

HANDSOME PRIZES TO BE WON EVERY WEEK!

See
Inside.

THE NELSON LEE

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2^d



The
**SCHOOLBOY
'TECS!**

Nipper and the Chums of St. Frank's on the trail! Smashing battle between schoolboys and Professor Zingrave's gang! Thrills abound in this week's long complete school and adventure yarn.

New Series No. 105.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

January 23rd, 1932.

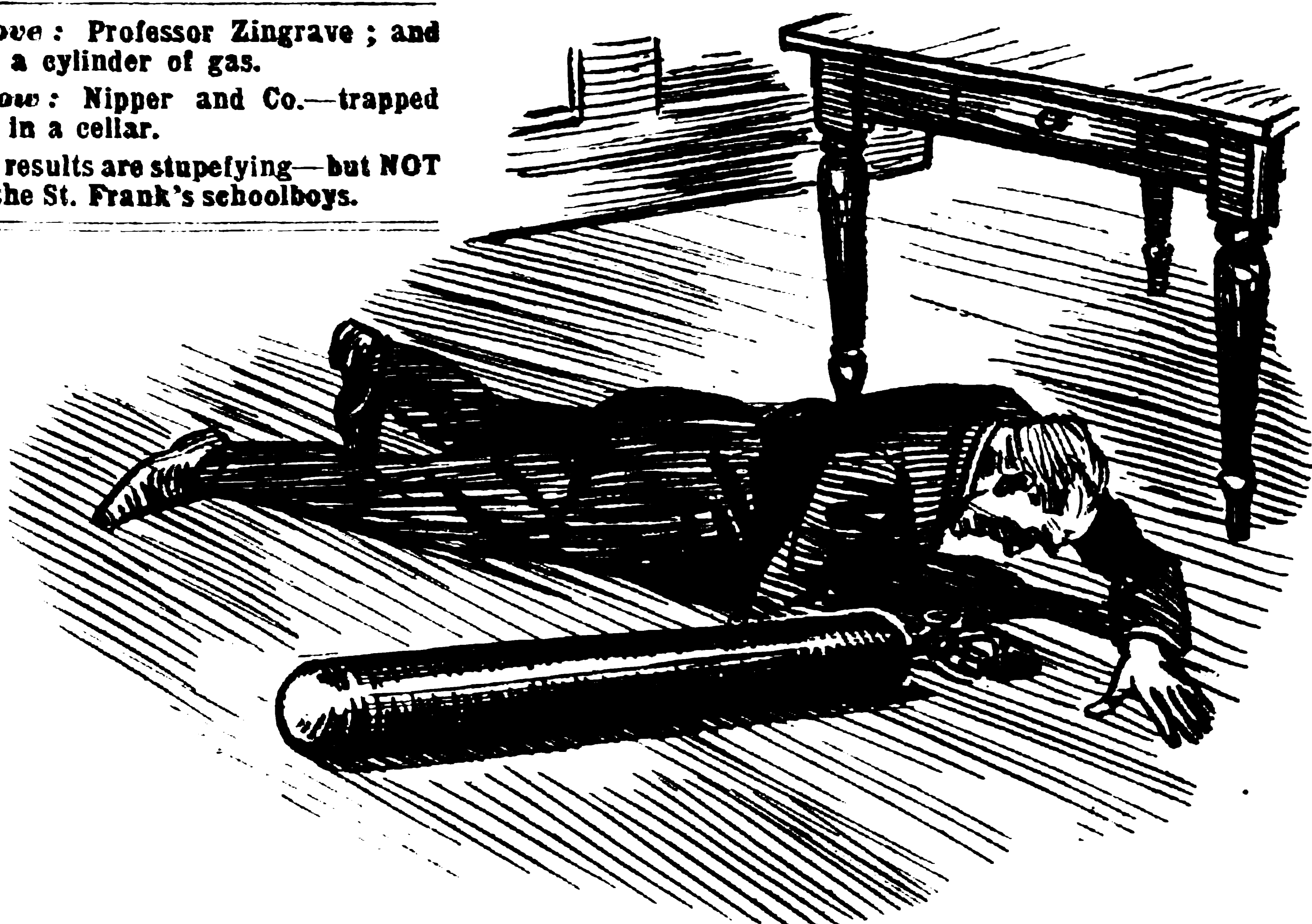
St. Frank's schoolboys round up a gang of desperate "wanted" men!

The CAPTIVES of

Above : Professor Zingrave ; and
a cylinder of gas.

Below : Nipper and Co.—trapped
in a cellar.

**The results are stupefying—but NOT
for the St. Frank's schoolboys.**



CHAPTER 1.

The Mystery of the Head's Study!

"CAN'T be long, now," said Nipper in a low voice.

The captain of the Remove Form at St. Frank's was standing in the black, deserted Junior entrance of the School House. At this hour of the evening the building was locked up, and the deeply-recessed stone porch was an excellent observation post. From here Nipper could see right across the misty Triangle, with the lights of the other Houses gleaming in a friendly way through the slight mist. He could also see Big Arch, close at hand.

"They must be having a long jaw," muttered Handforth impatiently.

There were two others present—Church and McClure. The four Removites had taken up their stand nearly three-quarters of an hour ago and, not having troubled to don overcoats and hats, the prolonged inactivity left them chilled.

"There's really no sense in our stopping here," said Church grumpily. "We're only watching for Admiral Carington's car to leave. We might as well

be doing that in the Ancient House lobby—where it's warm."

"But we couldn't talk," said Nipper. "At least, we couldn't talk about Crag House. We're the only fellows in the school who know the inner facts."

"I wonder if anything fresh will happen to-night?" said Handforth breathlessly.

"It will!" declared Nipper. "The gov'nor means to make a big move to-night."

"Then I hope he'll let us join in," said Handforth fervently.

It was quite true that these four juniors were favoured; they knew more than any of the others. Recently, there had been some mysterious disappearances in the district. Young fellows had vanished as though into thin air; eight St. Frank's boys were included amongst the missing. The county police were baffled; even the Scotland Yard officers, who had come into the district, were making no progress.

But Handforth & Co., and Nipper, happened to know that the secret of all this mystery was centred around Crag House, the lonely old mansion on the cliffs, near Shingle Head. It was the property of

Long complete story that teems with action and thrills!

CRAG HOUSE!

Admiral Sir Rodney Carrington, and the sensational events had been occurring during the old sailor's absence abroad.

Sir Rodney always wintered South—in Egypt, or Madeira, or Southern Italy. Unknown to him, criminals had taken possession of his home, and startling things were happening. The four boys knew, for example, that "Crowson," the Crag House butler, was really the notorious Douglas James Sutcliffe—known to the police as Jim the Penman. The boys knew, too, that there were strange underground workings beneath the old mansion; and here the missing boys were held in captivity.

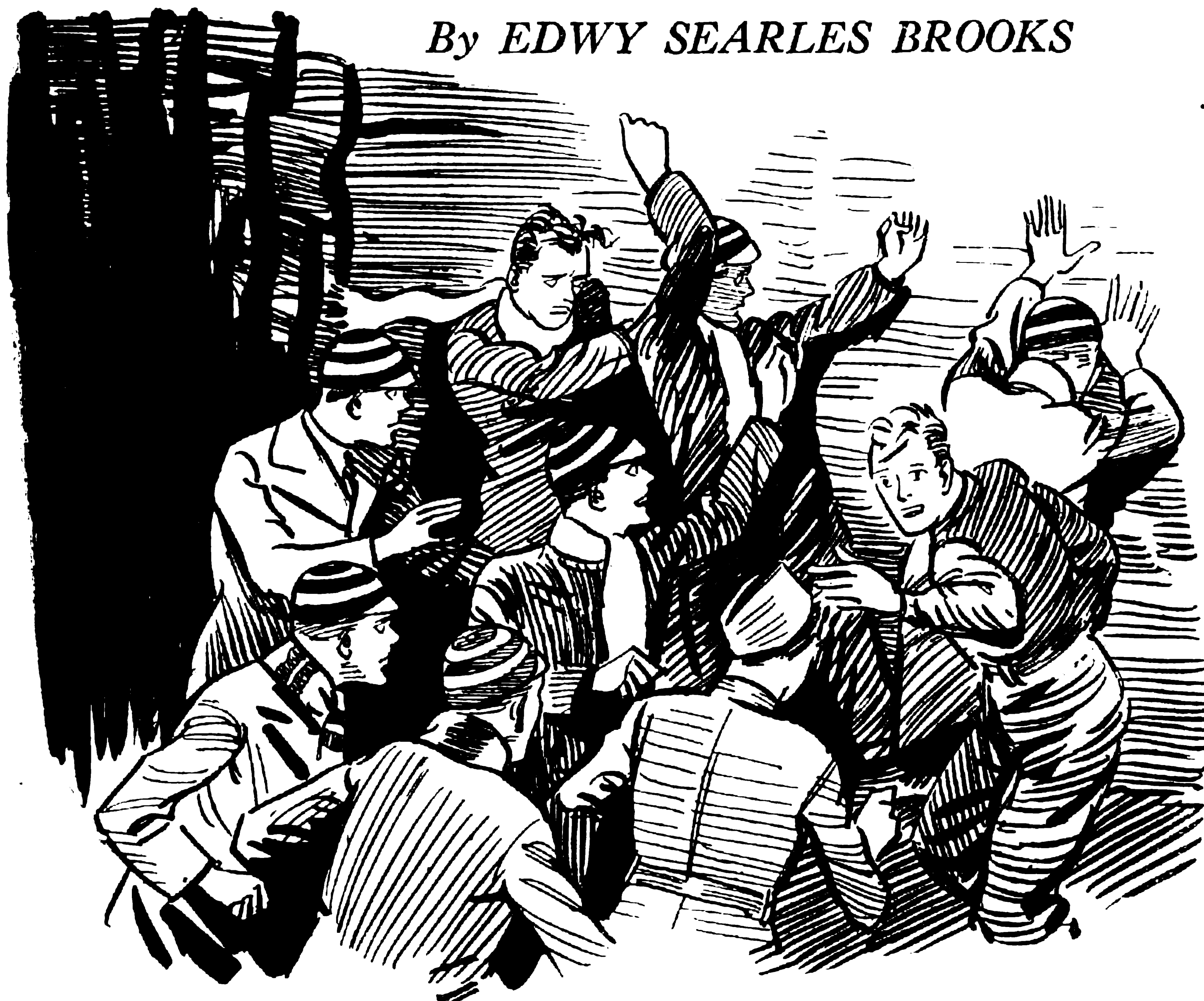
But Nelson Lee had warned Nipper & Co. to say nothing—for the detective was working out this case in his own way. On the top of all the other mystery had come the startling news that Professor Cyrus Zingrave, the one-time Chief of the

League of the Green Triangle, had been rescued from prison. Some believed that that rescue effort had come to nothing; that Zingrave had perished at sea, following the rescue. But Lee had his own ideas on this subject.

"Yes, my sons, something's going to happen to-night," said Nipper confidently. "My guv'nor communicated secretly with Admiral Carrington, and brought him home. Those crooks at Crag House know nothing of that—and that's where they're going to get their shock. The old boy arrived this evening, and he's talking with the guv'nor and Mr. Leonard now. There'll be a raid on Crag House to-night, or I'm a tadpole!"

They had seen the limousine arrive, containing Admiral Sir Rodney Carrington; and they were now waiting for it to depart. Nipper very badly wanted to be in this big "stunt."

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS



There was one thing he did not know—one thing which Nelson Lee himself had not known. A friend of Sutcliffe's in Marseilles had learned quite by chance, that Admiral Carrington had boarded the train for Paris, and he had wired this information to Jim the Penman. Thus the crooks, instead of being in ignorance of the move, had been fully prepared.

"Listen!" said Nipper suddenly.

"It's coming!" murmured Handforth.

They could hear the quiet purr of a powerful car; a moment later a huge limousine glided through Big Arch, and the boys were glad that the period of waiting was over. They saw the car move sedately across the Triangle, and glide out into the lane.

"Well, he's gone," said Church, taking a deep breath. "I wonder if Mr. Lee and Inspector Lennard were in that car, too?"

"It's hardly likely," replied Nipper. "Anyhow, I'm going along to see the guv'nor, and to find out what the wheeze is. You chaps wait here."

"Not likely," protested Handforth. "We're coming with you."

"Well, come as far as the Head's door—and wait for me," said Nipper. "We don't want to pile on him in a bunch. He might not like it, particularly as Mr. Lennard is there. I'll soon dodge out and tell you what the plan is."

They hurried through Big Arch and across Inner Court. Handforth & Co. did not like it much, but they hung about outside whilst Nipper opened the door and entered. There was no latch; he merely turned the handle, and walked in. He felt that, in the circumstances, it was not necessary for him to announce himself. He went straight to the headmaster's study and tapped on the door.

He had a momentary touch of pride as he realised that his beloved guv'nor was back in harness again as a detective, although he was still controlling this great school as headmaster.

There was no response to his knock; so Nipper rapped again. He could not hear any voices within. And then, with a feeling of annoyance, he realised that Nelson Lee and Chief Detective-inspector Lennard must have been with Admiral Carrington in that car.

He opened the study door and walked in. Then, abruptly, he halted, his eyes opening wider.

The lights were on; there were significant signs of a struggle; the window was shattered. The air of the room was thick with a foggy, pungent vapour which caught Nipper by the throat and set him choking.

CHAPTER 2.

Nelson Lee—Captured!

"OH!" said Nipper breathlessly.

It was not a very dramatic exclamation, but it contained a world of dismay. In that first glance Nipper could tell that something dreadful had happened. Nelson Lee and Lennard were not here—and that choking vapour was suggestive enough. Nipper found himself coughing and spluttering, and he was dizzy by the time he backed out and ran to the front door.

"Hallo! What's wrong?" asked Handforth sharply, as he saw Nipper clutching at his head.

"Come in—quick!" said Nipper. "Something's happened! They're not here."

The other juniors ran to the Head's study; they stood in the doorway, staring. Their hearts were thudding.

"But—but I don't understand!" said Handforth blankly. "What's this awful niff? It's—it's some sort of gas, isn't it?"

"Look at the window," said Nipper, in a low voice. "It's smashed right in! There's a chair overturned, too, and there are papers on the floor, and— There's been a struggle here—"

"Mr. Lee and Mr. Lennard must have been pinched!" gasped Church frantically. "They've been grabbed—by the crooks! Hi! Help!"

"Help!" yelled McClure.

Two people appeared at once—Mrs. Jones, the housekeeper, and a maid. Mrs. Jones had "looked after" Nelson Lee for years; but until recently she had remained at the great detective's house in Gray's Inn Road, London. It was in consequence of her own earnest entreaties that Lee had shifted her to St. Frank's. She had expressed the gravest doubts regarding Lee's welfare at the old school, and, to tell the truth, Nelson Lee was glad enough to have his old housekeeper in charge of his household.

"Why, whatever's the matter, young gentlemen?" she asked, hurrying forward. "Well, I declare, Master Nipper! Don't you know better than to shout like that—"

"Do you know where the guv'nor is, Mrs. Jones?" asked Nipper quickly. "Something pretty bad has happened, I'm afraid."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the housekeeper, gazing in a frightened way at the filmy vapour which was escaping from the open doorway.

"The guv'nor had Mr. Lennard with him—and another visitor, I believe?" went on Nipper quickly.

"Yes, that's right," said Mrs. Jones, nodding. "An old gentleman; he came just over half an hour ago. I thought his car was waiting outside——"

"There's no car now—he went five minutes ago."

"That's funny, Mrs. Jones," said the maid, in a scared voice. "Do you remember that crash of glass?"

"What crash of glass?" asked Nipper sharply.

"Why, about ten minutes ago, sir," said the girl. "We all heard it, and one of us came and inquired; but Mr. Lee told us to go away. He said it was nothing. He gave orders that he wasn't to be disturbed."

"That's bad," said Nipper. "Perhaps it wasn't the guv'nor who gave that order! The crashing of glass must have happened when the crooks broke in."

He was thinking rapidly; and now, without delaying further, he ran across Inner Court, burst into the Ancient House, and went to the Housemaster's study. Mr. Alington Wilkes was astonished to see him—and more astonished to hear his story.

"I'll come at once," said Old Wilkey, leaping up.

A remarkable man, in many ways, was Mr. Wilkes. Nothing much to look at, but he was full of surprises. And when an emergency arose, he could be almost as active and as astute as Nelson Lee himself.

There was never any flurry about Old Wilkey; he kept his head in all circumstances. With the disappearance of Nelson Lee he became Acting Headmaster at once; his first task was to telephone for the police. He got in touch with Inspector Jameson, of Bannington, and he gave brief details of what had occurred. The inspector promised to run over at once, bringing with him Sergeant Reeves, of Scotland Yard. Reeves was Chief Inspector Lennard's assistant, and he was naturally perturbed to hear of his chief's disappearance.

The news spread over the school like wild-fire, and there was a first-class sensation. Nelson Lee vanished—and with him one of the most important men of Scotland Yard! Like other people who had disappeared in the district, they certainly had been spirited away by the unknown crooks.

Mr. Wilkes had advised the police to set up immediate inquiries regarding the limousine, which had left St. Frank's immediately after the outrage in the head-

master's study, it seemed. That car had presumably contained Admiral Sir Rodney Carrington. But had it?

"The first thing we shall have to do is to trace that car," said Sergeant Reeves, after he had made a preliminary inspection. "Seems to me that Mr. Lee and Mr. Lennard were tricked by somebody—somebody, perhaps, who came here pretending to be the admiral. There must have been others in it, too. There are a lot of footprints outside on the flower-bed."

"We shall have to photograph them," said Inspector Jameson.

"Not much good, I'm afraid," replied Reeves. "They're too confused." He pulled at his ear. "There seems to be no end to the audacity of these beggars," he went on. "In fact, they're getting more daring every day. They must have come right into the school, and bagged Mr. Lee and Mr. Lennard out of this very room. It's almost unbelievable."

"You mean that there might be some other explanation?" asked Jameson. "You think that Mr. Lee and Mr. Lennard might have gone off of their own accord?"

"It's possible—although I don't think it's likely," replied the sergeant. "They would certainly have told somebody—rung me up, or something. Mr. Lennard told me to stand by; and he hinted, in fact, that I should be needed later on this evening, with a number of men. Something unexpected must have happened, that's certain. No, I don't think they left the school of their own accord. There's some infernally fishy work going on."

And the investigation continued.

CHAPTER 3.

Nipper's Theory!

NIPPER, naturally enough, was wild with anxiety.

Knowing the inner facts as he did—knowing of Nelson Lee's suspicions regarding Professor Zingrave—he did not give a moment's consideration to the theory that Lee had gone off of his own accord. There had been foul play. The evidence of it stood out like a beacon.

The police were busy with theories. Dr. Brett had arrived by now, and he definitely stated that the study contained traces of a stupefying gas. It was now believed that the mysterious crooks had made a raid on Nelson Lee's study and had made a clean sweep of Lee, Lennard, and even the admiral. All three had been rendered helpless and taken away.

"And it's any odds that they were coolly removed from the school in that limousine," said Sergeant Reeves. "Who was to suspect? The car left quite openly. Many witnesses saw it go."

Nipper listened, but was not convinced.

"I wish Mr. Lennard had taken me more into his confidence," went on Reeves, with some impatience. "But he was extremely secretive—I understand that Mr. Lee had sworn him to silence. He only gave me a hint or two; said that something special might happen to-night."

"Something special has!" commented the police inspector.

"I knew that Admiral Carrington had been secretly fetched from abroad, and that there was to be a conference," continued Reeves. "Now, it seems to me that Mr. Lee had made some discoveries, and he took Mr. Lennard into the secret. They met the admiral, and—— But why?" he went on helplessly. "I can't get the hang of it at all. Why should Mr. Lee have brought Admiral Carrington back home? There's no connection—unless there were some suspicions regarding Crag House. And that seems absurd."

Nipper could have told him otherwise, but he kept his own counsel.

"Anyhow, the crooks must have known of this meeting, and they were alarmed," said the Yard man. "They feared that the outcome would be disastrous for them; so they forced their way into the study, exploded a gas bomb, or something like that, and grabbed the three of them. That's how I figure it out. Heaven alone knows where they are now."

"We shall be able to form a more accurate opinion after we have traced that car," said Jameson.

Nipper drifted away; these theories did not interest him much. He was certain, in his own mind, that the prisoners had been taken away to Crag House.

"Here, I say—just a minute!"

It was Handforth, and Church and McClure were with him. They grabbed Nipper as the latter wandered out into the darkness of Inner Court. Nipper wanted to think; but he was not sorry to see the chums of Study D.

