressed, like himself, in that queer garb! A place like a prison cell!

It was well that Shorty Williams and the others were absent just then. If they had been present they would have received a most unpleasant shock. For Waldo, upon awaking, was not "rabbit-brained" like the others, but in full possession of his normal wits!

In some strange way, by some freak of Waldo's composition, the drug had not taken effect!

**I**T was a staggering revelation.

Those men, when they had seized Waldo, had had no knowledge of his peculiar qualities. Quite naturally, they took him to be an ordinary boy. And in most respects he was an ordinary boy. Yet he had inherited those extraordinary qualities from his father. His eyes were unusually keen, his hearing uncannily acute; he did not know the meaning of pain. Thus that potent drug, which had had such a devastating effect upon the brains of the other "recruits," had left Stanley Waldo unaffected.

At first he did not realise this; he did not understand.

He was in full possession of his memory. He recalled, in clear detail, how he had fallen into the sea with that glider. He remembered the strange black motor-boat and the mystery figures in glistening oil-skins who had rescued him. After that he could recall nothing—except, perhaps, that he had had a suffocating sensation as one of the men had clapped something over his mouth and nostrils.

"My only sainted aunt!" he breathed, leaning back against the wall. "They must have drugged me, or something! I remember it now! They pulled me into that boat, and—and—I struggled for a bit, and I can't remember any more."

He looked down at his clothes, he looked at Chambers again, and he looked round at the cubicle.

"But where am I?" he went on, in dazed wonder. "What's happened? Chambers here—and Chambers vanished the other night!"

The thought which occurred to him halted his train of reasoning for the second. Cham-

## COMING NEXT WEDNESDAY



bers! Then what about Turner and Page and Freeman and the others?

Chambers had certainly been kidnapped by the people who had seized those Fourth-Formers, and Joe Spence and the others. Then it stood to reason that he, too, had been kidnapped by the same people! Kidnapped—out of the sea! Waldo could be excused for feeling utterly confused and bewildered for some minutes.

"I say!" he whispered, bending over Chambers and gently shaking him.

At the same moment he was aware of a queer feeling behind one of his ears. It was not a pain, for he never felt pain. It was just a sensation; scarcely an itching, but a numbness. He put his hand there, and he felt a tiny swelling.

"Chambers!" he repeated.

Chambers sat up, and the expression in his eyes as he looked at Waldo was blank—a stupid, dull expression.

"Hallo, Chambers!" breathed Waldo eagerly.

"Hallo!" said Chambers, staring in that strange way.

"But—but what's the matter with you?" asked Waldo, in wonder. "Don't you know me? They've brought me here, too. I don't know how—"

He broke off, for Chambers seemed utterly disinterested.

"I say!" he went on. "What's wrong, Chambers?"

## "The Return of Professor Zingrave!"

By E. S. Brooks.

First Jim the Penman—and now Professor Cyrus Zingrave!

Audaciously the professor makes a spectacular escape from prison. Crooks become allied in a great battle of revenge against Nelson Lee. And from Crag House, wherein toil the captive schoolboy slaves, they direct their sinister operations.

The smashing fight between Zingrave and Nelson Lee makes thrilling reading in next week's sensational long complete yarn, featuring the Chums of St. Frank's.

### "Outlawed!"

More enthralling chapters of David Goodwin's magnificent highwayman-adventure serial.

### "HANDFORTH'S WEEKLY!"

### "MAILERS!"

A good joke wins a good prize—have a shot, chums.

### ORDER IN ADVANCE!

Chambers did not reply; he just looked stupid. And it was so amazing for Chambers to be like that that Waldo gaped. Chambers was usually so arrogant, so masterful.

"Here, pull yourself together, old man!" said the Removite, half frightened. "For goodness' sake don't look at me like that! Don't you know me?"

Still Chambers did not reply; he only gazed about him with the meek timidity of a tame animal.

"Great Scott!" gasped Waldo, in horrified amazement. Then suddenly he thought of that little swelling behind his ear. "Turn your head," he said. "I want to look—" He broke off, for Chambers had obeyed instantly. "Turn your head right round," went on Waldo, in a strained voice.

It was almost pitiful the way Chambers obeyed so readily, and sure enough, just behind the ear, there was the tiniest possible trace of a puncture. Waldo would not have seen it had he not been looking for it. It confirmed his suspicion.

He was only too well aware of his own peculiarities. He guessed something of the truth, but only vaguely. He was more interested in Chambers' behaviour.

"Get up, walk to that door, and come back again," said Waldo, in a low voice.

Chambers obeyed, and Waldo watched him fascinatedly.

