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The MONSTER of MOAT HOLLOW!

Handforth and Co. hunt for treasure—and are chased by a gorilla! See this week's exciting long school-adventure yarn featuring the famous Chums of St. Frank's.

New Series No. 106.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

January 30th, 1932.

The MONSTER of

CHAPTER 1.

A Narrow Escape!

AS the Morris Minor swung smartly through the gateway of St. Frank's, a strange figure came within range of the brilliant headlights. It leapt wildly aside with remarkable agility—unnecessary agility, for Edward Oswald Handforth, at the wheel of the little car, had jammed on the brakes and stopped the car dead.

"Sorry if I gave you a scare, sir," he said, putting his head out of the driving-window.

"We're always warning you about dashing into the Triangle at thirty miles an hour," muttered Church.

He and McClure were passengers in the little saloon. The chums of Study D had been shopping in Bannington, and they had returned hungry. It was well past tea-time.

"How dare you?" said the figure in the gloom. "Do you realise that you nearly killed me? I shall report you to your Housemaster for this, Travers!"

Handforth could not help grinning. Professor Sylvester Tucker, the science master, was always making mistakes like that.

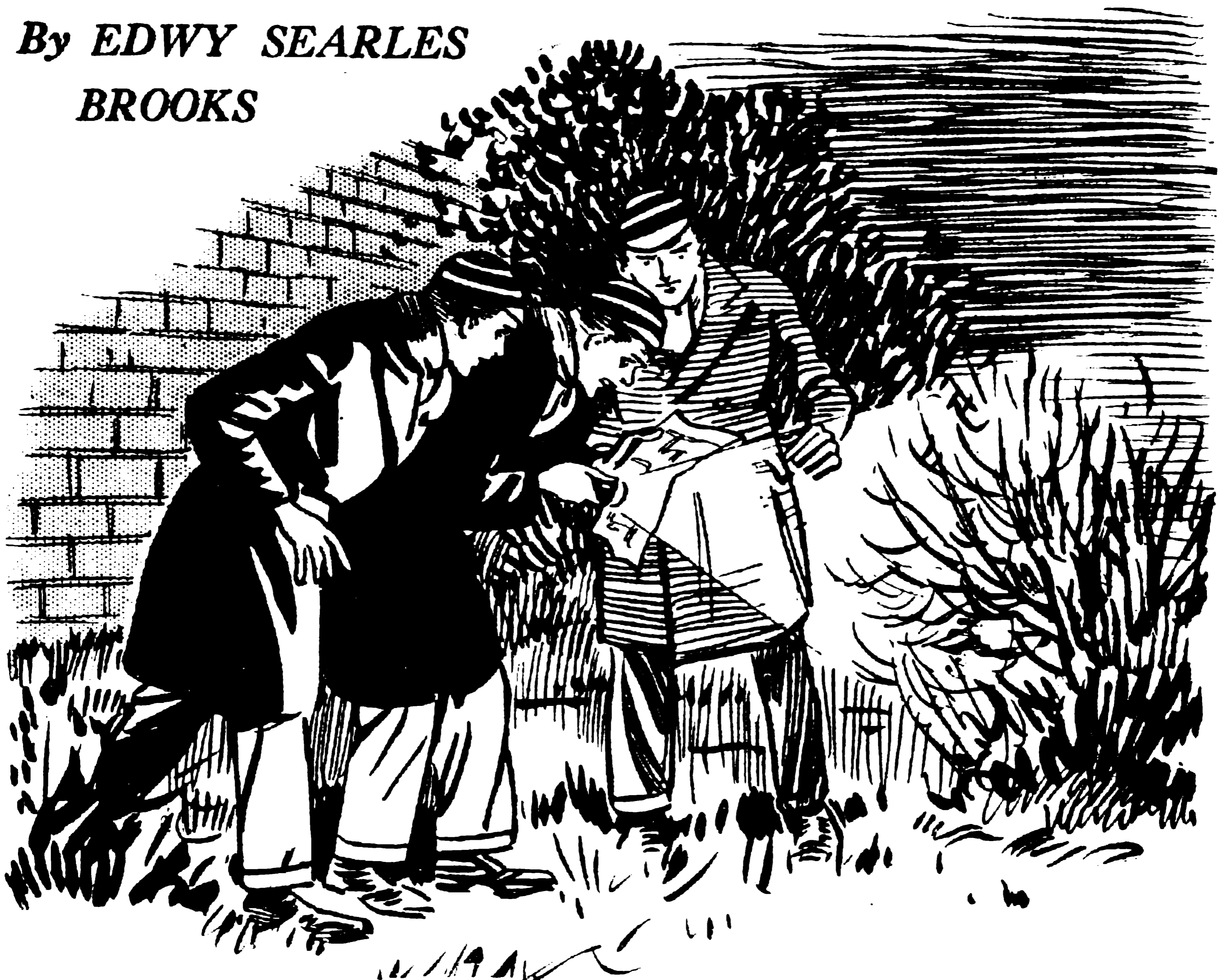
"I'm not Travers, sir—I'm Handforth," said the burly junior.

"I didn't mean to frighten you——"

"Frighten me? Nonsense!" said the professor testily. "Don't be absurd! And

Moat Hollow: forbidding, said to be haunted! Tenanted by a man of mystery; guarded by a terrifying monster! And somewhere within the precincts of this sinister pile lies buried a fabulous treasure!

By **EDWY SEARLES**
BROOKS



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MOAT HOLLOW!



don't deny that you are Travers—because I know perfectly well that you are Travers!"

"All right, sir—I'm Travers," said Handforth obligingly. "Have it your own way."

"The school is becoming positively unsafe," continued Professor Tucker severely. "Boys disappear without warning and without leaving a trace. One cannot move a yard without encountering a policeman——"

"But that's all over, sir," grinned Handforth. "That case is finished—and the crooks are under arrest. You're behind the times, sir."

"Eh? Finished?" said the absent-minded professor. "Well, perhaps you're right. Why bother me about it?"

He prepared to move on, but Handforth called him back.

"You're not going out like that, sir, are you?"

"Like what?"

"Well, you've only got your slippers on, sir, and the lane is pretty muddy," said Handforth. "And while dressing-gowns

are comfortable enough for indoor wear, they hardly seem correct——"

"Slippers? Dressing-gowns?" said Professor Tucker, gazing down at himself in wonder as he stepped into the light of the car's head-lamps. "Good gracious me! Upon my soul! This is most remarkable! How perfectly absurd!"

"That's what we thought, sir," said Handforth calmly.

"And yet I must go down to the village," said Professor Tucker. "There is not a moment to be lost."

"Can I run you down in the car, sir?" suggested Handforth obligingly. "Or perhaps I can go there for you?"

"Yes, yes, an excellent suggestion," said the professor warmly. "Thank you, Gresham."

"Handforth, sir."

"Thank you, Gresham Handforth. It's a curious thing, but I never knew until now that your Christian name was 'Gresham.' One lives and learns, eh? Yes, you can go to the village for me. Thank you—thank you!"

He prepared to toddle off indoors.

"Just a minute, sir," said Handforth. "What do you want us to do in the village?"

"Eh?"

"You said there was something important——"

"Dear me! Why was I going into the village?" asked Professor Tucker, in wonder. "Certainly it was important, Travers——"

"Handforth, sir."

"Very important indeed, Travers Handforth," said the professor, frowning. "Ah, yes, of course! To be sure! This registered letter has to be posted. I knew there was something of particular urgency."

"Which registered letter, sir?"

"Really, young man, I wish you wouldn't make so many objections—— What? Oh! Well, of course——" He searched his pockets frantically. "It appears to have vanished," he said at length. "A most important letter, too. Wait! Perhaps I left it on my desk. Wait here. I'll go and see."

He dashed off, and the chums of Study D chuckled.

"The old boy's a caution," said McClure. "He not only toddles out in his slippers and dressing-gown, but he actually forgets the giddy registered letter! He didn't even know that the mystery of Crag House had been cleared up."

"He lives in a world of his own," said Handforth pityingly. "Poor old boy!"

It was perfectly true. Professor Sylvester Tucker was so wrapped up in his science and in his astronomy that he had no time for ordinary, everyday matters.

He appeared a minute later, and he ran into Browne and Stevens, of the Fifth, on the Ancient House steps.

"Ah, so there you are!" he said, beaming. "It is very good of you, young men, to do this for me. Here is the letter."

William Napoleon Browne regarded the letter with interest.

"And what, Brother Tucker, are we supposed to do with this?" he asked politely.

"Didn't you promise to post it for me?"

"Eager as I am always to fly at the word of your command, I must confess that on this particular occasion my mind is singularly blank," said the lanky Fifth Form skipper. "By the way, sir, have you noticed the extraordinary brilliance of the Pleiades this evening? And as for the Cassiopeia group, it is burning like a bonfire."

"Good gracious!" ejaculated the professor, leaping out and staring heavenwards.

"Easy, Brother Horace—easy!" murmured Browne, as they strolled indoors.

"Surely you must be mistaken?" the professor was saying, unaware that he had been left alone. "The sky is quite cloudy, and——"

"It was only Browne, sir, playing one of his silly practical jokes," interrupted Handforth, getting out the Minor and coming up. "That the letter, sir? Good! I'll bring you the receipt."

And Handforth got back into the car, and was off before Professor Tucker could switch his mind back from the stars.

"Can't mess about," said Handforth, as the little Morris bowled down the lane. "If I had allowed him to start jawing about the giddy stars we should have been kept all the evening. Blow Browne!"

"Go easy!" said Church, as the car fairly hummed. "There's no desperate hurry."

"Isn't there?" retorted Handforth. "We haven't had tea yet!"

Admittedly he was going slightly faster than he should, but he was on his right side of the road, and ordinarily there would have been no danger. As they reached the bend near the old deserted house known as "Moat Hollow," however, an almost screaming whirr sounded from the direction of the village.

The dazzling beam from powerful headlamps shot skywards and then down again—indicating that a car had roared over the bridge which spanned the Stowe. The next moment the car was hurtling towards the Morris Minor like a meteor—and so recklessly had the driver taken the bridge that he was now on his wrong side of the road.

"Look out!" yelled Church wildly.

Handforth had no time to think. He swerved instinctively, braking at the same time. The Morris almost tottered on two wheels, hurtling diagonally across the road towards the ditch.

With a roar and a flash the other car—a high-powered saloon—tore past. There wasn't an inch to spare. Then——

Cra-a-a-sh!

The big saloon, which had been roaring along at between fifty and sixty, failed to take the bend. It went headlong into the wall which surrounded the Moat Hollow garden; it plunged straight through, careered across the wilderness of ground, and then, like some juggernaut, charged the house itself.

CHAPTER 2.

The Shape in the Gloom!

CRA-A-A-SH!

There came another alarming sound of destruction as the great car literally bored its way into the

wall of the empty house. Followed a silence—a dreadful, ominous stillness.

"Phew! That was a narrow shave!" breathed Handforth unsteadily.

"The fool must have killed himself," gasped Church. "Oh, my hat! I thought we were all booked! Did you ever see such madness? He must have been doing nearly eighty!"

"Perhaps the car was out of control," suggested McClure. "No man in his right senses would drive like that."

They had tumbled out of their own little car—which was not only on the grass verge, but practically on the edge of the ditch. Handforth, by remarkably skilful driving, had saved himself and his chums. And now, as he stood on the dark road, he was shaking and trembling.

"Come on!" he muttered. "We'd better go and see."

The others hesitated. That stillness was ominous.

"We must go," insisted Handforth, taking a grip of himself. "Come on! There's nobody else about at the moment, and the driver of that car might be badly hurt. He'll need help."

"Judging by that awful crash, he'll be beyond all help," said Church, with a gulp. "Still, you're right, Handy. There's always a chance."

They ran across the road, leaving the little Morris on the grass verge, the headlights still on, the engine still running.

"My only sainted aunt!" said Handforth, in an awed voice.

The wall which surrounded Moat Hollow was unusually high, and just at the bend of the wall, nearest the road, a jagged hole was visible. The car, curiously enough, had hurtled straight through, boring that one big gap, leaving the rest of the wall intact. It was an eloquent hint of the car's terrific speed.

The three boys went through the gap, and they found themselves in the tangled wilderness which had once been a garden. Moat Hollow was rather a sinister old house—a place of gloom and ugliness—and it had stood empty for many months. The last occupant, in fact, had been an enterprising gentleman who had actually started a secret night club in the cellars. But that venture had petered out, and since then the old building had been falling more and more into decay.

"There it is," muttered Church, pointing.

They could see the back of the saloon, and they were freshly disturbed; for the big car had broken clean through the wall of the house, and was now half inside and half outside.

The boys half expected to hear groans; they did not even know how many people that wrecked car contained. The total absence of sounds frightened them.

"Come on!" said Handforth doggedly.

The car, they could see, was more or less a wreck; all the doors were gaping wide open, and two of them were sagging crazily. The body itself was twisted and distorted; but the glass, being unsplinterable, had not shattered.

"Nobody in the back," said Handforth, with relief.

Their eyes were thoroughly accustomed to the gloom by now. Handforth squeezed his way between the car and the jagged wall, and his heart was thumping as he examined the driver's compartment. And now his heart thumped harder.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" he exclaimed, in wonder and relief. "There's—there's nobody here!"

"But that's impossible," said Church.

"He must have fallen out——"

"What's that?" asked Mac sharply.

He had heard a faint slithering sound in the depths of the gloom. All three boys turned and stared, and for a second they beheld a vague, indistinct shape. The gloom was so intense that they could not see anything definite; just the shape of a smallish figure. Handforth afterwards declared that he had seen a hideous face, with matted hair falling over the forehead; he had noticed, too, that the figure was in rags and tatters. But it was all very doubtful. The thing was there one second—and the next second it had gone.

"What—what was it?" panted Church.

He felt his skin going taut, and there was a tingly sensation in his scalp. He had a fleeting recollection of thinking that this was what people meant when they talked of one's hair standing on end.

The next second a light slashed through the darkness—the beam of an electric torch.

"Silly ass!" came Handforth's voice. "I'd forgotten I had this thing in my pocket. Well, I'm jiggered! There's nobody here. Nothing!"

The light revealed the badly battered car and a great pile of debris. Even now the air was misty with dust. But there was no sign of a mysterious intruder.

"It's funny," went on Handforth, with a catch in his voice. "I'll swear I saw something just now."

He took his courage in both hands, and flashed the light into the car. But he need not have been so concerned. The car was definitely empty. Curiously enough, there was not even a bloodstain. The occupant—or occupants—of the wrecked saloon had completely disappeared!

CHAPTER 3.

The Flying Squad Men!

HANDFORTH took a deep breath.

"Well, thank goodness there's been no tragedy!" he said with relief. "It's a wonder that the driver wasn't killed. He asked for trouble if anybody ever did!"

"He's made junk out of this car, anyhow," said McClure. "By jingo, and she's nearly new, too—a glorious luxury car! Must have cost over a thousand quid."

"And now it's scrap-iron," said Handforth. "What I can't understand is that mysterious figure we saw. We did see it, didn't we?"

"Let's—let's get out of here," said Church uneasily.

They were moving towards the jagged hole in the outer wall when Handforth stooped and picked up something—a dirty-looking sheet of stiffish paper.

"Hallo! What's this?" he said. "I didn't notice this——"

He was interrupted by the sudden shrieking of car brakes from the road; then the roar of an engine as it revved up; the sound of a whirring reverse gear; shouts of men.

"There's another car!" said Church, getting out into the open. "Come on! Perhaps these people can explain——"

"Hallo, there!" came a sharp voice. "What's been going on here?"

Men came tumbling through the big hole in the garden wall; several of them were carrying powerful electric torches, the beams of which revealed the three boys.

"What are you kids doing here?" asked one of the men quickly. "What's been happening?"

"That's the car, Sam," said one of the others. "Glory! What a smash!"

"Come along now—out with it!" went on the first man, pulling at Handforth's arm.

"Cheese it!" protested Handforth. "Who do you think you are, anyhow?"

"I'll tell you who I am—I'm Inspector Burgess, of the Brighton C.I.D."

"Oh!"

"I'm in charge of a Flying Squad unit, and we've been chasing this stolen car," went on the inspector. "Satisfied now, young man? What do you know about this affair?"

"Sorry!" ejaculated Handforth. "For a moment I—I thought you were crooks!"

"Oh, did you? Thanks!"

"I—I didn't mean to be rude——"

"That's all right. What's been happening here?"

"Well, you can see, can't you?" replied Handforth. "We were coming down the

lane in my little car, and suddenly this whacking great saloon shot over the bridge and charged us—it was on the wrong side of the road. I swerved, but even now I don't know how the dickens we escaped a head-on collision."

"The other car swerved and went clean through the wall, eh? It must have been going at a tidy speed," said the inspector.

"Anything between sixty and seventy," replied Handforth. "By George! It came over the bridge like a rocket. The funny thing is, we can't find anybody."

By this time the other detectives had searched the car—not only the car, but the debris near by.

"He always was a lucky beggar, that Tod Millar," said Burgess, when he heard. "As many lives as a cat! Still, I can quite understand how he escaped; this car has a steel body, and the glass is unsplinterable. He's probably injured, though—but not enough to render him helpless."

"Who's Tod Millar?" asked Handforth.

"A dangerous crook—one of the cleverest men in his line of business," replied Inspector Burgess gruffly. "He stole this car from a parking station, and then made a smash-and-grab raid on one of the biggest jeweller's shops in Brighton. We've been chasing him ever since, but he managed to get clear of us."

"So we really stopped his game?" asked Handforth, with satisfaction. "I say, what's he like? When we first came into this old place we fancied we saw a queer little figure in rags and tatters—a man with an ugly face, and matted hair——"

"Cheesc it, Handy," protested Church. "We didn't see all that; in fact, I'm beginning to believe that we must have been fooled by a shadow, or something."

"Oh, you know what a chap he is for drawing upon his imagination," said McClure. "I'm beginning to think it was a shadow, too."

"Well, it wasn't Tod Millar," said the inspector impatiently. "Millar is a big man—and he always dresses in the height of fashion. A pleasant-looking man, too, with a genial face. You'd never know he was a crook to look at him—that's why he's so clever at the game."

The detectives took little or no notice of that strange story of the "shape"; it was so fantastic, in fact, that they dismissed it as schoolboy imagination.

They were delighted to find the bulk of the stolen property in the wrecked car. One or two articles were missing, but Inspector Burgess hoped that they would be found when the car was pulled clear



Handforth & Co. dashed through the battered wall surrounding Moat Hollow. They saw that the car had careered onwards and had finally wrecked itself against the house.

of the wreckage, and the whole place searched.

"The beggar hadn't time to pocket any of the stuff," said the inspector. "He just dumped it down on the seat and drove off—and he had to keep on driving after that because we were on his trail."

"But what do you reckon became of him?" asked one of the other Flying Squad men.

"Well, he wasn't badly hurt, that's certain," replied the inspector. "Dazed a bit, I suppose. He must have staggered out of the car, and before these boys arrived on the scene he got away. Easy enough, too. He could have hidden in the grounds until the boys were inside, and there's a dense wood just beyond the back wall. In all probability he's in that wood now. We'll have it surrounded and searched."

Handforth & Co. felt somewhat important when they were requested to give their names. They were told there was not much likelihood that they would be required again; but the inspector meant to be on the safe side. One of the other

officers took down statements from them—and Handforth was inclined to be long-winded.

A search of the grounds and the house itself proved barren of result. Mr. "Tod" Millar, smash-and-grab expert, had failed in his enterprise, but he had at least retained his liberty.

CHAPTER 4.

The Mystery of the Vanished Man!

UPON closer inspection, a few drops of blood were found near the driving-seat of the wrecked car; there were other drops on the running-board, and they were traced across the piles of debris. This proved that Millar had got out of the car, and had staggered away. His injury might have been trivial—or serious. It was impossible to tell.

By this time the whole village knew of the dramatic incident; and the story had reached the school, too. Crowds of fellows came down in great excitement. Some of them even penetrated into the Moat

Hollow grounds, to be met and turned back by the detectives.