"Anything fresh?" asked Handforth eagerly.

"Nothing," replied Nipper. "They're trying to get on the track of the car. But it seems a waste of time to me. The gov'nor has been taken to Crag House. Yet I didn't like saying anything to Sergeant Reeves."

"Why not?" put in Church. "The police ought to raid the place."

"And what good would that do?" retorted Nipper. "Jim the Penman and those other crooks are prepared. They're ready. A raid would come to nothing. It would do more harm than good—since it would put the crooks on their guard. No, my sons, we've got to think this thing out for ourselves. And we must act, too."

"That's it, by George—we must act," said Handforth, who was quivering with excitement. "But how?"

"We must do something on our own," replied Nipper fiercely. "There's no sense in telling the police anything yet. If there's a raid on Crag House, my gov'nor might be killed, or something. It's too risky. We've got to go slow."

Just then a bustle of movement came from the doorway of the Head's house; Sergeant Reeves, Inspector Jameson, and two or three plain-clothes men came hurrying out. Two cars were waiting, and the officers went briskly towards them. Their very movements indicated that they had some definite objective in view.

"Have you heard any news, Mr. Reeves?" asked Nipper, running up.

The detective-sergeant looked at him impatiently for a moment, and then his expression changed.

"I was going to tell you to cut off," he said. "Sorry, Nipper. You're anxious, aren't you? Yes, there's a bit of fresh information. That car has been found."

"Oh!"

"Somewhere in Kent," went on Reeves. "It was abandoned in a side lane, with all the lights switched off. We've since learned that it was a hired car. It belongs to one of the big London hiring companies. Admiral Carrington chartered it to bring him down to St. Frank's. The driver has gone."

"Great Scott! That makes another disappearance, then," said Nipper.

"Yes," replied Reeves. "It's getting serious. Now, we know that the car came to St. Frank's. Either the driver was in league with the crooks—and that doesn't seem likely, for the hiring company gives him a first-class reference—or he was gassed like the others, and carried off."

"What are you going to do now?" asked Nipper.

"We're going up to Crag House."

"What! You don't mean——"

"We've had rather a surprise," said Sergeant Reeves, in a puzzled voice. "I thought I might learn something by ringing up Crag House. There's a man there

Nelson Lee's study was in a chaotic condition. The window was smashed, and there obviously had been a terrific struggle. But of Nelson Lee himself there was no sign.



named Crowson—a sort of butler, who is left in charge during the winter. My idea was to ask him if he knew anything about the admiral's movements; and you could have knocked me over when the admiral himself answered the telephone."

"Great Scott!" said Nipper, staring.

"In a way, it's a relief," continued the Yard man. "There are only three disappearances now. The admiral is safe. Until I got on the 'phone, I had taken it for granted that Sir Rodney had been kidnapped with the others."

"Did he explain anything?"

"I didn't ask him to," replied Sergeant Reeves briskly. "We don't know who these crooks are, but they're clever, and they might be listening in on the telephone. I'm not taking any chances like that. Crag House is comparatively near by, so I'm going up there now to ask the admiral all about it. Perhaps he'll be able to give me some valuable information."

"I say, let me come, Mr. Reeves," said Nipper eagerly. "I shan't be in the way. And you know I'm worried about my guv'nor——"

"Well, it's a bit irregular, but you can come," said the sergeant kindly. "Wor-

ried, are you? I hope we shall be able to get on the track of something definite."

Nipper was more than grateful—he was seething with excitement. Reeves knew of his attachment to Nelson Lee, but Reeves did not know that Nipper had a very special reason for getting a close look at Admiral Sir Rodney Carrington.

CHAPTER 4.

At Crag House!

FROM the very beginning of this audacious conspiracy, the plotters had coolly worked in the open. To the ordinary eye there had never been anything mysterious about Crag House. And now, as the police car drove up, the place was exactly as one might have supposed it to be after the unexpected arrival of its owner.

The private gate stood wide open; lights were gleaming from many windows; and as soon as Sergeant Reeves rang the bell the door was opened by a dignified butler.

"Come in, gentlemen," he said, bowing in the visitors. "The master is expecting you."

Nipper secretly admired the man's coolness. To the police he was "Crowson"—just the butler. But Nipper knew him to be Sutcliffe, the notorious forger and crook. The calm audacity of Jim the Penman's impersonation was startling.

The visitors were ushered across the brilliantly-lighted hall. Inspector Jameson frowned somewhat when he saw that Nipper was accompanying them, but he said nothing. He had no authority over Sergeant Reeves—and Reeves had given Nipper permission.

As the butler stood respectfully aside, at the library door, Nipper was reminded of the fly as it walked into the spider's parlour. Yet the simile was not altogether apt, for Nipper was convinced that he and the police officers were perfectly safe. The crooks would attempt no tricks. Others knew of this visit, and if anything happened— But Nipper dismissed the thought. Admiral Sir Rodney Carrington himself was here.

"Come in, gentlemen—come in," said the admiral, with some asperity. "Hallo! What's this? What's this boy doing here?"

"It's all right, sir—I allowed him to come," said Sergeant Reeves. "I am glad to see that you are unharmed."

"And why shouldn't I be unharmed?" retorted Sir Rodney, staring. "Upon my soul! What's all this fuss? What's all this bother? Sit down."

His manner was brusque. He was a little man with iron-grey hair and a bristling little moustache. The library was warm, well lighted, and eminently respectable.

"I think you came to St. Frank's College and interviewed two gentlemen there—Mr. Nelson Lee and Mr. Lennard?" asked Reeves. "I regret to tell you, Sir Rodney, that they have both vanished."

"Vanished?" repeated the admiral. "What do you mean? That's impossible! How could they have vanished?"

He listened in astonishment to the story.

"Extraordinary," he said at length. "I can't make head or tail of it; and if you expect to get any help from me, Sergeant Reeves, I'm afraid you'll be disappointed. I can't tell you anything."

"Mr. Lee and Mr. Lennard were all right when you left?"

"All right? Of course they were all right," replied the admiral testily. "You don't suppose I did anything to them?"

"No, sir, but—"

"I went to see Mr. Lee, prior to coming on here, at his own invitation," continued Sir Rodney. "A matter connected with

some property of mine on the other side of Caistowe. Mr. Lee wants it rather urgently—there's some talk of a summer camp for the boys. This property of mine is up for sale, and there was some danger of the school losing the option unless my signature was obtained to-day. That's why Mr. Lee was so anxious about it. Quite a trifle, gentlemen." He shrugged. "Our interview was in no way connected with the strange disappearances I have been hearing about. We concluded our little talk, and I took my departure. That's all I know."

Reeves was frowning.

"I can't quite understand why Mr. Lee should have my chief present at the interview," he said. "Mr. Lennard isn't interested in a summer camp for the boys."

"Well, that's neither here nor there," said the admiral impatiently. "That other fellow—Lennard, I think you said his name was—took no part in the conversation. He was reading all the time. When I left, both gentlemen were quite normal, and— Just a minute, though!" he added, with a sudden light in his eyes. "As my car left the headmaster's house, I fancied I saw one or two figures lurking in the darkness."

"Oh?" said Reeves eagerly. "If you can give me details—"

"I can't," interrupted the admiral, in his blunt way. "I thought nothing of it at the time—it occurred to me that the figures might be boys, playing some sort of trick. I didn't know. But, in the light of what you tell me, there may be some other explanation. I was driven straight home here, and after I had given the chauffeur a drink, I paid him and sent him back to London. The car, as you probably know, was a hired one."

"That car has been found—abandoned," said Reeves quietly. "The driver has vanished. And the strange thing is, the car was found in Kent, many miles from here."

Sir Rodney frowned.

"That is extraordinary," he remarked. "However, I cannot help you, and in any case the matter is no concern of mine. You'd better take it up with the owners of the car."

He was palpably irritated; as any ordinary householder would be upon finding himself pitchforked into an unsavoury mystery. It was clear, too, that he could offer no help. His statement was plain, straightforward—and more or less valueless. Reeves realised this. Never for a moment did the Scotland Yard man suspect that anything was different from what it seemed.

The visitors took their departure almost at once, and as soon as the front door had closed upon them Crowson returned to the library.

"The gentlemen have gone, sir," he said respectfully.

"Yes, and they have gone without a suspicion," said Admiral Carrington, in a silky voice—curiously different from the gruff tones he had previously used. "What did I tell you, Jim? There is nothing easier than fooling the police."

CHAPTER 5.

Nipper Means Business!

BUT if the police were fooled—Nipper was not.

Inwardly he was very excited as the police car drove back to the school. For Nipper had the advantage of knowing some of the inner facts of this remarkable case. He had gone into Crag House full of suspicion—suspicion against Admiral Carrington; and he had known, from the first, that "Crowson" was really Jim the Penman.

Now, having seen Sir Rodney face to face, he knew—he positively knew—that the man was none other than Professor Cyrus Zingrave himself!

Nipper had never seen the admiral, but on more than one famous occasion he had been face to face with Professor Zingrave. The man in the library at Crag House had borne no facial resemblance to the master criminal; but he was certainly of the same build, the same size, and he had the same massive brow. Nipper, on the look-out for trickery, had watched the alleged admiral with concentrated attention. The moustache looked real enough—the hair—the eyebrows; but once or twice Nipper had detected a vaguely familiar glint in the eyes.

And he remembered Nelson Lee's theory. From the first, Lee had stated it as his opinion that Professor Zingrave had not drowned, after the escape from prison.

Lee and Lennard had vanished, and the driver of the hired car had vanished. Yet Admiral Carrington was safe. In the light of all this, what was the conclusion which stood out clearly?

"The real admiral was grabbed, too," muttered Nipper. "That's certain. All that work at Crag House has been done for a definite purpose—so that Zingrave, whilst pretending to be dead, shall step into Admiral Carrington's shoes. By Jove! What a brainy wheeze!"

Nipper was only theorising, but he had hit upon the absolute truth

Yet he dared not voice his conclusions to Sergeant Reeves or Inspector Jameson. They would laugh at him. Zingrave had tricked them completely; they would not listen to Nipper's sensational suggestion. And even if they did listen, they were helpless. On suspicion alone they could not take any action. Nipper knew sufficient of police regulations to realise that the situation was ticklish. The police would do nothing without definite proof—and Nipper could not provide them with that definite proof.

The instant he got out of the car, at St. Frank's, he hurried into the Ancient House. He went to Study D, and found Handforth & Co. They were trying to do their prep, but they were making a hash of it.

"Thank goodness you've come," said Handforth. "You boulder! What do you mean by going off like that—without us? What's the news?"

"About as bad as it can be," said Nipper steadily. "Admiral Carrington saw the police, and he satisfied them that he knew nothing about the gov'nor's disappearance."

And Nipper briefly gave the details of that interview at Crag House. Handforth & Co. listened with bated breath.

"But that's all rot," protested Handforth. "Mr. Lee didn't want to see the admiral about any summer camp—"

"That was a yarn," interrupted Nipper. "In fact, I'm not sure that it wasn't a bad blunder on Zingrave's part. He had to give some sort of explanation of his visit. And yet, if the gov'nor never appears again, who is there to doubt the story? Mr. Lee's the only one who could contradict it."

"You're getting mixed, aren't you, old man?" asked Church, with concern. "Your brain's a bit muddled. What do you mean—Zingrave?"

"I mean that the man at Crag House is no more Admiral Carrington than I am," replied Nipper, in a low voice. "He's Zingrave himself!"

Handforth & Co. were nearly speechless.

"That's the dickens of it!" went on Nipper, pacing up and down. "We've got to do something, you chaps, and we've got to do it at once. My gov'nor's up there, a prisoner. Don't you see? Mr. Lennard, too. They were grabbed and taken to Crag House—along with all the other prisoners."

Handforth fanned himself.

"Give me air!" he breathed. "I'm jiggered if I can get the hang of all this! You said just now that Admiral Carrington—"

"According to my theory, the admiral was collared before that car arrived at the school," put in Nipper shrewdly. "Can't you see? Zingrave took his place, came to St. Frank's, and my guv'nor and Mr. Lennard were trapped."

"Then why didn't you tell Sergeant Reeves?" asked Handforth blankly. "Why didn't you grab Zingrave while you had the chance?"

"The police don't grab people like that," growled Nipper. "They have to have warrants before they can arrest people."

"But if you told them——"

"It wouldn't make any difference," said Nipper impatiently. "I have no definite proof, and without it the police wouldn't take action. They might set a watch on the house, and take all sorts of precautionary steps, and then the crooks would get wind of it. Yes, and before the police could get the evidence they need, there's no knowing what might be done to my guv'nor and the others."

"My only hat!" said Church. "Then—then what are we going to do?"

"There's only one thing," said Nipper, and his voice was unusually ferocious. "We're not the police—we don't have to have warrants—and we'll do this job ourselves!"

CHAPTER 6.

A Call for Volunteers!

"**O**URSELVES?" repeated Edward Oswald Handforth, with a gulp. "You—you mean——"

"We know of that smugglers' cave, immediately below Crag House," said Nipper, sitting down at the table, and bending his head close to the others. "Now, you chaps, listen! We know there's a tunnel leading up into the old quarry working, don't we? The guv'nor told me quite a few things—things that even you chaps don't know."

"You bounder! Why didn't you tell us?"

"I'm telling you now," said Nipper. "There has been secret work going on under Crag House—for weeks. The chaps who were captured were treated with some sort of drug—a stuff known as the 'G. S. Fluid.' It dulled their brains, and turned them into human machines. Automata. Waldo was one of the last chaps to be collared; but, strangely enough, Waldo wasn't affected by that drug."

"Great Scott!"

"He has been keeping his eye on things—pretending to be helpless," continued

Nipper keenly. "Waldo knows a lot. Once or twice Mr. Lee has penetrated into the tunnels, and Waldo has met him. Those crooks have been building a private prison under Crag House—granite cells, and all that sort of thing. That's why the workers were needed. Oh, can't you see?" he went on almost desperately. "Granite cells! The guv'nor's in one of them now—and Mr. Lennard—and the admiral! And we know the secret! We know ten times more than the police! Why shouldn't we—we St. Frank's chaps—go to the rescue? And think of the honour for the old school if we nab these crooks off our own bat!"

"You—you mean we four?" asked McClure, his eyes shining. "I'm game, but it'll be tremendously risky——"

"I know you're game," interrupted Nipper. "As for the risks, this is a time to take risks, isn't it? What do we care? All the advantage is with us, because Zingrave and his crooks don't know that we're on to their game."

"It's a go!" said Handforth excitedly. "We'll start right away——"

"No, we won't," interrupted Nipper. "We'll wait until later on. And we shall need some help, too. A few sound chaps like Tommy Watson, Montie, Travers, Pitt, Boots, and Christine. Say a dozen, all told. We'll let them into the secret, and we'll ask for volunteers. What do you say? Then, after lights-outs, we'll steal away from the school and make this raid."

"It's what I've always dreamed about!" murmured Handforth huskily.

"If we succeed, we shall get all the honour for the school," went on Nipper. "If we fail——" He shrugged. "If we fail, we shall join those other poor chaps, and it'll be left for the police to rescue us in their own time. It's a glorious chance for us to do something big, my sons. I'm a cautious chap as a rule, but to-night I'm feeling reckless. We'll go all out for the dishing of the crooks."

Handforth, of course, was wholeheartedly in agreement; Church and McClure were so thoroughly aroused that they had no hesitation, either.

And without any unnecessary delay, eight sturdy Removites and Fourth-Formers were taken into the secret—Tommy Watson, Sir Montie Tregellis-West, Vivian Travers, Jimmy Potts, Reggie Pitt, Ralph Leslie Fullwood, Buster Boots, and Bob Christine. This made a dozen, all told.

They could hardly believe their ears at first; but there wasn't a doubt as to their



"Look! There's Freeman—and Turner—and Page!" exclaimed Buster Boots. But the schoolboy slaves just continued to stare vacantly before them; they did not recognise their rescuers.

enthusiasm. Not one of them hesitated. They volunteered in a body.

"Good men!" said Nipper, his eyes gleaming. "It's for my guv'nor's sake—for the sake of all those other chaps who have been kidnapped. With only a little luck on our side, we'll rescue the whole giddy crowd, and put those crooks to rout."

Nipper then remembered something of tremendous importance.

"You remember that I told you chaps about that 'G. S. Fluid'?" he asked. "A day or two ago my guv'nor identified the stuff in the lab. He analysed it, you know. And he said he was going to London to get some other drug—a sort of antidote."

"My only sainted aunt!" said Handforth. "Did he get it?"

"I believe so—he went to London," replied Nipper. "Think what we can do if we take that antidote with us. Mr. Lee told me that it acted almost at once—within half an hour. Don't you see? We

can release those helpless prisoners, give them a dose of this stuff, and they'll be themselves in no time! Then they can join us—they can help us to raid Crag House."

"It sounds almost too good to be true," said Travers, shaking his head. "By Samson! What a pity Mr. Lee isn't here! Do you know where you can put your hands on that stuff?"

"I can search for it, anyhow," replied Nipper briskly.

He did so without delay—before bedtime. And he could have shouted with joy when, in the cupboard of Nelson Lee's bed-room, he found a sealed box. Ruthlessly he broke the seals and removed the lid. Within lay revealed a tiny surgical syringe, and a bottle of greenish fluid. The label bore the words "Anti G. S." It was sufficient to tell Nipper the full truth. And on that label, too, were the directions for administering the drug—directions which clearly stated it to be perfectly harmless.

"Now we can get busy!" muttered Nipper eagerly.

CHAPTER 7.

The Adventure Begins!

BY a pre-arranged plan the young conspirators left their dormitories, after lights-out, at different times.

By taking this precaution there was less chance of discovery. Nipper and Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West were the first out; they started the ball rolling at ten-thirty. They did not wait in Bellton Lane, but in the monastery ruins—for here there was little or no chance of meeting people.

The others came trickling along in twos and threes at five-minute intervals. It was practically eleven o'clock before the full dozen was made up.

"Everything's all serene, then?" said Nipper, at length. "You all got out without any trouble? Good! Now we can make a start."

"We've got everything you told us," said Handforth eagerly. "Most of us are carrying powerful electric torches, and two or three of us have coils of rope wound round our giddy bodies, under our clothes."

"And we've plenty of stout cord, too," added Nipper. "We may need it—if we make any prisoners. And we've all got scarves, which will come in handy as gags."

"Begad!" murmured Sir Montie. "It sounds frightfully bloodthirsty, dear old boys."

"We mean action to-night, Montie," replied Nipper. "We're schoolboy 'tecs out to capture dangerous crooks. No half measures. It's all or nothing!"

"By George! That's the spirit," said Handforth enthusiastically. "Well, everybody ready? Come on!"

They did not go by way of the road; it was safer to cut across the meadows, and then take a diagonal course across the St. Frank's golf links, and thus reach the edge of the moor.

It was a pitch-dark night, cold, but calm. No stars were visible, owing to a heavy pall of black clouds. The glass was high, however, and there was no indication of rain.

"The tide will be full," murmured Nipper, as they were crossing the moor, towards the shadowy coast line. "I looked it up before I went to bed. But that needn't bother us—we can get into the smugglers' cave by climbing across the rocks. There's a handy ledge, and, with

care, we can all get in without even getting wet."

"I say!" ejaculated Travers suddenly, and there was a startled note in his voice.

"What's wrong?" asked Nipper.

"Supposing something goes amiss?" said Travers. "I mean, supposing we fail? We shall all be collared, shan't we, and pushed in with those other poor chaps?"

"Well, that's pretty certain."

"Don't you think we ought to have told somebody at the school?" asked Travers. "We could easily have taken another chap into our confidence; and then, if we're missing in the morning, he could have given the alarm."

There were many murmurs of approval.

"What do you take me for?" asked Nipper, with some impatience. "I've fixed all that."

"Oh! You've told somebody, then?" asked Travers.

"No; but I've written a letter to Old Wilkey, and I've even posted it in the school box," replied Nipper coolly.

"You posted it!" went up a general chorus.

"Why not?" asked Nipper. "If this thing goes right, we shall be back at St. Frank's long before morning—back triumphant with those other chaps and with Mr. Lee. What will it matter about the letter, then? But if things go wrong—well, Old Wilkey will know exactly what we have done, and our very disappearance will give the police all the evidence they require for making an immediate raid."

"Frightfully brainy, old boy—it is, really," said Sir Montie admiringly. "Then we're all right, begad!"

The others were relieved—but, as Nipper pointed out, it was only a precautionary measure. He would not hear of failure. They were going out to win.

Reaching the cliffs, they proceeded with caution. It was familiar ground to them all; for in the summer months cliff rambles were popular. Even in the darkness they knew their way fairly accurately.