"They're all like it, I expect," he muttered. "Chambers and Freeman and Dallas and Joe Spence and all the others! Automata! They do just as they're told, and they don't even know who they are or where they are! Ye gods and little fishes! I shall wake up in a minute. This isn't merely a dream—it's a nightmare."

He heard a sound. Footsteps!

"Lie down!" he hissed, and Chambers instantly obeyed.

With a single spring, Waldo reached his own bed above. Only just in time. A key turned in the door, and a wrinkled old man appeared. He it was, in fact, who looked after the prisoners, who brought them their food. He carried a tray now; he set it upon the table and clapped his gnarled old hands.

"Come!" he said, as though talking to tame animals. "Food! Eat!"

Chambers got off the bed and sat upon one of the chairs, and Waldo, taking his cue, did exactly the same. He saw the old man looking at him with a queer little smile, but he took care to keep his face absolutely expressionless.

"So you've come round, too, hey?" said the old man, with a chuckle. "The Chief said you would. Wonderful stuff, that! Acts like magic, don't it? There, there, my pretties!" he went on soothingly. "Come along! Eat your supper! There's work to-night, I believe."

And, chuckling to himself, the old man passed out.

Waldo sat there, feeling too choked to eat any food. His mind was in a turmoil.

### CHAPTER 17.

#### Mysterious Work!

IT had been clever of Waldo to conceal his real condition, to make the old man believe that he was affected in just the same way as Chambers. Now Waldo was beginning to realise that it would pay him to carry on with this pose. For he might be able to see much, to learn much, and yet none would suspect that he was in the full possession of his wits.

Somehow, he managed to force down some food. It was good enough—new bread, corned beef and hot cocoa. It seemed ages and ages to Waldo since he had fallen into the sea in that glider. Now and again he

caught himself wondering if he was, indeed, dreaming.

But there was not much time for thinking. He had no sooner finished eating than the old man appeared again, to clear away the dishes. Then came Shorty and Jim. They were carrying powerful petrol-vapour lamps, and their manner was brisk.

"Come along!" said Shorty. "Smart's the word, lads! Follow me."

Chambers followed at once, and Waldo fell into line. He passed out of the cubicle, and he was astonished to find himself in a rock tunnel. Until now he had believed that he was in a house of some kind. Lined up in the tunnel were a dozen or more figures—everyone dressed exactly the same. Waldo nearly betrayed himself as he recognised Turner and Page and Freeman and the other missing Fourth-Formers. He recognised Joe Spence, too. They were all exactly like Chambers—dull-eyed, obedient, as listless and as meek as cowed rabbits.

"All here?" said Shorty. "Good! March!"

The "human machines" commenced marching. Waldo marched with them. He scarcely knew whether to be glad or horrified. He was certainly glad to see all these fellows safe and well. But were they well? In body, perhaps, but what of their minds? It was tragic to see them like this.

To his bewilderment, he and the others were now marched out into a great tunnel which he instantly recognised as one of the old quarry workings. Then came more bewildering events.

With two or three others, he was placed in a tiny compartment which was like a cupboard, but which turned out to be a lift. Up he went—up, up. Then at length he emerged from the lift, to find himself in a place which bore a close resemblance to a mine gallery.

Electric lights were gleaming brightly, and there was plenty of space. This was not the cellar of Crag House, but an excavation some distance below the cellar. A wide gallery, hewn out of the earth and rock, with straight walls, smooth floors, and here and there side passages. And electric lights everywhere. He found himself taken along to another gallery, and here, lying about, were many blocks of granite. There were heaps of mortar, too, sacks of sand and cement.

Orders were given, and the captives commenced mixing mortar, making concrete. Others set to work on a big granite wall. It was for this reason that the blocks were being used. It was a wonder that Waldo did not betray himself, for he could hardly prevent himself from taking a lively interest in all he saw. Only by the greatest effort did he act as the others—pretending to work mechanically, without interest in what he was doing.

He saw that the granite wall extended for a great distance along the wide passage. Here and there were openings; no doubt doors would be fitted in these later. It was like the massive wall of a prison.

But what could it be for? Waldo was freshly puzzled. There were side walls, too. He found that a series of cells, or little rooms, were being constructed all along this great gallery.

Very little was said; a word now and again to the workers, urging them to keep going. There were only two men taking care of the "gang"—Shorty and Jim. After about an hour Mr. Crowson came along, and Waldo knew him at once. Crowson! The butler of Crag House! Here was another staggerer. So he was under Crag House!

"Oh, my hat! This is too much!" muttered Waldo wearily.

In a second he realised that he had been incautious. Shorty approached him, and shook him by the shoulder.

"What's that you said, boy?" he asked sharply.