Nipper, the Remove skipper, managed to convince them that he was a privileged person. Being the ward—and assistant—of Nelson Lee, the famous detective—who was also headmaster of St. Frank's—Nipper certainly had some justification for being privileged.

Handforth & Co. told him all about it.

"The funny thing is, the blighter has vanished," said Handforth. "They've found some bloodstains, too—proving that he must have been injured. I suppose the poor beggar is lurking in the wood—"

"Don't you waste any sympathy on Tod," remarked one of the detectives who happened to hear. "He's a gunman—and that's another way of saying that he's one of the most dangerous crooks of all. He knows that he'll get a 'lifer' next time—he's not long finished a seven-year stretch—and he'll shoot to kill."

"I was wondering if we could help to search the wood—" began Nipper.

"Then you can go on wondering," interrupted the detective. "The inspector wouldn't hear of it. He's not keen on your being even here."

"By Jove! We're having some excitement round here lately," remarked Nipper, after the detective had moved off. "It was only last week that Jim the Penman and his gang were arrested—thanks to my guv'nor."

"Rats!" said Handforth. "We chaps did as much as Mr. Lee in that capture."

"All right—we won't argue," smiled Nipper. "Then there was that doubt about old Zingrave. He might have gone to his doom when he fell out of the window of Crag House and plunged down the cliff, but the tide was in and it's possible he escaped."

"Why talk about that now?" asked Handforth impatiently. "Blow Professor Zingrave! Let's see if we can be of any use here."

Handforth hated to think that the excitement had fizzled out. He liked to make a mystery out of everything. And having heard so much about the redoubtable Tod Millar, he was very anxious to make a single-handed capture.

There were some curious features about those bloodstains. They were seen near the car, and, again, outside on the old paved, moss-grown brick path which surrounded the house. This clearly proved that the injured man had wandered off in this direction.

At one place on that paved path there were several drops, all close together. Millar had stood here, and apparently he

had roughly bandaged his wound, for no other bloodstains were found. Yet some recently-made footprints were clearly impressed on the soft earth, near the path. The boys had not been there at all—and, in any case, they were the footprints of a man.

All the walls were thoroughly examined—Inspector Burgess having formed the theory that Millar had climbed the wall somewhere, thus escaping to the wood.

But a blank was drawn here. The earth was soft almost everywhere round the wall; yet there were no footprints. This either meant that the man was hiding somewhere within the property, or that he had escaped by means of the hole in the wall. And this would have been very risky, for he might have run into somebody at any second.

Again the house was searched—even to the limited space between the attic ceilings and the rafters. The cellars were explored. But it was all useless.

Later on, long after the boys had gone back to the school, a breakdown gang arrived, and the wrecked car was removed. Police made a systematic search of Bellton Wood.

The next day the boys learned that that search had been fruitless. Tod Millar, in some way, had completely eluded capture. And by now, no doubt, he had managed to seek some refuge—probably with friends in London. So the affair, as far as St. Frank's was concerned, appeared to be completely over.

Handforth was thoroughly disgusted.

"They ought to have let us help last night," he declared. "Practically the whole of the Remove and the Fourth could have joined in, and that blighter would have been collared. I wanted to meet him, too—so that I could give him a piece of my mind for driving so recklessly."

"The man evidently took the wrong road in his hurry," said Vivian Travers. "He didn't realise the lane was so narrow—you know how it narrows down immediately you cross the bridge—and there's a turn, too. Things like that happen in a flash. You're jolly lucky, Handy, to be alive."

"That's what we've been telling him," said Church with a sigh. "But he seems to think that he's been swindled."

There was an important football match that afternoon, so the juniors had no time to waste on the missing crook. The Junior XI. was late with some of its fixtures—partly owing to the mysterious events of the past few weeks. Away matches had all

been postponed, because none of the boys had been allowed out of gates after dark.

Now, however, Nipper was determined to "catch up." There already had been a game against the Bannington Council School. This had been a home match, and it had resulted in a victory for the Saints—three goals to one. The away match against Kirby Keeble Parkington & Co., of Carlton College, had been played also, and Nipper and his men considered themselves lucky to obtain one point. The result had been a draw—two-two.

To-day's match was against Helmford College—and this would be away, also.

"We've got to win, you chaps," Nipper said to his team. "At least, we shall have to draw. We're keeping our position at the head of the League table, and we want to stay there for keeps. It won't be long now before we have the Cup Ties. So let's show those Helmford chaps that we're in earnest."

And all such unimportant matters as crime and crooks were forgotten.

CHAPTER 5.

Bad News for Skeets!

THE game proved to be a strenuous one, and the Saints could do no more than score one goal. However, the Helmfordians were no more successful, so the result was a draw. Nipper & Co. returned to St. Frank's well satisfied.

They noticed, as they passed Moat Hollow, that the garden wall was roughly boarded. The next morning news came that bricklayers were at work, and that the wall was being rebuilt very thoroughly; the wall of the house was also receiving the same kind of attention. But interest in Moat Hollow had dwindled now, particularly as there was a sensational item of news in the morning papers.

Nipper happened to be down first, and he was reading the paper in the Ancient House lobby when the chums of Study H came downstairs, chatting cheerfully. Behind them were Handforth & Co.

"Seen the paper, Skeets?" asked Nipper, giving Skeets Rossiter—otherwise Viscount Belton—a curiously searching look.

"Not this morning," replied Skeets, in surprise. "What's wrong? Why are you looking so solemn?"

"I'm afraid you'll look solemn, too, old man, after you have seen this," said Nipper quietly. "It affects you very much, I should say."

"Affects me?" ejaculated Skeets, staring. "Something in the paper?"

Travers and Jimmy Potts and the others came downstairs. They all saw the headline across the top of the newspaper—

"SENSATIONAL CITY CRASH."

"Hallo!" said Handforth. "A big accident of some kind, eh?"

"Don't be an ass," said Church. "When there's a City crash, it means that some big company has gone bust."

"It's the Anglo-Canadian Assurance Corporation," said Nipper, watching Skeets closely.

"But—but that's impossible!" exclaimed Skeets, turning pale. "My dad is one of the directors of the Anglo-Canadian Assurance Corporation. He has always told me that the company is as

safe as the Bank of England."

"Everybody else thought so, too—until yesterday," replied Nipper. "One of the biggest shocks the City has ever had. It doesn't go into many details here, but it is rumoured that the managing director has bolted with a couple of millions. It seems incredible."

"Let me look," said Skeets huskily.

He took the newspaper, and it wasn't long before he found the paragraph which had already attracted Nipper's attention.

"It is feared that many prominent men will find themselves virtually wiped out in this disastrous crash," read Skeets aloud. "The Earl of Edgemore is likely to be one of the greatest sufferers. It will be remembered that Lord Edgemore unexpectedly inherited the title and estates some little time ago. Previously he had been a successful rancher in Canada, and he came over to England with his son—"

Skeets broke off, and he looked about him almost dazedly.

"Hard lines, dear old fellow," said Travers gently.

"We're—we're awfully sorry, Skeets," muttered Jimmy Potts.

Skeets was stunned. He was a day boy—the only day boy in the Remove—and before setting out from Edgemore Castle that morning his father had been particularly cheerful. Evidently he had known

GOOD NEWS, CHUMS

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nothing of this disaster. Skeets had gone straight upstairs to rout out his study mates.

"Haden't your pater seen the papers before you came away?" asked Handforth.

"I—I don't think so," replied Skeets. "He doesn't take much interest in papers, anyhow. My dad's an outdoor man; and for some weeks past he has been superintending the work down at the lower end of the estate. He's clearing a spinney down there, and he's going to build a real log shack on the bank of the lake—a real Canadian affair, you know. A place we can use in the summertime. Dad's got some big ideas about it, and he means to make it picturesque and—and home-like. He's been tremendously bucked about it."

The others were silent. They knew that the rancher earl had not been happy in his new life at first; but he was settling down now, and this idea of building a typical Canadian log home had evidently appealed to him.

"Gee whizz!" ejaculated Skeets abruptly. "Perhaps dad doesn't know about this—even now! I'm going straight over."

"You'll miss breakfast——" began somebody.

"Do you think I can eat any breakfast?" asked Skeets, nearly choking.

"I say, we'll come with you," suggested Handforth eagerly. "Perhaps—perhaps we can do something to help."

"Yes, we'll all go," said Travers.

Skeets raised no objection; he was too worried and anxious to care. He went on his own motor-cycle, and Jimmy Potts rode on the pillion of Travers' machine. Nipper got out his motor-bike, and Handforth & Co. went in the Morris Minor, with one or two other fellows crowded in.

When they arrived at the Castle they found that Lord Edgemore, after a hearty breakfast, had gone off to the lower end of the estate. And there the boys found him—looking as unlike a noble earl as any man could.

He was attired in breeches and gaiters, he had discarded his jacket, and the sleeves of his open-necked shirt were rolled up. He was wielding a great axe, and evidently taking a great amount of pleasure in doing so. For Lord Edgemore was essentially a man of the outdoors.

"Well, this is certainly a surprise!" he exclaimed, as he beheld the newly-arrived company. "What's in the wind, Skeets? Have you youngsters been given an unexpected holiday, or something?"

Skeets could have groaned; for it was clear enough that his father knew nothing of the crash.

CHAPTER 6.

Ruined!

THE Earl of Edgemore suddenly became aware of the boys' solemnity—of Skeets' pallor. His cheerful expression changed. The men who were working with him got down to their jobs again. The earl himself walked across to the boys, leaving his axe behind.

"What's wrong, Skeets, lad?" he asked quietly. "You look troubled."

"You haven't seen the paper this morning, dad, have you?"

"Why, no."

Without a word, Skeets thrust the newspaper into his father's hand. Nipper and Handforth and the others, gathering round, watched the earl's expression. They saw him start; they saw some of the colour leave his cheeks. But never once did the earl flinch. When he looked up there was a rueful, twisted little smile on his face.

"Yes, Skeets—sure," he commented. "It looks mighty bad."

"Is it true what it says in the paper, dad—that you're ruined?"

"I'm afraid it is," replied the earl. "We can't be sure, of course—these newspapers are apt to exaggerate at times. Now I understand those telephone calls."

"What calls?" asked Skeets quickly.

"Twice this morning I've been told that people from London have been ringing me up," replied the earl. "But I couldn't be bothered—I sent messages back to say that I couldn't attend to any business until mid-day."

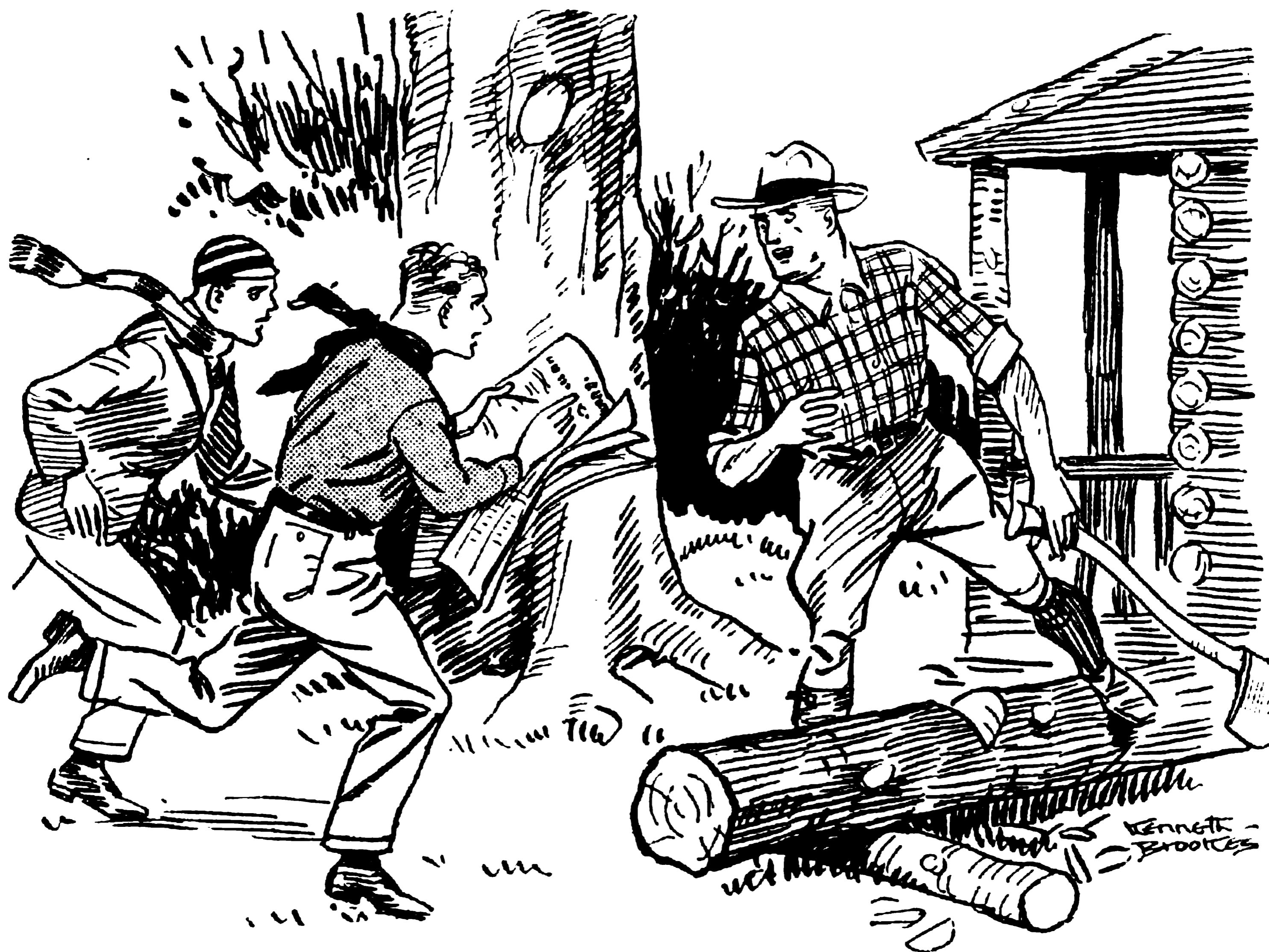
"It must have been your lawyers ringing you up, sir," said Nipper, "or perhaps your brokers, or somebody like that."

"I guess you're right, lad," said Lord Edgemore. "Well, we'd better go along to the castle now. I can see I shall have to do some telephoning of my own—and you just don't know how I hate that instrument."

He spoke calmly, almost cheerfully. He had taken the blow fairly and squarely on the chin, and the boys admired him for it.

"I reckon they'll want me to go along to London," he went on, with a regretful glance at his workmen. "Being one of the directors, I guess my presence will be necessary. It's going to spoil everything."

Clearly the news had come to him like a bolt from the blue. It was curious that he should learn of it, for the first time, through the columns of the morning newspaper. It turned out, later, that he had not even opened his morning's mail—or he would have learned about it then. In such matters the rancher earl



Newspaper in hand, Skeets dashed up to his father. It was obvious that the rancher-earl had not heard the dread news—that he was now a ruined man!

was extremely careless. He hated business of all kinds; letters and telephones and newspapers only worried him.

When they reached the castle they were just in time to hear the telephone bell ringing again. Lord Edgemore went to the library alone; Skeets and the others wandered about in the great panelled hall.

"Perhaps it isn't so bad as the paper says," murmured Jimmy Potts hopefully. "You can never tell, Skeets, old son."

"We'll wait," said Skeets steadily. "Dad will find out all about it on the 'phone."

Soon afterwards the library door opened, and Lord Edgemore invited the boys in. He was looking so calm—indeed, almost cheerful—that at first they were deceived.

"Is everything all right, sir?" asked Handforth eagerly.

Lord Edgemore went over to the great fireplace, and, with his back to the cheerful blaze, he filled his pipe.

"For once the newspapers got hold of the right story," he said. "The Anglo-Canadian Assurance Corporation has crashed—and crashed mighty badly. The company's bankrupt."

"Dad!" muttered Skeets. "Does—does that mean that we've lost everything?"

"Just about," replied his father.

"But didn't you have investments in anything else, sir?" asked Nipper.

"The receivers will be interested in all my other investments," replied Lord Edgemore, a trifle grimly. "No, boys, it's ruin. Well, these things happen, and we've got to face them. And if we can manage to face them with squared shoulders, so much the better."

"Oh, dad! But we've still got the castle and the estates," said Skeets.

"No; they'll have to go," replied his father quietly. "Sorry, lad. I'm afraid it'll mean a complete sell-out here. We shall lose everything. And that's mighty hard on you—because I don't think you'll be able to stay at St. Frank's after this term."

"Oh, I say, that's pretty awful," said Handforth, startled. "You don't mean that, sir!"

The earl lit his pipe and nodded.

"Yes, the castle will have to go," he said, drawing Skeets to him, and placing a hand on his shoulder. "Brace up, lad! We were happy in Canada—and we'll be happy again. I guess we'll go back there—back to the old ranch, eh?"

There was something in his tone which indicated that he was not entirely displeased at the prospect. But Skeets looked stunned. He had been extremely happy in his new life—and he had looked forward to spending many terms at St. Frank's. And now, all in a flash, his dreams were shattered.

"I can't believe it, dad," he said, in a low voice. "It's all so—so sudden."

"These things generally hit you like that," said his father.

"Not an hour ago everything was glorious—I was at school, and you were down at the spinney, chopping trees," went on Skeets huskily. "You were so keen on that scheme, too, dad, weren't you? I mean, building that ranch-house by the lake."

A shadow passed across Lord Edgemore's kindly face.

"I guess that's washed out now, Skeets," he replied sadly. "It's funny how things happen. I was just beginning to love the castle and the estates—I was settling down like a real, old-fashioned English gentleman, eh? Well, it's no good squealing. We've just got to make the best of a bad job."

Skeets braced himself, and he managed to smile—a somewhat wistful smile.

"It's a pity the days of miracles are over, dad," he said. "Gee! Wouldn't it be fine and dandy if we could locate the old Edgemore treasure!"

CHAPTER 7.

Buried Treasure!

"**T**REASURE?" went up an excited chorus.

The very word had a magic sound to the schoolboys; they instantly became eager and animated. The old Edgemore treasure! It was the first they had heard of any such thing.

"No, lads, you mustn't take any notice of Skeets," said the earl, shaking his head. "There's no more chance of recovering the old Edgemore treasure than there is of the Anglo-Canadian Corporation becoming suddenly solvent."

"Well, dad, I said it would be a miracle," remarked Skeets. "It's a fact, too, that the treasure has never been located—and there are all sorts of records in our family to prove that the loot was buried somewhere on the estate."

"Forget it, lad—forget it," said his father somewhat impatiently.

"Sorry, dad!"

And Skeets said no more on the subject. The earl went upstairs to change; it was

necessary for him to journey up to London without any delay.

"What's this about a treasure?" asked Handforth breathlessly, as soon as the door had closed.

"Oh, nothing!" said Skeets dully. "I guess I was crazy, that's all."

They hardly liked to pursue the subject, for Skeets was overwhelmed by the bad news. Handforth, however, was less considerate than the others.

"Don't you see, Skeets, you ass—so that we chaps can help you?" he asked tensely. "If there really is a treasure, we might be able to find it! And that would mean that you can stay on at St. Frank's."

Skeets looked at him with sudden intentness.

"Shucks! Things like that don't happen in real life," he said.

"Oh, don't they?" retorted Handforth. "Rummier things happen in real life than in stories! I was reading an article only a couple of days ago——"

"Never mind your article, Handy," interrupted Nipper. "Don't bother Skeets now."

"It's all right," said Skeets, with a sudden smile. "Perhaps Handy's right. There couldn't be a better time for looking for the treasure, could there? And if we found it——! Gee! If only we could get some real clue!"

"How did you first get to know of a treasure?" asked Travers.