By keeping to the cliffs, and climbing along the precarious rocks, they at length reached that black opening—bigger than most of the other openings—which was locally known as the Smugglers' Cave. The tide was in, as Nipper had said.

The sea was now right up to the cliff, and they only gained their objective by slow, careful climbing; by clinging to rock ledges, slithering along seeking foothold and handgrip. They all reached the inside of the cave without a single mishap.

So far they had not used their electric torches, but now they were getting into the intense blackness of the cave, clinging precariously to the narrow ledge which rang along one side. Nipper had warned his companions not to turn on their torches until they received the signal from him.

It was fortunate they had taken this precaution, for the boys soon made the startling discovery that they were not alone.

The first warning they received was a swirling and surging of the sea. Then unexpectedly they heard a man's voice—booming and echoing with amazing strength in the cave. Nipper jumped to the truth instantly. That strange black motor-boat, which he had seen on a previous occasion, had slipped into the cave on the tide.

It was not necessary for Nipper to give any warning to his companions. They halted, clinging to the rocks, their hearts thudding.

CHAPTER 8.

The Fight in the Cave!

ALIGHT suddenly slashed through the darkness, and for a moment the boys thought they would be discovered. Then the beam was switched in another direction, and they saw the black, shiny deck of the queer craft as it crept farther and farther into the cave. A man with enormous shoulders, and wearing a peaked cap, was standing up in the little cockpit, holding an electric lamp. He was giving directions to a companion.

Nipper knew the pair—Captain Slaney and his assistant, a man named Jed. This queer motor-boat came fairly regularly, bringing supplies. Obviously, it had just arrived with another full cargo.

And it was no moment for hesitation. No sooner had the two men leapt upon the rock ledge—which was much wider in the inner depths of the cave—than Nipper ran quickly forward.

"Back up, you chaps!" he called urgently. "On them! We'll grab this pair to start with."

"Hurrah!" yelled Handforth, his voice cracking with excitement.

Captain Slaney spun round, flashing his torch.

"What the heck——" he began.

And then his mouth gaped. No less than eight or nine beams of brilliant light stabbed out of the darkness, and he had the momentary impression that

a miniature army was descending upon him. Jed was equally dumbfounded.

The boys leapt at the pair recklessly. It was this drastic activity, in fact, which gave them the advantage. Both men, at the first hint of danger, had pulled guns from their pockets; but they had no time to use them. The boys were on them like a swarm of agile monkeys. In the very first clash Captain Slaney's pistol was jerked from his hand, and it splashed into the water.

"Boys—blamed schoolboys!" snarled Slaney, in mingled amazement and alarm. "By thunder! We'll make short work —,"

Thud!

Hard knuckles rammed against his mouth, and he muttered savagely. His own fists were whirling, and he felt them ram hard against flesh and bone. Fullwood went down, partially stunned; Tommy Watson staggered back against the rock wall. But others leapt into their places, and the fight went on. In spite of the confined space, the boys more or less sorted themselves out. Half of them were attacking Captain Slaney, and the other half confined their attentions to Jed.

It was a wild rough and tumble "mill," and although there were so many boys, the men were desperate, and they were putting up a terrific resistance. However, the end came suddenly—unexpectedly.

For Captain Slaney, rushing at one of his tormentors, tripped against an inequality in the rock floor. He shot forward, and Nipper and McClure dodged out of the way just in time. Slaney hurtled off the edge of the ledge—into the sea.

"Never mind him!" yelled Nipper quickly. "Some of you show your torches. We'll settle this other chap. It'll be easy now."

It was. Jed not only had more attackers to deal with, but he was morally affected by the mishap to his chief. He could hear Captain Slaney floundering in the water, gasping and cursing. Under the combined weight of the boys he went down; they sprawled over his feet, his chest, even his head. Cords were quickly tied round his ankles and wrists; a muffler was wrapped round his head.

"Good enough!" said Nipper crisply. "I don't think we'll have much trouble with this other blackguard."

They fished Captain Slaney out, and he looked a sorry spectacle. The icy-cold water had knocked every ounce of fight out of him. He was dragged upon the ledge, and the boys immediately took the

precaution of binding him as they had bound Jed. The pair lay upon the rock, helpless. And the boys were able to take a breather.

"My only sainted aunt!" said Handforth. "Phew! That was pretty warm while it lasted!"

"It was the only thing to do," said Nipper. "We're out for blood to-night, Handy! And whenever we see a crook, we're going for him—bald-headed! Understand, you chaps: No quarter! No hesitation!"

"What are we going to do with these blighters?" asked Travers.

Nipper leapt upon the motor-boat, and he made a quick inspection. There was a little cabin, almost completely enclosed.

"Bring those beggars in here," he said. "This boat's easy enough to handle; I'm going to take her straight to Caistowe."

"What!"

"Yes!" said Nipper. "I'm not going to give these men a chance of escaping—or of being rescued by some of their precious pals. I'll hand them over to the police straight away."

"But—but——"

"You'd better come with me, Tommy," continued Nipper. "We can do this on our own. You other chaps will wait here until we get back."

"Here, I say, isn't that a bit off-side?" protested Handforth. "You'll be hours, and——"

"Don't you believe it," interrupted Nipper. "We'll be back within half an hour. We can't afford to miss an opportunity like this. The motor-boat is of tremendous importance as evidence. Zingrave was rescued by this boat, and it's more than likely that the police will find something aboard definitely to connect



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Slaney with the rescue of Zingrave. Don't you see how important that is?"

The prisoners had been dumped aboard by this time, and Nipper did not waste any further time in talking. He started up the engines, and he was astonished to find how silently and smoothly they ran. The little craft edged her way out into the black night.

CHAPTER 9.

A Surprise for the Police!

NIPPER was skilful in the handling of a motor-boat; but getting out of that black cave was a ticklish job. More than once the craft grated ominously against the rocks.

At last they were clear of the threatening rocks, however, and by clever manœuvring Nipper headed the motor-boat out for the open sea. He found that she answered perfectly to the lightest touch, and her speed, when he opened the throttle, was amazing.

"Now we're off!" he sang out, wildly exhilarated. "By Jove, Tommy! This is good!"

Tommy Watson hardly knew whether it was good or bad. The craft was leaping hissing through the sea; foam was curling and boiling in her wake; the wind fairly shrieked overhead.

"She's a wonder!" declared Nipper.

"Mind you don't bash into the pier or something!" gasped Tommy.

He was feeling rather bewildered by the unexpectedness of it all. Instead of penetrating the old tunnels under Crag House, he and Nipper were engaged on this surprising adventure. But Nipper was right. Far better to get these two men under lock and key without delay.

The trip was brief. The distance was trifling—only just round the headland and across Caistowe Bay—and that little craft accomplished the journey in a few minutes. Nipper, at the helm, judged things well, and Tommy was relieved when the craft, with engines still, glided against the stone steps of the quay. Nipper leapt ashore, and he quickly fastened a rope.

"Hallo, what's this?" demanded a suspicious voice. "What boat's that? Where are your lights?"

Nipper ran up the steps, and found himself facing one of the lesser harbour officials—a night-watchman, he judged the man to be.

"It's all right," said Nipper quickly. "We're St. Frank's chaps. We've got some prisoners aboard this motor-boat—"

"Here, steady, young gent," interrupted the man. "Prisoners? What do ye mean?"

"I'm not trying to fool you," said Nipper earnestly. "We're on the track of the people who have disappeared recently, and we've grabbed two of the crooks."

"So help me!" ejaculated the man.

"I want you to run to the police station and bring two or three officers here at once," said Nipper. "For goodness sake don't refuse—or, I'll tell you what. You can stay here with my chum, and I'll dash to the police station. We can't waste any time."

A police-constable, strolling along the front, had heard the voices, and he now came up. At the first flash of his lamp he uttered an exclamation.

"Why, darn me if it's not young Nipper!" he said. "What's it all about, young gent? Heard anything fresh about Mr. Lee?"

Nipper quickly explained, and the very astonished constable hardly knew whether to believe it or not. But he was a quick-thinking man, and he knew, moreover, that Nipper would not attempt to fool him. He hurried away at once.

The police-station was not far away; within five minutes the constable was back, and now he was accompanied by a sergeant and two other constables, and also Sergeant Reeves, of Scotland Yard.

"Jolly good, Mr. Reeves," said Nipper briskly. "Here are two prisoners for you—two of the gang."

"What have you youngsters been up to?" asked the amazed Reeves.

Slaney and Jed were hauled out of the motor-boat, and Reeves himself, vastly excited, examined that interesting craft.

"She's the boat which rescued Professor Zingrave the other day," said Nipper quickly. "Can't stop to give you any more details now, Mr. Reeves. Tommy and I are busy. We'll see you later."

"Here, hold on," said the Yard man. "I want to know——"

"I can only tell you that these two men are members of the gang," interrupted Nipper. "Hold them—shove them in the cooler until we bring the rest of the bunch. We shan't be long."

"What in the name of mystery are you getting at?" demanded Sergeant Reeves, frankly bewildered. "Do you kids think that you can handle this job—Hi! Just a minute! Don't let those youngsters get away!"

Nipper was running, and Tommy was by his side.

"Come on—sharp's the word!" urged Nipper.

They outdistanced the constables who attempted to stop them, and vanished into the darkness. Tommy Watson was more than ever dumbfounded.

"I feel like a thief!" he panted at length. "I mean, running away from the bobbies like that——"

"They only wanted to detain us—so that Reeves could question us," said Nipper. "And then the blighters would insist upon taking a hand in the game. We don't want to be hindered like that. We're doing this job on our own, and in our own way, Tommy!"

"I say, you are hot stuff to-night," said Watson dizzily.

"My guv'nor's a prisoner at Crag House," said Nipper, his voice tense and earnest. "He's in the hands of criminals who have sworn to kill him. Do you wonder that I'm hot stuff, Tommy? We've got to go straight ahead—we've got to win! It's neck or nothing with us to-night!"

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH gave an impatient snort.

"Well, we're not going to stick here!" he declared. "It might be an hour before Nipper gets back. Does he expect us to wait in this cave?"

The ten St. Frank's boys had seen the motor-boat glide mysteriously out into the night; and now they were rather at a loose end. They all felt the loss of Nipper's leadership.

"I don't think he'll be long," said Travers. "Still, we might as well be carrying on the good work. Let's explore a bit."

"Good egg!" said Fullwood.

After the hectic opening of the adventure, this inactivity was not to be borne. The boys wanted action—action all the way.

With their torchlights gleaming, they explored the great cave, and they had no difficulty in locating the narrow tunnel which led steeply upwards into the heart of the rock cliff.

It was a tunnel of great antiquity; it had been used, centuries ago, by the earlier smugglers.

With Travers and Handforth leading the way, the boys penetrated that narrow rock passage. They were thrilled. This was a real adventure!

CHAPTER 10.

The Man in the Tunnel!

IN the library of Crag House, Admiral Sir Rodney Carrington, alias Professor Zingrave, sat at the big desk with his supposed butler, Crowson. The pair were going through a number of

intricate figures; they were examining papers.

"I fancy, my dear Jim, that this little venture will work out very satisfactorily," said the professor in his gentle voice, as he sat back. "Officially, I am dead—and there can be no inquiries after Sir Rodney Carrington, since, to all appearances, no harm has come to that unfortunate gentleman."

"The police might come again," said Jim the Penman uneasily.

"I doubt it," replied Zingrave. "If they do come, we shall be ready for them. You can leave all that safely to me, Jim. I tell you, everything is working out well."

Sutcliffe helped himself to a cigarette, and lit it thoughtfully.

"I should be happier, Zingrave, if you had not constructed that prison below these cellars," he said slowly. "There is always a danger——"

"There is no danger whatever," cut in Professor Zingrave sharply. "That prison is the very keystone of my whole scheme. Already I have two of my bitterest enemies locked away. Yes, Jim—locked away for the rest of their natural lives! There, in those granite cells, in darkness and solitude, they will live—

week in, week out, month in, month out, suffering treble the tortures I suffered. But this is not merely a plan of revenge—but a plan for our permanent security."

He rose to his feet and paced up and down.

"Can't you understand that?" he went on. "We'll capture them all—we'll make a clean sweep! Those men who could expose us, we will place out of harm's way. It is said that dead men tell no tales, Jim. But why should I kill them? I want these men to suffer."

He turned back to the desk, and rapped his knuckles upon the papers.

"We have ample reserve funds, you and I," he continued. "You are very important to me, Jim—and your own peculiar talents will be of inestimable value. We have been through Carrington's papers, and we know that he is a very rich man. With your skill, you can forge his signature so cleverly that none will ever suspect. Things will go on smoothly at Crag House. But we must keep together, Jim."

"I'm not against that," replied Sutcliffe. "But I must confess that I am growing tired of this butler role——"

"That can be altered—in time," interrupted Zingrave, somewhat impatiently. "A few months more, Jim, and I can dismiss you. You can return as my guest, and—— Well? Come in!"



Savini carried his unconscious burden into the cell. He did not see Nelson Lee on the floor—did not see the detective worming his way to freedom.

A tap had sounded on the door, and now Shorty Williams entered.

"I was wondering if I'd better go down to the cave?" said Shorty. "Slaney ought to have reported nearly an hour ago. He's bringing a lot of fresh stuff, you know. But we've heard nothing."

"Yes, go down by all means," said the professor. "And tell Slaney to come up to me. I want to see that man," he added grimly. "I hear he is in the habit of drinking. He'll either stop that folly, or I shall stop it for him in a way which he will not appreciate."

"Better not be too hard on him, Chief," said Shorty, with a grin. "Don't forget that it was Slaney who helped you to get out of 'stir.' The game couldn't have been worked without Slaney."

The professor looked across at the man with such an intent, steady stare that Shorty felt suddenly cold.

"I am forgetting nothing, Williams," said Zingrave silkily. "Neither do I require advice from you. You may go."

Shorty was glad to get out, and he went

down the secret lift grumbling to himself. Jim the Penman was easy enough to get on with; Zingrave rather frightened him.

He resolved to give Captain Slaney a friendly word of warning. The professor was no man to thwart. He paid handsomely for good service. It was profitable to keep in his good books.

Thinking thus, Shorty Williams reached the wide, spacious quarry working—that old tunnel which had been in existence for centuries. It was black and silent as he made his way along, flashing his torchlight.

He turned into the narrower tunnel which led down towards the smugglers' cave. Shorty did not even see the shadowy figures which suddenly materialised out of the surrounding blackness; he only heard the quick scuffling of feet. The man spun round, alarmed.

"On him!" came a low, vibrant voice. "And make sure that he doesn't yell."

Shorty gasped. Figures swarmed upon him; some leapt at his feet, and he was

hung headlong. He tried to shout, but a heavy woollen muffler, rolled into a ball, was pushed hard into his face.

CHAPTER 11.

The Human Machines!

"**Q**UICK work!" said Vivian Travers coolly.

The boys had made no mistake in capturing Shorty Williams. So drastic had been their treatment that the man had not even given a single shout. Now he lay on the ground, bound hand and foot; and he was prevented from making any outcry by the heavy muffler which was tied securely round his face.

"Number three!" said Handforth breathlessly. "By George! We're going the pace!"

"What shall we do with him?" asked Church.

"Better leave him here—in this crevice," said Travers, flashing his light into an inequality of the quarry working. "There's a space behind this old wooden upright. He won't come to any harm;

and if he suffers discomfort for an hour or two, all the better."

Shorty was filled with apprehension. The words he had overheard could mean only one thing. He was the third! So Captain Slaney and Jed had been captured, too!

It was almost unbelievable. There wasn't a man here—not a police officer. Just schoolboys! And Zingrave and Sutcliffe, up in Crag House, knew nothing of this astounding raid.

"That's the way to get 'em—bag them by surprise before they can guess what's hit 'em," said Buster Boots. "By jingo! This is a pretty big tunnel! Where do we go now?"

"It's different from the other tunnel," said Reggie Pitt, flashing his light up and down. "It's an old quarry working, isn't it? Look at these old uprights and beams."

This was, indeed, a wide, lofty tunnel. All the way along it, on either side, were the foot-square oak uprights, and above, the equally sturdy oak roof supports. Aged though the working was, it was still in a splendid state of preservation.

"I think we'd better wait a bit, dear old boys," said Sir Montie cautiously. "I



My Name is FIGGINS...

I'm the 'big noise' at St. Jim's. From my height I look down on those School House bounders! They call me long and lanky, but really they're just jealous because I am so much taller than they are!

Poor old Tom Merry has got an absurd idea in his head that the School House is better than the New House, and Manners, Lowther and Blake and Co. agree with him. Poor mutts, I don't know what they see in that Casual Ward of theirs!

On the whole the School House freaks aren't such bad fellows, as long as they keep their place. This week I have decided to join up with them and give them the lead in the efforts to solve the **MYSTERY OF THE HUT!** If you like a good mystery yarn, here's your chance, and you'll find it in this week's ripping issue of the GEM.

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mean, really, we're taking the most frightful risks, aren't we? Nipper knows more of this place than we do."

"No fear," said Handforth impatiently. "We'll push on. We'll explore——"

"Montie's right," interrupted Travers. "We've got so far, and now I think we ought to wait for Nipper. He can't be long now."

The others agreed, and Handforth, disgusted, was compelled to abide by the decision of the majority.

"It's no good, Handy—we don't want to do anything hasty," murmured Church. "According to what Nipper has told us, there are some secret doors in this old tunnel. He knows something about them—and we don't."

"We shall be sensible, too, if we switch off our torches," remarked Fullwood. "Far better for us to wait in the dark. Then if somebody suddenly appears with a light we shall be able to spot them—and grab them."

It was a sensible suggestion, and all the electric torches were extinguished. The darkness, now, was like that of the tomb. It could almost be felt. And there was a silence, too—a nerve-racking silence.

Fortunately for the boys, there was an almost immediate diversion. They were aware, at first, of a curiously low rumbling noise; it was very faint and vague. They did not know whether the sound was real or imaginary. And then, like the slashing of a summer night's sky by lightning, came a blaze of radiance from farther down the great tunnel.

"Great Scott!" murmured Handforth, catching in his breath. "Look!"

"Hush!"

They saw that a part of the solid rock wall had swung open—like a door. An old man, carrying a highly-powerful petrol vapour lantern, had come into view; there were other figures, too. Figures dressed in drab-looking suits. Every figure was identical—for all those suits were of the same type.

"Come on, my pretties—come along!" came the old man's voice. "That's the way. Supper for you soon—and nice, comfortable sleep. No more work until to-morrow."

He spoke as though he were addressing a number of tiny infants. There were six of the automaton-like figures, and, having emerged into the tunnel—out of what was apparently a lift—they stood meekly in a little group.

"That's the way," went on the old man. "Now, my beauties, stay just where ye are. Don't move. Understand? I'm

going up for the rest. I shan't be more than a minute."

He left the lantern standing in the middle of the tunnel, and now he entered the lift and the rock door automatically closed.

"Great Scott! Look at them!" whispered Bob Christine.

"Some of our chaps—Fourth-Formers! I'll swear I can see Turner—yes, and Page, and——"

"Steady!" interrupted Travers. "They're some of the captives, all right, but we mustn't take any action yet. That old fellow is coming down again—with 'the rest.' And he said he wouldn't be more than a minute."

"What's the matter with those chaps?" muttered Fullwood, with a little shiver. "They—they seem so queer."

"Of course they're queer," said Travers. "Don't you remember what Nipper told us? They've all been treated with that horrible 'G. S. Fluid,' or whatever it's called. Their brains are dulled—they're like rabbits. That old man is as feeble as the dickens, yet he is able to look after a dozen of the prisoners. They do just exactly as they are told."

"It's—it's awful," said Handforth, in an awed voice.

They all wanted to rush forward, to help those unfortunate prisoners; but they were guided by their better judgment, and they remained in the black shadows.

The half-dozen "human machines" stood waiting patiently—listlessly. Now and again one of them moved slightly, shuffling his feet or leaning against the rock wall, but not one of them spoke.

For the unseen watchers it was a weird experience.

Then came that strange rumbling again—which they now knew to be caused by the lift. The rock door opened, and a second batch of captives appeared.

"Come on—now's our chance!" hissed Handforth.

"No, no!" urged Pitt. "Not yet!"

"But we've only got to grab that old man, and we can rescue those chaps——"

"Be quiet, for goodness' sake!" breathed Pitt. "That old man is taking the prisoners somewhere, and we want to find out where that somewhere is! Far better for us to lie low for a bit."

"By George! You're right," admitted Handforth, startled.

The old man was marshalling his charges along the quarry working—towards the unseen schoolboys. They were compelled to back away, moving deeper and deeper into the tunnel. They made

no noise, for they were all wearing rubber-soled shoes.