Waldo looked at him dully, and made no reply.

"Funny!" said Shorty, frowning. "I say, Jim, this kid muttered something just now. I've never known one of the others do it. No chance of that stuff losing its effect, is there?"

"The Chief says it'll work for at least three weeks—perhaps a month," replied Jim. "Perhaps this kid isn't properly 'off' yet. He's one of the new ones, isn't he?"

"Yes—that one who fell in the sea," replied Shorty. "I don't think he ought to have been used to-night."

"It won't do him any harm," said the other. "Funny, isn't it, the way they work and take no notice? It hardly seems possible that they'll be themselves again when that stuff loses its effect. Come along, now—keep at it!" he added sharply.

And the work went on.

— —

## CHAPTER 18.

### The Man in the Tunnel!

WALDO experienced a sense of overwhelming relief.

He told himself that he would not make another slip of that kind. Even now he might be examined—and by some method these crooks might discover his secret. His relief was occasioned by Shorty's words. The "stuff" would not have a permanent effect. After three or four weeks the boys would become their normal selves. Waldo suddenly became cheerful. That ghastly thought was dismissed from his mind—the thought that his unfortunate companions were for ever doomed to remain in this appalling condition.

He found himself looking at the situation from a totally new angle. The prisoners were being well cared for—they had good beds, and good food. They were being worked hard, it was true, but that would do them no real harm.

Until now, Waldo, like a great many others in the school, had feared that some awful fate had overtaken the missing boys. Now Waldo knew the truth.

Moreover, he was in an advantageous position. He was like the other victims—and yet he was not like them.

He did not know how long he worked; it seemed an age to him. He only knew that the others were weary and worn by the time the order came for them to "down tools." Boys though they were, they had progressed far more rapidly than any similar number of trained workmen. Not that they were more skilful than trained workmen. But they were kept at it without pause—without rest. It was forced labour. And the overseers were not particular about the quality of the labour. The granite walls were by no means perfect, but they were at least impregnable.

Waldo himself was not aware of any sense of tiredness. He was far too fascinated by all that he saw and heard. He also had an overwhelming desire to escape, so that he could rush out and tell everybody of what he had seen. He longed to get back to St. Frank's; in his mind's eye he saw himself rushing into the Ancient House with his startling story.

It so happened that he was among the last to go down the lift. He and three others were in that little party. All the rest had been marched along the quarry working to the cubicles.

Jim was in charge of this final batch. Jim was leading the way, swinging one of those powerful lanterns. They had not gone far along the tunnel before a shout came from the rear:

"Hi! Just a minute, Jim!"

It was Shorty who was calling, and Jim halted his charges.

"Wait here," he said briefly.

The boys halted immediately, and waited. Shorty went back, taking the lantern with him. Waldo, at first, was astonished. The guard had gone, leaving the prisoners there alone.

Suddenly he realised that this was his chance.

The old quarry working—which might lead him to liberty! He did not know this particular working; in fact, he knew that he had never been in it before. But surely there must be a way out?

He made up his mind quickly.

Glancing back, he saw the two men near the lift, and they were talking earnestly, inspecting a paper of some kind. Waldo himself and the other prisoners were in darkness.

"Yes!" murmured Waldo. "It's the only chance I'm ever likely to get!"

He slid away—merging into the blackness of the tunnel. His heart was thudding, and perhaps he did not quite realise the difficulties of the enterprise. He had no light—no tools of any kind. He went off into the dark tunnel.

A hand came out of the blackness and gripped him; he gulped. He found himself looking into a villainous face—a face which was lined and creased and mahogany-coloured. He could see it only dimly in the faint light which came down the tunnel from the far-off lantern.

"Oh!" he panted.

"Steady, young 'un—steady!" came a soft, familiar voice. "Do not breathe a word! You know me, don't you? I am Mr. Lee."

## NELSON LEE

Waldo could hardly believe his ears. The figure was dressed like a tramp; the face was ugly and dirty. But there was no mistaking the voice.

"Mr. Lee!" breathed Waldo joyously. "Oh, thank goodness! I—I thought you were one of the crooks at first."

It was Nelson Lee's turn to be astounded. After watching those "workers" in the cave the other night, he had been prepared to find Waldo in a similar condition.

"My boy, I am relieved to find that you are alive—yet I must confess that I half-expected it," said the great detective. "It was to make sure that I came here to-night, adopting this disguise as a safeguard. You see, if I am caught, I do not want the enemy to know my identity."

"I—I was going to escape, sir—"

"Wait!" interrupted Lee. "We may only have two or three minutes in which to talk. Those two men are still engaged, and so we have a brief opportunity. Tell me, Waldo. Tell me as quickly as you can—what has happened?"