"Well, for a month or two past dad and I have been pretty busy over the week-ends—especially on wet days," replied Skeets, a thoughtful look coming into his face. "You see, we've been going through the old family records. Queer old manuscripts and diaries—and letters. I can tell you, it has been fascinating work. Reading those quaint old letters—some of them actually written by Captain Humphrey himself."

"And who's Captain Humphrey?" asked Handforth.

"One of my ancestors—and a bit of a lad, by all that we can hear of him," replied Skeets. "He lived in the sixteenth century, and he was a younger son. You know what I mean—one of the family who never inherited the title. The lord of the Edgemore estates at that time was Sir Malcolm Rossiter; and Captain Humphrey Rossiter was his younger brother. A restless, roving sort of chap, and there's a jolly interesting account, in one of the old manuscripts, of how Humphrey took part in a great riot in Bannington. He was the leading spirit, and it was because of that episode that he was virtually banished from home. He went to sea and fought against the Spaniards. Some years

later he got the command of one of the ships which sailed for the Spanish Main under Drake."

"By George!" said Handforth, his eyes shining. "There's an ancestor for you!"

"That was Drake's great voyage when he set out to circumnavigate the world," continued Skeets. "He took five ships with him, and Captain Humphrey Rossiter was in command of one. It tells you all about it in those old letters and diaries and manuscripts. They went through the Strait of Magellan, and they attacked all the Spanish ports along the Pacific coast of South America. Most of the accounts say that Sir Francis Drake had only one ship left then—either the Pelican or the Golden Hind. But our family records clearly state that both ships took part in those raids. Drake himself was in command of the Golden Hind, and Captain Humphrey Rossiter sailed the other. It was in the Pacific that they fought and conquered the Cacafuego, one of the greatest treasure ships that ever left Spain. This vast treasure they brought back to England."

"Sir Francis Drake sailed into Plymouth Sound, but Captain Rossiter's ship, bulging with treasure, put into a secret bay along the south coast—probably at the place we now know as Caistowe. She carried dozens of chests packed with doubloons and pieces of eight. Yes, and jewels, too. Emeralds and rubies and diamonds."

"My only sainted aunt!" said Handforth, his eyes burning.

"This treasure was carried to the Edgemore estates," continued Skeets, now thoroughly aroused. "I'm not spinning a yarn, you chaps—it's all written in the family records. But there was only one man who knew the exact hiding-place, and that was Captain Humphrey himself. He arranged everything, because he had many enemies who were after that treasure, too. But one thing's certain; he buried those chests, and they have never been discovered—not to this day!"

CHAPTER 8.

The Parchment!

THE story of the treasure, as told by Skeets Rossiter, had fired all those schoolboys. This was a tale after their own heart! They regarded Skeets almost with awe. He was a descendant of that bold, roving pirate who had served under the great Drake! A man bearing Skeets' own name had sailed the Spanish Main!

"Look!" said Skeets, pulling open a great drawer of the desk. "Here are the old diaries and manuscripts. Dad and I have spent hours—days and weeks—in reading them. We haven't half finished the job yet—there are lots of more recent diaries to go through."

"Hasn't anybody ever tried to locate that hoard of Spanish gold?" asked Jimmy Potts.

"In the seventeenth century several of my ancestors tried," replied Skeets. "They dug up the estates in dozens of places. One old boy, in his enthusiasm, practically tore down the dungeons, believing the treasure to be buried somewhere under the floor. But nothing ever came of it, and as time went on the story was looked upon as a myth. But I'm jolly certain that the treasure is buried somewhere—perhaps under the very spot on which we're standing," he added dramatically. "Who knows? Of course, my ancestors were all wrong. It's no good digging for treasure at random."

"Think of the number of square miles on the estate!" said Nipper, nodding. "You might dig for years and find nothing. That's just the trouble, isn't it? You haven't a clue to the exact spot. That's what makes it seem a bit hopeless, Skeets, old man."

The door opened just then, and Lord Edgemore reappeared; now sedately attired in a quiet lounge suit and spotless linen.

"You boys still here?" he asked. "What about your schoolmasters? Won't they be asking awkward questions?"

"My only hat! We'd forgotten all about school!" said Nipper, with a whistle. "What the dickens is the time?"

"Never mind the time," said Handforth excitedly. "What does time matter—when we're talking about Spanish gold? Buried treasure, by George!"

"Come, come!" said the earl quietly. "You mustn't work yourselves up over that old yarn. I'll admit it would be handy enough if we could find that treasure; but such things don't really happen."

"Do you really believe that the treasure is somewhere hidden, sir?" asked Travers.

"I certainly do," replied the earl promptly. "I am convinced that it actually exists. But as for finding it"—he shrugged—"as far as I can see there's no hope of unearthing it. In the course of centuries the Edgemore family has spent a fortune on that vain endeavour."

"That doesn't mean to say that we shouldn't succeed, sir," said Handforth, full of enthusiasm. "Why shouldn't we

read up those old records? Perhaps we can find a clue of some sort? Look here, just how big are the estates, anyhow? I can draw a rough plan of the park now."

He searched his pockets for a piece of paper, and pulled out a crumpled, yellowish sheet which crackled queerly. On one side of it there was some faded writing, and something which looked like a roughly-sketched plan. Handforth hardly glanced at it; he turned it over upon its blank side, and produced a pencil.

"Now, we'll start with the castle," he said, making a dot in the middle of the paper. "The boundary line runs just about——"

"One moment," said Lord Edgemore, in a curious voice. "What is that paper, lad?"

"This paper?" asked Handforth. "Oh, nothing. Something I picked up somewhere——"

"I would not be so inquisitive, only recently I have been going over many old documents," said the earl. "This looks like very old parchment to me, but I can hardly believe——" He broke off, his jaw dropping. "But—but this is impossible!" he gasped.

All the colour had fled from his face, and his eyes were shining with an unusual brilliance. He was staring fascinatedly—dazedly—at that piece of “paper” which Handforth had taken so carelessly from his pocket. All the boys were regarding him in wonder—and not without a little concern.

"What is it, dad?" asked Skeets breathlessly.

"Am I mad?" muttered Lord Edgemore. "Tell me, Handforth—did you find this parchment in this room—in the castle?"

"No, of course not, sir," replied Handforth in bewilderment.

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"Then it is absolutely dumbfounding," said the earl. "Look, Skeets! Look at this! You have seen those ancient diaries, haven't you? You have seen specimens of Captain Humphrey Rossiter's handwriting?"

Skeets looked at the yellowish parchment and yelled. His father had turned it over now, and Skeets was staring at the faded characters—at the crudely-drawn plan.

"This is Captain Humphrey's handwriting, too!" he said hoarsely.

"This is a most amazing coincidence," said the Earl of Edgemore, trying to keep his voice steady. "You boys are talking about that old ancestor of ours, and, without any thought of what he was doing, Handforth pulls a piece of paper out of his pocket. And it proves to be an old parchment, actually written by Captain Rossiter himself!"

"Where did you find it, Handy?" yelled everybody, in one excited voice.

"I—I don't remember," gasped Handforth. "I didn't even know I'd got it. I thought it was a piece of old exercise paper, or something. I say, this is too rummy for words!"

"Think!" urged Skeets. "Think hard, Handy. You must have found that parchment somewhere."

"By George!" burst out Handforth abruptly. "Got it!"

"You mean, you remember where you found it?" asked Skeets.

"Yes," said Handforth, and his voice was more amazed than ever. "I found it in—Moat Hollow!"

CHAPTER 9.

The History of Moat Hollow!

"**M**OAT HOLLOW!" went up a concerted yell.

Everybody was incredulous. Church and McClure are particularly so, for they knew what a blundering ass Handforth was. Besides, it seemed so absurd.

"I remember now," said Handforth tensely. "But I'd forgotten all about the paper from that moment to this. You know how we were nearly run down by that crook's car, the other night? You remember how it crashed through the wall of Moat Hollow?"

"Don't be an ass, Handy," said Nipper. "Do you think we've forgotten that already?"

"Well, it was just before that Flying Squad car came," continued Handforth.

"I spotted something on the ground—a piece of paper, I thought. I remember picking it up, and putting it into my pocket. Then we heard the Flying Squad car, and the detectives came, and I never thought of the paper after that. But I tell you I found it on the ground, amid all the debris, near that wrecked car."

He spoke so earnestly that it was obvious he was telling the truth. Church and McClure, too, vaguely remembered that Handforth had bent down and picked up something.

"I thought it was something that the crook had dropped," went on Handforth, looking round. "Even now I can't understand where that parchment came from. It couldn't have been lying loose about the grounds of Moat Hollow, could it? Besides, it was dry—just as it is now. And why Moat Hollow? What has that old house to do with Edgemore Castle and that old ancestor of yours?"

"Wait!" said Lord Edgemore, a sudden sharp note in his voice.

He was examining the parchment—eagerly now. He had gone over to the window, so that he could obtain more light. He was catching some of the boys' fever.

"This appears to be merely one page of a manuscript," he said. "This crudely-designed plan, you see, occupies three-fourths of the sheet, and the writing is beneath. It breaks off abruptly at the bottom, indicating that there is another page, or more pages, to follow. And this sheet itself is numbered 'seven.'"

"What does the writing say, dad?" asked Skeets breathlessly.

"It's no easy matter to read this old English script," replied his father. "There are some references, I notice, to 'chests.' Yes, and the word 'gold' appears. H'm! Let me see—'Here, within the grounds of Traitor's Lodge, as directed by my carefully writ instructions, and by the use of the plan, shall you come upon the exact placing of the great treasure. I have deemed it necessary to observe these precautions—' That's where it breaks off. Great glory! This begins to look interesting, boys!"

"It definitely refers to the treasure!" said Skeets eagerly. "And—and yet Handy found that parchment in Moat Hollow! It doesn't seem to fit—"

"Let me think," interrupted Lord Edgemore, frowning. "I can tell you at once that this sheet of parchment, by itself, is more or less useless. And it seems to me that the remainder of the parchment is useless, too—since the all-important plan is here. In other words, we have the plan,

but the directions are elsewhere. So if anybody else has possession of them they are of no use."

"Who else could have them, sir?" asked Nipper, staring.

"That is what we don't know," replied his lordship. "There can be little doubt that Captain Humphrey Rossiter was a rascal—probably a traitor to his friends. He meant to keep this treasure for himself."

"What, exactly, happened to him, sir?"

"His brother, Sir Malcolm Rossiter, was a very religious, God-fearing man," replied the earl. "He was quite out of sympathy with Humphrey's exploits at sea, and when he returned home he was banished to the 'Traitor's Lodge.' This place, I have been able to ascertain, was a small manor house on the extremity of the Edgemore estate. It had been named 'Traitor's Lodge' quite a century earlier, and I have not been able to discover why. But it doesn't matter. Humphrey was not allowed to live within the castle; and it was while he was at Traitor's Lodge that he had a bitter quarrel with some of his former friends. There was a terrible fight, I believe, and Humphrey was killed. Unfortunately, he died before he could reveal his secret."

"By George! You mean, he had buried the treasure unknown to a soul—and then the men who were to have shared it with him, killed him?" asked Handforth. "So they dished themselves like that! Well, I'm jiggered! But where is this place—Traitor's Lodge? I've never heard of it on your estate, sir."

"That's the point," replied Lord Edgemore quietly. "The parchment was found at Moat Hollow—and it was found, mark you, after one of the old walls had been accidentally broken down. I'm not taking anything for granted, but it at least seems possible that the parchment was hidden somewhere within the wall. Thus it came to light after centuries——"

"You—you mean that Moat Hollow is Traitor's Lodge?" asked Skeets blankly.

"I mean that Moat Hollow occupies the exact site of the old Traitor's Lodge!" replied Lord Edgemore calmly.

CHAPTER 10.

Startling News!

ALL the boys stared in wonder.

"But Moat Hollow doesn't belong to you, sir," burst out Handforth.

"Doesn't it?" said the earl dryly. "I have always had an idea that it is on my estate."

"My only hat!"

"That's news to us, sir."

"I haven't been exactly proud of the old house," said Lord Edgemore, smiling. "Parts of the estate, you see, are rather scattered. Centuries ago the park extended a great deal beyond its present boundaries. Successive Edgemores have made a change here and a change there. But that property is mine right enough. My agents have communicated with me several times, regretting their inability to find a tenant. I have more than once thought of pulling the house down—for it appears to have a somewhat sinister reputation in Bellton."

"Lots of the village people think it's haunted, sir," said Nipper, "but, of course, that's all rot. That high wall all round it makes it look forbidding. And at various times it has been used as a school, and then some crooks got hold of it. Many years ago, I believe, it was a private lunatic asylum for a time—although the tenants called it a sanatorium."

"Yes, it has an unsavoury reputation," agreed Lord Edgemore. "I have told my agents to lease it cheaply—but all to no purpose. Nobody wants the place. Now, it seems to me that some of the original walls of the Traitor's Lodge might have been incorporated in the building of the new house—which, in itself, is a century or so old. So it came about that Captain Humphrey's manuscript was never disturbed. This week, by the sheerest of accidents, it came to light."

"One sheet of it, anyway," said Skeets, his eyes shining. "But where's the rest? The police searched the place thoroughly——"

"They weren't looking for old parchments," interrupted Nipper shrewdly. "It's quite likely that they threw the other sheets aside, thinking that it was old waste paper, or something. Or the rest of the manuscript might be buried under the piles of debris."

"Great Scott! And there are builders at work to-day—messing everything up!" gasped Handforth. "Here, I say! Hadn't we better dash to Moat Hollow and do some exploring? We might find the rest of that manuscript straight away."

They were all thoroughly aroused; they were filled with excitement. The prospect of a treasure hunt thrilled them intensely. And it was all the more thrilling because Lord Edgemore needed money so badly.

"Just a minute, dear old fellows," said Travers. "Isn't there a snag in this? What about the law of treasure trove?"



The St. Frank's boys saw signs of great activity at Moat Hollow. Pantechnicons were being unloaded; and there were also totally enclosed vans which looked secretive and mysterious.

Even if we find these doubloons, they'll belong to the Crown!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Handforth blankly.

"Don't you think we are counting our chickens before they are hatched?" asked Lord Edgemore, with a smile. "Don't be so sure, boys! There is only a very remote chance of making any discovery. But you needn't worry about treasure trove. That law only applies to buried gold when the owner is unknown. This gold, if it is buried at all, is on my property—and therefore, if it is found, it becomes mine."

"I say, that's a relief," said Handforth. "Everything's all serene, then."

"Come on—let's hurry to Moat Hollow," said Skeets. "I suppose those men are there by your orders, dad?"

"Not by mine," replied his father. "My agents, no doubt, have been attending to the matter. Still, there ought not to be any trouble. The workmen won't object to your making a search."

"But we'd better keep mum about the possible treasure," said Nipper shrewdly.

"Bear that in mind, Handy. We mustn't

let a soul know why we are searching. That's a jolly important point."

"Why speak to me?" asked Handforth, staring. "Doesn't it apply to the others, too?"

"Ahem! Of course," murmured Nipper.

As they were hurrying out of the library the telephone bell rang again, and they left Lord Edgemore talking into the instrument. They crowded out to their motor-cycles and the Morris Minor. The whole situation had undergone a dramatic change. This picturesque story of the Edgemore treasure had filled them with enthusiasm.

Then came the thunderbolt.

Just as they were starting off, Lord Edgemore came hurrying out of the great main door, and on his face there was an expression of mingled annoyance and chagrin.

"Just a minute, Skeets!" he called.

"You, too, boys! I've some bad news."

They came crowding round.

"Bad news, dad?" asked Skeets quickly.

"Moat Hollow has been leased."

"What?" went up a yell of consternation.

"Did you ever hear of anything more exasperating?" remarked the earl. "For

months—years—that place has been empty. I couldn't let it for love or money. And now, just when I particularly want it for myself, my agents have found a tenant."

"Can't you tell the agents——"

"It is too late," said Lord Edgemore. "I gave my agents full authority in the matter—they have the power of attorney regarding the renting of any of my property—and it appears that they have secured a good tenant for Moat Hollow, and they have leased it to him for three years—the tenancy beginning from to-day. The agreement is signed and sealed, and if you boys go to Moat Hollow now you will be trespassing."

"Well, I'm blessed!" said Handforth, his face expressive of disappointment. "What an awful frost! But it mightn't be too late, sir," he added, brightening up. "Can't you see this new tenant and buy him out?"

"I am not in a very advantageous position for buying people out—at the moment," replied his lordship ruefully. "I could, I suppose, lay my hands on a little money—but not much."

"Do you know who the tenant is, dad?" asked Skeets.

"A foreigner, I think—a man named Dr. Franz Ragozin," replied Lord Edgemore, frowning. "My agents tell me that his references were highly satisfactory—his banker's reference and his business references. They seemed very pleased about it, and, of course, I did not let them know that I was in any way disappointed. It's just a piece of bad luck, and I'm afraid we can't do anything about it."

"Can't we, by George!" muttered Handforth under his breath. "Tenant or no giddy tenant, we're going to search Moat Hollow for the rest of that manuscript!"

CHAPTER 11.

The New Tenant!

"WHAT if we do search Moat Hollow?" asked Nipper, as they were preparing to leave.

"It won't be much good, even if we find the rest of that script. This Dr. Ragozin won't allow Lord Edgemore to dig up the place. And if we breathe a word about the treasure, the beggar might bar everybody out, and start digging for himself."

A Word from Fatty Wynn . . .



"I say, you fellows, I am afraid that I can't stop long, because I've got to rush off and have a snack. You see, I haven't had anything to eat since two o'clock, and it's nearly half-past now. I am sure you will understand that a fellow does get hungry, and you won't think me greedy."

"A most awful thing has happened this week. Of course, the New House is streets better than the School House normally, but our House dame has gone away and the food is simply awful. Even I can hardly eat it. And Ratty, that's Mr. Ratcliff, our Housemaster, has given orders that we are not to be served in the tuck shop. Figgins and Kerr and I have pooled our resources and Figgy is going to make us a fig-pudding. I don't know what it will be like, but if you want to know, get a copy of this week's GEM and read the long complete story of St. Jim's."

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"The whole thing looks suspicious to me," growled Handforth. "Why should there be a tenant so suddenly? I tell you, it's fishy! What about that chap, Tod Millar? He escaped pretty mysteriously, didn't he?"

"It's no good making mysteries out of nothing, Handy," said Nipper briskly. "Let's run along to Moat Hollow and see what we can do, anyhow. It'll mean a row at the school—because we shall all be late—but I dare say we shall get over it."

And off they went. When they arrived at Moat Hollow they found that the breach in the outer wall had been completely repaired. The great gates were closed and even locked; but from within came the sound of much activity.

"What's the idea of keeping the place bolted and barred like this?" asked Handforth in wonder.

They hammered upon the gates—which were completely boarded over, so that no prying eyes could see within—and presently a bluff, genial foreman appeared.

"Why, hallo, young gents!" he said. "Thought you was some of our chaps with another load of bricks."

"Why do you keep these gates locked?" asked Nipper.

"Search me!" replied the foreman, with a shrug. "But them's our orders—and there's that big foreign bloke knockin' about to see that we keep to 'em."

"What foreign bloke?" asked Handforth curiously.

"Calls himself Mr. Hess—Paul Hess, I believe," replied the other, with a sniff.

"Never mind Mr. Hess," said Handforth. "I was one of the chaps who happened to be on the spot when that runaway motor-car broke through the wall of the house. Have you men seen any grubby old papers knocking about amongst the broken bricks and stones? I'm rather keen on getting hold of them."

"Papers?" repeated the foreman, scratching his head. "I ain't seen any. You mean, you lost 'em? Well, p'r'aps it won't do no 'arm if you come in and have a look round. Blamed if I can see why the gates should be locked, anyway."

The boys crowded in, and they soon found that the house wall was well on the way to being repaired. They went indoors, and here they found several bricklayers working energetically.

"Double pay if we get the job finished by this afternoon," whispered the foreman confidentially.