After a hundred yards had been covered, the old man called a halt, and he touched something on the rock wall, and another of those mysterious doors swung back. The twelve machine-like figures walked through a narrow opening.

"Now's our chance," murmured Reggie Pitt tensely. "Let's get that old man before he can close the rock door."

"Better go easy with him," said Handforth. "He's a bit ancient——"

"Ancient or not, he's a crook—and it's more than likely that he carries a gun," said Pitt. "We can't take any chances. We'll rush him and bowl him over, just the same as we did the other man."

They ran forward in a body; and the old man, hearing the unusual sounds, looked round. He was not alarmed. If he thought anything at all, he thought that Shorty and Captain Slaney were appearing. Then blank consternation showed in his face as he beheld the swarm of schoolboys dashing at him out of the blackness.

"Hey! Help!" he gasped. "What's all this——"

He could say nothing further. He was flung over as the boys grappled with him. Swiftly they bound their prisoner, and whipped a muffler round his face.

"Well, that makes the fourth," panted Handforth. "And this time——"

"Listen!" interrupted Church, in sudden alarm. "Quick! There's somebody coming."

They looked round. Two figures, dim and mysterious, had materialised out of the gloom of the tunnel, lower down. They approached rapidly, and the boys clenched their fists.

"What are you chaps doing?" asked a familiar voice.

"Nipper!" gurgled Handforth, in relief.

The newcomers were Nipper and Watson, and there was a general sigh of satisfaction. Nipper listened and nodded his approval as he heard the story.

He quickly told his own yarn, and the others grinned.

"We can't be bothered with the police," concluded Nipper briskly. "I didn't tell Sergeant Reeves any of the details—he doesn't know anything about Crag House. This is our job, my sons! Better shove this old chap with the other man. Wait a minute, though. There are some cells down this side tunnel; we can use a couple of 'em for the prisoners."

In the excitement of capturing the old man, and Nipper's return, the juniors had

had no opportunity of inspecting the schoolboy slaves. Now they looked at them in wonder. For those figures were standing listlessly, taking no interest whatever in what had happened.

"It's—it's uncanny!" said Handforth uncomfortably.

Nipper picked up the powerful lantern, and he and some of the others moved nearer to the captives. In this powerful light they could be easily recognised.

"Look! It's Freeman!" said Buster Boots, staring at one of the captives. "Yes, by jingo, and here's Page—and Turner."

"And here's Joe Spence, the station-master's son!" said Nipper.

"And here's Chambers of the Fifth!" added another.

But those captives, although recognised—although spoken of by name—paid no attention. They looked at their rescuers in a curiously detached way.

"Poor chaps!" muttered Nipper. "Can't you see? They don't even recognise us!"

"Just—machines!"

"Can't we do something for them?" asked Christine desperately. "I say, Page! Page, old man!" He shook the arm of one of the captives. "Don't you know me, Page? Look! I'm Christine!"

The unfortunate Page stared stupidly, as a tame rabbit might have stared.

"It's that drug," said Nipper. "Their brains are pretty well helpless. But we'll soon make a difference. This is where our real work begins, my sons. And the quicker we work, the better."

"You mean—the antidote?" asked Handforth eagerly.

"Yes, rather," said Nipper. "Bring them in—get them all into this side tunnel. Look! There are electric lights here, and the place is comparatively warm."

They found, upon examination, that they were in a kind of deep cavern—a great oblong place with a low rock roof. All down one side of it cubicles had been built—cubicles of plain deal. There was accommodation in each for two prisoners—beds, wash-basins, and everything necessary for simple comfort. It was gratifying to find that the captives had not been treated too badly.

Nipper was slightly disappointed; he had hoped to find Waldo. But Waldo, apparently, was at work with the other "shift." For there were two "shifts," and just recently they had all been kept working at fever pitch.

(Continued on page 24.)

Another hilarious, side-splitting issue of Handy's unique 'magazine'!



HANDFORTH'S Weekly

No. 40. Vol. 2.

EDITORIAL STAFF.

January 23rd, 1932.

THE
EDITOR'S
CHIN-WAG

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

THE FASHION
WORLD

By
Reggie Pitt.

HERE'S an interesting letter I have received from a reader—a welcome one, too:

“Dear Ted,—When are you going to put something to interest girls in your WEEKLY? Nearly all the girls at Moor View read your awful rubbish, and there's really nothing worth reading, is there?”

“You are, therefore, hereby commanded, in the NEXT ISSUE following receipt of this letter, to fill your silly paper with what the magazines call ‘feminine interest.’ If you fail, you shall be sent to Coventry for six hours and a half.

“Beware!

“IRENE MANNERS.”

Pity the poor Editor, dear readers! Grouse, grouse, grouse by every post! What a life!

Well, a command is a command. Directly I received this missive, I went round to the fellows who contribute to my journal, and I demanded some feminine interest for this week's issue.

Unfortunately, Irene old thing, most of my contributors are confirmed leg-pullers, and the way they grinned when they heard my request prepared me for something extra-special in the way of japes.

In this number you will find several articles, etc., written specially for girls. If the fellows' idea of “feminine interest” doesn't agree with your own, blame it on to them—not me.

E. O. HANDFORTH.

MY dears, I saw the most amazing bargain the other day. It was the too sweetest gown of black bombazine, with a double-breasted gusset of crepe georgette covered with bugles and spangles and what-not, all for the sum of a hundred and fifty guineas. I would have bought it on the spot, only the Editor hadn't yet paid me for this article.

In the same shop, a divine creation in puce and magenta three-spun English crepe-de-chine was offered for the simply ridiculous price of one thousand pounds (or five hundred coupons). This magnificent bargain had a bonnet and coat of twice-turned billiard-cloth to match, all of which was offered for sale or return on the Five-Year Plan. The people thronging the bargain basement had to be seen to be believed, and even then it was doubtful. I had to wait two and a half hours before I could make my small purchase of a card of Queen Anne safety-pins with hook-and-eye fastenings.

English home-spun tweeds will be very popular this year, and you can obtain a delicious costume-suit of this material for two pounds (and 40 monthly instalments of £1). As regards hats, I always favour those things like a fireman's helmet, with oak-leaves and orchids and berries and things fastened all over them. Outside one shop, where I had recklessly spent 1½d. in purchasing two safety-pins with pointless points, I saw what I thought to be a very charming hat. Upon closer inspection, however, I discovered it to be a dustbin lid with a dent in it.

In conclusion, my dears, don't be afraid to spend your money freely. It's all good for trade—very good, indeed.

AROUND THE TOWN

By Our Society Expert.

I RAN across dear Lord Bunkum in Piccadilly yesterday. His lordship looked at me and remarked, "—! —! —!" (You see, I was in my car when I ran across him.)

* * *

At the exclusive Winter Ball at the Phitz Hotel, Lady Brittlenose was wearing a wonderful fancy dress made by Maison Potté. The dress was designed as a Fire Extinguisher, and was so realistic that, when a fire did actually break out, one of the guests seized Lady Brittlenose, bashed her head on the floor, and tried to pour her on the flames. There was a good deal of laughter at this humorous incident.

* * *

The Marquis Groinold was also there. He was disguised as the Marquis Groinold. The Committee awarded him the First Prize for his marvellous impersonation of the Marquis Groinold—not knowing that he really was the Marquis Groinold all the time. There was great merriment when the incident was explained. The Marquis stuck to the prize, however.

* * *

I was not at the Winter Ball myself. I tried to get in; but because I hadn't a ticket, they rolled me down the steps, kicked me on the pavement, and flung me into the gutter, where I was immediately run over by a car. I didn't mind this, however, as it was Count Munnies's car. The Count gave me a charming smile as he wiped his boots on me before entering the hotel.

* * *

The Duchess of Wapping held a reception at her Mayfair home, for her daughter, Lady Angela Rotherhithe. The Duchess has a very famous dog, Ceasem, which has won many first prizes at various shows. This was the dog that was set on me when I attempted to go in to the reception, and I was, of course, proud to be bitten by such a famous dog as Ceasem.

INVITATION

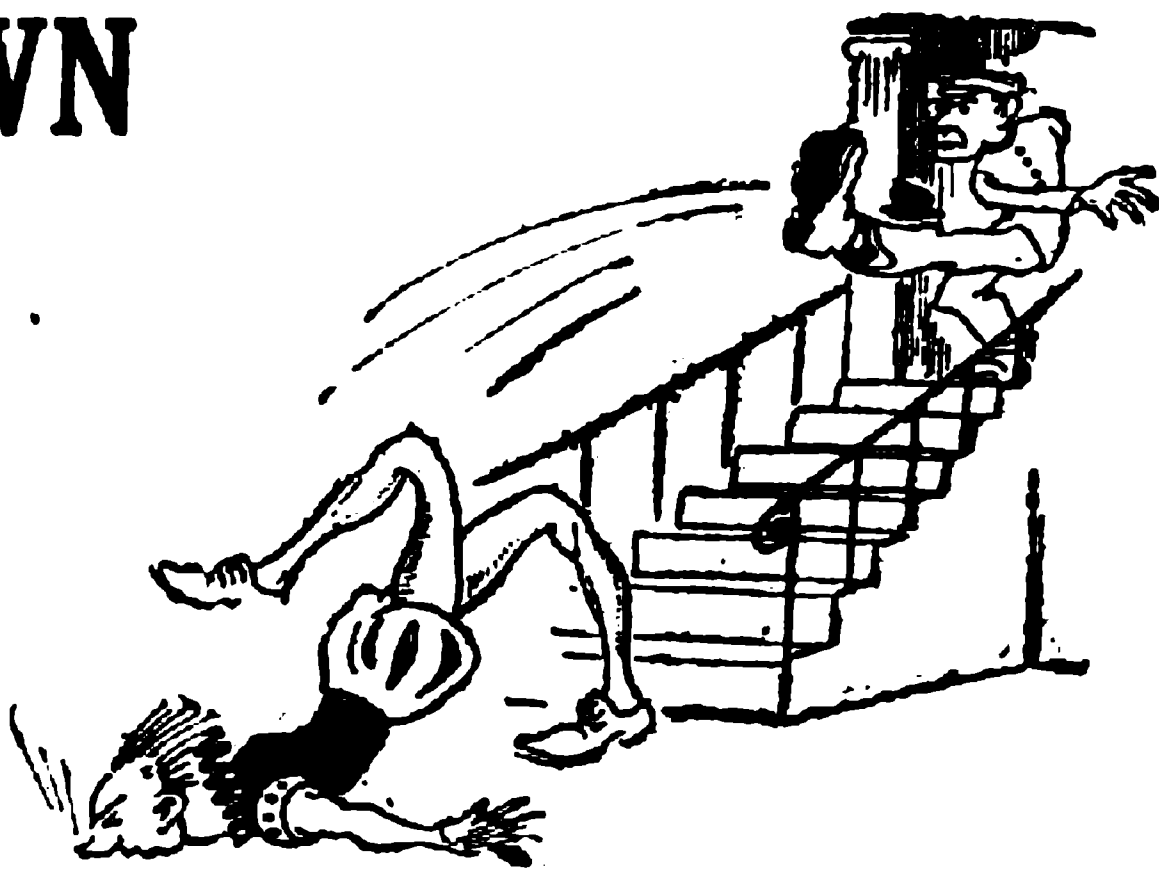
Farmer Holt would be glad of the company of the young gents who trespassed on his estate last Monday to a

PARTY

at Holt's Farm, Bellton, on Saturday next.

A REAL WARM TIME
GUARANTEED.

(Ambulances at 10.30 p.m.)



Lord Buckshot is holding a party on his Scottish estate for the rabbit shooting. His lordship is a very crack shot, and he shot me twice through the hat and one in the arm when I attempted to butt in at his party. He laughingly said that he was sorry he had run out of ammunition, or he would have been pleased to let me have a further display of his shooting ability. I entreated him not to mention it.

BOO-HOO

By C. de V.

I'VE always been pat in Mathematics and Latin,
I know quite a lot about Greek;
I'm certainly hottish at Irish and Scottish,
And French I can fluently speak;
But yet I'm not happy; my mentor is snappy,
Her warnings have filled me with dread;
I answer her mildly, but, oh! I sob wildly,
For, Boo-hoo!
I can't use a needle and thread.

If you should be looking for succulent cooking,
My work is a pleasure to eat;
I'm always in clover at tennis, moreover
You won't find me easy to beat!
Observe me while swimming the Channel and skimming
The waves about Flamborough Head;
But think while you're praising my skill as amazing,
That, Boo-hoo!
I can't use a needle and thread.

For classes gymnastic I'm enthusiastic,
I thrive on the parallel bars;
For any old topic except telescopic
Survey of invisible stars,
I'm ready and willing to find something thrilling
In sciences living or dead;
I find on reflection, I'm all but perfection,
But, Boo-hoo!
I can't use a needle and thread.

BLANKO' OINTMENT
Makes a Bruise a Pleasure.

THIS KNOW
Arnold

IT is a daily occurrence at Suncliffe tearing Third Form pupils very much. They will not learn. There seems to be a great deal of fag work. But I have and I humbly suggest authorities.

Question a fag, and he has a great store of out-of-the-way subjects. There is to be known Flowers, Curious World, Famous Badges, the Armies Battleships—dozens learns these things pictures, which he can

The thing is obvious the school issue the in the shape of cigar instance, "CAESAR Cards," showing the Gallic War, with the back. And ENGLAND, First No. 1. Alfred the

The cards could be used in a haphazard way. The fag would never go to get the set. any money the fags by this method than in the school now.

TWO RE

(1) Report from the to Miss Bond.

"We have to do work from the Cook—as follows:

Miss Emily Penn
Giles Craggs,
Mrs. Jane Storey,
Peter Burnett,
William Thompson
Jan

(2) Report from Hospital.

"Patients admitted Jan. 28th, 1932: Emily Pennesse, Giles Craggs, Jane Storey, Peter Burnett, William Thompson (Signed)

AUNTIE SOBSTUFF'S CORNER

(Conducted by Auntie Sobstuff—alias Jimmy Potts.)

BOO-HOO!

My poor readers, I sympathise with you from the bottom of my heart. Write to me and tell me all your troubles. There's nothing I like better than poking my nose into things which do not concern me in any way whatever.

Maisie Lacey (Pontypool-on-Pont) writes to me and says: "Dear Auntie,—After I had dropped some ink on my white gloves, I thought I could take it out by dipping them in whitewash. But now they are so stiff that I can't even bend them with a coke-hammer. Dear auntie, what shall I do? I am distracted with worry."

My poor, dear child, what can one do in a situation like this? (Boo-hoo!) It is fate, my dear—simply fate.

We can only smile cheerfully and keep our hearts brave and undaunted. (P.S.—You might try washing them with turps.)

"**Little Lucy**" (Seldom-in-Ernesst) tells me that she has a distressing complaint. "My hair keeps falling out," wails Lucy. "Dear auntie, what can I do with it?" Try making it into a doormat, my child. Or why not buy a bottle of glue? Failing that, I am afraid that we can only fold our hands, smile bravely, and say, "It is fate!" (Boo-hoo!)

Little Miss Muffet (Satonna-Tuffet) writes: "Dear Auntie,—My rich uncle (aged 87½) came to see me at my school yesterday,

and he gave me a good many presents, including a box of chocolates and a scent-spray. Would it be right for me to accept these presents from a man I have never seen before in my life? I am very perplexed what to do. Can you help me to decide?"

My poor child, your dilemma touches me deeply. (Boo-hoo!) It is fate, my dear—that's all. What can we do against fate? All you can do is to fold your hands around as many presents as you can get hold of, and smile a brave, cheerful smile.

Elsie (Chelsea) writes: "I want your advice, dear Aunt Sobstuff. I bought a cheap muslin frock at a shop near here yesterday, and ordered it to be sent. But when I opened the box, I found it contained a marvellous gown of green taffeta with a celluline collar and cuffs. Obviously they have sent me the wrong dress—this is miles better than mine. What ought I to do?"

These kind of things, Elsie, must happen when we are the victims of fate. Ask yourself honestly and sincerely what you ought to do. There is only one answer. You ought to stick to the green taffeta and smile a brave, simple smile. (That's what you will do, anyway.)

Write often, my dears. All your troubles will be welcomed and will gladden the heart of
AUNTIE SOBSTUFF.

ALL THE NEWS

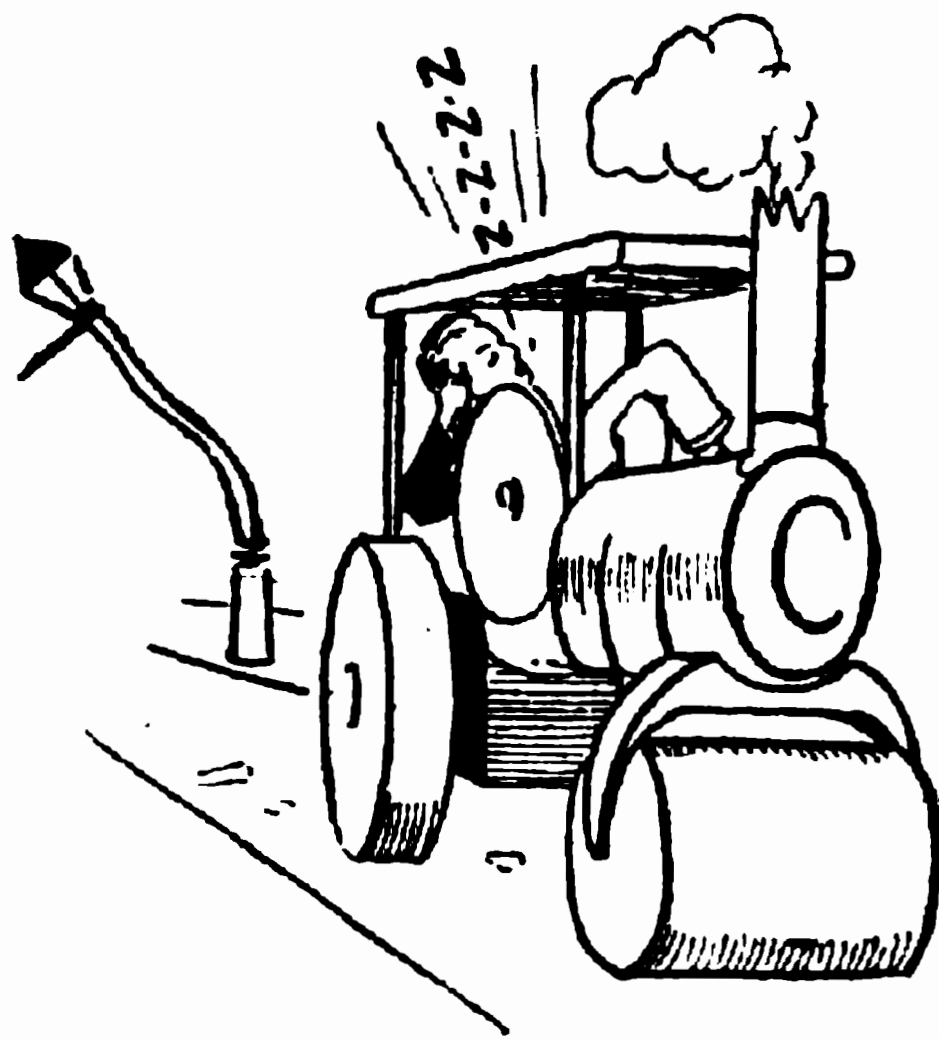
VIVIAN TRAVERS has been putting insect powder in his study to kill a few black-beetles. This is careless. Suppose any Fourth Form fellows drop in?

We were surprised that, in the New Year's Honours List, Teddy Long was not even mentioned. Surely he might have been awarded the Order of the Bath?

Archie Glenthorne told me that the other night he dreamed that he was driving a steam-roller, and he asked me what it meant. It means that he was dreaming.

Hussi Khan learned his English from a well-known native Babu. Judging by his chatter, William Napoleon Browne must have been taught English by a well-known Baboon.

The Fourth would like to rig up a booby



By Walter Church.

trap for Mr. Pycraft, but they are afraid to do it. Being "boobies" themselves, I should have thought the Fourth would find it easy. The Remove suggests that the Fourth buy a chicken and try to pluck it—it might raise their own pluck. On second thoughts, though, all they would pluck would be the white feathers.

Enoch Snipe is nothing if not candid. When Crowell asked him why he hadn't done his prep., poor old Snipey replied that he was sorry, but he "couldn't see any sense in Virgil." I thought Crowell was going to have a fit.