Waldo told him—briefly, breathlessly.

"That's the rummy part of it, sir," he ended. "All these other chaps are like—like helpless imbeciles. They do just as they are told without questioning. If you talk to them, they can't answer. Their brains are numbed."

"And yours is not?" said Lee keenly. "Amazing! And yet, knowing you as I do, Waldo, I cannot say that I am surprised. You are differently constituted."

"It seems like it, sir," agreed Waldo. "Anyhow, I've fooled the crooks."

"That was very brainy of you," said Lee approvingly. "I am relieved to hear that their unfortunate condition is not permanent. That's splendid news."

Lee was thinking rapidly whilst he spoke. Waldo's immunity was an unexpected factor—and it was one of tremendous importance.

"Waldo!" said Lee suddenly, his voice sounding keen. "Are you willing to take a chance?"

"Yes, rather, sir!"

"Will you help me?"

"Of course, sir!"

"It'll mean hard work and irksome confinement," continued Lee. "In a word, I want you to stay down here—as a prisoner."

"Oh!"

"Don't you see, my boy, how unique your position is?" went on the detective. "If you gain your freedom—as you had planned—you will only alarm these criminals. You will put them on their guard, and they will be in such a panic that they will probably abandon their project. And I may never discover what that project actually is. You see, before we can arrest them we must have a definite charge."



*The Editor replies to letters from his readers.*



A breezy chat with readers conducted by the EDITOR. All letters should be addressed to The Editor,

NELSON LEE LIBRARY, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

I HAVE received many enthusiastic letters from readers expressing their approval of the pen-sketches of prominent St. Frank's characters which have been appearing recently. This week we commence with thumbnail descriptions of the Remove boys, the alphabetical order of studies being followed.

**STUDY A.—BERNARD FORREST.** Tall, well-built, and aristocratic, with perfectly-fitting clothes, Forrest impresses most people as being a fine sort of chap. His charming manner, his easy assurance, his self-possession, all delude those with whom he comes in contact. For beneath the veneer Forrest is an unscrupulous young rascal; almost entirely without principle, selfish and cunning. He is the recognised leader of the "knuts" in the St. Frank's Junior School. His one outstanding good quality is that he has plenty of dogged pluck. Can fight well, too.

**ALBERT GULLIVER.** A thin and weedy youth, with skinny arms and narrow shoulders. He possesses a long, pointed nose and thin lips; his large ears stand out prominently. Mean and spiteful, Gulliver is very much of a rotter—to say nothing of being a snob. **GEORGE BELL.** Almost as aristocratic as Forrest himself; but his narrow chest indicates that he is no fighter. Generally wears a supercilious expression. Usually he is a languid, simpering fellow, weak and characterless. Like other fellows of such shallow character, he thinks an enormous lot of himself.

\* \* \*

Stanley Waldo is about 15 years of age, Albert W. Wilson (Wallasey). It is very doubtful if Handforth could knock him out in a boxing match, unless he got in a lucky blow. Waldo is not superhuman; he is impervious to pain as we know it, but a right swing to the jaw, whether he felt pain or not, would knock him out, providing it was sufficiently forceful.

By this time, Cedric L. Woods (Brandon), you will have discovered that your favourite old character, Professor Cyrus Zingrave, is once again to be featured by Mr. Brooks. I am sure that you will like the series of stories now running. You are one of the Old-Timers, as faithful as they make 'em, and I can assure you that I heartily appreciate your stout loyalty to the Old Paper. Write to me again; I am always pleased to hear from you. And that applies to all other readers.

\* \* \*

Nipper lives with his guardian when he is not at school, Stuart B. Renton (Bishop Monkton). His guardian is Mr. Nelson Lee, and their home is in Gray's Inn Road, London. Jack Grey is, of course, still at St. Frank's. He shares Study O, in the West House, with Reggie Pitt.

\* \* \*

The author gives fairly full descriptions of St. Frank's and district in the writing of the stories, Harry Alcock (Endon). After a few more weeks of reading the yarns you will obtain an accurate mind-picture. Nelson Lee figured in the Foreign Legion in the story called "The Legion of the Lost"—No. 29, August 9th, 1930.

\* \* \*

When Handforth's Aunt Sophie changed his Austin Seven for a Morris Minor, F. W. Walkington (Cardiff), the Austin was naturally taken in by the firm which supplied the new car. So there is no mystery about the Austin Seven's disappearance. Handforth is slightly older than Church and McClure, but only by a few months.

\* \* \*

The captain of the Remove prior to Nipper, Gordon Allan (Victoria, Australia,) was Ralph Leslie Fullwood.