Nipper, at the first glance round, saw that the quest was hopeless. The floor of this room—the room into which the motor-car had crashed—was littered with bricks, sand, cement, and other building

material. There was precious little chance of finding any parchment. The new wall was solidly built. And Nipper could see, upon close inspection, that the broken wall was of great antiquity. Without question, this wall had formed a part of the old original Traitor's Lodge.

"Huh!" came a sudden angry ejaculation. "What you boys do here? Huh? Who let you come in?"

They turned, and found themselves facing a large, powerfully-built man with enormous shoulders. He was clean-shaven, with shaggy red hair, and he was either a Pole or a Russian. There could be no mistaking the high cheek-bones and the other Slav characteristics of his features.

"It's all right—we're only having a look round," said Nipper.

"You not look round," said Ivan Hess sharply. "You go out! You go out now—yes? This house belong to Dr. Ragozin. He very angry if he find you here—and he coming soon. You go."

The workmen were listening interestedly, and one or two of them grinned with amusement. Nipper glanced at the other boys, and they all moved out. There was no sense in arguing with this unpleasant individual.

As they reached the open air, and were about to cross the untidy grounds, two workmen opened the gates, and a muddy, travel-stained car drove in.

"Huh!" grunted the man Hess. "The master is here. He turn you out—quick."

The man who alighted from the car was tall and gentlemanly; he was sombrely attired in black, with an enormous black silken cravat and a wide-brimmed black hat. He had a tiny wisp of black beard on the point of his chin, and a small moustache. Horn-rimmed spectacles half concealed his piercing black eyes. Altogether an impressive figure.

"You boys are here for what reason?" he asked bluntly, but in a pleasant voice, with only a slight trace of foreign accent. "You will let me introduce myself. I am Dr. Franz Ragozin, and I have leased this property. You understand? Perhaps you do not realise that you are trespassing?"

"We were only having a look round, sir," said Nipper cheerfully.

"We wanted to find——" began Handforth.

"Yes, we wanted to find out who the new tenant is," continued Nipper, giving Handforth a soft, warning nudge. "The old place has been empty for so long that we were naturally curious. Glad to know that Moat Hollow is to be occupied at last, sir. We hope you'll be comfortable here."

"It is not that. I desire to be comfortable," said Dr. Ragozin softly. "The place, it suits me. For my purpose it is ideal."

He indicated the gateway, and it was clear that this was a sign of dismissal. The boys all went, and the gates were closed upon them.

"What the dickens——" began Handforth.

"Shut up, ass!" hissed Nipper. "Do you think we want to get these people suspicious? Far better for them to think that we were only having a casual look round. That foreman won't say anything."

The boys returned to St. Frank's, and their first impression of Dr. Franz Ragozin was definitely unfavourable. In some vague way the man seemed sinister.

CHAPTER 12.

Dr. Ragozin Refuses!

THE boys were late for lessons, of course, and they were reported to their Housemaster. But when Mr.

Wilkes heard about the Earl of Edgemore's misfortune, he excused the boys and inflicted no punishment.

For the rest of the day Skeets and his friends were on tenterhooks. The advent of Dr. Franz Ragozin, just when there seemed some chance of unearthing the Edgemore treasure, was the height of misfortune; and it really seemed that nothing more could be done in the matter.

Lord Edgemore himself was in London, and Skeets could not get hold of him. He learned, however, that his father had given instructions to the agents—a big Bannington firm—and they had approached the new tenant of Moat Hollow, only to be met with a firm refusal to consider any offer.

By the end of the day Skeets was despondent. Handforth and Nipper and the others were keenly disappointed, too. Then, next day, word came from the village that Dr. Ragozin's effects were arriving.

The boys—those who knew about the hidden treasure—hurried down to the village immediately after morning lessons. They found great activity at Moat Hollow.

Two big pantechnicons were being unloaded; and there were other vans, too—totally enclosed vans, which looked secretive and mysterious. These had been taken into the grounds, and they were left locked.

"Well, he means it," said Nipper. "There'll be no persuading him to give up the tenancy now, Skeets."

"I guess you're right," grunted Skeets. "But doesn't it strike you as strange that this man should move in so quickly? Any ordinary tenant would have waited for the place to be put shipshape. Most of the rooms need papering, and the whole place is in an awfully dilapidated condition. Dr. Ragozin hasn't waited for any of those things to be done."

Mudford, the local postman, who happened to be passing, joined the boys.

"Rare goings on, young gents," he said, shaking his head. "This old place has seen some queer tenants, but I reckon this furrin chap is the queerest of all."

"He's brought enough stuff with him," remarked Handforth.

"Meanin' them closed vans?" asked the postman. "Lions an' tigers, I figure," he added mysteriously. "Leopards an' bears, and such-like."

"What the dickens do you mean?" asked Skeets, staring.

"Ain't you heard, young gents?" asked Mudford. "This 'ere Dr. Ragozin is goin' to turn the old place into a private zoo."

"What?"

"That's what people are sayin' in the village, anyhow," declared the postman. "There'll be no peaceful sleep for us after this, what with lions growlin' all night, and such-like. It didn't ought to be allowed, if you ask me."

He went off, grumbling.

"A private zoo?" said Nipper, with a whistle. "I believe old Muddy is right, you chaps. Perhaps we're wrong about Dr. Ragozin. He may be honest enough."

"Rats!" said Handforth. "There's something fishy about him—and you're not going to make me think anything else."

While they were talking a car drove up, and Skeets was delighted to see his father.

"I've had a rough time in London, lad," said Lord Edgemore ruefully. "They're after us like wolves. As things look at present, we shall be lucky enough if we can scrape up the money for our fares to Canada."

"As bad as that, dad?" asked Skeets quietly. "Do—do you mean that we shall be turned out of the castle at once?"

"Why, no," replied the earl. "Hardly at once, young 'un. These things take time. I dare say we shall be able to stay there for some weeks yet—perhaps a month or two."

"Oh! Then—then that'll give us time to locate that treasure!" said Skeets eagerly and with intense relief. "What about Dr. Ragozin, dad?"

(Continued on page 24.)

Our champion chump puts over another howling issue of—



HANDFORTH'S Weekly

No. 41. Vol. 2.

EDITORIAL STAFF.

January 30th, 1932.

THE
EDITOR'S
CHINWAG

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

NIPPER'S
PUZZLE
CORNER

THIS week, you fellows, the Editor of this astonishing magazine (which is me) has to apologise for two new features.

First of all, William Napoleon Browne, the silly ass of the Fifth, has suddenly broken loose again, and will oblige us each week, until further notice, with a "Dreadful Diary." These imaginary extracts from the diaries of the various fellows are all burlesques, of course; and they may amuse you, though it is possible they may not amuse the "owner" of the diary.

This series will finish immediately W. N. Browne includes ME in his burlesques.

Secondly, I regret to announce that Reggie Pitt is going to inflict on us a series of articles called "Furious Fiction," in which he illustrates the various kinds of stories which are printed nowadays, and compares them with the writings of years ago. I have had to blue-pencil a good deal of Pitt's piffle, and, now that I have attended to his articles, I think you'll find them almost humorous. Judging by Reggie Pitt's proposal, this series of articles is going to stretch away indefinitely into the dim future. The Editor of HANDFORTH'S WEEKLY, however, has other views.

If you would like to know exactly how to write a good story, you will do well to read Pitt's rot. When you have finished it, you will know exactly as much as you did before.

Yours as of yore,
E. O. HANDFORTH.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

The Editor and his two chums, Church and McClure, have been selected for hares in the great cross-country paper chase next Saturday. Unfortunately, though, there is a lack of scrap-paper to tear up for "scent."

In the circumstances, the Editor of HANDFORTH'S WEEKLY would be very glad to consider contributions from all and sundry. Articles to be written on one side of the paper only, and they can be as long as you like.

A VERY ill-natured fellow knew that his chum hated Worcester Sauce on his dinner, so he plotted to play a joke on this sauce-hating chum. He took the salt-sprinkler, emptied it and filled it up with Worcester Sauce, so that, when his chum went to pour a little heap of salt on the side of his plate, he would get a good dose of sauce instead.

A nasty arrangement altogether. The sprinkler was of china, not glass, so the contents were invisible, and this mean blighter put the thing in the cruet with many a sinister chuckle. But, unfortunately for him, he had made one little mistake, and things didn't work out as he expected. Where did the scoundrel slip up?

"Wat-er" Problem!

Here's another story of a villain who made a slight oversight. A really rank rotter wanted to get rid of another fellow, and he made an elaborate plan to drown him. In this rotter's house (we'll call him R.R.—rank rotter!) was a room very suitable for this purpose. This was the bathroom, which had a large tank near the ceiling, and no windows. R.R. made a slight adjustment to the in-flow of this tank, made the door absolutely watertight, and waited for this other fellow—we'll call him O.F.—to visit him.

When O.F. rolled along, R.R. lured him into the bathroom, bolted the door on him, and then let in the water through the tank to the bathroom, leaving O.F. very nicely boxed up in a room filling with water. But again a villain's cunning was beaten by a little oversight. What was it this time?

Answers elsewhere, as usual.

NIPPER.

DREADFUL DIARIES

Perpetrated by William Napoleon Browne

No. 1.—NIPPER.

MONDAY.—At dinner in Hall I detected a piece of meat on my plate. It was securely hidden under a haricot bean, but certain clues suggested to my mind that the meat was present, and I followed the trail grimly, relentlessly.

TUESDAY.—Detected footprints in my study and determined to follow them. Examining them closely with a magnifying glass, I walked round in circles for three-quarters of an hour before I deduced that the footprints were my own. Highly satisfied with brilliant deduction, which saved endless toil.

WEDNESDAY.—Slipped over in the Triangle and sat down. Felt a sensation of dampness—almost of wetness—and from the data presented to me deduced I was sitting in a puddle. When I examined the situation impartially my deductions, as usual, turned out to be correct. I then formed the hypothesis that a change of bags was necessary, and was not surprised to find I was quite right.

THURSDAY.—While mixing gum in Montie's ink-well in class to-day, my keen observation taught me that Crowell was watching me, and this immediately suggested to my brilliant reasoning that I might soon find it necessary to step out in

front of the class. From this situation I deduced, by analogy, that I should experience a very painful interview with a man in gown and mortar. I was staggered to find my predictions fulfilled to the very letter almost the next moment. I have long suspected that I possess the faculty of acute reasoning.

FRIDAY.—While toasting a muffin, I smelt a very hard, acrid smell, and from this I deduced that the muffin would be black, or charcoal-colour, when turned from the fire. I mentioned this to my chums and they were amazed to find my deduction correct.

SATURDAY.—I am not superstitious, but when the opposing team put the ball in our net for the thirteenth time, something seemed to tell me we should lose. This deduction, like all the others, was perfectly and absolutely correct. What a wonderful fellow I am!

SUNDAY.—I am not superstitious, but when the opposing team put the ball in our net for the thirteenth time, something seemed to tell me we should lose. This deduction, like all the others, was perfectly and absolutely correct. What a wonderful fellow I am!



FURIOUS FICTION

Or, how to write stories, by Reggie Pitt.

This Week: **THE SERIAL STORY.**

IN these articles, old beans, I am going to try to analyse the various types of story—common and uncommon—from the days of Noah to the present time. I am doing this because I feel it is my duty, and also because I still hope to be able to wangle a bob or two out of the Editor for it.

The Serial Story is the most important story in the magazine, because it begins so seldom and ends so infrequently. You start with a thrilling title, and then you advertise the story with a few particulars about what has already happened in the earlier chapters. Something like this:

THE MAN WITH ONE NOSE.

Thrilling, blood-freezing, blood-boiling serial, complete with a first deposit of **TWO COLUMNS** and 48 weekly instalments of **ONE COLUMN**. Read while you pay.

WHAT HAPPENED LAST WEEK.

Nothing at all.

WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN NEXT WEEK.

(About the same.—E.O.H.)

After this you begin the story proper. It is important to start if you mean to finish. When a story commences like this: "Bang! Bang! A revolver spat viciously—in fact, a pair of spats"—you don't expect the tale to be about a gentle youth who spends his spare time knitting mittens for savages. Always begin a crook story with a revolver shot, and you can be sure the story will go with a bang.

The same thing applies to mystery stories. Every story featuring a haunted house must begin on the stroke of midnight. Otherwise the readers write indignant letters to the Editor demanding their money back. It is a good idea, when starting a "haunted house" serial, to give an effect of chattering teeth at the start.

"It was the hour of mum-mum-mum-midnight!"

If your story begins at one o'clock in the morning, it is usual to start it with the chime of the clock—but NOT when it begins at midnight.

Boom!

The hour of one tolled out—

That's quite all right. But—

(Continued at foot of next column.)

THE LAY OF

ON Jan. the 1st
And in
We sent
To plum
soon!"

On Jan. the 2nd
And on the 3rd
We were dismayed

"Come quickly,
On Jan. the 4th

"What's happen
On Jan. the 5th

His mate we'll go
The plumber's man

The 7th—rather
He had a look

A snooze till Jan
On Jan. the 9th

I'll soon repair
Have you a tool

To suit me, so
As we had not, he

You'd have a too
I'll be a week,"

Till Jan. the 22nd
He then drilled it

And told us, will
"This job's deferre

Will be my half
At half-mast three

Arrived and soon
The leak to fix; Jan

Still found that
Hard at his toil, mid

But Jan. the 31,
Brought great delight

The plumber's won

On Feb. the 1st the

And in the aftern
We sent express an

To plumbers, "R

(Continued from
Boom! Boom! B

Boom! Boom!

Boom! Boom!

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with a thrill. If

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breath, you know

a serial story.

Next week, ge

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novel short story

never been done

it, my lads. If

forgive you. (Ne

NOVEL SHO

OUR DICTIONARY

(Reggie Pitt's great work is still going strong.)

COPSE: Policemen.

CORNER: An article which fills up half the paper—as "Nipper's Puzzle Corner."

CORPORATION: A fellow is said to have a "corporation" when he "carries all before him."

CORRIDOR: A passage leading to some other "dor."

COUNTERPART: The good part of a joint; so called because it is kept on the counter.

COURT: Where they put a criminal when he is "caught."

COVEY: A man, i.e., "A covey of pheasants—a dealer in pheasants."

CRAWL: See CREEP.

CREEP: See CRAWL.

CRIB: The secret of much wisdom.

CRICKET: A game where even a funk is often "bowled."

CROCODILE: An ancient-looking saurian composed mainly of teeth. (From the Fr. Croc—old; o—of; dile—face. "Old of face.")

CRUET: An article containing the "condiments" of the "season."

CRUDE: All other articles in this mag.

Solutions to Puzzles

1. The salt-sprinkler, being airtight except for the one hole, lets out only one or two drops of sauce, as there was no inlet for the air. If the guest had dropped the sauce out gently, the air would have flowed in as the sauce came out; but he held the thing absolutely upside down, and the sauce inside couldn't flow out.

2. O.F. merely pulled the plug out of the bath and waited very comfortably to be rescued. The out-flow of water equalled the in-flow, and so the water did not rise above the level of the bath. R.R. should have stopped up the waste-pipe, but he forgot all about it. Serve the scoundrel right!

MAKE PUNISHMENT A PLEASURE.

You will BEND OVER as easily and as naturally as you could wish if you keep your joints supple with

PONGO PLASTER (Advt.)

SEZ YOU!

Have you heard the story of the barber who always gave fellows ghost yarns to read while cutting their hair?

That ass Church gives us some

PEPIGRAMS

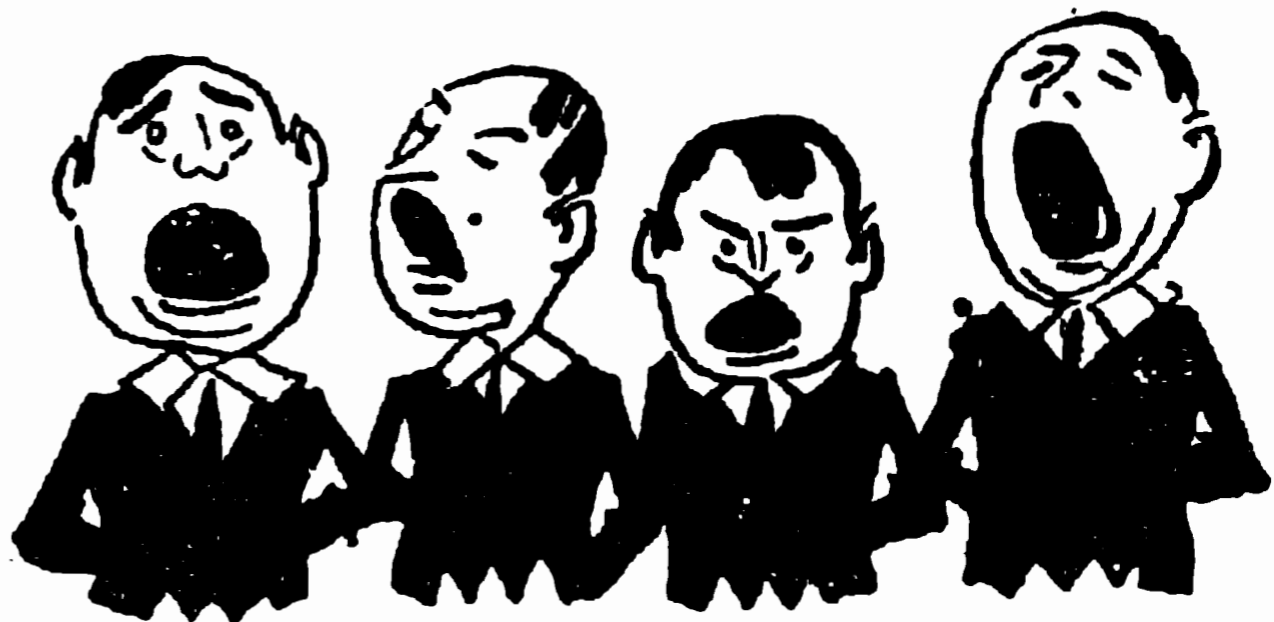
TIMOTHY TUCKER is now collecting donations for his great scheme to "help the black and negroid races of the world to an equal civilisation with the white." He tells us heartrending stories of the burdens borne by the blacks. Evidently a case of "weighed down upon the Swanee River."

He says that it is his ambition to make their lives helpful and industrious, and to do away with the barbarous customs they hold now. Having attended a performance of Crispin's Coloured Coons during the vac, I can assure him that their customs aren't half so barbarous as their jokes.

The lights on Handy's Morris failed to function the other evening, and a crowd of Remove fellows gathered round to help him put them in order. I am sorry to say, though, that many hands didn't make the lights work.

In the end, of course, Handy had to take the car to a lamp specialist in Bannington, and when he received the bill, he said it was the first time he really understood what was meant by the "charge of the Light Brigade."

The stew at dinner yesterday was admittedly bad, but that doesn't justify Handy referring to it as a "stewpid meal." Puns like that ought to be prohibited. It's stew bad!



The Vivian Travers Glee Singers gave a concert in the Common-room on Monday, and sang well—considering. Mac remarked that he supposed the secret of glee-singing was to make the funniest face possible, and to scream for all you are worth on a top note. The singing did not give the audience much glee.

However, what says the poet Burns: "The best-made screams of mice and men oft sang a glee!" Phew! If I make any more jokes like that, I shall get frightened.

LEAK.

Western burst
noon
S.O.S.
Please come

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man!"

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wretch?

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the 23rd

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was done.

tern burst,

S.O.S.

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JACK GREY.

vious column.)

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Boom! Boom!

Boom!

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the ground until

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to write a really

something that has

ore. Look out for

miss it, I'll never

STORIES.)

The Monster of Moat Hollow!

(Continued from page 20.)

"I'm going to see him now; but I doubt if it'll be any good," replied his father. "My agents have met with a blank refusal."

The earl was admitted at once, and he was surprised to find that one room at least was already comfortably furnished, and a genial fire was blazing.

"This is a great delight, Lord Edgemore," said the doctor smoothly. "You must excuse the disorder. I am as yet in the throes of moving in. You are a good landlord; you come soon to see your tenant."