Likewise Snipe was again in hot water in natural history. Talking of scorpions, Crowell said: "Give me the names of three other things that sting." Thus answered Snipe: "Er—beeses, wasps, and—er—the cane!" He knows what he is talking about, does Snipe.

LEDGE

ance to see Mr. his hair. The ter finds his Somehow school-work. way to make a invented a way, it to the school

u will find that knowledge upon He knows all out Roses, Wild customs of the Army of the Empire, of others. He from cigarette ets with avidity. therefore. Let dird Form lessons te pictures. For a Set of Fifty dents from the original text on "HISTORY OF of Fifty Cards. eat as a Baker." put into circula-manner, so that now when he was I'm willing to bet ould learn quicker by that practised

PORTS

or View Scholars

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weather,

24th, 1932."

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THE MATRON."

The Captives of Crag House

(Continued from page 20.)

Nipper wasted no time. He closed the rock door which led into the quarry working, and he set two of the boys there to keep watch—and to give the alarm at the first sign of the enemy's approach.

By this time, too, Shorty Williams and the old man had been carried in and bundled into an empty cubicle at the end of the cavern. They were locked in.

The "human machines" were placed in the other cubicles, and then Nipper, reading the directions on that fateful little bottle of "Anti-G. S.", prepared the tiny, delicate surgical syringe.

The great experiment was to be tried!

CHAPTER 12.

Administering the Antidote!

FOLLOWING the directions closely, Nipper gave each prisoner a tiny injection. Back at St. Frank's, before setting out on this adventure, he had given himself a similar injection. He had suffered no ill effects; he had only been aware, soon after the tiny operation, of a strange prickly sensation of his skin, and an unusual exhilaration of mind. These symptoms had rapidly worn off.

"I can't believe it," said Handforth, staring uncomfortably at Turner and Page, who were lying on the little camp-beds in one of the cubicles. "I mean, these poor chaps are like harmless lunatics. I can't believe that they'll ever be normal again."

"We shall soon see," replied Nipper steadily. "This stuff is supposed to work within a few minutes. That 'G.S. Fluid' is not really harmful; and even without the antidote the effect would have worn off after a week or so. This stuff merely brings about an immediate reaction."

He was as impatient as any of the others—and as anxious. It was a trying period, this spell of waiting. Twice Nipper went to the rock door, opening it and looking out into the dark quarry working.

But nobody else came. The rescuers, so far, had had everything their own way. This was not surprising, for the crooks had been taken off their guard. One by one they had been seized. And that was the whole essence of the schoolboys' enterprise. They were capturing the gang singly—reducing its strength as they went along. The very daring of their methods was winning them success.

"Any change?" asked Nipper, as he went back into one of the cubicles.

"I'm not sure," said Reggie Pitt. "These poor fellows are Chambers and Joe Spence. That stuff seems to have made them sleepy. They were all right until five minutes ago."

The captives had made no protest when Nipper injected the antidote; they had sat upon their bunks listlessly. Their dulled wits told them, vaguely, that they were not due to sleep yet. This was generally the hour at which they were fed—immediately upon coming down from their labours.

After a while they sank back upon their pillows, with closed eyes. Nipper looked at Chambers and Joe Spence compassionately. They seemed so peaceful—so child-like in their repose.

"Perhaps Mr. Lee was mistaken about that stuff," said Handforth. "It seems too thick——"

"Dry up, you chaps—let a fellow sleep!" came a grumbling murmur from Chambers.

The rescuers exchanged triumphant glances.

"It is working," said Nipper breathlessly. "Chambers is coming to—he probably thinks he's in St. Frank's still. Don't disturb him."

Chambers suddenly sat up, rubbing his eyes.

"What's the matter?" he asked irritably. "Why can't you be quiet?"

He looked at them unseeingly—without recognition for the moment. They said nothing. They watched, fascinated. They could even see Chambers' efforts to fight his way back to normal.

Then a shout came from another cubicle, and Nipper and Handforth dashed out. They found Turner, of the Fourth, sitting up in his little bed—and in his eyes there was a look of clear intelligence.

"I—I say, what's wrong?" he asked dazedly. "Where am I? What's the meaning of this—this rock place? And these rummy clothes I'm wearing?"

"Look at me," said Nipper, seizing Turner by the shoulders. "You know me, Turner, don't you?"

"Know you?" repeated Turner. "Don't be an ass! You're Nipper, of the Remove."

"Thank goodness!" said Nipper.

"Look here——"

"Take it easy, old man," said Nipper. "No, don't get excited. We'll explain everything in good time."

"One of your silly Remove japes, I suppose?" grumbled Turner, passing a hand over his brow. "Well, I don't think much of it!"

The rescuers could hear excited murmurs from the other cubicles—plain proof that the rest of the captives were recovering their normal wits. It wasn't long before Turner was on his feet.

"Look here, why can't you chaps tell me?" he demanded. "My mind is all muddled, and I can't get the hang——"

He broke off suddenly, and a startled light came into his eyes.

"Well?" said Nipper. "Can you remember anything?"

"Why, yes, of course—that jape you rotters played on us an hour or two ago!" said Turner indignantly.

"An hour or two ago?" repeated Handforth, in a curious voice.

"Well, wasn't it an hour or two ago?" demanded Turner. "You bundled us under the seats in that giddy local train, and sent us on to Caistowe. But we dished you, and when the train happened to stop we jumped out and—— Yes, that's right, too! We found a van in Caistowe lane, and we helped to get it out of the ditch. The men offered us a lift, and I don't seem to remember what happened after that."

"That was three or four weeks ago—and since then your mind has been a blank," said Nipper quietly.

CHAPTER 13.

Another Capture!

TURNER would not believe it; it seemed fantastic to him that his brain could have remained dormant for weeks. The others were just the same. They believed that this was some practical joke; that it was still the first day of term, and that the Removites were responsible for it all.

Chambers was his old aggressive self; he declared that he had sought a lift home from Bannington in the fog; he had entered a strange motor-car, and after that he remembered no more.

"It's the same story—every time," said Nipper. "Actually, you were all gassed, and rendered unconscious—and then, before you came to your senses, you were given a dose of this 'G.S. Fluid.' I know it all sounds amazing, but it happens to be true. Look at your hands! Look at the signs of hard work. You've been in the hands of these crooks, and they've been making slaves of you."

"And we've risked everything to come along and get you free," said Handforth excitedly. "By George! Things are going marvellously! All these chaps are back in their right senses, and now we've got a pretty strong attacking force."

The rescuers were far more joyous than the rescued. For the former could appreciate the miracle which had taken place; the latter were only bewildered.

However, as their brains grew clearer and clearer, and as they listened to further explanations, they lost their scepticism, and they soon caught some of the others' excitement. They were eager enough to join in the attack, and to do their bit in rounding up and capturing the crooks.

It was no good questioning the prisoners about the work they had been doing—or about the other captives. For, with the return to normality, they remembered nothing. All that had happened since their capture was an absolute blank. They listened to the story of the secret lifts and the granite prison as though it were something widely separated from their own lives.

"Easy, you chaps—easy!" came a sudden warning shout from the end of the cavern. "Somebody's coming!"

"Keep silent—everybody!" urged Nipper.

Outside, in the quarry working, the second shift had been brought down for food and sleep. There weren't so many workers in this crowd, and they were in sole charge of Jim Sale—a man who figured in the household staff of Crag House as a manservant.

Jim Sale was irritable. Sutcliffe had spoken sharply to him, for things seemed to be going wrong to-night. Shorty Williams, strangely enough, had not returned, nor had there been any sign of Captain Slaney. And now Jim Sale was further intrigued by the remarkable disappearance of the old man whose duty it was to prepare food for the prisoners. Jim Sale could not understand it at all. But he understood quickly enough a minute later.

The very ease with which the prisoners could be handled told heavily—now—against the crooks. For this second shift was being marched along by just the one guard. The captives were so docile, so obedient to orders, that a stronger guard was not necessary.

Thus, when Jim opened the secret door, leading into the cavern containing the cubicles, he found himself beset by a veritable army of attackers. He was one against a couple of dozen. He hadn't an earthly chance.

"Hi! What the—— Back, you young fools!" he gasped in alarm, thinking in that first moment that it was the captives who had unaccountably lost their docility.

"It's all right—only one of them!" sang out Handforth cheerfully. "On him, you chaps!"

Crash!

Handforth's fist, lunging out, caught Jim Sale on the point of the chin, and the man staggered back, howling. He had been in the act of pulling a wicked-looking automatic, but he was never able to use it. Within twenty seconds he was down—bound hand and foot, and another of those handy mufflers was used as an effective gag.

"That was quick work," said Nipper approvingly.

"It's getting monotonous, dear old fellow," sighed Travers.

"There'll be nothing monotonous about our next move," said Nipper. "So far we have only come up against the underlings. We've got to deal with Jim the Penman—and Zingrave! But we'll win! We're out to win to-night!"

"Hear, hear!"

Nipper knelt down beside the latest prisoner, and he pulled the muffler aside.

"Just for your own satisfaction, my friend, I'll tell you that you're the fifth man we've collared," he said. "Now, it's no good struggling——"

"You—you young whelps!" snarled Jim Sale. "How did you get in here? How did you make them boys normal again?"

"That's neither here nor there," replied Nipper. "How many men are there up in Crag House—in addition to Sutcliffe and Zingrave?"

The man gaped.

"Then—then you know?" he asked, aghast.

"If I didn't know before, I know now," replied Nipper coolly. "I don't think your gang is a particularly big one, is it? How many more of you are there?"

A cunning light came into the prisoner's eyes.

"Dozens—scores!" he said viciously—and with far too much promptitude.

"Which means that there are no more at all, eh?" retorted Nipper. "Just Sutcliffe and Zingrave! Good enough! Now we know where we are!"

CHAPTER 14.

Welcome News!

"YE gods and little fishes!"

It was an amazed ejaculation from one of the newly arrived captives. Nipper, spinning round as he recognised the voice, leapt forward.

"Waldo!" he ejaculated gladly.

Stanley Waldo, of the Remove, had been watching and listening in amazement for some moments. Now he had stepped from the ranks of those helpless captives, and it could be seen that he was in full possession of his own wits.

"I thought I was dreaming at first," he said, as he gripped Nipper's hand. "By Jupiter! I'm glad to see you chaps here! It means that there's something doing, eh?"

"It means that something has already been done, my son!" said Handforth. "You boulder! You've been spoofing those crooks all the time, haven't you?"

"I was getting a bit tired of it," replied Waldo quietly. "And, to tell you the truth, after what happened to-night, I began to lose all hope." He looked straight at Nipper. "You know what I mean?" he asked steadily.

Nipper could hardly pluck up the courage to frame the question.

"You mean—my guv'nor?" he said. "Tell me! Is he——"

"Don't get alarmed!" said Waldo quickly. "Great Scott! I didn't mean to give you a shock like that, Nipper. Mr. Lee is alive."

"Thank Heaven," muttered Nipper fervently.

"They were brought in during the evening," said Waldo. "Mr. Lee and Mr. Lennard. They have been locked in two of those granite cells—and I can tell you that there are no cells in any convict prison a tenth as hideous. You see, I had been working with Mr. Lee, and he had promised me that it wouldn't be long before rescue came. But when I saw that he himself had been collared—well, it all seemed pretty hopeless. I didn't know that you fellows——"

"We won't waste any further time in talking," said Nipper. "We've got to get active again. So Mr. Lee is in one of those cells—and poor old Lennard, too! By Jove! We're going to rescue them, you chaps!"

"Rather!"

"Come on, St. Frank's!"

"Hurrah!"

"Chuck it!" protested Nipper. "No cheering—no shouting! We're not going to win by making a noise. So far we have succeeded because we had a tremendous advantage over the enemy. We still possess that advantage—so long as we don't let them know that we're on the warpath. Our game is to take them by surprise."

"I can come in handy here," said Waldo briskly. "As you know, I've been keeping my eyes well open. I know just how to

open all the secret doors and I know how to work the lift. In fact, I know everything about the place."

"How many other members of the gang are there?" asked Nipper.

"You've accounted for this fellow here, and Shorty and Captain Slaney and Jed," said Waldo. "Oh, yes, and that old man. As far as I know, there are only two more."

"The two king-pins of the whole show," nodded Nipper. "Jim the Penman himself—and Professor Zingrave."

afraid of blackmail. Also, it gave him greater pleasure to capture boys—especially St. Frank's boys—because he would be hitting at Mr. Lee."

"That's very likely," nodded Nipper.

"After the prison was completed, it was Zingrave's idea to take the boys in secret to various remote parts of the country. There they would have been found, but owing to the drug they would know nothing—remember nothing of what had happened. In that way Zingrave's secret would have remained safe."

"Only these other men would have known about it—Captain Slaney and the rest," agreed Nipper. "Jim the Penman and Zingrave were compelled to take a few into their confidence, of course. Slaney used that motor-boat for bringing supplies



Exerting his enormous strength, Waldo pulled and tugged at the door. Suddenly it splintered, with such force that Waldo was sent hurtling back among his chums.

"That's right," said Waldo. "Zingrave is disguised as Admiral Carrington. I say, it's a clever scheme, you chaps! Zingrave's dodge is to live at Crag House as Admiral Carrington, and he has built that private prison underneath the cellars so that he can capture all his old enemies and keep them under his own eye."

"My hat!"

"Great Scott!"

"That's why all these boys have been kidnapped—so that they could build this prison," continued Waldo. "Of course, Zingrave could have employed men—some of his own gang—but I believe he was

of granite and cement and other stuff. It was all pretty well organised, wasn't it?"

"And we shall have to organise this thing ourselves if we're to succeed," said Waldo. "Rush tactics have served so far, but we need strategy now. We must go cautiously—for both Sutcliffe and Zingrave are armed, and they're desperate."

"We're ready for them," said Nipper eagerly. "St. Frank's can do this job—and do it thoroughly! There's not much fear of our being disturbed, and we have the whole night before us."

And plans for the capture of the crooks were made.

CHAPTER 15.

A Jolt for Jim the Penman!

FIRST and foremost, the other captives were treated with that wonderful antidote. No further action should be taken against the crooks, it was decided, until the attacking force was complete—with all the prisoners in full possession of their wits.

But Waldo had been wrong in assuming that there was no fear of their being disturbed. He did not know, for example, that Jim Sale had been given definite instructions to find Shorty without delay—and to send Shorty up to the library of Crag House.

Shorty was wanted; he was a chauffeur, and there was some special work for him. But neither Jim Sale nor Shorty Williams showed up. A quarter of an hour passed; half an hour. Sutcliffe became irritable, annoyed—and then angrily impatient.

He went down to the secret prison, which was built beneath the ordinary cellars of Crag House. He found that labyrinth of tunnels and passages empty. Electric lights were glowing here and there; a movement could be heard, now and again, from some of the granite cells. But all the workers had gone.

The full range of cells had not yet been built. Many were in course of construction. For Professor Zingrave was ambitious in his plan; he was making the most amazing prison in the world—here, under Crag House.

"What on earth is the matter with the fools?" muttered Jim the Penman harshly, as he strode towards one of the granite walls.

It moved open at a touch of a hidden spring, and he stepped into a hand-controlled lift. Down he went—far down into the depths of the earth. This shaft led straight to the quarry working, which was at a much lower level.

Sutcliffe was only irritated. Never for a second did he suspect that anything was seriously wrong. He decided that there had been too much laxity with the men. Shorty Williams, in particular, had been getting insolent of late. He would have to be put in his place.

As Jim the Penman descended in the lift, he reflected somewhat bitterly that it was always risky to take men into one's confidence. All these men, of course, had been carefully chosen. They were old servants of Professor Zingrave—men who, in the past, had been members of the League of the Green Triangle. They had prospered in those days, and now they had been eager enough to place themselves once again under the leadership of the wily professor. There were others, too—in London. Jim the Penman and Professor Zingrave had many hirelings. But only these few at Crag House knew of the real secret.

Jim reached the bottom of the shaft, and he opened the rock door quite casually. Then he got the shock of his life.

He heard voices—unfamiliar voices. On the instant he was alert. He pulled the door almost to, until there was only a tiny crevice left. Standing in the darkness of the lift, he peered out into the quarry working.

He could hardly believe the evidence of his eyes and ears. He saw many figures down the great tunnel—figures which looked fantastic and imp-like in the light from the vapour lamps. He heard voices—boyish, excited voices.

"This looks—nasty!" said Jim the Penman, compressing his thin lips.

In spite of the devastating shock of the blow, he kept his head. In a flash, he knew why Shorty Williams and the other men had not returned. They had been captured! Gazing out through that crevice, he could see numbers of schoolboys—yes, and amongst them were the drably-clothed prisoners. Yet these prisoners were no longer helpless. Some of them were talking just as animatedly as the other boys. In some miraculous manner they had completely recovered—and all within the space of half an hour! Jim himself had seen the second shift go down, in the charge of Jim Sale.

Sutcliffe did not even attempt to arrive at any explanation. This one dramatic fact was sufficient. The prisoners were normal—and they were accompanied by a veritable host of helpers.

There was one tiny spark of comfort.

As Jim the Penman eagerly searched that throng down the tunnel, he could see no sign of a police officer. There was no man at all—nobody in authority. He listened intently.

"Caution is the watchword," he heard one of the boys saying. "If those crooks get the best of us, they'll convert us all into workers—and nobody will ever know what has happened to us. We're doing this job on our own—"

"All the better," said one of the others. "St. Frank's is going to get the credit for this coup! Come on, St. Frank's! On the ball!"

"Easy—easy!" came another voice. "There must be no excitement—no shouting. We're up against desperate men, and we must take them completely by surprise or they'll escape us."

Jim the Penman's jaw shut like a trap.

"Completely by surprise!" he muttered, between his teeth. "Kids, eh? Just these kids—without any leaders! The young fools!"

He touched the ropes and the lift shot upwards.

AS Jim the Penman went up in that lift he had no illusions.

He knew that he had made this discovery by sheer chance. His heart quickened its beat as he realised how narrow his and Zingrave's escape had been. The boys might have had everything their own way—

The lift reached the top. Jim the Penman stepped quickly out, and he ran to the quiet, sedate study where "Admiral Carrington" was resting—revelling in the comfort of the place after his long incarceration in penal servitude.

"Is this quite necessary?" asked Zingrave, not without asperity. "Is there any real reason why you should come bursting in—"

"There is!" snapped Jim the Penman. "They're after us!"

Zingrave leapt to his feet.

"After us?" he snarled. "Who? What do you mean?"

Even Jim was startled at the change in the professor.

"Boys!" he said tensely. "Yes, you may stare! Schoolboys—but dozens of them! They have already taken Shorty and Slaney and the others."

"You're mad," said Zingrave harshly.

But he did not think Sutcliffe mad after he had heard the story. He was calmer, however. This news was alarming enough, but it was not necessarily fatal.

"Boys—just schoolboys," he murmured, as he paced up and down. "You're quite sure there were no men with them? No police officers?"

"Haven't I told you already?" demanded Jim impatiently. "I heard the young cubs, too. They were even saying that if they failed nobody would know—"

"Yes, yes, of course," said the professor. "That makes it easier, Jim. Much easier. The mere fact that these boys are without a leader proves that they have come out without permission. The school authorities would never have allowed them to venture upon such an enterprise. They have broken bounds. They have told nobody. H'm! It begins to become interesting."

"Interesting or not—it's infernally awkward!" said Sutcliffe. "Don't you realise that those boys are on their way up now? Or, at least, they will be soon. We've got to do something, Zingrave. It's no good standing here talking—"

"Keep your head!" snapped the other. "Kindly remember, Sutcliffe, that I am in charge."

"Are we going to quarrel?" asked Sutcliffe bitterly.

"By no means, old friend—by no means," said Zingrave, with a sudden smile. "But our nerves, I must confess, are somewhat ragged. We mustn't lose our tempers in that way. Now, there is not one chance in a thousand that these boys have told anybody where they were going—or what they were planning. Somehow—it doesn't matter to us how—they have restored the workers to their normal intelligence. So there must be a considerable force preparing to spring upon us."

"The young whelps!" said Jim. "If they were men we should know what to do. But we can't enter into a fight with boys—we can't use guns. Hang it, I'm not usually

squeamish, but I'll not pull a gun on a boy!"

"And quite right, too," said Zingrave. "There is no necessity to pull a gun on a boy, Jim. We can deal with this matter in another way. Do you realise that if we capture all these boys we shall have the upper hand completely? They can disappear—just like the others. In fact, it is our only chance. We must not allow one of them to get away—for that would be fatal."

"What do you propose doing?" asked Jim the Penman, staring. "There are two of us. There are between thirty and forty of them."

"Come with me," said Zingrave abruptly.