*A bad deed helps Dick to perform his day's good deed!*

# Outlawed!

A stirring serial of old-time romance and adventure.

By DAVID GOODWIN



## Good-bye to Basing!

WITH a ringing laugh, Dick watched the running figure of Captain Spott disappear into the darkness. Then he turned, and after returning the whip to the magistrate, faced Sir Cecil Stanhope once more.

"Sir Cecil," said the young highwayman quietly, "you are now rid of the leeches who have lived on you so long. The estates, I think, are not yet beyond hope, so pull yourself together and start afresh. Doubtless you will help him to play a man's part, Sir Adam?" he added, appealing to the magistrate.

"Aye, with all my heart," nodded Sir Adam earnestly, "if only for my old friend's sake. Come, Cecil, what do you say?"

"I will, I will!" cried the young baronet

passionately. "I thank you, sir, for what you have done, and I will face the world as a Stanhope should."

"And now, Dick," said Vincent, "where are you bound? Are you long from Fernhall?"

"Fernhall!" exclaimed Dick. "I am but a knight of the road, with two pistols for my fortune. Sir Adam, Fernhall is no longer mine—by law. The knaves yonder sought me for the five hundred guineas on my head."

Sir Adam stared dumbly, then threw himself into a chair and laughed till his sides ached.

"Forgive me for making merry at your misfortune, Dick," he cried, wiping his eyes, "but, on my soul, it is too comic. Those rogues called on me to arrest you, as I was

in duty bound to do, and I flouted them and helped you rout them. Ho, ho! I am glad I did not know it before—it would have been very awkward for me. But I'll forget it again, believe me. We are all friends here."

"I thought you knew about my misfortune," said Dick.

"Nay, I supposed you were in possession of Fernhall and a peaceful subject, since Vane's death and your pardon from the State. And you are outlawed afresh. Your cousin Hector in possession. Pink me, this is not to be borne! Let us go and hound out the villain!"

"Nay, that would scarce become a magistrate!" laughed Dick. "I hope soon to bring it about with my own hand, nevertheless. But it grows late, and I think Sir Cecil wishes to be alone—he has much to think over. Do you help him, Sir Adam, when he has hit on a course. Nay, we will not stop the night—our company will bring neither of you any good reputation. Good-night, and fortune attend you."

And, refusing all pressure to stay, he and Turpin sought their horses and rode away into the night.

#### A Roadside Adventure!

"WHERE to now, Sir Knight?" asked Turpin gaily, as they trotted down the Hutton road. "These little crusades of yours are very amusing, and I think Sir Cecil Stanhope may thank his stars 'e met you. But they do not fill the pockets, and my purse begins to feel light. I went over the knaves we tied to the trees, but the rascals had but a few guineas between them."

"You have helped yourself indirectly to Sir Cecil's money, then," said Dick rather gruffly, "for if those rogues had any, that is where it came from."

"And cheap, too, at the price of ridding himself of the Spott crew," said Turpin imperturbably. "I find one guinea as good as another, Dick. But my very pistols itch to meet some fat burgess with a belt full of gold. I never took hand in so many unprofitable labours before I met you, my gay young crusader. Where shall we turn next?"

"Away to the southward," replied Dick. "A day's journey, and then we will turn

to our profession in earnest. If I'm to be hanged at last, I'll have something in payment for it. But it is not well to make a stir near Ralph's school; and as the country will soon be humming with the news of our exploit, we'd better make ourselves scarce in all haste. I can pay a flying visit to Ralph whenever necessary, till the time comes to strike home. I will tell you of that anon."

For three hours they rode, putting up for the night at the cottage of a turf-cutter who was well known to Turpin. Next day they were on the road betimes, and towards evening, as they came out upon the lonely heaths beyond Harboro', Turpin announced his intention of leaving his comrade for a few hours.

"I must strike across country by the milestone here, Dick," he said. "I have to settle a little matter of which I will say nothing at present. It may prove to our joint profit later on, as I will explain to you to-night. Do you ride on and await me at the Conyer's Arms at Boxley, which is a good little hostelry, and safe as the daylight for gentlemen of our profession. 'Tis not ten miles ahead, and you will be there by dark. It will be near midnight before I join you."

He waved his hand and rode away at right angles across the heath, leaving Dick wondering what was in the wind.

"He is plaguey mysterious," thought Dick. "I have not known him to pull off so suddenly before. But it is a queer day when Turpin does not know what he is about."

He pushed on at a canter, gaining the higher part of the road, where trees and coppices fringed the way, and the light was dim as it filtered through the branches that nearly met overhead.