"I have come because I am hoping that you will consider an offer I have in mind," said the earl. "When my agents leased you this property they did not know that I had other plans in mind. I am not doubting the legality of the agreement—"

"Offers do not interest me," interrupted Dr. Ragozin firmly. "I am here—and I stay. I am sorry, but I listen to no offers."

"I am prepared to make full compensation—"

"You offer me a thousand — two thousand—and it is no good," said the doctor, with a shrug. "Money, it is no object to me. You do not tempt me, Lord Edgemore. For months I have been looking for such a quiet house as this—a house which would be good for my private zoo. This place, it is ideal. A house to itself, private grounds and an excellent high wall which surrounds it completely. Even if I had had it built especially, it could not have been better. You understand?"

"You informed my agents, no doubt, that you intended to—"

"You speak of the zoo?" broke in Dr. Ragozin, with a laugh. "Oh, yes! That was all understood. Your agents offered no objections to my plan, Lord Edgemore. You cannot catch me there."

"My dear sir, I am not attempting to catch you," said Lord Edgemore, somewhat annoyed. "This old place has been vacant for so long that my agents were instructed to secure a tenant at any cost. By that I mean that I raised no objection regarding the use to which the house should be put. So you are starting a private zoo? Well, that is interesting."

"I have great plans—wonderful plans," said Dr. Ragozin, pacing up and down. "Here, in the quietness of this old house, shall I make the great experiments of which I have dreamed. I will tell you in confidence, Lord Edgemore, that my work

will be of amazing value to science. Later, you will understand. I am glad that I have at last settled down. As for your offer that I shall get out—no. I cannot listen. Here I shall shut myself up—completely. None shall interfere—none shall interrupt. The village people may call me queer, but I care not. I have privacy—and I shall carry on with my great work."

And there was such a note of finality in his voice that Lord Edgemore accepted his dismissal. The treasure hunt, it seemed, was definitely "off."

CHAPTER 13.

A Mysterious Attack!

BY nightfall the last of the pantech-nicons had unloaded and had gone. The other vans—presumably cages—were left within the grounds. The great boarded gates were closed and locked; and Moat Hollow, so to speak, withdrew into its shell.

Naturally, the advent of Dr. Franz Ragozin was the chief topic of conversation in the village, and the good people were by no means pleased. The man was a foreigner—and they instinctively distrusted him.

Nelson Lee happened to be in the village that evening, and he heard many comments about Moat Hollow's new tenant.

"It wouldn't be so bad if he conducted his household in an ordinarily Christian way," said the vicar, whom Lee happened to meet in the village street. "I, of course, have no prejudice against foreigners, Mr. Lee. Why should I have? But this man is—well, when I called upon him this afternoon he brusquely told me that he is not interested in my church, and he as good as hinted that he never wants to see me again. He was most rude."

"I should rather like to meet Dr. Ragozin," said Lee slowly.

"I can assure you that you will not obtain any pleasure from such a meeting," said the Rev. Goodchild. "I can understand the man shutting himself up behind those high walls—particularly if he is starting a private zoo. But even that seems grotesque, to my mind. Frankly, Mr. Lee, I don't like the idea at all. Supposing some of his wretched animals escape?"

"That is hardly likely," smiled Lee.

"There are no womenfolk there at all—no ordinary servants, by what I can hear," went on the vicar severely. "There is a man named Hess—Ivan Hess, a Pole.

I understand that he was formerly a lion-tamer in a circus. A most repulsive-looking fellow."

"And yet, Mr. Goodchild, it is perfectly natural that Dr. Ragozin should have a keeper for his animals," said Lee gently.

"H'm! Quite—quite," admitted the vicar grudgingly. "Then there is another man—Ridley, his name is. He is the butler, and I am told that he treats his master with insolent familiarity. A really remarkable household, Mr. Lee."

Nelson Lee was not particularly interested in the village gossip—and the vicar was a very great sinner where gossip was concerned—although he would have been highly indignant if anyone had told him so.

Nelson Lee walked back to St. Frank's alone, in the gloom of the winter's evening. He paused outside Moat Hollow, inspecting the walls with interest. There were high spikes all along the top, and he noticed that many of these spikes were new. Some of them had become broken and twisted during the months that the old place had been unoccupied. Dr. Ragozin had had them renewed.

"You are interested, sir?" asked a voice suddenly.

A beam of light shot out from an electric torch, revealing Lee clearly. A man approached from the shadows of the gateway, and behind the torch-beam Lee could see the impressive face of Dr. Ragozin.

"Am I different from other people?" returned Nelson Lee, amused by the man's dramatic move. "I think I am talking to Dr. Franz Ragozin?"

"And I am talking to Mr. Nelson Lee—the headmaster of St. Frank's," said the other curtly. "You look at my walls, and you pause. You think I am doing something wrong—yes?"

Nelson Lee laughed.

"I am on the public highway, Dr. Ragozin, and it is my privilege to pause for as long as I please," he said dryly. "I am interested in your walls—yes. I understand that you have a private zoo——"

"You will understand that I shall suffer no interference!" interrupted Dr. Ragozin in a low voice, as he stepped nearer. "What I am doing is honest—open. You interfere with me at your peril!"

Nelson Lee did not move a hair.

"And what makes you suppose, Dr. Ragozin, that I have any intention of interfering?" he asked steadily. "Don't you think you are somewhat foolish?"

The mockery in his voice was biting.

Dr. Ragozin took a step backwards, and bowed stiffly.

"I apologise, sir," he said. "You will forgive me, I trust. But these village people, they get on my nerves. They think I am doing something wrong here. Yet what is there wrong in a private zoo? I am a scientist—a doctor—and I have great plans. I do not want people prying."

"If you shut yourself up behind high walls, Dr. Ragozin, you must expect people to be inquisitive," retorted Nelson Lee.

Without another word he turned on his heel and walked up the lane. He was rather intrigued by the man's outburst. Clearly Dr. Ragozin was alarmed. He was alarmed by the mere fact that Lee had paused and inspected the walls. And he knew, moreover, that Lee was something more than a schoolmaster.

"A private zoo?" murmured Nelson Lee sceptically. "Perhaps—and perhaps not. I think I am going to be interested in Dr. Franz Ragozin."

He had reached a point half-way up the lane, when a black figure suddenly merged from a gap in the hedge. Nelson Lee halted, some instinct warning him of danger.

Thud!

The automatic in the man's hand spurted fire, and the Maxim silencer prevented any loud report.

Nelson Lee fell like a log, for the automatic had been fired at point-blank range—straight for his heart!

CHAPTER 14.

A Lucky Escape!

"WHAT was that?" asked Nipper quickly.

He was with a small crowd of other Removites—Skeets, Handforth & Co., Travers, and a few more. They were on their way to the village—on the off-chance that they would hear something further about Moat Hollow's new tenant.

They had all heard that faint "thud," and Nipper at least had seen a flash of ruddy light in the distance.

"It sounded like a muffled back-fire, I guess," said Skeets.

"Don't think I'm getting nervy, but I'll swear it was the report of a silenced automatic pistol," said Nipper grimly. "There's no mistaking that sound—once you've heard it."

"Great Scott!"

"But who the dickens——"

"Don't ask questions—come!" urged Nipper, breaking into a run.

He was in the lead, and suddenly he checked, for he saw, lying in the road ahead, a still, black figure.

"I knew it!" he panted. "Hold on, you chaps! There's been foul play! Oh! It's—it's the guv'nor!"

A note of anguish had come into his voice. Bending down over that still figure, he had flashed on an electric torch, and instantly he had recognised Nelson Lee. The schoolmaster-detective was lying face upwards, just as he had fallen, and his eyes were half-open—and staring. His overcoat—just over the heart—showed a deep, jagged tear.

"He's dead! They've killed him!" said Nipper in horror. "Guv'nor! Guv'nor!"

"Take it easy, old son!" muttered Handforth, and his own voice was shaky. "Oh, who could have done it!"

"Wait—wait!" exclaimed Nipper, with sudden hope. "My hat! He's breathing, you chaps—he's still alive! Hold this light, Tommy!"

With trembling fingers Nipper opened the unconscious detective's overcoat and jacket. Then he unfastened the waistcoat, expecting to see a wound in the chest. He was staggered—and overjoyed—to find no trace of a wound. Not even a blood-stain. Something rattled in the waistcoat pocket.

"Oh!" breathed Nipper, in a choking voice.

He pulled from the waistcoat pocket the smashed and twisted wreckage of a watch—and a flattened-out bullet.

"It's a miracle!" said Nipper huskily. "Don't you understand, you chaps? The bullet went straight for his heart—but his watch was in the way! His watch saved him!"

"But—but he's in a bad way, all the same," muttered Handforth.

"The force of that bullet was like a terrific punch over the heart—and that's enough to knock anybody out," said Nipper. "Guv'nor! Thank heaven you're alive!"

He roughly tore aside Nelson Lee's shirt and vest, and an ugly bruise was revealed. By this time Travers had been to the ditch, and he had returned with a capful of water. It was his idea to sprinkle some of the water into Nelson Lee's face. But Handforth snatched the cap, and he splashed the entire contents in one go. It was effective enough, for Lee almost immediately opened his eyes.

"Guv'nor!" said Nipper. "It's all right—you're not badly hurt. Buck up, sir!"

Within two minutes Nelson Lee had sufficiently recovered to get to his feet, although he was very shaky on his legs.

"No, I don't know who did it," he said, in answer to the eager questions. "A black shape suddenly appeared from the hedge, and the next second he fired at me point-blank. That's all I remember."

"Well, let's get along to the school," said Nipper earnestly. "Oh, the devils! They tried to kill you in cold blood!"

"I'll bet that those rotten Moat Hollow people did this," said Handforth fiercely.

Nelson Lee started, and he looked at Handforth hard; for, strangely enough, the same thought had occurred to him. But he was not so blunt as the aggressive leader of Study D.

"What makes you think that, Handforth?" he asked.

"There's something fishy about those people, sir," replied Handforth. "It's my firm belief they know something about that treasure—and they're after it! They're afraid that we shall get in first——"

"Treasure?" repeated Lee. "What on earth are you talking about?"

"You might as well know, guv'nor," said Nipper. "Skeets won't mind."

"Shucks! I should say not," said Skeets promptly. "I wanted to tell Mr. Lee, anyway."

And as they walked slowly back to the school, the boys assisting Lee, the story was told. Nelson Lee heard about that sheet of parchment which Handforth had found in Moat Hollow; he heard of the Edgemore treasure—and he learned that Moat Hollow was actually the old Traitor's Lodge.

"Yes, it all seems significant," agreed Nelson Lee at length. "I hope you boys will keep all this to yourselves. It is certainly strange that Dr. Ragozin should lease Moat Hollow so suddenly—immediately following the finding of that parchment."

"It's a simple case of putting two and two together, sir," said Nipper. "Ragozin is after that treasure!"

"And the worst of it is, we can't prevent him," said Skeets miserably. "He's the lawful tenant of Moat Hollow——"

"But he has no lawful right to Captain Humphrey's hoard," put in Nelson Lee. "If our theory is correct, we can understand why Dr. Ragozin is so intent upon secretiveness. He knows perfectly well that if he locates that treasure, and keeps it for himself, he will be committing a crime. But how can we stop him? Within the privacy of those grounds he can dig and search to his heart's content. I shall have to see Lord Edgemore about this. In the meantime, boys, we must all keep our own counsel. Perhaps we are wrong—perhaps Dr. Ragozin is merely eccentric."



Running down the lane, the boys saw a still figure stretched across the path. Nipper gave a groan of anguish as he recognised Nelson Lee!

"We must certainly not jump to hasty conclusions."

But the boys were thoroughly satisfied in their own minds that Dr. Franz Ragozin was bent upon locating the Edgemore treasure.

CHAPTER 15.

Handforth On the Job!

"LOOK here, Handy——"

"Rats!"

"But it's absolutely dotty——"

"I don't care about that," interrupted Handforth. "If you chaps don't like to come, you can jolly well stay behind! But I'm going to investigate—and I'm going now!"

There was a stubborn note in his voice, and Church and McClure were filled with alarm. Handforth had cunningly fallen behind just as Nelson Lee and the others had entered the school. Church and

McClure, half suspecting his object, fell behind, too.

"I'm going down to Moat Hollow," insisted Handforth, "and I'm going to have a look round. There's no time like the present—and it's as clear as daylight that those blighters tried to kill Mr. Lee. Perhaps I shall be able to get hold of a clue."

His chums groaned.

"It's madness," said Church. "You'll be collared, as sure as a gun—and then those people will know that we suspect them."

"Rot! I can take care of myself," replied Handforth, with supreme confidence.

He would not listen to any arguments against the enterprise; he was striding briskly down the lane. Church and McClure were more or less helpless. If they left him to go back for the others he would certainly go on alone—and that would be fatal. So they could do nothing but accompany him.

In their hearts, too, they were just as keen as he was. There wasn't the slightest shred of evidence that the mysterious man who had shot at Nelson Lee was in any way connected with Moat Hollow. But the boys were not concerned with evidence. By now

they were satisfied that Dr. Ragozin was a "wrong 'un."

They did not approach Moat Hollow in the ordinary way. Just before they reached the bend of the lane they plunged into the wood, and from here it was possible to approach the back wall of the property secretly. There was a little door set in the wall here, although it was any odds that it would be locked and bolted. But there were handy trees, too, and they knew that they would be able to get over the wall.

To such agile youngsters, the task was not difficult. Reaching the wall, which was black and shadowy on this side, Church "made a back," and Handforth, scrambling up, just managed to reach the top of the wall. He hauled himself up, avoiding the treacherous broken glass. He grasped the metal spikes, which, far from affording a protection, assisted any unlawful climber.

"Good enough!" breathed Handforth. "You chaps can wait there."

"Not likely," hissed Church. "You rotter! Give us a hand up. We're going with you."

"Oh, all right!"

Handforth did not quite approve of this plan, but he made no objections. Reaching down, he assisted his chums to the top of the wall. From here they could see into the gloomy grounds. The house rose shadowy and sinister beyond, and only two chinks of light were showing from behind the curtained windows of a back room. There was an absolute silence.

Yet, while the boys stood watching, undecided for a few moments what to do next, Church fancied he heard a curious slither, and almost immediately afterwards he could have sworn that the sound of a creaking door came to his ears. But the wind was blowing through the leafless trees of the wood, close at hand, and it was impossible to be certain.

"Come on," whispered Handforth.

He lowered himself, and then dropped. The others did the same. They landed noiselessly in the soft earth near the inner side of the wall. Then, cautiously, they commenced making their way across the wilderness of ground towards the house.

So far, it seemed, they had been unobserved.

They would have been astonished if they had known that Dr. Franz Ragozin, standing well back behind one of the upper windows of the house, was watching their every movement through a pair of powerful night-glasses! He had been warned of their intrusion—and now he was waiting. Something interesting would happen soon—and with an almost fiendish pleasure, the doctor waited.

The boys had paused. Handforth, in fact, had had a sudden idea. He was rather celebrated for sudden ideas.

"Just a minute, you chaps," he breathed. "I've thought of something. You remember that plan on the old parchment? Well, I believe it's a plan of this garden."

"Never mind that now," murmured Church. "You can't be sure—"

"I'm going to have a look, anyhow," whispered Handforth. "We're safe enough—there's not a soul about."

He was famous for his recklessness. He had that sheet of old parchment on him—for he claimed that it was his property, and Skeets had been rash enough to let him keep it for the time being. Handforth now pulled it out with eager fingers, and at the same time he switched on an electric torch.

"Put that out!" hissed Mac. "Oh, you idiot!"

"It's all right—I'm only taking a quick look," said Handforth coolly. "H'm! I'm not so sure, after all."

He had flashed the light upon the parchment, and was trying to compare that plan with the general lay-out of the Moat Hollow grounds.

And at that upper window, Dr. Ragozin uttered an audible gasp. Through his night-glasses he could see Handforth & Co. as distinctly as though they were within a couple of yards of him. He saw that parchment clearly—he could even detect the faint lines of the crudely-drawn plan. The next second Handforth had stuffed the parchment into his pocket, and the torch had been extinguished.

CHAPTER 16.

The Monster!

"ASKING for trouble—that's what it is," whispered Church uneasily. "Thank goodness you've put that torch out, Handy."

"Cheese it! I only switched it on for a tick," said Handforth. "I shall have to come along in the day-time—and compare that plan with the grounds. We'd better creep up to the house, and get as close as we can to that lighted window. We might be able to overhear something."

"Wait!" breathed McClure. "What's—that's that rummy noise?"

They all halted, holding their breath. The wind was stronger now, and it was whistling through the tree-tops, near at hand. But there was another sound—a queer, shuffling, slithering sound.

"It's—it's over there—in that black corner," muttered Church.

They listened again; and now, with queer tingling sensations running up and down their spines, they heard heavy breathing.

Before they could move the shuffling noise came nearer, and Handforth jumped as he felt something soft and hairy brush against his arm. Then, with a gulp in his throat, he saw that a queer Shape was right alongside him.

"Look out!" he panted.

Click!

He switched on his torch, and, in the same moment, all three boys gave a yell of consternation. For a brief second they

saw the Thing—a smallish creature, smaller than themselves, but enormously broad in the shoulders. It was covered with long, coarse hair, and the arms were of grotesque length. The face was animal-like: horrible and repulsive. They saw the little eyes gleaming, the open mouth with the yellow fangs—and then one of those long arms shot out, and the torch was tossed out of Handforth's grip.

"Run!" yelled Church wildly.

Even Handforth knew better than to stay behind and test his strength against that awful monster. It resembled a gorilla—and yet, at the same time, it was curiously like a human being.

As Handforth ran he felt a grip on his arm; he half-turned, panting with fear. With a frantic effort he managed to free himself, and he could hear the shuffling and slithering of the thing as it came after him, heard, too, a curious muttering growl. Desperately Handforth pelted on, terrified by the monster that pursued him.

How the three boys reached the wall they could never remember. How they scrambled up to safety was even more dim. Somehow or other they leapt, they gripped the top of the wall; perhaps one of them had "made a back," but they never quite recalled those details. They only knew that they reached safety—Church with a cut finger and Handforth with a torn and bleeding wrist.

And down below them shuffled that awful monster, sniffing like a great dog, growling ominously. Only by their frantic speed had they escaped the clutches of the gorilla-like creature.

They dropped heavily to the ground and ran. And they did not stop running until they reached the open road. Here, to their joy, they beheld the lights of an approaching car, and they stood back. They could hear voices, too—people were walking up the lane from the village. It was good to have this human companionship. They were back in the world of realities.

"Oh, my hat!" panted Handforth. "I—I thought it was all up with us."

"What was it—a gorilla?" muttered Church. "I say, we shall have to keep this dark, you know. We shall get into awful trouble if Old Wilkey hears about it. We were trespassing, don't forget."

"And that rotten doctor has a perfect right to let his animals loose in the garden if he wants to," added Mac. "By jingo! Never again! I've had enough of Moat Hollow to last me a life-time!"

CHAPTER 17.

Bertram the Bear!

"**M**OAT HOLLOW?" said Willy Handforth thoughtfully. "I wonder!"

He was with Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon in the village; the three Third-Formers had just emerged from the

confectioner's, having regaled themselves upon cream buns and chocolate eclairs.

"Bother Moat Hollow," said Chubby. "Your major seems to be as keen as mustard on the place, and some of those other Remove chaps are hot, too. But what do we care?"

"I don't expect you to care about anything except your tummy," retorted Willy, with scorn. "But I care, my son! I don't know much about Dr. Ragozin, but he seems to be a queer fish, by all accounts. I don't like this wheeze of his."

"That private zoo, you mean?" asked Juicy Lemon.

"Yes," said Willy. "If there's any monkey business at Moat Hollow—if any of those animals are being badly treated—I'm going to have something to say."

"Go hon!" laughed Chubby. "And who's going to take any notice of you?"

Willy was silent. He had a passionate love for all animals; in fact, he had an uncanny power over them. Wild creatures which would not approach ordinary people, allowed Willy to fondle them.