They went down through the ordinary cellars, down to that secret prison. Opening the door which led into the lift shaft, Zingrave listened. Everything was silent. The raiders were not yet ready—they were not even coming.

"They think they have ample time," he said. "And they are wise in not rushing into this thing. I am surprised—for boys, as a rule, are most headstrong. Between thirty and forty, you say?"

"Yes—including the prisoners."

"We must use gas," said Zingrave slowly.

"Gas!"

"What else?" retorted the other. "We will let them come up into this secret prison; they cannot release any of my precious prisoners, for the locks are impregnable. They will assume that you and I are sleeping. We will leave one of the doors handily open—so that they will be lured up into the ordinary cellars. And when they are there, Jim—well, then we shall have them just where we want them!"

CHAPTER 16.

Zingrave's Revenge!

PROFESSOR ZINGRAVE suddenly raised his voice.

"Yes, Jim!" he said loudly. "I am very much afraid that these misguided schoolboys, in their eagerness to help their unfortunate fellows, have walked into a trap. I will warrant that the boy Nipper is at the bottom of the whole affair. Nipper, eh?" Zingrave rubbed his hands gently together. "The bright young assistant of Nelson Lee! I wanted to add him to my collection!"

There was a diabolical note in his voice now, and even Jim the Penman found some difficulty in repressing a shudder.

"We will gas them," continued the professor silkily. "How's that, my good Jim? Oh, no, we won't do them any harm. This gas is perfectly innocuous. But it will at least render them unconscious—and when they awaken they will have been treated by the 'G. S. Fluid.' We shall have more workers for our great task, eh? And the whole countryside will be ringing with another sensation. Splendid! How completely these schoolboys are trapped!"

Jim the Penman knew exactly why Professor Zingrave had raised his voice. In one of those granite cells, not far distant, Nelson Lee was imprisoned. In the next cell was Chief Detective-inspector Lennard, of Scotland Yard. And Zingrave wanted them to hear—the very gloating note in his voice proved that.

Nelson Lee did hear—and the great detective inwardly groaned. He had never ceased to condemn himself for having fallen a victim to Professor Zingrave's wiles.

Lee had known for some time the exact purpose of this private prison. He had been marked down, from the first, as one of the inmates! And he knew that if Professor Zingrave had his way, he—Lee—would be kept in solitary confinement to the end of his days.

The detective's cell was more like a dungeon than anything else. A narrow, ill-ventilated space with a stone floor. There was no bed—merely a number of granite blocks, built against the wall. No blankets, no pillow. Just that granite bed! There was no light, either. Life in this hideous cell would become so intolerable after a few weeks that death itself would be an infinite relief.

Nelson Lee had heard enough to tell him the truth. Nipper, with many of the other boys, had dared to come into the tunnels—on a rescue effort! Their plans had been dis-

covered—and the two criminals were scheming to entrap the whole crowd.

Much as Nelson Lee deplored the folly of the boys, he could not help feeling proud of them. And he was driven almost mad by his own helplessness.

Yet, when he considered the matter in a calmer mood, he could hardly believe that Nipper would have come upon such an enterprise without leaving word at the school. Nipper was usually so careful—so thoughtful. Yet, in the circumstances, he might easily have blundered this once. Lee could guess how anxious Nipper must have been for his—Lee's—safety.

The detective knew exactly how the captives had regained their normal intelligence; he remembered telling Nipper of that antidote, and Nipper, of course, must have found it in the bed-room cupboard. Well done, Nipper! It would be a thousand pities if this daring adventure should end in disaster for the boys.

Zurrrh!

Leo only faintly heard that sound; but Zingrave and Sutcliffe, standing outside in the lighted passage, heard it distinctly. It was the soft buzz of an alarm bell. They looked at one another sharply.

"A car has just entered the drive," said Sutcliffe. "An electrical contact is made as soon as any vehicle passes the second elm tree. By thunder! Do you think the police



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.

NOT SCRAMBLED.

Boy: "And what do I feed these goldfish on?"

Shopkeeper: "Ants' eggs, sonny."

Boy: "Hard or soft boiled?"

(R. Chadwick, 28, Darby Fields, Leymoor, near Huddersfield, has been awarded a handsome watch.)

SARCASM.

Inquisitive Old Lady (looking at submarine in dock): "And doesn't that gun on deck get wet when you submerge?"

Sailor (sarcastically): "Oh, no, ma'am. When we submerge one of the sailors holds an umbrella over it."

(G. Baker, 2, Heath Square, Cheade, Cheshire, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

A DUNCE.

Mother: "Well, Tommy, how are you getting on at school?"

Tommy: "Splendid, mother. Even the master says he can't teach me anything."

(V. Leventhall, Ashford Residential School, Ashford, has been awarded a penknife.)

SHORTER HOURS.

"Say, Bill, what are you striking for?"

"Shorter hours, Alf."

"Good! I'm with you. I always thought sixty minutes was too long."

(F. Catchpole, 184, High Road, Walton, Felixstowe, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

NOT HAIR-RAISING.

Bald Man: "We had burglars in the house last night."

Friend: "Weren't you afraid?"

Bald Man: "No. I never turned a hair."

(R. Wray, 13, Weelsby Avenue, Grimsby, has been awarded a penknife.)

NOTHING DOING.

Irritable Old Gent (to little boy who keeps sniffing): "Haven't you a handkerchief, my boy?"

Boy: "Yes; but I don't lend it to strangers."

(J. Cox, 20, Langton Road, Brixton, London, S.W., has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

"Nonsense," interrupted Zingrave. "Have you forgotten Savini?"

"I thought he wasn't coming until to-morrow—"

"I have been expecting him for the last hour," said Zingrave. "When I give instructions for a certain thing to be done—that thing is done with promptitude. Come! We must admit the visitors."

"And the boys?"

Zingrave went to the lift again and listened.

"There is no sound," he said. "You remain here, Jim—and if there is any sign of the boys coming up, warn me."

He vanished, and soon he was at the rear door of Crag House. A closed car was standing there, and a foreign-looking man came into view.

"Well, Mr. Crowson, I'm a bit later than I thought—" He broke off and stiffened. "Sorry, sir," he said. "I didn't see you at first. I thought you were Mr. Crowson, the butler."

"That's all right, my good Savini," said the professor. "You are one of us. Take no notice of my personal appearance. I am the Chief."

"The Chief!" said Savini huskily. "I might have known! Welcome back, sir!"

"You have brought—the cargo?" asked Professor Zingrave.

"He's inside—as quiet as a babe," replied Savini.

"Good! Bring him in!"

THE door of the car was opened, and Savini returned, carrying the inanimate form of a slightly-built, elderly gentleman, who was attired in evening dress. Without a word, they went down to the secret prison.

"All quiet!" reported Sutcliffe. "No sign of the boys yet; they must be making their plans."

"As long as they give us time to get my dear friend, Lord Stretton, into a cell, I shall not mind," said Zingrave, with almost deadly smoothness. "Look at him, Jim! You know him, eh? Lord Stretton!"

"You haven't wasted much time," said Jim the Penman grimly.

He was not entirely in sympathy with Zingrave's vengeance plot. Sutcliffe was more matter-of-fact; he was out for gain, first and last. From the very beginning he had been opposed to this secret prison, but he knew better than to voice his views.

"Let me look at him—let me see him more clearly," said Zingrave abruptly.

Roughly he pulled the unconscious man from Savini's grip, and the unfortunate Lord Stretton was sent slumping to the floor, with his back against one of those granite walls.



HARD LINES.

A man was looking very worried.

"What's the matter?" asked a friend.

"Well, it's like this. I've lost my spectacles, and I can't look for them till I find them."

(*E. Lawrence, 3, Tunnel Avenue, East Greenwich, London, S.E.10, has been awarded a pocket wallet.*)

RUDE.

Mrs. Smith (at party): "Bobby, it's rude to keep reaching out for cakes. Haven't you a tongue?"

Bobby: "Yes, ma, but my arm's longer."

(*H. Yates, 46, Brixham Gardens, Ilford, has been awarded a penknife.*)

SHARP WILLIE.

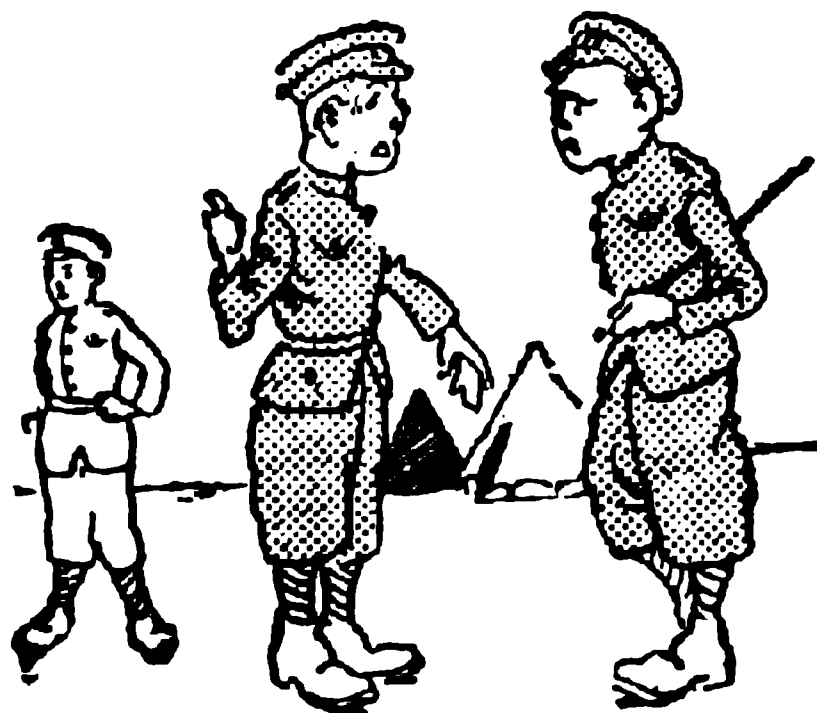
Father: "What did you do with the sixpence I gave you for taking your medicine?"

Willie: "I spent threepence on sweets, and I gave threepence to Jimmy to take the medicine for me."

(*A. Richardson, 31, Prince Alfred's Road, Port Elizabeth, S. Africa, has been awarded a useful prize.*)

NOT "FED UP" YET.

Stage manager (to actor who has proved a failure): "Come off! They've thrown an egg and a frying-pan at you. Isn't that enough?"



Actor: "No; I'm waiting for the rasher of bacon."

(*E. Green, 447, High Road, Leytonstone, London, E.11, has been awarded a pocket wallet.*)

AFRAID.

First Small Boy: "I'd pull your hair, only it's so red I'm afraid of burning myself."

Second Small Boy: "And I'd jolly well punch your head, only I might get a splinter in my hand."

(*G. Woods, Lawn Villa Garage, Harlesden Road, London, N.W.10, has been awarded a penknife.*)

GOOD TO BAD.

"Daddy said there is not another woman in the world like you, Aunt Jane."

"That was very flattering of him."

"And he said it was a good thing, too."

(*H. Dymond, East Bridge, Bishops Nympton, Barnstaple, has been awarded a penknife.*)

NOT SMART.

Corporal (speaking about knock-kneed soldier): "It's no good, he never looks smart. Look at him now! The top half of his legs are standing to attention, and the bottom half are standing at ease."

(*K. Day, Renethiam, 262, Brereton Avenue, Cleethorpes, has been awarded a pocket wallet.*)

"The third!" laughed Professor Zingrave, giving way to a sudden paroxysm of triumphant gloating. "First, Nelson Lee—then Inspector Lennard—now Lord Stretton! Look at him, Jim! The great and noble judge! The man who sentenced me to twenty years' penal servitude!"

"Steady, Zingrave!" said Jim sharply. "This is no time for indulging in these wild outbursts. Have you forgotten——"

"Forgotten?" shouted Zingrave. "Have I not lived year after year for this moment of my revenge? They shall all suffer—every one of them! They shall remain in this prison, enduring tortures day after day. What I have suffered they shall suffer—a hundredfold!"

Jim the Penman had always suspected that Zingrave had a mad streak in him—and now he was certain of it.

"This won't do," he said angrily. "If you must go on like this, leave it until tomorrow."

"Leave me alone!" panted Zingrave, staring into Lord Stretton's face. "I want him to see me—I want him to know that I am triumphant. There are many more on my list—the Crown counsel who prosecuted me—the Chief Commissioner of Scotland Yard! They shall all come here—they shall all be sentenced to penal servitude. Yes! Do you hear that, Jim? I'm the judge this time! I'm the prosecution, I'm the jury, and I'm the judge! And I shall sentence every one of them to penal servitude for life! And it will be such penal servitude as they have never dreamed of!"

Jim the Penman shrugged. He knew how useless it was to argue. With the other part of Zingrave's scheme he was in full agreement—since it meant wealth and ease. Better to let the professor have his whims and fancies. But this was certainly not the time to indulge in these outbursts.

Zingrave suddenly drew upright, and all his wild fury had gone.

"Put him away!" he said curtly. "I am sorry, Jim—I apologise."

"That's all right," growled Sutcliffe.

Savini lifted the unconscious judge. Zingrave handed him a curiously-shaped key, and at the same moment he pointed.

"Into that cell," he said briefly.

He pointed to the third cell from the end of the row. And here Savini made a trifling mistake; but it was a mistake that was to have stupendous consequences.

For Savini, knowing nothing of the other prisoners, assumed that all the cells were empty. He had made the mistake, too, of thinking that Zingrave had indicated the second cell—and Nelson Lee was within that one.

As though to assist the workings of fate, Sutcliffe at that moment was standing by the lift shaft.

"There are sounds from below!" he said in a low voice. "The boys are preparing to come up."

"We're ready for them," replied Zingrave. "Hurry, Savini. Just place the prisoner inside, and lock the door again."

He went to the lift shaft and listened—and thus he did not see that Savini had gone to the second door, instead of to the third.

CHAPTER 17.

Nelson Lee's Chance!

WITHIN the cell, Nelson Lee felt himself grow rigid.

He had heard Zingrave's orders—and when he heard the key in the lock, he guessed that Savini had blundered. Lee was expecting every second to hear a sharp order from Zingrave, correcting the man; but that order did not come.

Savini, having opened the great door, which swung back on oiled hinges, picked up his burden again. The interior was pitchy dark. Savini walked in, half-dragging, half-carrying Lord Stretton. His vision was, consequently, obscured.

Lord Stretton's very bulk prevented Savini from seeing clearly into that dark cell. And, like a flash, Nelson Lee saw his opportunity. He slithered silently to the floor, lying full length and in such a position that Savini would not kick against him.

The man walked right in, and as he passed Lee half rose, thus getting behind him. It was brilliantly done. Savini, his eyes now accustomed to the gloom, saw that he was in a perfectly empty cell. It was what he had expected, so he had no suspicion that he had blundered.

Lee, with the agility of a panther, was outside the door; the first glance showed him Zingrave and Sutcliffe, near the lift shaft; their backs were towards him. The detective was away like a shadow—back into the dark recesses where the building work was only half completed.

The detective could scarcely credit this marvellous piece of good fortune. As he turned, he saw Savini leave the cell and lock the door again. The same key was a master-key—for every cell.

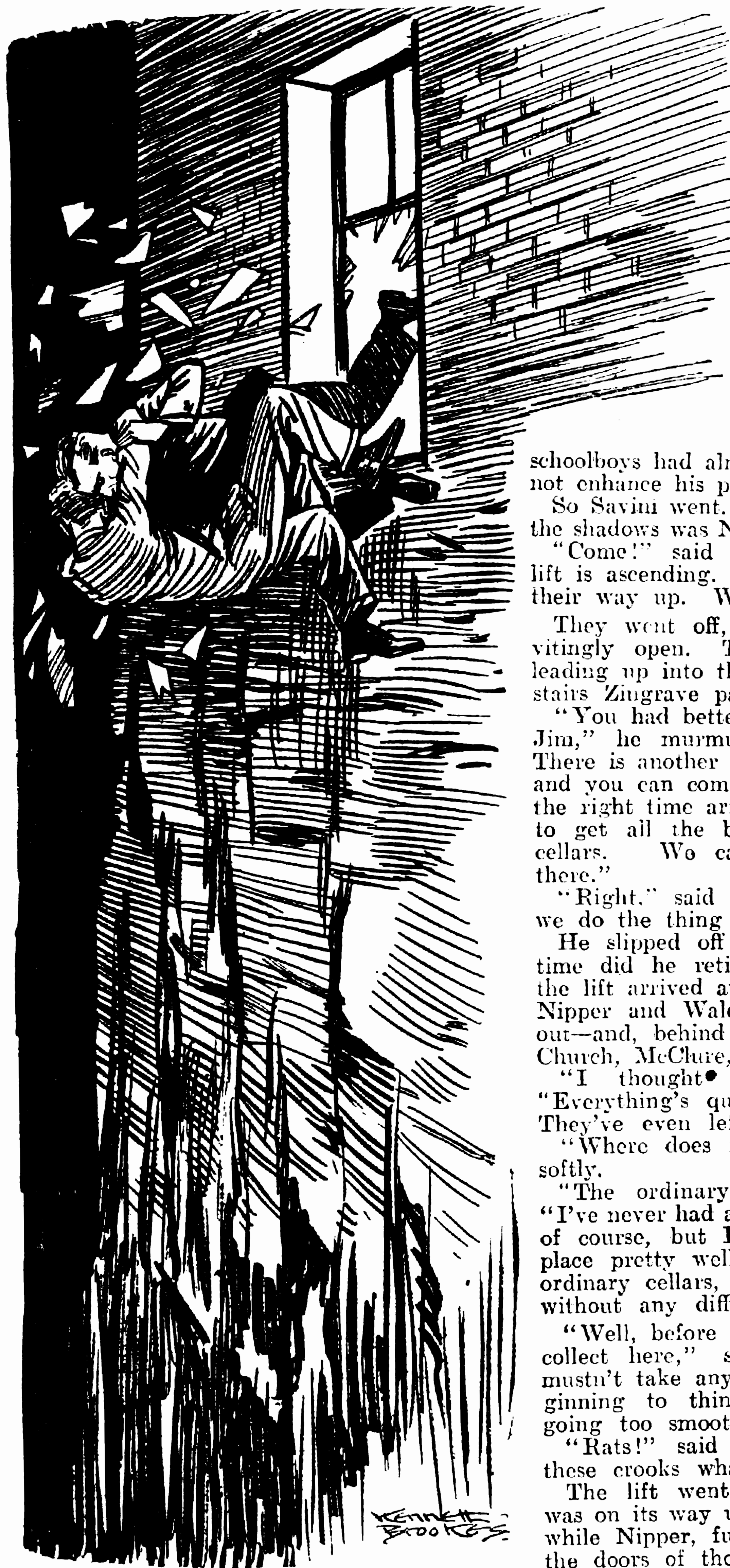
"I've put him in, Chief, he said, handing back the key.

"Good!" said Zingrave, taking it. "Now, Savini, you must go—quickly. Drive straight back to London. You will be paid to-morrow—by the usual agent. You shall have two hundred pounds."

"I'm ready for the next job when you want it, Chief," said the man eagerly.

"All right—but go," said Zingrave.

For a moment he had thought of telling Savini of the impending attack. Then he decided that it would be better not to do so. It was essential that Savini should get out of this district as quickly as possible. Even if he stayed, he would not be of much use. Zingrave, to tell the truth, was not very proud of the fact that a number of



Fighting desperately, locked in each other's arms, Nelson Lee and Zingrave crashed through the window. Outside was a yawning chasm—with the jagged rocks and the sea far below.

schoolboys had almost bested him. It would not enhance his prestige with his underlings.

So Savini went. And lurking back amongst the shadows was Nelson Lee, now a free man.

"Come!" said Zingrave suddenly. "The lift is ascending. Some of the boys are on their way up. We must prepare, Jim."

They went off, leaving a secret door invitingly open. There were stairs beyond, leading up into the cellar proper. On those stairs Zingrave paused.

"You had better go round the other way, Jim," he murmured. "I will stay here. There is another stairway on the other side, and you can come up by that means—when the right time arrives. If possible, we want to get all the boys up into the ordinary cellars. We can deal with them better there."

"Right," said Jim. "All I hope is that we do the thing thoroughly."

He slipped off; and only in the nick of time did he retire into the shadows. For the lift arrived and discharged its first load. Nipper and Waldo were the first to come out—and, behind them, Handforth, Travers, Church, McClure, and three or four more.

"I thought so," murmured Waldo. "Everything's quiet for the night. Hallo! They've even left that secret door open."

"Where does it lead to?" asked Nipper softly.