"I begin to feel the lack of him already. What a merry rogue he is! 'Twould be little sport to ride the highways without him. Hallo, yonder comes a traveller, and in no good humour, by the sound of him!"

A large, bulky form on horseback was approaching slowly, and a torrent of abuse came from the rider. He bestrode a fine, handsome chestnut, which had fallen almost dead lame in one of its forelegs. The man was flogging the poor beast savagely.

"Get on, you lagging, good-for-nothing sloth!" he bellowed, lashing it with a heavy hunting whip. The beast winced and stag-

#### HOW THE STORY BEGAN.

**DICK FORRESTER**, formerly a young highwayman, has been deprived of his fortune and estate at Fernhall by the trickery of **HECTOR FORRESTER**. This is only the beginning of Dick's troubles, for he next falls foul of **CAPTAIN SWEENEY**, the notorious leader of a gang of footpads, and is also wanted by the King's Riders for assisting his former comrade of the road.

**RICHARD TURPIN**, the famous highwayman, to escape capture. Dick is forced to become an outlaw, and he and Turpin ride off together. They encounter many stirring adventures, during which Sweeny makes numerous unsuccessful attempts on Dick's life. The two comrades frustrate a plot arranged by Hector to kill Dick's young brother Ralph, and the young outlaw sends the boy to St. Austell's School. The highwayman pay a visit to an old friend, Sir Henry Stanhope, only to discover that he has died. His son has succeeded to the title, and Sir Cecil, weak and extravagant, is mixed up with a number of sponging "friends." One of these, Captain Spott, schemes to have Dick arrested by Sir Adam Vincent, a magistrate, not knowing that the two are old friends. Dick borrows Sir Adam's hunting-crop and whips Spott out of the house.

gered, but it could bear no weight on its lame foot, nor go any faster.

Dick's blood boiled at the sight, for nothing made him more angry than cruelty to a horse, and he pressed forward.

"For shame, sir!" he cried hotly. "Are you mad to flog a lame horse like that? Get down and lead him like a man, or he will never stand on four sound legs again."

"To the deuce!" cried the stranger, a big, portly man, richly dressed, and with a bullet head and brick-red face. "Mind your own affairs, puppy, or I will serve you worse than the horse!"

Dick's reply was to whip out a long, black pistol.

"By the rood," he said, "I had no thought to strip you, and in truth business was not in my mind, but you have fairly earned it. Down from that horse and out with your purse, or he will go home riderless! Quickly, for I am in no mind to wait!"

The man looked into Dick's pistol-muzzle blankly, and then fairly gasped with rage. He was beyond speech.

"Move no hand towards a weapon, unless you want a bullet through your skull!" said the young highwayman. "Down with you, sirrah!"

"A hanged highwayman!" muttered the stranger; but he dismounted rapidly enough, glaring at Dick the while.

"Fool!" he cried, as he stood in the road. "You have put your own neck in the noose! Do you know who I am?"

"I shall be blithe to hear," said Dick. "For if I find you ill-treating a horse again I will cure you of it for good and all. I let you off with a fine this time, provided you pay it swiftly."

"Braggart! I am Vincent Grafton, of Claverhouse, lord of this manor and Justice of the Peace, and the terror of evildoers. You had best ride for your life, or I will make it the worse for you."

"They call me Galloping Dick," said the young highwayman calmly, "and better men than you have threatened me, to their own undoing. For the last time, your purse, for my finger itches upon the trigger!"

The magistrate surrendered his well-filled purse. He was a good enough judge of men to see that Dick would be as good as his word.

Dick dismounted, took the purse, motioned the man back, and advanced to the lame horse. He undid the girths rapidly, threw the stirrup-irons away, took the saddle off, and flung it into a ditch by the roadside. He removed the bridle, unhitched the bit and hurled it far into the wood, and replaced the bridle as a plain halter round the neck. Then he took the magistrate's whip, tore off the thong, and broke the crop across his knee.

"You may now lead the horse home," said Dick coolly. "I doubt you are not man enough to ride him without saddle or bit. Be thankful I have not laid the thong

about your shoulders. You were very near to receiving a thrashing. Away with you, sirrah, and treasure this as a lesson!"

### Squire—and Tyrant!

PLAYING no heed to the man's muttered threats, Dick mounted Black Satan and trotted on towards Boxley, well pleased with himself. When a mile or two along the road he pulled out the captured purse.

"Well filled!" he exclaimed jubilantly, opening it. "A very just fine. It is strange that yonder ruffler should be lord of a manor, and magistrate besides. He is wealthy, certainly, but plainly of no birth. But this is a plaguey long road to Boxley, on my word! That is a pleasant-looking cottage, I see, and methinks a meal of bread and cheese would be welcome. Doubtless the owner will take good payment for half an hour's rest here."