And when it came to private zoos, Willy had one of his own at St. Frank's. Half his spare time was spent in looking after his numerous pets. Naturally enough, therefore, the activities of Dr. Franz Ragozin interested him vastly.

It was rather unfortunate that Dr. Ragozin should choose that particular minute to put a little plan of his into operation. He knew that people in the village were talking of the zoo, and, as it was still early in the evening, he thought it advisable to provide a little local colour. It was just as well that the villagers should have something definite to talk about.

So the doctor was now ready—waiting till he heard voices outside in the lane. He had a whip—and he had something else.

Willy & Co., walking along the road, saw a couple of Farmer Holt's labourers coming towards them. The two men were hurrying past the high wall of Moat Hollow, as though they were in some fear of the place. And they were talking loudly.

Then, sharp and clear, came the crack of a whip—and an angry voice.

"Down, you brute—down!" came the voice. "Here, Hess! Bring that light nearer. We've got to get this animal back in his cage. He's dangerous."

The men outside almost broke into a run. Dr. Ragozin chuckled to himself. It was very important that the rumour should get about that dangerous animals were loose within the grounds of Moat Hollow.

But Willy & Co. were out there, too! And Willy was going hot and cold. The slash of that whip infuriated him. For it meant that some poor creature was being hurt.

"Come on!" snapped Willy. "We're going to have a look at this."

"But—but—" began Chubby.

Willy took no notice. The doctor's harsh voice was sounding again, and the ominous cracking of that whip was all too apparent. Certainly, Dr. Ragozin had achieved his object—he had set some of the villagers talking. But he had not anticipated any such move from those three fags.

They were like monkeys; they threw themselves at that high wall, clutching and clawing, and Willy was the first to pull himself up to the top of the protective fence, at the summit. For here an additional wooden fence had been built all along the top of the wall.

Juicy Lemon succeeded in getting up, but Chubby was not so fortunate—until he managed to claw hold of one of Willy's legs, and, thus helped, he performed the feat.

Willy's eyes were glowing—dangerously.

For now that he was at the top of the wall, he could see beyond. A lantern was standing on the ground, and near by Dr. Ragozin, whip in hand, was cruelly lashing at a smallish black animal which crouched down, emitting whimpering grunts.

"Oh, the cad!" panted Willy. "The brute!"

"What—what is it?" whispered Juicy.

"I don't know—a bear, by the look of it," said Willy. "But what does it matter? That brute is torturing it. Come on—both of you!"

His chums knew better than to disobey. Willy took a flying leap, and landed on the inner side of the wall.

Thud! Thud!

Immediately afterwards, Chubby and Juicy landed, too. Dr. Ragozin, hearing, turned sharply. His eyes were blazing with sudden anger. For the second time within half an hour, St. Frank's boys had invaded his privacy. This was altogether too much! And he had been congratulating himself only that evening that the high walls surrounding Moat Hollow were impregnable.

"Hey! What are you kids doing?" he shouted angrily. "Who told you to jump —" He pulled himself up with a jerk, realising that, in his fury, he had been speaking perfectly normal English, without a trace of accent. "You come without permission!" he went on, now using a pronounced accent. "You think you play about as you like, yes?"

"You coward!" shouted Willy. "Come on, you chaps."

Recklessly the three fags hurled themselves upon Dr. Ragozin. The man was not expecting that charge; he was not ready. Over he went, like a ninepin, and half the breath was knocked out of him by the violence of his fall.

"Poor little beggar!" said Willy tenderly.

He had picked up the furry, black creature in his arms, and it whimpered pitifully, snuggling close.



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.

WHAT "NECK'ST"?

Tommy: "Mummy, did you tell Mrs. Jones that your hair is permanently waved?"

Mother: "Yes, dear. Why?"

Tommy: "Well, can I have my neck permanently washed?"

(N. Beard, 17, Boyer Street, Derby, has been awarded a handsome watch.)

MISSING.

1st Fireman: "Where's the fire?"

2nd Fireman: "There isn't one."

1st Fireman: "But you said the fire-bell had gone."

2nd Fireman: "So it has—someone's pinched it."

(K. Tinsley, 96, St. Peter's Avenue, Cleethorpes, has been awarded a penknife.)

A BIGGER PORTION.

Willie: "Do your glasses magnify, grandma?"

Grandma: "Of course."

Willie: "Will you please take them off when you cut my piece of cake?"

(A. Herningbrough, 4, Oatland Place, Leeds, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

NEXT IN NUMBER.

Jim: "I nearly saw your father to-day."

Jack: "What do you mean?"

Jim: "He is P.C. Ninety-nine and I saw P.C. Ninety-eight."

(D. Roxburgh, 72, Causeyside Street, Paisley, has been awarded a penknife.)

HE WAS BALD.

"And of which of your boyhood's ambitions has been realised most completely?" asked the interviewer.

"When I was young," replied the celebrity, "I wished I hadn't any hair to brush."

(A. Worwood, 95, Springcroft Road, Hall Green, Birmingham, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

STRETCHING A POINT.

The teacher had asked his pupils to name a few long words, and instantly up shot a forest of hands.

"Please, sir, 'procrastinate,'" cried one bright youngster.

CHUBBY HEATH, scared by what he and his fellow fags had done, looked round nervously.

"Come on, Willy!" he muttered. "We can't stop here. They'll be on us in a tick!"

Willy looked round.

"Who cares?" he snapped. "The brute! Whipping this poor thing and torturing it!"

In his present state of mind he was ready to face a dozen angry men. The ill-treating of dumb animals always made him "see red." And the very instant he took that tame bear into his arms he knew that it was as harmless as a kitten. In other words, there wasn't the slightest excuse for Dr. Ragozin's brutality. Willy, of course, did not know that Dr. Ragozin had been applying that whip with an ulterior motive—so that the rustics, beyond the wall, should get the impression that dangerous wild animals were loose in the grounds.

"Poor little thing," muttered Willy, stroking the bear. "It's only a cub."

It was fortunate, perhaps, that Ivan Hess had gone indoors, and now there was no sign of the gorilla-like monster which had attacked Edward Oswald Handforth and his chums.

Dr. Ragozin, very winded, was trying to get to his feet.

"You—you interfering young puppies!" he snarled. "Get out of here! You hear me—

yes? Go! I have the police on you for the trespass!"

"Unless you're jolly careful, I'll have the police on you—for cruelty to animals!" retorted Willy. "Do you think I'm afraid of you?"

Dr. Ragozin did not. Something in Willy's tone almost scared him. The boy was a mere youngster—a fag—but he was nevertheless endowed with a strange authority in the righteousness of his wrath.

Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon, standing by, were breathless with wonder.

"You try to use that whip of yours on me!" went on Willy defiantly. "Go on—I dare you! I had an idea all along that you were a fake and a fraud—and now I know it."

Dr. Ragozin gulped.

"Boy, you talk too much!" he said thickly. "You go—yes?"

"I'm going—it makes me feel ill to be anywhere near you!" retorted Willy contemptuously. "Come on, you chaps!"

Willy walked boldly to the great gates, and it was some seconds before Dr. Franz Ragozin realised that Willy was taking the bear cub with him. The fags reached the gates, and Willy shot back the bolts of the little wicket. Willy saw no reason why he should make an ignominious exit over the wall. Far better to go sedately, by the wicket gate.

"Very good," said the teacher. "And now you, Tommy Tucker. What have you thought of?"

"Elastic," replied Tommy.

"That is not a very long word," remarked the teacher.

"No, sir; but you can stretch it."

(*E. Longhurst, 106, Hargate Lane, West Bromwich, has been awarded a pocket wallet.*)

WRONG ALL THE TIME.

A kind old gentleman met a little boy who was crying pathetically.

"Why are you crying, my little man?" he asked.

"I don't know what to do," sobbed the boy. "Mother won't let me stand on my head, and father grumbles because I wear out my boots."

(*Miss Enid Fryers, 5, The Triangle, Teignmouth, has been awarded a penknife.*)

A FORTNIGHT OLDER.

Manager (to smart-looking boy who has just called to see him): "Didn't I tell you, when you called a fortnight ago, that I wanted an older boy?"

Smart-looking Boy: "You did, sir; and that's why I've come back again."

(*S. Samborne, Timsbury House, Timsbury, Nr. Bath, has been awarded a pocket wallet.*)



A GOOD GUESS.

Johnny: "I think my drum annoys the man next door."

Bertie: "How do you know?"

Johnny: "Well, he gave me a penknife this morning and asked me if I knew what was inside my drum."

(*D. Berry, 23, High Street, Ipswich, has been awarded a penknife.*)

THE END OF THE WEEK.

Schoolmaster: "This makes the fifth time that I have punished you this week. What have you to say?"

Pupil: "I'm glad it's Friday, sir."

(*G. Rankin, P.O. Box 202, Georgetown, Demerara, British Guiana, has been awarded a useful prize.*)

NOT MUCH SOUP.

Diner: "Waiter, you've given me a wet plate."

Waiter: "That's your soup, sir."

(*J. Burden, 44, Kimmel Street, Princes Park, Liverpool, has been awarded a penknife.*)

A MINOR MISTAKE.

Lady (to boy who has been pulled out of the lake by park-keeper): "My dear boy, how did you come to fall in?"

Boy: "I did not come to fall in. I came to fish."

(*N. Pearce, P.O. Walmer, Port Elizabeth, S. Africa, has been awarded a useful prize.*)

"Come back, you!" almost screamed Dr. Ragozin. "You take one of my animals! Hi! Hess! Hess! These boys, they steal!"

By this time Willy & Co. were out in the road, and Chubby and Juicy, at least, were mightily thankful to get out in safety.

"I say, chuck it!" whispered Chubby. "You can't take that bear, Willy! It's not yours!"

"You bet it's mine!" retorted Willy promptly. "Bertram the Bear—my new pet!"

"Crumbs!" said Juicy, in admiration and awe.

Dr. Ragozin appeared in the little opening of the wicket.

"You come back with that bear!" he panted. "You hear me? You insolent boys!"

"I'm taking this bear cub to a place where it will be looked after kindly," retorted Willy, with the utmost coolness. "I'm not making any mystery about it. I'm taking Bertram to St. Frank's."

"Bertram!" stuttered Dr. Ragozin.

"That's what I've christened him—Bertram," replied Willy, nodding. "I'm taking him to St. Frank's—and if you care to come and fetch him, it's up to you."

"I come—now!" shouted the doctor. "I see your master—I tell him all!"

"I dare you to!" said Willy scornfully. "Come, if you want to—and blow you! But it's only fair for me to warn you that if you show yourself near St. Frank's, you'll have half the Third Form on you. By the time the Third has finished with you, you brute, you won't be recognisable as a human being! Just show yourself within the gates of St. Frank's—that's all! I'm telling you straight from the shoulder. You can have your bear if you come and fetch him."

"You—you—you—— I have the police on you for thieving!" shrieked the infuriated man.

But Willy had turned on his heel, and without any hurry he walked off. Chubby and Juicy wanted to run, and they were amazed at their leader's self-control. But Willy was right. Dr. Ragozin, after a moment's hesitation, went back into the grounds of Moat Hollow and slammed the wicket gate.

"Thought so," said Willy calmly.

"How—how the dickens did you know that he wouldn't come after us?" gasped Chubby. "My only sainted aunt! You're a mivvy, Willy!"

"I knew he wouldn't come—because he daren't," replied Willy. "After the way he treated this poor little beggar, he's scared. First blood to us, my sons! We've had a brush with Dr. Ragozin, and we come away with the honours!"

Within the grounds of Moat Hollow, Dr. Ragozin was rapidly cooling down. An idea had come to him. He would not take any action—yet.

Willy Handforth's seizure of that bear cub had given the doctor an excellent excuse to visit the school—and there was something at the school of far more importance than a bear cub!

CHAPTER 18.

War Declared!

"A MONSTER?" said Nipper, staring. "That's what I said—a monster," replied Handforth breathlessly. "And when I say a monster, I mean a monster."

"Good gad!" murmured Archie Glen-thorne. "I believe he's trying to tell us that he has seen a monster."

They were in the Ancient House lobby—Handforth & Co. and Nipper and Skeets and Travers and a few others. The chums of Study D had just returned, and they were full of their startling adventure.

"We thought we might be able to get hold of a clue, or something," said Handforth vaguely. "Anyhow, we climbed over that high wall, and we dropped into the grounds."

Seeing that some of the boys present were not "in the know," he realised that he had better not say anything about the Edgemore treasure or the attack on Nelson Lee. Lee had distinctly asked the boys to keep that incident to themselves. Still, there was no reason why the fellows, as a whole, shouldn't know of that other affair.

"You were dotty, Handy," said Harry Gresham. "Everybody knows that the new tenant at Moat Hollow has got a private zoo of his own. It was just asking for trouble, climbing over that wall."

"The thing we saw was a sort of gorilla," said Church, with a little shiver. "We only saw it for a tick—and then it knocked the torch out of Handforth's hand."

"Yes, by George—I've lost that torch," said Handforth indignantly. "A jolly good one, too. It cost me eighteenpence."

"A gorilla?" said Nipper, with interest. "If you ask me, you were lucky to get away without being hurt."

"It looked like a gorilla—and yet it wasn't a gorilla," said Handforth, breathing hard. "It—it was almost human. A horrible creature! And there it was, loose in the grounds. That man ought to be put in prison."

"My dear chap, you were in the wrong, and the less you say about this business, the better," said Nipper. "Dr. Ragozin has a perfect right to loose his wild animals if he wants to. That's his concern. As long as they don't escape and menace the neighbourhood, he can do pretty well as he likes."

They were still discussing the exciting adventure when Willy & Co. arrived. A shout went up when the bear cub in Willy's arms was seen.

"Hallo! What's that?"



With the precious 'parchment in his hand, the intruder escaped from Handforth's grip and leapt towards the open window.

"What's Willy been up to now?"

"This is Bertram the Bear—my new pet," explained Willy coolly. "Don't back away, you asses! He's as harmless as a mouse."

And, to prove it, Willy fondled the cub—which was not so small, after all. It had grown exceedingly heavy on that walk up from the village. The bear was looking about him with twinkling little eyes, and seemed to be rather frightened. He snuggled closer to his new master.

"He may be safe with you—but I wouldn't like to take him in my arms," said Travers. "His teeth look sharp to me."

"Look here, Willy, my lad, you can't bring bears into the school," said Handforth sternly. "What's the idea? Where did you get that thing, anyway? Who gave you money to buy bears? Only this afternoon you told me that you were broke. In fact, you borrowed five bob——"

"Keep your hair on, Ted," said Willy. "I didn't buy this bear. I bagged it."

"You—what?" yelled his major.

"First blood!" explained Willy coolly.

"Allow me to present part of Dr. Ragozin's zoo!"

There was fresh excitement.

"Ye gods and little fishes!" gurgled Hand-

forth. "Do—do you mean to tell us that you boned that bear from Moat Hollow?"

"And why not?" retorted Willy. "That brute of a Ragozin was whipping the poor little beggar. I told him straight that if he likes to come to St. Frank's to get the bear back, he can come. But he'd better look out for himself!"

And Willy, helped by Chubby and Juicy, told the story.

"Well I'm jiggered!" said Handforth, at length. "Good old Willy!" He smacked Willy heartily on the back, nearly knocking him over. "Bravo! Well done!"

"Don't be so jolly pleased about it," growled Willy.

"Anybody who gets the better of Dr. Ragozin is my pal!" went on Handforth enthusiastically. "I'm dashed if I don't lend you another five bob, my son! We had an adventure at Moat Hollow, too. We saw a monster there——"

"Yes, we saw it," nodded Willy. "A horrible monster."

"You did?" yelled Handforth. "You didn't say anything about it——"

"I'm talking about Dr. Ragozin," interrupted Willy coldly. "If he isn't a monster, show me one!"

And he marched off to the pets' quarters, to prepare a new and comfortable home for Bertram.

The other fellows drifted away, and it was only natural, perhaps, that Nipper & Co. and Handforth & Co. should congregate in Study H, to compare notes with Skeets and Travers and Potts.

"I had an idea that we should soon come to grips with those Moat Hollow people," said Nipper keenly. "Now, you chaps, all this means something. First of all, that gorilla-thing which Handy saw. Then the whipping of that harmless bear. Don't forget the rustics who were outside at the time—Willy saw them."

"I don't quite get you," said Skeets, staring.

"Isn't it as plain as daylight that Dr. Ragozin is working a stunt?" asked Nipper, lowering his voice. "He wants to spread the impression that Moat Hollow is well protected—that, in fact, it is impregnable. He doesn't want people to pry upon him—so he is giving the neighbourhood an early scare."

"But—but why?" asked Tommy Watson.

"Because Dr. Ragozin isn't all he pretends to be," replied Nipper shrewdly. "He took that house immediately after that mysterious motor-car crash—after the disappearance of Tod Millar, the crook. And that old parchment came to light at that time, as the single sheet which Handforth found proves. Those people at Moat Hollow know something about that treasure—they're after it themselves. It's becoming clearer and clearer."

"Yes, and they tried to kill Mr. Lee!" said Skeets breathlessly. "They were afraid that he might get 'on' to them, eh?"

"That's the way I look at it, anyway," said Nipper. "There's going to be trouble soon, you chaps—and, what's more, we're going to see that Skeets and his pater aren't dished out of that treasure."

"Rather!" said Handforth eagerly. "We'll find it for ourselves—and we'll diddle those crooks!"

"But it won't be easy," said Nipper warningly. "They're dangerous—they'll stick at nothing. We shall have to go carefully, my sons—and never for a moment must we be off our guard."

"Yes, it's war—war to the knife," said Skeets, his eyes shining. "Gee! You fellows are sure swell! If only we can get hold of that treasure now, it'll mean salvation for dad!"

CHAPTER 19.

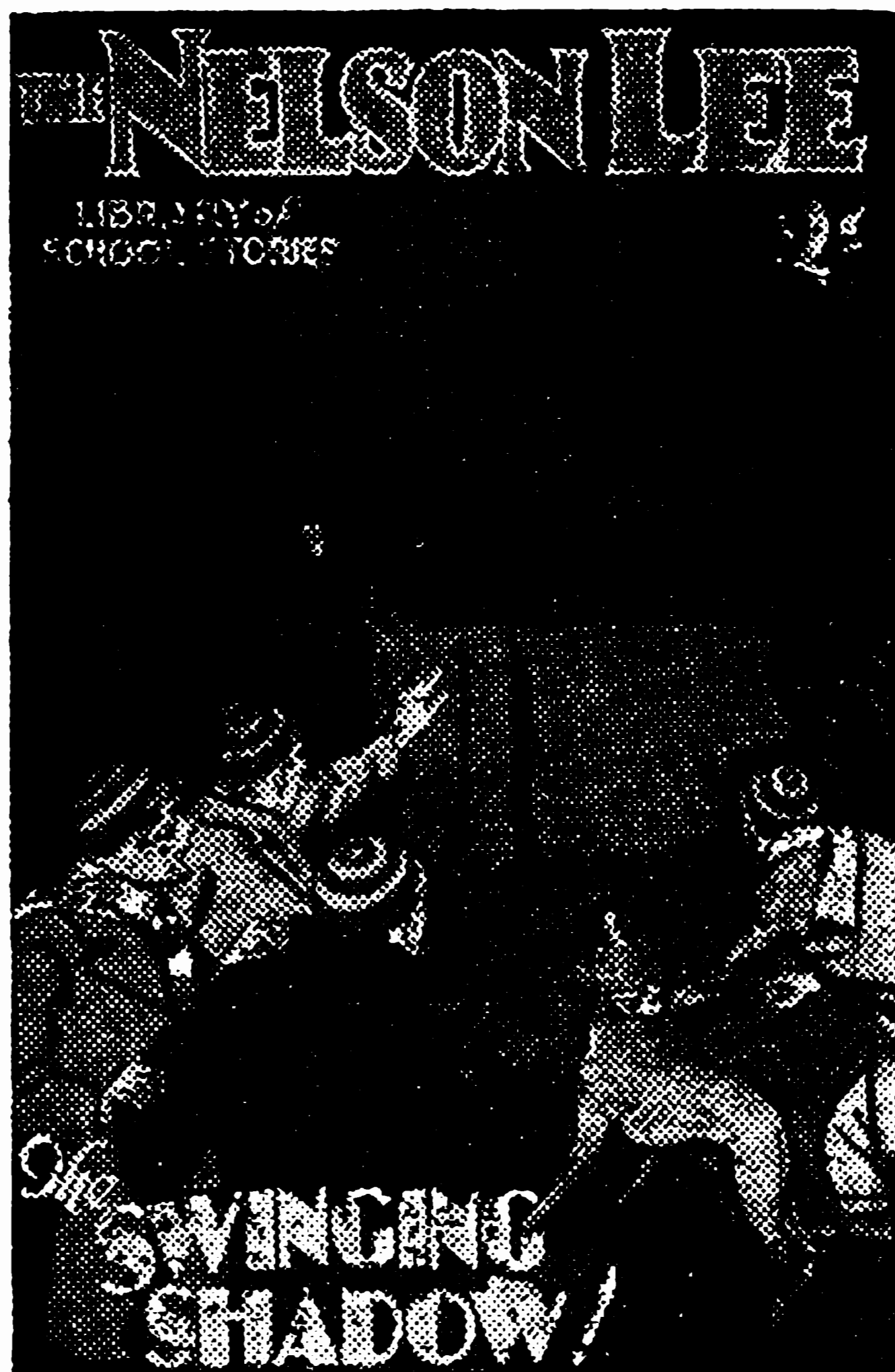
The Night Intruder!