"The ordinary cellars," replied Waldo. "I've never had a chance of getting up there, of course, but I know the lay-out of the place pretty well. Once we're up in the ordinary cellars, we can get into the house without any difficulty."

"Well, before we do that, we'd better all collect here," said Nipper. "And we mustn't take anything for granted. I'm beginning to think that the whole raid is going too smoothly. I'm uneasy."

"Rats!" said Handforth. "We've got these crooks whacked!"

The lift went down again—and soon it was on its way up with a fresh load. Meanwhile Nipper, full of eagerness, was testing the doors of those cells. He thudded upon

Kenneth
Brooke

them gently; and from the interior of one came a familiar voice.

"Who's that out there?" it asked.

"It's me—Nipper," said the boy breathlessly. "Mr. Lennard, where's the guv'nor?"

"In the next cell to me."

Nipper went to the adjoining cell, and tapped upon the heavy door. There was no response, for in that cell reposed the unconscious Lord Stretton. Nipper tapped again; still no response.

"Guv'nor!" he called. "Guv'nor—it's Nipper!"

He broke off, for the utter silence rather startled him. He went back to the other cell.

"Mr. Lennard!" he called. "The guv'nor can't be asleep, can he? He doesn't answer."

"I can't understand it," replied the Chief Inspector. "I thought he was in the next cell to me. Perhaps he's been taken somewhere else."

"Oh!" murmured Nipper, going suddenly cold.

And nothing could be done. As Waldo had already explained, the cell doors were as impregnable as the doors of a bank vault. They could only be opened by means of that one special key. The locks were of a unique type.

"What have they done to the guv'nor?" muttered Nipper huskily. "Mr. Lennard's here—but not Mr. Lee! Where is he? If they've harmed him——"

"Go easy, old man," broke in Tommy Watson. "Don't jump to any conclusions. We're getting near to the end of the adventure now—and we shall soon know the truth."

"You're right," said Nipper, steadying himself. "Thanks, old man. I mustn't lose my head."

CHAPTER 18.

Trapped!

STANLEY WALDO, his face set grimly, strode up to Nipper. The other boys were collecting—the last lift load was on its way up.

"Isn't there some way in which we can break these doors down?" asked Waldo. "If we make a lot of noise down here I don't think it will be heard in the house. We're a good way down, you know—right beneath the ordinary cellars. Look!"

He reached down, and to Nipper's astonishment he lifted one of the great granite blocks as though it were hollow. Stanley Waldo had all the qualities of his famous father; he was phenomenally strong; his eyesight was ultra-keen; his hearing was amazing.

"What do you mean?" asked Nipper, staring.

"These cell doors are strong enough—but I thought it might be a good idea for me to chuck some of these granite blocks at them," said Waldo. "They're terrifically heavy, and after a certain amount of bombardment——"

"I appreciate the thought, old son—but it wouldn't be any good," said Nipper, shaking his head. "A battering-ram, with a dozen men behind it, couldn't shift those doors. Better put that pebble down. You can chuck them about easily enough, I know, but it wouldn't be wise."

Waldo lowered his burden.

"I thought we might try," he said.

"Far better get this raid over—grab Sutcliffe and Zingrave, and then we shall find the key," said Nipper eagerly. "That will be the quickest—and the safest. We're all up now—the whole crowd. My suggestion is that

COMING NEXT WEDNESDAY!



we get into the house and surprise the crooks."

A move was made for the stairs which led up into the cellars.

The boys met with no resistance—for, by this time, Professor Zingrave had vanished. That gentleman, in point of fact, was lying full length on the floor of the butler's pantry. Next to him was a long cylinder, filled with gas. The nozzle penetrated the flooring at this spot—and here, too, was a little spy-hole.

Zingrave was waiting. He could see through that spy-hole; he was waiting for all the boys to get into the cellar. Sutcliffe, he knew, was at a similar vantage point in a store-room; and Sutcliffe had a second cylinder of gas. Zingrave had arranged to give a signal, and

at that moment they would both open the cocks of those gas cylinders—and the suffocating stream of vapour would pour down upon the unsuspecting boys. Within one single minute they would all be “out.”

It was absurdly simple, but success depended upon the fact that all the boys collected in the cellar together. Zingrave was relying upon this. He knew that they would all come up; and he had securely locked and bolted the ordinary door which led up from the cellar into the passage near the kitchen. The boys would not quickly conquer that door; and it was the only exit—the only exit, that is, leading into the house.

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~~~~~ ORDER IN ADVANCE! ~~~~~

“Looks as if we've come across a bit of a snag here,” said Nipper, who was the first to mount the cellar steps. “This door is locked.”

“Can't we smash it down?” asked Handforth.

“Easily,” replied Nipper. “But it would make a considerable noise—and we don't want to make a noise. I'm afraid it's bolted, too.”

“That's awkward,” said Waldo. “Let me come up there.”

Zingrave, at his spy-hole, heard all this. He heard something else, too—something that caused him to gloat with triumph.

“How about the rest of the chaps?” somebody was asking. “Are we all up here?”

“Yes, everybody,” said another voice. “The last of the chaps has just come up those stone steps. But what are we going to do? It's no good going back, and if we can't go forward——”

Zingrave did not wait to hear any more. Softly, he rose to his feet and, slipping out of the pantry, he went along into the passage. He touched a hidden button, and he chuckled softly to himself. He went back to his original post. And, as he had expected, sounds of consternation were coming up.

“It's closed, I tell you!” one of the boys was saying, in an alarmed voice. “I don't know how it happened!”

“There's no door at all now!” said one of the others. “Great Scott! We're trapped!”

“Trapped!” said Nipper sharply.

He pushed his way through the others. Mysteriously, the secret door leading into the private prison had closed. Nobody knew how. At one moment it had been open—now there was not even any sign of a door. There was nothing but solid stone.

“Perhaps one of us accidentally touched a hidden spring,” said Nipper, looking worried. “But I'm not so sure of that. That locked door—the ordinary cellar door, I mean—is significant.”

A grim suspicion had occurred to him. Perhaps they were too clever! Had they walked right into a trap?

It seemed all too certain that such was the case. The secret door had mysteriously closed, so that they could not retreat. And the other door, which led into the house itself, was locked and bolted. They were all imprisoned in the cellar!

CHAPTER 19.

The Signal!

THUMP-THUMP!

“What was that?” asked Handforth huskily.

The question was unnecessary, for he knew perfectly well that somebody in the room above had hammered hard—twice—upon the floor boards.

“That was a signal of some kind,” said Nipper sharply. “We've blundered, you chaps! We've been trapped somehow, but I don't understand——”

“Trapped!” went up a shout.

Professor Zingrave, at his spy-hole, gloated and laughed. Young fools, to think for a moment that they could go through with this raid!

Between thirty and forty of them—and they had been completely outwitted by two men! There they were, the whole paltry crowd, caught like rats in a trap in the cellar!

The gas would pour down upon them, and nothing could save them from disaster. Zingrave had already given the signal—and by this time, no doubt, Sutcliffe had turned the cock of his own gas cylinder. The professor's hand reached for the fatal tap.

"No, Zingrave, not just yet," came a soft voice from behind.

"Why, Jim," said Zingrave sharply, half-turning, "I thought you were at your post."

"I thought better of it," came Jim the Penman's voice. "I heard your signal, of course, but there is another way in which we can deal with these boys."

As he spoke he was bending over Professor Zingrave, and like lightning, he passed his hands over the professor's slight form.

"Are you mad?" demanded Zingrave angrily. "What are you doing, Jim? Take your hands——"

"This is all I wanted, Zingrave!" snapped the unexpected voice of Nelson Lee. "Being a desperate man, you would not hesitate to use your automatic, so I thought I would get hold of it before you could draw."

"Lee!" croaked the professor, leaping to his feet.

His brain was in a whirl. Nelson Lee had acted brilliantly, for by imitating Jim the Penman's voice, Zingrave had had no suspicion.

"We'll have this little argument on level terms, professor," said Lee grimly. "I want you, my friend."

Zingrave was limp; he offered no resistance. But Nelson Lee was not fooled; he knew that the professor was only gathering his strength for a desperate struggle.

Jim the Penman was already "out." For Sutcliffe, going to his post, had been unexpectedly and dramatically dropped upon by Lee, who had heard every word of the plan. It had been the work of a moment for Lee to send his fist crashing upon Sutcliffe's jaw. Never had a man been more completely knocked out. But Nelson Lee had taken no chances; he had roughly bound Sutcliffe before leaving him.

Now he was facing Zingrave.

And Zingrave wondered if he was mad. This thing was impossible. He had locked Nelson Lee into one of those special cells. How could Lee have escaped?

"No!" snarled Zingrave wildly. "You shan't take me!"

It was no time for thinking. Like a wild cat he commenced fighting, and next moment the pair were swaying up and down in the confined space of the butler's pantry.

Lee, for all his strength and prowess, was startled by the animal-like ferocity of Zingrave's attack. He clawed, he clutched, he kicked, he even tried to bite. And as he fought he screamed in his rage.

They swayed backwards and forwards, and crockery went crashing down as it was swept from the shelves. Nelson Lee found that his original intention of knocking out Zingrave quickly was impossible. It was taking him all his time to defend himself, to protect his eyes from the infuriated criminal's clutching fingers. His shins were already hacked and bruised. He was compelled to back away, fighting for his very life—well

nigh overwhelmed by the terrible savagery of the onslaught.

He had expected a desperate resistance, but this staggered him. And Lee was not his normal self; he had had no food for many hours, and he was still suffering from a brutal blow on the head, which had considerably weakened him. As he fought he realised that Zingrave was battling for his very life's liberty.

Failure would mean a return to the convict prison—to penal servitude. The man was crazed with fury and disappointment. At the very moment of his success it seemed that dire and absolute failure was to be his lot.

The fight raged on, terrible in its ferocity.

CHAPTER 20.

A Fight for Freedom!

"LISTEN!" said Nipper, holding his breath.

From the flooring above came the sounds of a fierce altercation—voices, scufflings, and then violent thuds and more scufflings.

"That was the guv'nor's voice," said Nipper wildly. "Quiet, everybody! Listen!"

And then there was no doubt; they heard Nelson Lee's voice clearly, heard Zingrave's wild screaming. They knew exactly what was happening. By some sort of miracle Nelson Lee had got up there, and he was facing his enemy.

"Hurrah!"

"Come on, you chaps!"

"Now's our chance!"

"So that's why the guv'nor wasn't in the cell!" muttered Nipper, his eyes shining. "But even now I can't understand. What does it mean? How did he get out? How——"

He broke off, realising the uselessness of these conjectures. The only thing to do was to get out of this cellar—to dash up and to join in the fight. Jim the Penman was there, too, probably. Nelson Lee was fighting against the pair of them—he would need help.

"Come on!" yelled Nipper.

He fairly fought his way up the cellar steps, where a number of other fellows were struggling. For a moment, indeed, it looked as though a panic would ensue.

"This won't do!" shouted Waldo. "We'll never get the door open at this rate. Keep your heads, you idiots! Give me room. I'll have this door down."

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Waldo!"

"You're the chap!"

The press round the door was relieved. Waldo himself went up, and he pulled with all his strength at the handle of the door. With a splintering crack it smashed. A groan went up.

"Never mind," said Waldo. "We'll try something else."

He found upon examination that there was a tiny space beneath the door. The door was fitted on the inside, so that it opened inwards. Nipper had already felt there, and although he had used all his strength, he had not met with any success.

But Stanley Waldo was specially equipped by nature.

Using all his amazing strength, he gripped the lower edge of the door. With the veins standing out on his forehead, his muscles like knots, he felt the lower part of the door slowly but surely giving. The others waited tensely—in an agony. For from above came the crashing of crockery, the screaming of Zingrave, and the sounds of a terrible struggle.

At last Waldo had got his fingers round the edge of the door—he had warped the lower part of the door outwards. He knew that if he relaxed his efforts the door would spring back and trap his fingers, either smashing them or crushing them badly.

He exerted every ounce of his strength. He heard a splintering; he obtained a further grip as his fingers slid more completely round the lower edge.

"Look out!" he muttered, between his clenched teeth.

Cra-a-a-ash!

The lower half of the door, doubling up like a piece of cardboard, smashed and splintered to smithereens. It came away with tremendous force, and so sudden was the breakage that Waldo shot back down the stairs, crashing into many of the other fellows. Several were bowled over, getting the full brunt of the fall, whilst Waldo himself was hardly bruised.

But they didn't care. The thing was done. The bottom half of that door was smashed open; there was a great space through which they could make their exit.

"Come on!" shouted Nipper. "Well done, Waldo! Bravo!"

"Hurrah!"

They went pouring through the opening, one after the other, crawling out like a lot of hares.

Meanwhile, the fight in the pantry was becoming desperate. Nelson Lee, owing to his superior strength, was gradually wearing down his frenzied opponent.

So far Lee had not attacked; he had had no opportunity. He had been fighting to protect himself from Zingrave's maddened clutch.

Now, however, the professor was weakening. And Lee, with a sudden burst of ferocity, turned the tables. He attacked with terrific force, and the pair, locked in one another's arms, reeled across the pantry.

It was at this moment that Nipper and Waldo and Handforth flung the door open and burst in. They were in time to witness the climax.

For that tremendous lurch had carried the combatants over to the big window; unable to pull themselves up in time, they crashed headlong through.

Zingrave had gone backwards, and he vanished completely, uttering a wild and terrible scream as he went out into the black night. But he retained his clutch, and he pulled Nelson Lee after him.

And it was not until that second that Lee realised the appalling truth. For this window directly overlooked the sheer cliff! There was no ground a few feet beneath; nothing but a yawning chasm, hundreds of feet deep—with the jagged rocks and the sea far below.

CHAPTER 21.

Bravo, St. Frank's!

"GUV'NOR!" shouted Nipper.

He did not know for certain, but some instinct seemed to warn him of the danger. He and Waldo leapt forward at the same second—just as Nelson Lee was disappearing. They clutched—they held. They had hold of one of the detective's legs, and desperately they retained their grip.

There came a rending tear as the cloth of Nelson Lee's coat was rent. Professor Zingrave, striving in that last dread moment to drag his enemy with him, went alone. His wild shriek came up to the ears of the horrified boys. But they could see nothing owing to the darkness—they only knew that Professor Cyrus Zingrave had gone down to his doom.

Exactly how they dragged Nelson Lee back to safety they could never remember. He was completely out of the window—overhanging that awful abyss. But drag him back the boys did, and he sank to the floor, almost completely exhausted by his dreadful struggle.

"Oh, guv'nor!" said Nipper thankfully. "You're safe! And—and Zingrave is dead! He's gone—down there to the rocks!"

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"Don't think of it, young 'un," murmured Nelson Lee. "I hardly know what to say to you all."

"Don't say anything yet, guv'nor," breathed Nipper.

By this time the other raiders had spread themselves all over the lower floor of Crag House. The place was searched from cellars to attic. But nobody else was found. The entire gang—it had only been a small one—was accounted for.

Jim the Penman, still unconscious, was secured, and several of the boys took it upon themselves to watch over him.

A strong dose of brandy worked wonders with Nelson Lee; he recovered rapidly. His first task was to go straight to the telephone in the library, and get in touch with the Caistowe police station—Nipper having informed him that Sergeaant Reeves was there. It was certain that Reeves, after what had happened earlier, would still be waiting.

"Hallo! That you, Reeves?" asked Lee, when he had got through.

"Why, am I crazy?" came the sergeant's amazed voice. "That's Mr. Lee, isn't it?"

"Quite right," said Lee. "We have some prisoners for you here—and Inspector Lennard is carrying on."

"Then—then you're both safe, sir?" asked Sergeant Reeves eagerly. "Where are you?"

"At Crag House, the residence of Admiral Sir Rodney Carrington," replied Nelson Lee. "Come up here at once, and bring two or three cars with you. I don't think you'll need many officers, but half a dozen might be welcome. There is some searching to be done, and we have some prisoners for you."

A little later, after Nelson Lee had rung off, he found himself surrounded by the St. Frank's boys and the others who had been rescued.

"As the headmaster of St. Frank's, I should be very angry with you for breaking bounds in the middle of the night," said Lee dryly. "But, of course, I can only express my heartfelt gratitude to you all. You have behaved nobly—splendidly. I am proud of you, boys."

"Anyhow, sir, St. Frank's rounded up the gang!" said Handforth stoutly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old St. Frank's!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Remove for ever!"

"And don't forget the Fourth!" yelled Buster Boots.

Everybody, of course, was wildly excited. And the boys were justified in feeling

tremendously proud of themselves. Entirely by themselves they had not only rescued the unfortunate captives, but they had smashed up the gang. It was true that Zingrave had turned the tables on them at the end, and, really, many of the honours went to Nelson Lee for his own astute work. As Nipper pointed out to the juniors, without Nelson Lee's help they would have made an absolute mess of the whole business.

But who cared? Nelson Lee himself was willing to let the boys have the full credit—and the boys themselves were just as eager to give the credit to Nelson Lee. In the end they all decided to share it.

One of the first tasks was to release Inspector Lennard and Lord Stretton. Later, Admiral Sir Rodney Carrington himself was found—not in one of those grim cells, but in a specially-constructed suite of rooms—really a part and parcel of that secret prison. He had a comfortable little sitting-room and a well-furnished bed-room. It was clear that Zingrave had intended keeping him a close prisoner—but, as the professor had had no grudge against Sir Rodney, he had at least aimed to make his dreadful exile as comfortable as possible.

It was the end of the case—one of the most sensational cases Nelson Lee had ever encountered. The next day, of course, the newspapers of the entire country were brimming with accounts of the sensational affair, and the St. Frank's boys came in for a great deal of praise.

There was one touch of uncertainty in this climax, however.

The body of Professor Cyrus Zingrave was not found. The tide had been in when he had fallen out of that window—and it was certain that he plunged into fairly deep water. He had not crashed to death upon the rocks.

Had he been drowned, and had his body been washed away out into the Channel? Or had he escaped? If this latter was the case, then he had very effectually covered up his trail, for no trace of him was found. In any case, his teeth had been drawn, so to speak, for he was a fugitive from justice—and all those men who had helped him were now under lock and key, with long sentences of penal servitude ahead of them.

As for Sir Rodney Carrington, he never ceased to express his gratitude to Nelson Lee and the boys for all they had done. The very instant the police had finished their work, Sir Rodney had an army of men in, and that secret prison was demolished, and Crag House was once again made into an eminently respectable country residence.

THE END.

Nipper & Co. in a grand new series of mystery-adventure yarns next week.

Thrills in
a "haunted"
house.

**"THE MONSTER OF
MOAT HOLLOW!"**

Where is the
lost Edgemore
treasure?

Gather round for a chat with your Editor, chums.



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.

FOR a first letter, C. Melhuish (Adelaide), yours was most interesting and welcome. You need not have been anxious as to whether it would reach me safely. All letters that are correctly addressed are practically certain to do so. So now that you know that your first reached the office all right, let's have another. And let it be known in and around Adelaide that I'm always keen to hear from other Aussie readers. If it comes to that, I like to hear from readers everywhere. When you ask how many lanes there are around St. Frank's, I find it difficult to answer you. There are lots of lanes—just as in any rural part of England. And some lanes, of course, are more important than other lanes. Jerry Dodd, the Australian boy in the Remove, hails from Bathurst, New South Wales. He is still a "whale" at cricket, and his pony, Bud, is his chief hobby.

* * *

As far as I know, Willy Handforth does not yet possess a guinea-pig, John Mulroy (Birmingham). He is much more interested in pets of a novel character. He is inclined to turn up his nose at his fellow fags who keep rabbits, white mice, and guinea-pigs.

* * *

What a lot of trouble you took over your letter, Jack Godden (Hilton, South Australia). Both Mr. Brooks and myself cannot fail to recognise the enthusiasm you show for the St. Frank's stories, and we both appreciate your lively interest. Yes, you are about right regarding the number of boys in the Remove. New Boys come occasionally, and now and again a lesser character will drop out. We'll forgive you for writing in pencil this time. It's better than not writing at all. But take my tip, don't let people use your pens in lieu of darts.

Pen-sketches of three more St. Frank's Removites: **STUDY C.—RICHARD HAMILTON.** Known to all as "Nipper," he is a born leader; capable, cool, unassuming, and fearless. One of Nipper's chief characteristics is his fine sense of judgment, and he never acts without thinking. He has acquired this admirable quality from his guardian, Mr. Nelson Lee, by whom he was trained. When Nipper has decided upon a settled course, however, he will pursue that course relentlessly to the bitter end. He is a leader in football, cricket and boxing, and his hobby is undoubtedly detective work—a hobby which he later means to make his life work. **SIR LANCELOT MONTGOMERY TREGELLIS-WEST, BART.** A slim and graceful fellow is Montie, and it takes a very great deal to upset his equanimity. He had a very strict code of honour, and is as true as steel. Is an exceptionally capable footballer and a sound cricketer. **TOMMY WATSON.** A broad-shouldered, sturdy junior, with a short, bulldog neck. Good-tempered and cheerful, but inclined to be stolid and stubborn. Unimaginative, but a faithful pal. Difficult to quarrel with, but once he has been forced into a quarrel is sulky afterwards. Blunt in speech and always to the point.