He dismounted, and a white-haired old cottager, poorly dressed, but very neat and clean, came out. The man looked care-worn and troubled, but he greeted Dick civilly.

"Can you rest man and beast for a space, good sir?" asked Dick. "I will pay you well—"

"Come in, sir, and say nothing of payment," broke in the man. "I shall have little chance of harbouring guests soon. You will be the last, I doubt."

Dick hitched Satan to the fence at the back, where some outhouses screened him from the road, and saw to the horse's wants. Then he entered the cottage.

"You have a snug home, good father, and well kept," he remarked. "Why should I be the last guest?"

The cottager sighed wearily.

"The old place is to be taken from me, sir. Our family—good, honest folk—have lived here for three hundred years past under the Kerrisdales, who were lords of the manor. I would they were back, for they were gentlefolk, and dealt well by their tenants and the poor. But since the present owner bought the manor, two years ago, things are changed. He grinds those who are under him to the utmost farthing. He is free to do as he likes with his own, but it goes bitter hard with me to part with this old place, which he is about to pull down to build a shooting-lodge in its place."

"That is hard indeed," agreed Dick.

"My work lies in this neighbourhood, sir, yet I cannot get another cottage, for he has forced up all the rents, so that a poor man cannot live there. Moreover, his agent makes me out to be in his debt, which I know I am not, yet I cannot prove it. So my little household is to be sold up, and I to be turned on the roads."

"Sdeath!" exclaimed Dick. "He is <sup>as</sup> scurvy a knave as ever I heard of, <sup>this</sup> landlord of yours. What is his name?"

"Squire Grafton, of Claverhouse!"

"What!" cried Dick. "Do you tell me that he—"

Dick broke off suddenly, for the sound of hoofs outside the gate reached him, and through the window he saw a riderless chestnut horse without a saddle, and a leather halter round its neck. He recognised it at a glance, and a grim smile stole upon his lips. He sat down again, in a shadowy corner of the room.

"I think another guest is at your door, good man," he said.

The little gate outside was flung roughly open, the cottager opened the door, and in strode the very man Dick had stopped half an hour before. He was obviously in the worst of tempers.

"How now, fellow?" he cried roughly. "Have you started to put this place in order against your out-going?"

"I shall be ready when you b'l me go, sir," said the cottager, with a sigh.

"You'll go to-morrow, sirrah, for then your lease is up! And a good riddance to you! The place will be pulled down, and the roof shall come off the same day. And, hark ye, for your debt to me, you shall labour fourteen days at the task with my men!"

"Will you not spare me the old place, sir—" began the man pleadingly.

"Enough!" cried Grafton, striking the table heavily with his whip. "You have cheated the estate long enough with your low rent."

"I am in your power, sir," sighed the cottager.

"Aye, you are," snapped the squire, with an ugly look, "and well you shall know it. Some of you people shall pay towards my recent loss! Ninety good guineas gone to a —"

He broke off with a gasp, paling as his eyes met those of Dick, sitting quietly in the dark corner.

## A CUP FOR STAMP COLLECTORS

There's a great treat in store for all you fellows who are stamp collectors, and who are in London between the 6th and 23rd of January. For a great Pageant of Postage Stamps is to be presented at Dorland Hall, Lower Regent Street, within one minute of Piccadilly Circus.

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"The highwayman!" muttered Grafton hoarsely.

The squire of Claverhouse was filled with mingled rage and fear. That he, the magnate of the borough and a Justice of the Peace, should twice in two hours encounter the same highwayman was disconcerting.

"Blood!" he exclaimed.

"I hope it will not come to that," said Dick coolly. "I see at present no need to shed any so long as you behave yourself."

"So!" roared the landlord, turning savagely upon the astonished cottager. "You harbour thieves and malefactors, do you?"

"I did not know—" stammered Dick's host.

"Stay!" interrupted Dick. "This good fellow knows nothing of the matter. Neither can anything be brought up against him, even by you, Master Justice. But let me point out that you have used two or three unpalatable expressions, which I cannot allow to pass."

## Dick's Good Deed!

THE magistrate's face was dark red with rage; he gobbled like a turkey cock. His fingers began to steal slowly towards the side pocket in his coat.

"Your hand begins to play truant, sir," remarked Dick, producing one of his long pistols. "If you are seeking your pocket to offer me a sugar-plum, allow me to say that I do not care for sweets."

"I was about to offer you the medicine you deserve," growled the squire; but his hand went no farther.