HANDFORTH, of course, was full of wild and woolly ideas for immediate action, but after a lot of arguing he was prevailed upon to give them up. No good could come of any hasty raids on Moat Hollow.

That the treasure was somewhere within those grounds, nobody doubted. The old house had been built upon the site of Traitor's Lodge—and some of the original walls had been actually used. There were elements of intense drama here.

"If those people at Moat Hollow are after the treasure—and there doesn't seem much doubt about that—it stands to reason that they must have got hold of that old manuscript," said Handforth, in the dormitory that night. "And how could they have got hold of the manuscript? To all intents and purposes, Dr. Ragozin approached Lord Edgemore's agents in the ordinary way."

COMING NEXT WEDNESDAY!



"There's only one explanation," said Church. "That crook, Tod Millar, took the manuscript away with him when he escaped that night. But in the darkness he dropped one sheet—and you picked it up, Handy."

"That's the way I figure it out," replied Handforth keenly. "Tod Millar hasn't been seen since—and I'll bet my boots that he got in touch with Dr. Ragozin, and the whole thing is a plot. It was through Tod Millar that they got to know of the treasure; and they decided to go all out for it. And the first thing to do was to get hold of Moat Hollow."

"Which they did—leasing it for three years," growled McClure. "By jingo! They were pretty smart there."

"Isn't it rummy how things work out?"

asked Handforth, in wonder. "At the same time as all this happens, Lord Edgemore loses his money in a City crash!"

"Well, we can talk all night at this rate," said Church, yawning. "Let's get to sleep. Perhaps we shall be able to make some definite plan to-morrow."

"Meanwhile, those crooks are digging for the treasure," growled Handforth. "That's what worries me. They might locate it to-night—and vamoose."

But his chums scoffed. Hidden treasure was not so easily found. It might be weeks—months—before the hiding-place was discovered.

"THE ST. FRANK'S FORTUNE-HUNTERS!"

By E. S. BROOKS.

Professor Cyrus Zingrave again!

He has had a remarkable escape from death—and now he is out to thwart Nipper & Co. from gaining the lost Edgemore Treasure.

One clue the schoolboys have, but it is useless without the vital manuscript held by Zingrave himself. How they obtain it, only to lose it at the last moment; of the stirring events leading up to this dramatic climax, are told in next week's thrilling complete yarn of the Chums of St. Frank's.

"THE CITY OF GOLD!"

By HERBERT FORD.

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"HANDFORTH'S WEEKLY!"

"SMILERS!"

Prizes to be won every week in this feature. Have a shot to-day, chums.

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

"In fact, those beggars can't locate it at all—because they haven't got the vital sheet of the manuscript," said Church. "That's what you appear to forget, Handy. Where is that parchment, by the way?"

"Keep your hair on—it's in my jacket pocket," replied Handforth. "And it's perfectly safe there, too."

"I'm not so sure of that," said Church. "I think you ought to have given it to Old Wilkey, to put in his safe."

They dropped off to sleep at last; at least, Church and McClure did. Handforth would have been breaking bounds, if he had had his own way. His chums would not have slept so soundly if he had not given them his word that he would not go off somewhere on his own.

At last he dozed off, and then he fell into a fairly sound sleep—only it was disturbed by dreams of huge gorillas, and the gorillas, curiously enough, all bore a strong facial resemblance to Dr. Ragozin.

He awoke with a start, and immediately he was wide awake. This was unusual, for as a rule Handforth was very "thick" after awakening.

But to-night his mind was restless. He found himself staring at the dim ceiling. It wasn't moonlight, but the stars were shining, and the little dormitory was filled with the faint and almost imperceptible radiance. A wind was blowing across Handforth's face—and this it was, perhaps, which had awakened him.

He could not understand it, for the window had been nearly closed. Now, as he turned his head, he saw that it was standing wide open. Then he saw something else—something which caused him to stiffen. He had caught sight of a black object, passing between him and the window. It moved so silently, so stealthily, that for a moment he believed his imagination was playing tricks with him.

Then he heard a faint whisper of sound—the moving of clothes on the chair near his bed; and after that doubted if he had heard anything. But a second later all his doubts were dispelled. A crackle—a faint crumpling of something which sounded like paper—came to his ears.

And then Handforth knew.

The parchment! Somebody was in the room—some intruder—searching Handforth's clothing for that parchment! And, what was more, the search had been successful.

Handforth thought of that terrible monster, and for a second his heart failed him. Then he gripped himself, for if this intruder got away with the parchment—The thought caused Handforth to leap into action.

With one violent spring he was out of bed; so violent that the bed went slithering back, to crash against the next, in which Church was sleeping. Handforth was on the floor now, reaching out for that black shape he had seen. His fingers encountered something soft—something slightly warm and slithery.

"Hi! Lights!" he gasped. "Quick, you chaps! I've got him!"

A hissing breath sounded in his ear—and it was almost a snarl. At the same time, Handforth was dazed by the discovery he had just made. He was attempting to retain a grip upon a man's bare skin—skin, moreover, which was curiously greasy.

With a twisting movement the intruder escaped from Handforth's grip, and in one leap he was at the window. All three boys caught a brief glimpse of him. A lithe figure, naked except for a loin cloth. And he was preparing to leap to the ground—with that precious parchment clutched tightly in one hand.

CHAPTER 20.

Failure—and Success!

WITH a lightning-like spring, surprising in one so clumsy, Handforth reached the window. His hands clutched, and he grasped that greased, sinewy body.

"Quick!" he panted. "Come on, you chaps—I can't hold him!"

He was frantic with excitement and consternation—and not a little scared, too. There was something horribly mysterious and eerie in this night visitor; this creature which braved the wintry weather without any protection. And not a sound had the intruder uttered—which added to the mystery of it all.

With a quick half-turn the greased body snaked out of Handforth's grip. Church and McClure arrived a shade too late; not that they could have been of much service, in any case. That slippery figure would have eluded them with ease.

Down it went—in a clean, animal-like leap. Thud!

It struck the ground softly, and half-stumbled forward. Handforth & Co., leaning out of the window, saw distinctly—for there was a fair amount of starlight in the West Square.

They saw a shadowy figure appear, as though from nowhere. With one leap it was upon the escaping intruder, and the next moment the pair were engaged in a wild, scuffling fight. Handforth & Co., breathless with excitement, watched.

It was a quick tussle—quick because the greased Unknown was incapable of being held. The other figure clutched grimly, but all to no purpose. Suddenly the Unknown rolled clear, going over and over with amazing agility. Up he came to his feet, and then away—running like a hare. The other figure, picking himself up, stood irresolute. He knew, at once, that it was futile to attempt any chase.

A beam of light shot down from the window; for Handforth had suddenly remembered an electric torch—one which belonged to McClure. The chums of Study D gasped.

For they found themselves gazing upon a queer figure in rags and tatters—a man with untidy hair, a week's growth of beard, and shoes which gaped in holes.

"Come on—quick!" hissed Handforth. "We'll grab this one, anyway."

"Stay where you are, boys!" came a familiar voice—although somewhat breathless. "There's no earthly reason why you should grab me."

"Mr. Lee!" gurgled Handforth.

Even though the light was full upon Nelson Lee, Handforth & Co. failed to recognise their headmaster.

"Switch that light off, you young ass!" warned Lee. "Fortunately, this little disturbance has not alarmed anybody else."

"But—but what are you doing, sir—rigged out like that?" asked Handforth in

amazement. "And how did you come to be here——"

"This is neither the time nor the place for questions, young 'un," broke in Lee. "I'll only say that I was on the watch to-night, and I was fortunate enough to trail our greasy friend. I did not know—then—that he was coming to your dormitory. I hope he didn't scare you too much."

"But who was he, sir?"

"That I don't know."

"And why did he—— Great Scott, I've just remembered!" gasped Handforth. "He came for that parchment, sir. You know—that single sheet——"

"I know," said Lee. "I shall have to give Nipper a wiggling for allowing you to keep that sheet of parchment, Handforth. You are proverbially careless."

"And now it's gone," groaned Handforth. "That rotter has pinched it."

"We can at least congratulate ourselves that his mission failed," whispered Nelson Lee. "I did not succeed in holding the man—but I got the parchment."

"Oh!" breathed Handforth & Co.

"And I shall take care of it from now onwards," continued Nelson Lee. "You boys had better go back to your beds—and, if possible, get to sleep. I will see you about this to-morrow. Until then, say nothing. You won't be disturbed again to-night. However, to be on the safe side, you had better close your window completely and latch it."

In another moment Nelson Lee had gone—walking noiselessly alongside the wall of the Ancient House and vanishing in the direction of West Arch. Handforth & Co., bubbling with excitement, left the window, and they closed it securely.

"My only sainted aunt!" said Handforth. "That was a narrow shave, you know. That blighter got the parchment and he escaped; but Mr. Lee was there. Don't you see, you chaps? The very fact that Mr. Lee is on the job proves that it's something big."

He strode across to the bed and began pulling at his clothes.

"What are you doing?" asked Church suspiciously.

"I'm going to get dressed," replied Handforth. "Buck up, you chaps—you do the same! We're going out——"

"We're doing nothing of the sort," interrupted McClure coldly. "You silly haddock! What did Mr. Lee just say? Didn't he order us to go back to bed?"

"That doesn't matter—I can't sleep after this," said Handforth. "I'm going out to investigate."

"Oh?" said Church ominously. "And what about your word of honour?"

"Eh?"

"You heard what I said."

"Now, look here——"

"You gave us your word that you wouldn't break bounds to-night," went on Church re-

lently. "And, what's more, we're going to hold you to it, Handy. Get back to bed, like a sensible chap."

Handforth, groaning helplessly, was compelled to give up his plan.

CHAPTER 21.

The Fight at Moat Hollow!

NELSON LEE was a very determined man that night.

He was not kindly disposed to people who fired at him point-blank with silenced automatic pistols. It was only by a remarkable stroke of good fortune that he still lived.

He had every reason to suspect that the new tenants of Moat Hollow were responsible for that dastardly outrage. He had no proof—and he was out on the prowl to-night in the hope of obtaining some definite clue. Nelson Lee believed firmly in the policy of attacking. He was certainly not the man to lock himself up behind closed doors and barred windows.

He had many enemies, it was true; but if these people at Moat Hollow were crooks, as he believed, they had a very excellent reason for getting him out of the way. It was owing to his activities that the recent plot at Crag House had failed. This fresh gang, it seemed, was determined to dispose of Lee well in advance. It occurred to the detective that there might be some vague connection between these criminals and the men who had recently organised that other plot.

He had had a very long talk with Lord Edgemore that evening; they had been together in Nelson Lee's study for two or three hours. Lee had heard all; and he was satisfied, like the earl himself, that the Edgemore treasure really existed. Clearly, then, these people at Moat Hollow were after that loot.

Nelson Lee's first move after getting away from the West Square was to hurry to his study and place that precious parchment in his safe. Considering the nature of the mission he was now undertaking, it was far too risky to have that document on him.

For he went to Moat Hollow.

It was not because of a mere whim that he had adopted the guise of a disreputable tramp. He wanted to be on the safe side. As a tramp he would be able to wail out a story—if surprised—that he was only looking for a shed in which he could sleep.

He arrived at Moat Hollow. The country lane was completely deserted. Nelson Lee saw that a solitary light glowed from one of the windows in the house; the occupants were not yet in bed. Lee decided to wait. Caution was essential, and if, when he was scaling the wall, somebody came to that lighted window, he might be seen.

The detective crossed the lane and crouched low in the dry ditch which wound its way

at the foot of the bordering hedge. There he kept a vigilant watch on Moat Hollow. A quarter of an hour passed. It was a game of patience, but Lee had long since acquired that necessary faculty after years of experience. Still that one window was bathed in radiance, standing out clearly against the remaining blackness of the forbidding pile which rose gauntly to the night sky.

Suddenly the heavy tramp of feet sounded down the lane. Lee gazed in the direction whence it came, and then muttered in annoyance under his breath.

Strutting down the lane came a portly uniformed figure. The detective recognised it immediately. P.-c. Sparrow, who stood for all that was law and order in the village of Bellton, was on his nightly beat. Lee did some quick thinking. If Sparrow found him crouched by the roadside in his guise of a tramp, there would be awkward inquiries; and awkward inquiries were to be avoided. Sparrow would have no use for tramps who lurked suspiciously in a country lane at dead of night.

Noiselessly Nelson Lee rose, and, seeing a gap in the hedge immediately behind him, slipped through the opening and hid behind the thickly tangled branches.

On came the village constable. In P.-c. Sparrow's estimation, there was no more alert guardian of the law than P.-c. Sparrow. To-night he sadly disproved that theory, although it would be unfair to condemn him too harshly, for Nelson Lee had moved like a shadow.

Humming unmelodiously, Sparrow thumped past the detective's hiding-place, never suspecting that a figure lurked behind the hedge. His footfalls grew fainter, and finally he merged into the darkness.

Lee gave a sigh of relief, and then an exclamation of satisfaction. Moat Hollow was now in total blackness. The time for action had come.

Slipping from behind the hedge, Lee crossed the lane and approached the high wall. He had come well prepared for this venture. Uncoiling a rope from around his

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body under his coat, he threw it over one of those long spikes at the top of the wall. He pulled the noose tight, and hauled himself up.

Reaching the top, he crouched for some time absolutely motionless. He was watching and listening.

Moat Hollow stood black and silent in the starlight. Not a movement came from the tangled weeds and bushes in the grounds. If there were any wild animals here—and Lee was sceptical of this—they were fast asleep.

He carefully dropped his rope on the inner side of the wall, and the next moment he slithered down silently. He advanced cautiously, choosing his steps with care, and moving ever nearer to the house.

He had covered half the distance when some instinct caused him to turn his head sharply to the left. He had heard nothing and seen nothing. Yet there, shapeless in the faint starlight, stood a vague figure.

Iron-nerved as Nelson Lee was, he caught in his breath. There was something almost uncanny about this. He had taken every precaution, and yet that thing appeared as though from the blackness of the night itself. With one swift movement Lee jerked forward his electric torch and switched it on. The beam shot out, revealing the shaggy Monster of Moat Hollow.

Then history repeated itself, for the creature leapt, and with one movement it swept the torch out of Lee's hand, just as it had deprived Handforth of his. Then with a low, slobbering growl it hurled itself upon the detective.

"'Elp—'elp!" Lee croaked. "I didn't mean no 'arm! 'Ere, what the—— Swelp me! It ain't human!"

His cries were like those of a man whose vocal chords were choked by fear. And all the while he was grappling desperately with that hideous monster.

Even as he fought, one of the first conclusions he came to was that this hairy skin was dead. It was a false skin. This was no animal he was fighting with—but a man. A human being, skilfully disguised. And the man was not big, either; he was much smaller than Lee, yet his strength was incredible. He was fighting with all the fury and abandon of a real animal.

Backwards and forwards they swayed. Lee continued to babble with terror, but he was fighting fiercely. His object was to subdue this creature, and to force away that hideous mask. He wanted to have a look at the man's real face. The Unknown was taken by surprise, too, for he had evidently expected the "tramp" to break away and flee in terror.

Over they went, rolling across the ground, then up again, clawing, clutching. Nelson Lee's opponent was using desperate tactics, kicking and biting. He was certainly playing his part realistically.

And in the midst of all this a sudden thought came to Nelson Lee. This thing, although fighting with the wild abandon of an animal, yet used the brain of a human.

In a flood of inspiration the great detective knew the truth. And so astounding was it, so tremendous the nature of his discovery, that he relaxed his efforts. In a moment the monster had him down, and was kicking again, clawing, tearing, biting.

With a herculean effort Nelson Lee hurled the creature off; then he was on his feet and running. As he ran he cried aloud in assumed fear. Lights now appeared from the house; two men came on the scene, carrying lanterns. They ran towards him, and the Monster slithered away, hiding in the bushes.

"After him!" came Dr. Ragozin's angry voice. "Stop him, Hess!"

But Lee was going up that rope like a monkey, and when he reached the top of the wall he turned, and his unshaven face was visible in the lantern light; his rags and tatters were plain to see.

"Swelp me, guv'nor, I didn't mean no 'arm!" sobbed Lee. "That—that thing nearly got me!"

"And it would have served you right!" raved Dr. Ragozin, running nearer.

Lee took a flying leap to the ground, and those within the Moat Hollow grounds could hear his feet as he ran helter-skelter down the lane. Dr. Franz Ragozin smiled to himself, never guessing that he had allowed his most dangerous enemy to escape.

While Nelson Lee, in the lane, glowed with the warmth of his amazing discovery.

That fight with the Monster had told him much, for he remembered a similar fight, and it had taken place not many days since.

He recalled that grim and desperate struggle with Professor Cyrus Zingrave at Crag House. On that occasion Zingrave had fought with all the ferocity of a wild animal, using his feet and his fingernails and his teeth, and in the end he had plunged backwards through a window to hurtle down to the sea, hundreds of feet below.

Since then Professor Zingrave had not been seen, and it was not even known whether he had escaped death in that headlong plunge. The police believed indeed that his body had been washed out into the Channel.

Nelson Lee now knew the staggering truth.

Professor Cyrus Zingrave was here in Moat Hollow, wearing the guise of that Monster. Not by eye or ear had Nelson Lee recognised the master criminal; but that fight had told him the truth. For the Monster had used precisely the same tactics as Professor Zingrave.

Lee's interest in this case increased a hundredfold. Not yet had he finished with his bitterest enemy. Now he understood that attempt upon his life in the lane; the master brain of Professor Cyrus Zingrave was behind this sinister plot.

THE END.

(Next week's long complete story of Nipper & Co. is entitled: *The St. Frank's Fortune Hunters!* Don't miss this thrilling story; order your copy to-day to avoid disappointment.)

The Editor's own corner with his reader-chums.



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

DEMON'S GAP, near Shingle Head, Martin O'Callahan (North Richmond, South Australia) is comparatively near to the Shingle Head lighthouse. You call it the Caistowe lighthouse, but I presume this is the one you mean. Fullerton of the Third is about thirteen years of age although he looks older. He has no particular chums as he is not at all popular. If Joan Tarrant has a boy friend at St. Frank's he is Bernard Forrest. Many thanks for your most interesting letter with its snappy criticisms. Your hope will come true, for Mr. Brooks is now writing the type of mystery-adventure yarn you like the most.