* * *

Molly Stapleton is rather younger than the other Moor View girls, Harold Robert Ellis (Dagenham). She is about the same age as Willy Handforth, and for this reason, perhaps, they are very chummy. Willy doesn't think much of girls on the whole, but Molly is an exception.

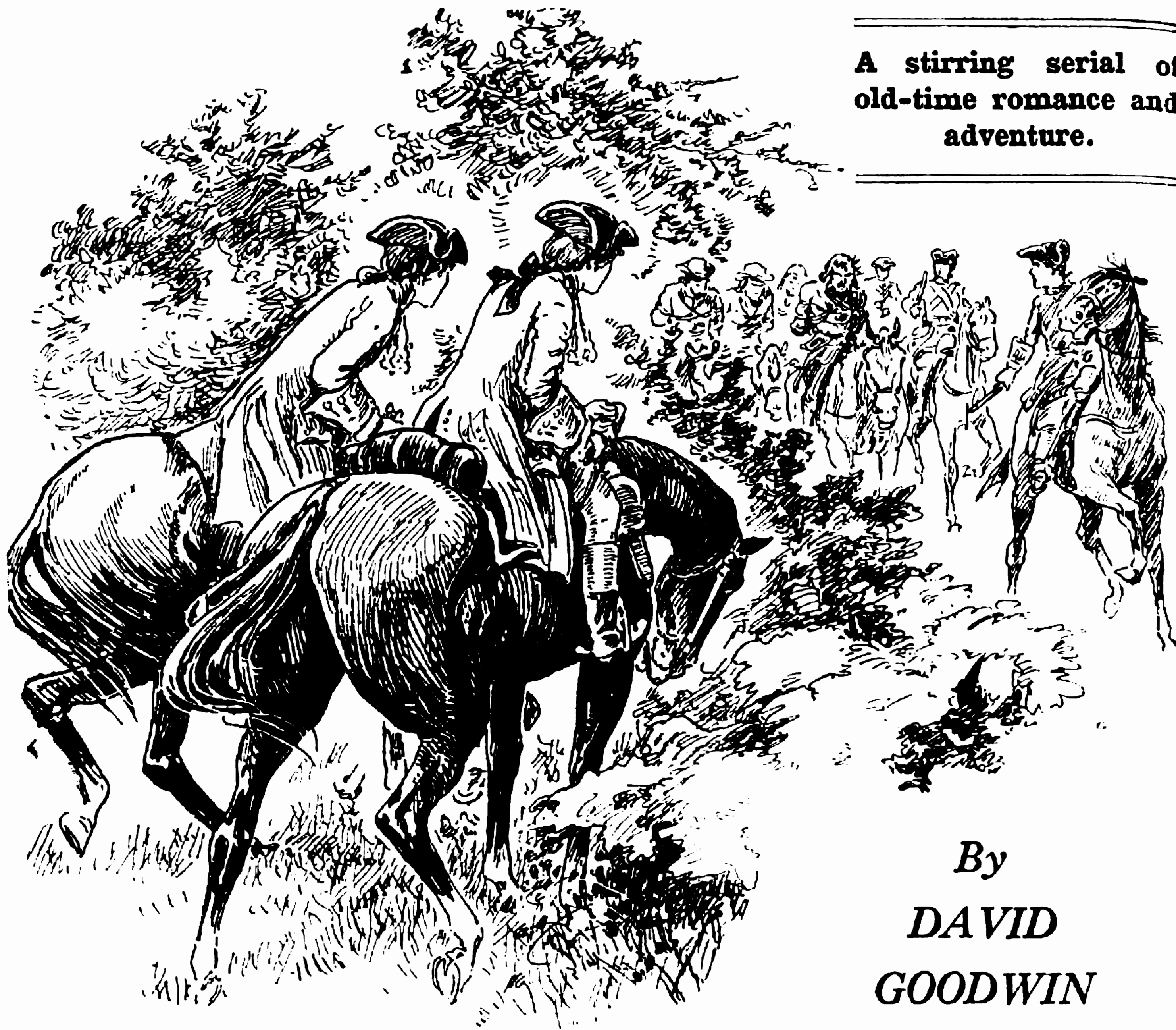
* * *

The famous train which once carried St. Frank's about the country, William K. Magee (Eccles), is still in existence, but at present it is not in use.

Turpin lays down the law to a Justice of the Peace!

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adventure.



By
**DAVID
GOODWIN**

Turpin Dictates Terms!

THE magistrate turned white as ashes. He gave a noisy gulp, then held up his hand.

"Release him! It was my mistake—that is not Turpin! Sir, my apologies. The—the prisoner is committed to the assizes. Remove him to the cells!"

Turpin smiled blandly, and made a deep bow in reply to the magistrate's apology. He nodded to Dick, who, utterly mystified, was being led away to the cells. Turpin's eyelid fluttered for a moment, and that almost invisible wink cheered Dick's heart more than a speech for his defence from the most eloquent lawyer at the Bar could have done. What was afoot he could not guess, but he felt a gleam of hope.

"We—we will now adjourn for luncheon," said the magistrate, coughing violently.

He turned out of the court-house into the corridor, looking uncommonly glad to go. Turpin gained the passage by another door and overtook him.

"I will trouble your worship for a short interview," he said, smiling faintly. "Your worship will not refuse me, I trust. In the inner room, if your worship pleases."

The magistrate muttered savagely.

"In here," he said, throwing open a door.

Then, after whispering a few words to an attendant, he followed Turpin into the room.

The Squire of Claverhouse threw himself into a chair and glowered with mingled fear and dislike at his visitor. Turpin, still smiling politely, perched himself with easy grace on the corner of the table, and looked his companion over from head to foot with an appreciative eye.

"Gold buckles, set with diamonds," he observed. "Spigged vest, fox-hunting boots,

ruby pin as big as a nut, gold signet with a coat-of-arms! Pink me, it gives a man heart! I may make my fortune yet, Jake. If you could do it, why shouldn't I?"

The squire fought for breath.

"I strolled in here without a weapon," said Turpin. "Isn't it a pleasant thought—walking about as if I were a London citizen on Sunday afternoon and feeling safe as a Quaker? What a help an old friend is! Even if I were captured by some other court's men you'd see me through, wouldn't you, Jake? Only to see your old brick-red face again is a pleasure! How it reminds one of old times! Do you remember——"

"Hush!" said the squire, in an agonised voice. "Not so loud!"

"I think I shall come and settle down in this district," continued Turpin coolly, eyeing the trembling form of the man before him, and noting his bloodless face. "It would be pleasant to ride abroad feeling sure that no meddlesome riders or bailiffs would interfere, and occasionally dropping in to dine with you at Claverhouse, just to talk over some of our——"

"Take care!" hissed the magistrate, starting up, the veins on his forehead suddenly swelling with rage. "Do not goad me too far! I am repenting of my leniency already! My men are waiting outside the door to take you, and you shall swing by the side of Forrester if you say another word!"

"I think not," replied Turpin, taking a pinch of snuff. "They would have to build a special gallows to hold the three of us! Ecod! What a sight it would be! Dick Forrester, Turpin, and Six-String Jake all on one gibbet-arm!"

The Squire of Claverhouse sank back, with a groan.

"It was something of a surprise to me, I confess," went on Turpin. "The loss of your beard and moustache makes a large difference, and you are much stouter than of old. I do not wonder you feel so safe. But we rode together so long, comrade, and I knew you so well and all your charming little ways, that it did not take me the twinkle of an eyelid to recognise you!"

"Hang you!" muttered the squire.

"It is a remarkable transformation in all truth, comrade. But you were luckier than most of us on the road, and you had no

niceties of choice, like some of us. I don't know what the rising generation is coming to! This young friend of mine, Dick Forrester—you would not credit the ridiculous scruples he has. But there was none of that about you, Jake! Rich or poor, man or woman, sick or strong, you stripped them all!"

Now Turpin's tone and words cut like a whiplash, and beads of perspiration stood out on the magistrate's forehead.

"Not so loud, for Heaven's sake!" he groaned hoarsely. "Somebody may be listening at the door."

"I hope not, for your sake. But you were ever a careful man, Jake. When you were in the profession, never a groat did you spend if you could help it. Never a jolly feast with boon comrades, never a fistful of guineas for a companion who had fallen on evil times, never a coin for the poor out of the rich man's purse you took. You hoarded it up, treasured it, added to it day by day, and you had rare luck!"

"Is it any crime for a man to save his money?"

"'Tis a crime to save other people's money, my good Jake, and so you will find if any of your parishioners hear of it. But doubtless they never will, unless they are told. Now to return. I lost sight of you after we parted at Lincoln, following our little adventure with the corporal and his men, but I heard of your great piece of fortune at York, when you and Will Caldecott and three others lifted fifteen thousand guineas from the mail. It is such a plum as does not fall to one once in a century. A lucky stroke, indeed!"

The magistrate glanced with an agonised face at the door.

"Then it became known that a sad accident had happened to Will Caldecott and the others soon after. They were found dead in their beds, all four of them, at the moorland cottage on Gorley Wold. How it must have grieved you, Jake, to lose four such splendid comrades at one stroke. And there was the added grief of the money—there was nobody to divide it with. You had to be troubled with the whole of it. With what you already had, I dare say it made twenty-five thousand pounds. But you were always a lucky man, Jake."

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 Sweeney 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. Late Turpin departs on a secret mission, arranging to rejoin Dick at Boxley. Dick earns the displeasure of Squire Grafton, a prominent magistrate and a tyrant in the county. Reaching Boxley, Dick falls into a trap and is arrested. He appears in court, and the magistrate proves to be Squire Grafton, who commits him to the Assizes, where he will be sentenced to death. At that moment the magistrate spots Turpin in court, orders his arrest, and then turns deathly white—for Turpin addresses him as "Six-String Jake."

"Hang you! Did you come here to drive me mad?" muttered the magistrate hoarsely.

"After that it was said you had slipped out by ship and gone to the Indies with your booty, and next we heard the ship was lost. It must have been a great sorrow to the sheriffs. And now you have bought a country estate, and are a lord of the manor. Six-String Jake becomes Squire Grafton, Justice of the Peace. Ecod, how amusing! An ex-highwayman meting out justice from the bench!"

Turpin suddenly lost his jocularly and became very grim.

"Now, it is not money I want," he went on. "But you will do me a small favour, and that forthwith. Understand, Jake, no nonsense; it must be done at once. You are to release Dick Forrester within the hour."

"Impossible! I refuse to do it!"

"Then you will swing upon the same gibbet as he. I will proclaim you for what you are.

Before the sun has risen and set again, you will be stripped of your estate and office, and flung into the felon's cell. They will believe me, Jake. My testimony is sound, and my proofs good."

"You dare not! To do that, you would hang as well as me."

"I know; but I'll do it. If Dick Forester hangs—all three of us hang!"

The magistrate looked into the highwayman's determined eyes, and knew he would carry out his threat.

"But, Turpin, I can't! It will mean my ruin if I let him go! They will blame me for it. I shall be disgraced!"

The highwayman shrugged his shoulders.

"That's your own affair. You are shrewd enough to cover that risk, if you chose. But burn me if I care whether you're ruined or not—it's that or your neck. There's no other way!"

"You lie! There's one more way, and it's this!" snarled the magistrate.

And whipping a long steel poniard from the back of his belt, where it had been hidden beneath his coat, he sprang at Turpin like a tiger.

Forced to Agree!

TURPIN caught Jake's wrist, stopping the blow with ease. There was a cry as the wrist bent back; the poniard clattered on the floor. Jake, mad with rage, now made a desperate attempt to clutch his rival by the throat.

Turpin tore himself free with a laugh. There was a wrench, a twist, and the magistrate fell on his back with a crash that shook the room.

The highwayman resumed his seat on the table, and looked at his prostrate enemy with a mocking smile. Turpin had possessed him-

self of the dagger, and was testing its point with his finger.

"No, my good Jake," he said, "that is not the way out of the fix. Have you had enough, or will you try again?"

The magistrate groaned.

"Get up and brush yourself," said Turpin. "And no more of your tricks, Master Jake of the Six Strings. Do you own yourself beaten, and obey my orders, or shall I use your own knife to you?"

"I can do no more," muttered the magistrate. "Yes, I give in. What do you want of me?"

"Even what I told you. You will release Dick Forrester at once."

"And ruin myself?"

Turpin shrugged his shoulders.

"That does not concern me," he said. "If it ruins you ten times over, you are going to release Dick Forrester—or be hanged yourself!"

"I shall have to bribe the turnkey," muttered Jake.

"As you please, so long as it is done. But in your place I should change my coat, and steal the keys from the turnkey's office, which you can easily do. Put on a mask, and open the door of Dick's cell yourself when the coast

is clear. For, look you, the turnkey might refuse to be bribed, and then the fat would be in the fire."

"Ay, that method will be the best, doubtless," said the magistrate gloomily.

"It will be like old times for you. I'll lend you my spare mask if you like." Turpin grinned. "It would not be well for you to be recognised."

"I have still a mask. It shall be done as you said. About seven o' the clock I shall be able to release Forrester."

"Very good. Make no explanations to him, but bid him go straight to the milestone at Boxley Wood, and lose no time on the way."

The magistrate nodded sulkily. It was the place where his men had captured Dick.

"And mind, worthy Jake, there must be no mistake," said Turpin warningly. "If he is not there by half-past seven, within an hour the story of Six-String Jake shall be in the hands of the sheriff of Lincoln. Dick Forrester joins me on the road to-night, or you shall hang beside him!"

Freedom!

AS the shades of night fell, a tall figure on a black mare sat silently by the corner of Boxley Wood, holding the bridle of a great black horse that stood riderless beside.

Suddenly the black horse pricked his ears forward, and gave a neigh of delight, stamping excitedly, and arching his neck as his

fierce eyes strained forward into the darkness. Out of the shadow of the wood came a dim form, hurrying towards the horses.

"Turpin, is it you? And Black Satan! 'Od's wounds! I can't believe it!"

"Ay, 'tis I right enough," said Turpin. "Up into the saddle, and give us a grip of your fist, Dick. Rein round and let us ride on across the open, for a shot or two out of the wood might grass both of us, and relieve Squire Grafton of much anxiety."

"I think I must be dreaming!" said Dick, as they trotted across the heath. "I shall wake up in that hanged cell, and find myself lying on the cold stone in the dawn."

"Doesn't Black Satan feel real between your knees?" said Turpin, with a chuckle. "Nay, you are out of the clutches of his worship. A gentleman in a black mask let you out—eh? And was in no very good temper, I doubt."

"Zounds! I knew you were at the bottom of it!" cried Dick. "Who was the man? When I saw you in the court-house, I made sure they had the pair of us at last, and wondered what mad folly brought you there. And the magistrate refused to arrest you—he was in a blue fright! Tell me, comrade, how was it done, and what's the reason?"

"I have some little influence over his worship," said the highwayman, with a grin, "and after a little discussion in his private room, during which he used a very pointed argument, he agreed to let you go."

"You have a life-and-death hold over him, then, of some sort. What is it?"

"Nay, that would be hardly fair to tell you," said Turpin, chuckling. "His red-faced worship has done his part as agreed, and I must keep his secret."

"You have saved my life, comrade, when it was not worth a penny's purchase, and it shall never be forgotten!" said Dick fervently.

"As for that," laughed Turpin, shaking out his rein, "we have saved each other's lives so often that I have lost count, and do not know at the present moment which of us is the creditor. But let that go—it matters not a straw. Which way shall we ride to-night, Dick?"

"Southward," replied the young highwayman, "away towards the Norfolk border, where we will ride the marshes for a couple of days. Old Sapengro and the gipsies are down that way, and there is some little news they should have for us. After that, back to St. Austell's for a flying visit to Ralph, by which time all will be ready for my plan, which shall shake the teeth of Hector."

"And what is that same plan?" asked Turpin.

"You shall learn very soon. It is better left unspoken until I have it complete. You shall help in that affray, comrade, and right good sport it will be."

"Will it set you back in your own place, to enjoy Fernhall again?"

"Why, no," replied Dick. "I see no hope of that ever coming to pass. I am an outlaw beyond all saving, and every day the hue-

and-cry for me is greater. But at least Fernhall is not for Hector Forrester, the cheat and miser. I will strip him of it and drive him out, as he drove me!"

"A pretty plan," approved Turpin. "Well, let us cover another dozen miles, and then put up for the night."

They settled themselves at a cottage in the woods, and next day rode far to the southward, Turpin relieving a Lincoln alderman of his money-belt on the way. Next day Black Bess fell lame by a sharp flint—a thing that did not happen to her once in three years. They had to lie up for a day, but the evening afterwards, as the dusk began to fall, they found themselves on the Norwich high-road.

"I know not how it is," said Turpin, "but I've had much experience in this way, and though I've seen nobody, 'tis borne in upon me that we are followed, Dick."

"By whom—and how?"

"That remains to be seen. We must go warily. I have learned that your escape from the prison has made a great stir, and that the sheriffs have sworn to take us."

"I have heard such resolutions too many times before," said Dick, grinning. "They come to very little save woe for those who try it. But I hear hoofs upon the road round the corner."

"Draw in among the trees here," replied Turpin, leading the way, "till we know who they are. 'Tis always better to see than to be seen."

"None too soon, by the rood!" said Dick, as they reined back behind the rather scanty cover of the spruce fir-branches. "See their yellow-laced hats over the gorse. 'Tis the King's Riders, and no others! 'Tis odds we shall be seen here, too."

"Bide a little, and sit quiet," murmured Turpin, as five or six Riders came round the bend. "They are not after us—they have prisoners. Four in all. 'Od's death!" he muttered in sudden amazement. "They've got the footpad Sweeny and three of his men!"

"What!" said Dick, beneath his breath. "Zounds, you're right!"

Bound like captured wolves, lashed round and round with ropes, their feet tied beneath the farm-horses they were on, the four footpads were escorted by six King's men with cocked and ready pistols in their hands. In the centre was Sweeny himself.

"Taken at last!" thought Dick.

At that moment a gust of the evening breeze blew aside the bough that screened Dick's face, and the evil eyes of Sweeny lit full upon him.

"Galloping Dick!" he cried savagely, and at sound of that name, the soldiers looked round quickly. "There he is—behind those trees!" went on Sweeny. "After him, fellows! You've taken us for the gallows; capture Galloping Dick, and let him accompany us!"

(Will Dick be captured by the Riders? See next week's rousing instalment.)

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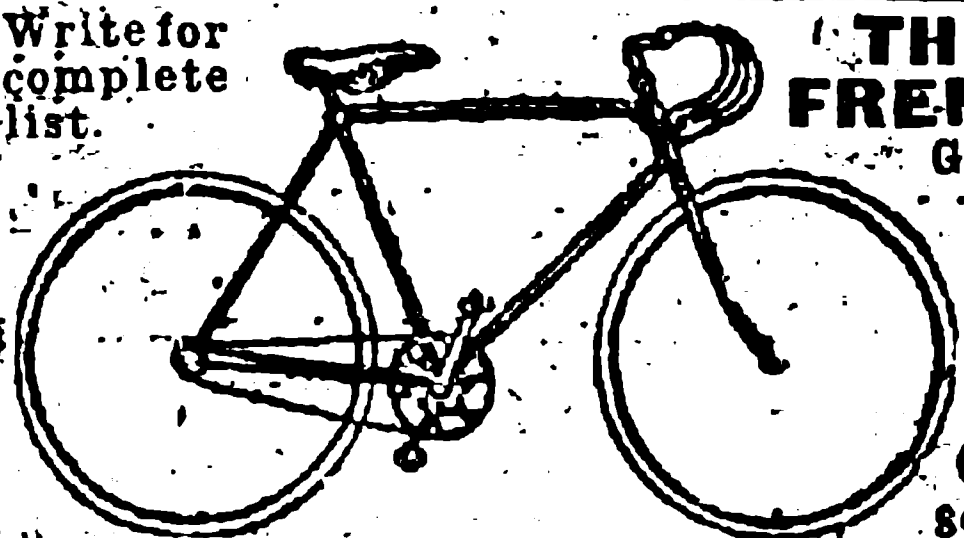
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