Dick placed his own weapon to the man's head, reached forward, and drew a short, silver-mounted pistol from his victim's pocket. He laid it, and his own, on the table, the butts towards him.

"For a magistrate, you carry strange medicines," said Dick. "Your authority as a justice must be weak, if you are not safe without arms in your own district."

"Small wonder, with so many gallows-born knaves about the country!" snapped the justice, scowling at Dick.

The young highwayman smiled calmly.

"Perhaps we had better not discuss the subject any further," he said blandly. "There are other matters to be dealt with of more importance."

"I have nothing more about me—not a groat!" snarled the Squire of Claverhouse. "You have already stripped me of all I had."

"Let that pass," said Dick. "It is your manners rather than your money which concerns me. It appears, Master Justice, that you treat your men no better than your horses. From what I have seen, you have used this honest cottager very ill."

"What concern is it of yours?" roared the magistrate. "Am I to ask your leave how I shall deal with my tenants? Be not

too cock-a-hoop, my ruffler! I shall see you on the gallows yet!"

"Even if it comes to pass, you may miss that interesting spectacle," returned Dick, "for if you use another uncivil word, and if you do not instantly moderate your voice and adopt a tone more suitable in addressing your superiors, I shall empty both these pistols into your useless carcase."

"My superiors!" stormed the magistrate.

"Certainly, sir. I am your superior, if only by right of capture. This cottager is your superior; for, if of lowly station, he is at least no swaggering bully, and I prefer his manners to yours. Enough!" Dick struck the table sharply. "We will now set right this matter of the cottage. My good host here wishes to remain in it."

"It will be levelled to the ground in three days!"

Dick picked up his pistol.

"Can you write?" he asked the magistrate.

"Sdeath!" spluttered that gentleman. "This is too much!"

"Excellent!" Dick beamed, then turned to the amazed cottager. "Good man, your name? Silas Bardwell? Master Bardwell, pray bring pens and ink, and set them before your landlord. A sheet of paper likewise. Ah, parchment? Better still. Seat yourself at the table, squire. Square your elbows and begin!"

The magistrate gasped. Dick looked pained.

"Your mouth is no thing of beauty at the best, but I prefer it shut," he said urbanely. "Sit down and write a lease, assigning this cottage to Silas Bardwell and his heirs for 999 years, at the annual rent of a peppercorn!"

"May death strike me if I do!" cried the squire furiously.

"It will strike you with exceeding suddenness if you don't!" snapped Dick curtly, and flicked a speck of dust from the barrel of his pistol. "I am not sure, on the whole, that it would not be simpler to shoot you. Then there will be no question of pulling down Master Bardwell's cottage."

The steely-blue eye behind the pistol-sight convinced the Squire of Claverhouse. He took up his pen and began to write at Dick's dictation, and, having some knowledge of

the law, the young highwayman drew up a very good and binding lease, by which Silas Bardwell was to pay the lord of the manor one peppercorn yearly for the messuage and appurtenances of Cross-Roads Cottage.

"Sign it!" commanded Dick. "Your full name and titles, please! You have wax and signet? Then affix your seal. Add your name beneath, 'Master Silas.' So! Now hand it to me and I will witness it."

Dick signed with a flourishing hand: "Richard Forrester, late of Fernhall."

"An odd signature to be under a lease of yours, Master Justice," he remarked, with a grim smile, and tossed the parchment across to Silas. "There, friend, please you to accept that in return for the hospitality you so freely gave me. One good turn deserves another. No court in England can upset that lease, and the cottage is yours, rent free, for the next thousand years."

"Ah, sir, you are too good!" said the cottager with fervent gratitude. "It is greater fortune than I ever dreamed of!"

"As for you," went on Dick, turning to the magistrate, "you have had two good lessons in one day, and I will leave you to think them over, to your great profit and advancement. Do not, after this, maltreat a horse or oppress the poor, lest worse disaster fall on you. Here is your purse back"—he threw it on the table—"none the lighter. It is my rule not to strip the same pigeon twice in one day, so we will call quits."

"We have not done with each other yet," muttered the magistrate, trembling with passion. "My turn is yet to come—and mark those words well!"

Dick gave a hearty laugh.

"I shall look forward to our next meeting, then, Squire Grafton," he said, walking calmly towards the door. "Twill mean some good sport, methinks. Farewell to you, and may we meet again soon. Farewell to you, too, good Master Silas!"

And with another ringing laugh, the young highwayman left the cottage. He unhitched Black Satan's bridle from the rails of the shed, swung on to the horse's back, and trotted away down the road to Boxley, where he had arranged to rejoin Turpin.

(More rousing chapters of this popular serial next Wednesday, chums.)

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