* * *

You are another good chap, Jack Godden (Hilton, South Australia), and I see you hail from the same part of the world as my chum above. That last letter of yours was most entertaining. Barry Stokes was not at St. Frank's in the first story, but he came at a considerably later date. Yes, Stanley Kerrigan is still in the Third Form, and Cuthbert Chambers used to have Phillips and Bryant in his study. That was before William Napoleon Browne arrived. Since then these three Fifth-Formers have gone into the West House, and Browne has rather put them into the background.

* * *

Jack Godden, of 16, Rowland Road, Hilton, South Australia—he's the chap I have replied to above—says that he is willing to pay sixpence to anybody, preferably living in or near Adelaide, for a copy of No. 112 of the Old Paper (Old Series). He also wants No. 1, Old Series, and he is willing to pay the same price for this. Will Australian readers please get busy?

* * *

Pen-sketches of three more St. Frank's Removites: **STUDY D—EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH.** Generally regarded as the clumsiest ass in the Junior School, but Handy is not such an ass as he sometimes appears to

be. He is big and burly and generally untidy; and he has a masterful, impulsive, aggressive nature. His main fault is his excess of confidence, for it very often leads him into pitfalls; but he makes up for this defect by his great generosity. As honest as the day, he is a staunch friend to be relied upon in any emergency. His temper may be hasty, but he has a heart of gold. **WALTER CHURCH.** A patient and long-suffering fellow, and so good-tempered that even Handforth has difficulty in arousing him. A trusty companion and a staunch friend. **ARNOLD McCLURE.** The Scottish member of the famous Co. Shrewd, quick-thinking, but not forceful in character. His disposition is amiable, and he is tolerant but not as patient as Church. A true chum, who makes few enemies.

* * *

The only reason Nipper appears to be more "perfect" than the other fellows, "Joyce" (Worthing), is that he is so. You must remember that Nipper has been trained since early boyhood by his guardian, Mr. Nelson Lee, and that counts for a lot.

* * *

William Napoleon Browne owns a swagger new Morris Oxford Saloon, P. M. Wilde (Hyde). For some time he had the small car you mention, but it wasn't sufficiently dignified for the great Napoleon; besides, the juniors found that it wasn't roomy enough for them. They are always cadging rides from the genial Fifth Form skipper, and he has got a bit fed-up with being squashed in like a sardine.

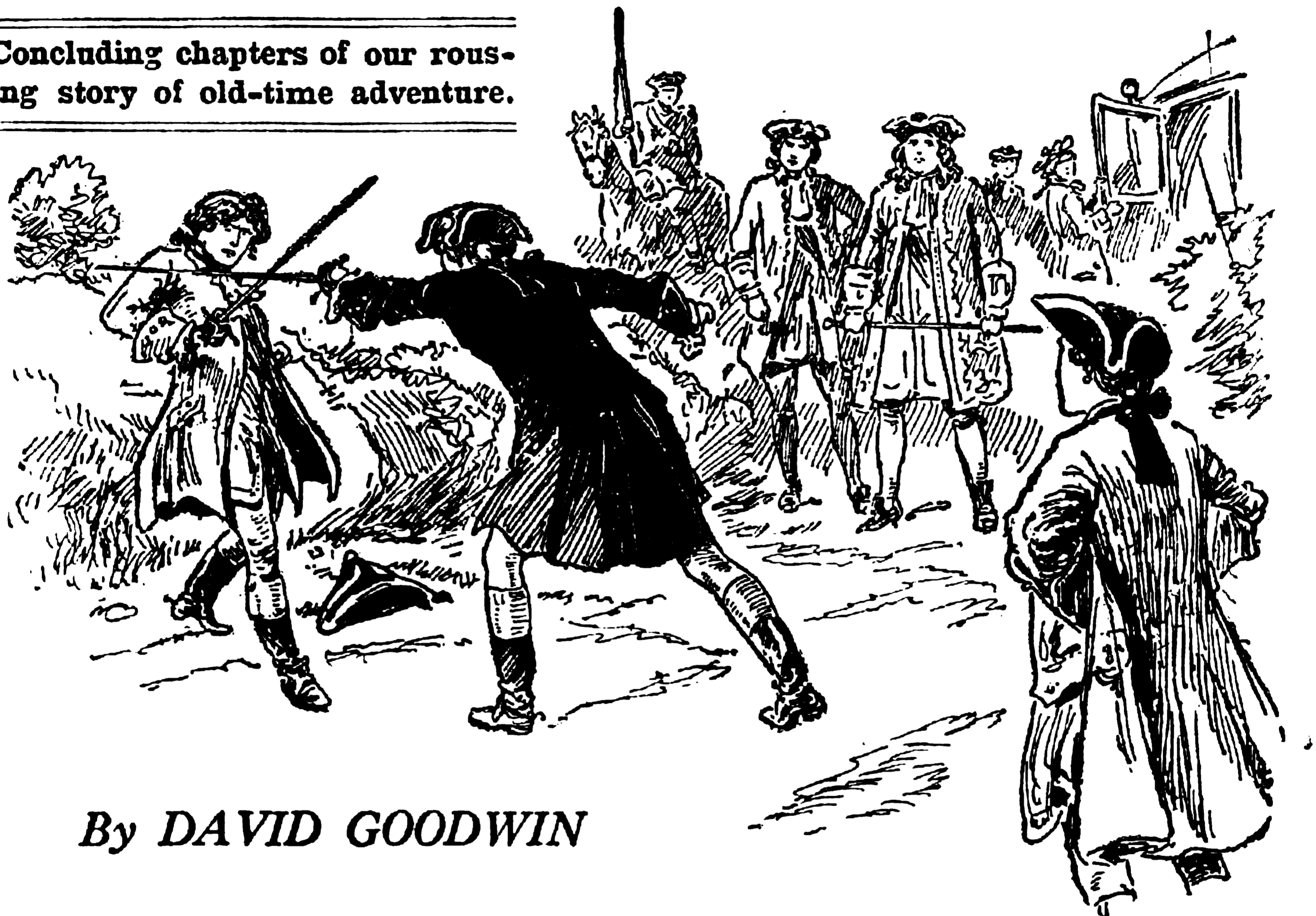
* * *

For a first letter, Harry Townrow (Hammer-smith), yours was like a real tonic. Many thanks for your cheery appreciation of the Old Paper. In answer to your questions: St. Frank's is illuminated throughout by electric light, the school having its own plant. The St. Frank's golf links are mainly used by the masters and seniors. A few juniors have taken up the game, but interest in golf is not universal enough to feature it in the stories.

Sword in left hand, Dick Forrester fights for his rights!

Outlawed!

Concluding chapters of our rousing story of old-time adventure.



By DAVID GOODWIN

Forced to Flee!

THE moment Sweeny saw Dick, Turpin wheeled and clapped spurs to Black Bess, and the two comrades crashed away through the wood, followed by shouts and pistol shots from the King's Riders.

In a few moments they were through the belt of trees and on the open heath beyond, where they galloped at lightning pace straight across country. At last Dick drew rein.

"Hold hard, Turpin!" he cried. "They're not after us!"

"Nay," said Turpin; "they were too few to dare leave their prisoners. I knew that well. But none the less, we shall do well to get out of the neighbourhood."

"Zounds! But it went against the grain to turn tail like that from so few, and because the villain Sweeny betrayed us."

"What else could we do, man? If we had a brush with the Riders like enough Sweeny and his men would have got away, which would be a sore calamity. Nothing better for us could happen than that the foul ruffian should be caught and hanged. We shall have enough to do shortly to save our own necks, if you ask me. Like enough he was setting some trap for us when they caught him."

"Ay," said Dick pensively, "all's for the

best, yet I regret a little that I did not settle accounts with him in person. Look, comrade, yonder is Muswell Heath, just upon the Norfolk border, where we should find old Sapengro."

"Let us go there," said Turpin. "It puzzles me somewhat," he added with a frown, "that the Riders made no attempt to follow us. I should have expected them to leave a guard with the prisoners and send at least two after us. It looks rather as though they thought themselves sure of us, in some way."

"You are strangely suspicious to-night, comrade," laughed Dick.

"There is something in the air I don't like," said Turpin. "Like an old hound, I can sniff the fox long before I see him. Who comes here? A little Romany lad, as I live. Now for news, if there's any afoot."

Surrounded by Soldiers!

A BROWN-FACED, healthy-looking little gipsy boy started up from the heather like a partridge, and came running eagerly towards the horsemen.

"Is it Dick Forrester?" he cried. "Now, all be praised. At last thou'rt found. All the Romanies are scattered over the heath to find and warn ye, and it falls to me. I fear ye'll be in a sorry case."

"What's afoot, young sir?" asked Dick.

"They have surrounded you."

"Who?"

"The Riders. The sheriffs of three counties are out, with every man and horse, soldiers withal, and they count in hundreds. The news of thy escape from the court-house is abroad, and a great outcry has been made all over the country. They have all sworn never to rest till they take ye, and you have been spied upon till you came to this heath. They are closing in on every side, and there is no gap."

"What did I tell you, Dick?" said Turpin coolly. "They mean business this time. There'll be no second escape if they take us."

"Why, we have but to steal up quietly, and then charge through the ring, as we have done before," said Dick. "'Tis but the chance of a bullet as we go, and they have no horses that will ever see ours, once through."

"Nay, but they are too thick for that!" exclaimed the boy. "There is no way through; and it is thou, Dick Forrester, that they seek far more than Turpin this time. Jasper Sapengro bids me say there is a single safe hiding-place that will hold but one. It is an old hollow tree, to be entered from the ground, and I will take you to it."

"There's your chance, Dick. Away with the lad while there's time!" cried Turpin.

"Nay, pink me if I take the only place," said Dick. "You go instead of me, comrade, and I'll take my chance."

"I'll hang fifty feet high before I do. You are in most danger."

"Then neither of us will hide," returned Dick. "Nor will we hang. If it's as bad as the lad says, we'll ride at them, and empty their saddles till they stretch us dead on the grass. Come on!"

"Stop!" cried Turpin. "I have a plan. Give me your coat."

"What for?"

"Give it me! It may be the last thing I ask, and you won't refuse."

Dick took off his handsome pink and gold-laced riding-coat, by which he was so well known to travellers, and gave it to Turpin.

"Put this on," said Turpin, taking off his own black-and-silver jacket, and handing it to Dick.

"What the plague is this for?" said Dick, as he slipped into it.

"I am going to charge the lines in this coat and my mask, and they will think they have caught you. The instant the word spreads they will relax their vigilance and with luck you may dash through safely. So hold yourself ready. Good-bye, Dick!"

Before Dick could protest, Turpin had galloped off like the wind. He dashed into a cover, and was out of sight in no time.

"Why did I change coats with him?" muttered Dick distractedly. "If he is taken, I won't save my neck at the cost of his. I'll ride into the thick of them and use the butt, till they shoot me down. Oh, comrade—heart of gold—why did you go?"

At that moment he heard the sound of approaching hoofs, and thinking that already the Riders were upon him, his hand darted to his holster. And then, as he recognised the horse-

man, he uttered a cry of mingled relief and surprise.

"Ralph!" he exclaimed. For his young brother it was who now dashed up on a foam-flecked, exhausted horse. "What brings you here, Ralph? How did you find me?"

"I learned from the gipsies where you might be," replied Ralph. "At St. Austell's I heard that a great effort was to be made to capture you, and I ran away. Day and night I've ridden that I might be with you. If you go down, Dick, so will I."

"You are a Forrester to the core, Ralph!" cried Dick. "But I would give my right hand if you were not here. This will be no work for you. It means all but certain death. Oh, boy, what folly have you done? You must ride back and save yourself."

"Not I! I am the master of Huntercombe, and have the right to stand beside you, Dick."

"I see plainly nothing can stop you now," said the young highwayman, with a sigh. "I pray you may pass through it safely, whatever happens to me. Have you any news of how the Riders are advancing?"

"Yes; they are closing in upon us in a large circle, with scouts and vedettes ahead, but as yet they are some distance away. There are five sheriffs and all the Riders and levies of three counties."

"All to capture one lonely highwayman," said Dick grimly.

"Aye, because there will be woe for them if they fail—and also the king is travelling north, and the sheriffs were frightened lest you might stop him, for which they would be sorely called to account."

"The king?"

"Yes. He will travel by another road now, of course. But the chief news is this. Hector Forrester is the first mover of all this, and it is he who stirred the sheriffs up and has spent much of his beloved gold in paying for the force. He means to have you caught now at any cost."

"Ha, that explains it! I thought there was some motive out of the common to lead to all this fuss. Well, he is likely to get his way at last. He sits at home at Fernhall, doubtless, and gloats over the trouble he has set moving."

"Nay, he is here, helping direct the men."

"Here?" cried Dick, leaping in his saddle. "You mean he is on the heath?"

"Yes, I caught sight of him by the fir woods yonder, where the road runs, with several of the Riders' scouts."

"'Od's death!" cried Dick. "If I can but come face to face with him before they get me, I do not care what happens afterwards. Quick, Ralph! Spur on, and show me where you saw him!"

Together they galloped away, and were soon approaching the fir copse to which Ralph had referred.

"Is yonder where you saw him?" asked Dick eagerly.

"No; 'twas in the wood farther down the road. But he was moving this way with his men."

"Well done, Ralph! Dismount here, and we will walk the horses very quietly into the wood. Have you the pistols? Draw them from the holsters and keep them ready. Quickly

—into shelter! I see figures approaching along the road already.”

They plunged into the thickest part of the dark pine-wood, which offered an ideal hiding-place, and there awaited developments.

The broad white ribbon of the high-road showed just outside the copse, and in the starlight Dick could see five dim forms approaching on horseback, and thought he recognised the outline of one of them as Hector. They halted at the corner.

“Shall we search the wood, sir?” asked one of the figures.

“No,” came Hector Forrester’s voice in reply. “He will not be in hiding. It is not likely he knows yet what is afoot. Do you four ride on separately, one to each of the four knolls away yonder, and keep a look-out there. I will watch here, whence I can see any mounted figure for a long way round. The first who sights him is to gallop back to the lines, and give the word.”

Ralph nudged Dick in delight as the four riders departed. Hector Forrester sat motionless on his horse for some time till they were out of sight below the rise. Presently he dismounted to loosen the curb-chain of his bridle, which was causing the horse to fret and stamp noisily.

Dick touched Ralph’s arm, and drawing his rapier, stole forward noiselessly. He reached the edge of the wood in a few strides. A bound, and he was out upon the road, with his rapier’s point at Hector’s breast.

“One cry of alarm or warning and you die!” exclaimed the young outlaw.

Hector gave a terrified gasp as he turned to confront his antagonist.

“You have me in a corner, perchance,” said Dick grimly; “it has taken a few hundred to catch me, and your men are closing in, but before they arrive you and I will settle the matter one way or the other! Out with your sword, and face me as man to man!”

Hector, as though paralysed with fear, neither moved nor spoke.

“Draw, and fight it out!” commanded Dick. “’Tis your only chance! See, I will meet you left-handed, that your swordsmanship may equal mine!”

Hector forgot his fear then, and his rapier leaped from its sheath.

“On guard then!” he cried, “and meet me with the left! I hold you to your word!”

Up and down raged the fight, and Dick found he had given no small advantage by using his left hand, skilful as he was. For Hector, always a good fencer, had been perfecting himself under a famous master-at-arms, and his skill had increased enormously since the encounter with Dick at Fernhall.

By changing hands the young highwayman would have had Hector at his mercy at once, but this he would not do. He kept to his word, and, warming to his work, he showed Hector that, left-handed or not, he was yet likely to pink his adversary.

The King’s Pardon!

THE fight was at its fiercest when the sound of hoofs and wheels rang down the highway. A splendid coach and four suddenly drove along, with four outriders, evidently escorting some great lord on his travels. The combatants had to stop and jump aside, or the coach would have driven over them. A commanding voice called out sharply, and the vehicle and its escort pulled up at once. A head was put out of the window.

“Vot is happening here?” cried a voice with a strong foreign accent. “Is it a fight?”

“Yes, a fight!” returned Dick curtly. “Guard yourself, Hector Forrester!”

“Hold!” cried the newcomer; and as a footman flung open the coach door, a large, podgy-looking man, splendidly dressed, with a fat,



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good-natured face, stepped out. "Dere is nodings better I like dan a goot fight," he went on. "Vot is it about? I vill see fair play."

"Why, sir, if it interests you," said Dick, "I have here before me the knave who has robbed me of my estates and fortune, and by treachery caused me to be hunted across England. He thinks now to have brought me to the gallows, and I am calling him to account for it."

"Very goot!" said the stranger, glancing at Hector. "And a very ill-looking knave he seems, for all his fine clothes."

The swords clashed together again. Only the clink of steel broke the silence. Now Dick pressed his rival hard, and Hector began to fall back.

"Dog of the highways!" he panted. "I'll lay you in the dust yet!"

Suddenly, after a quick thrust, he whipped a pistol from his pocket with his left hand. A warning cry came from Ralph.

Before Hector could pull the trigger, Dick's sword-point struck like lightning upon the scoundrel's wrist, and the pistol fell, exploding as it struck the ground. With a cry of despair, Hector attempted to guard himself, but Dick's blade passed through his body, and he fell dead upon the road.

"Vell done!" cried the stranger. "Der knave, he is vell served! Vot a vile trick mit der pistol! You are a brave man, sir, and a splendid swordsman. Vot is your name?"

"Galloping Dick, at your service!"

"You are der young highwayman?" asked the stranger, with a start of surprise.

"The same."

"Ach! It is I who order your capture, and here I find you, no cowardly ruffler of der highways, but a gallant shentleman, fighting against odds, and stripped of his rights by fraud. I remember something of der story. And I have seen you conquer your enemy, who showed himself a villain by his dirty trick!"

Dick bowed, marvelling who the stranger could be—apparently he was the High Sheriff—when suddenly a whole troop of Riders charged down upon the coach, completely surrounding it and the spectators.

"Your Majesty!" gasped the captain of the troop.

Dick stared in astonishment, and the stranger smiled.

"May I ask your name, sir?" said Dick.

"Ja!" replied the stranger, laughing. "My name is King George der Second."

"King George!" cried Dick. And then, mastering his amazement, he swung his hat off and bowed low.

"Your Majesty reconciles me to my capture," said Dick gallantly.

"I—I beg your Majesty's pardon," said the captain of the Riders, "but this is the——"

"Ach, you beg my pardon! Very goot—dat is a fine idea, and I gif it! Not to you, good captain, but to my new young friend here. Julius, gif me paper and ink-horn from der coach, and a pen!"

And, resting the paper against the side of the coach, the genial monarch—who, like his father, was brought up at the Hanover Court,

and talked queer English—wrote rapidly with a grey goose-quill, and scrawled his bold signature below.

"Your free pardon, Richard Forrester of Fernhall!" he cried, holding the paper out to Dick. "To-morrow we shall set our seal to it. Ach, vot haf we here?"

A second troop of Riders came up, and in their midst, bound with rope, and seated on Black Bess, was Turpin—a prisoner at last. He looked at Dick, and nodded with a smile.

"You are in luck, old comrade," he said. "All my wishes go with you. Good-bye, Dick; don't ye mind for me!"

Dick turned to the King.

"Your Majesty," he cried, "you have loaded me with kindness. But though I lose your favour, I must ask one more thing. That is my old and staunch comrade whom your men hold prisoner. I pray you, set him free!"

The King shook his head.

"Dot is Turpin," he said. "Richard Turpin, a notorious rogue and malefactor, mit der blackest of records. He must die!"

"Then, for my honour's sake, hang me beside him! I shall be worse than a poltroon to live while he is dead. See, your Majesty, he has my coat on! He wore it, and gave himself into the hands of the Riders that I might chance to go free!"

The King struck his hand upon his thigh.

"Himmel!" he cried. "You do some brave things for each other, you knights of der road! If he did as you say, he must go free! But mind, I cannot gif him a pardon. He is too black a rogue for dot. I know his crimes. But he shall be set loose, and given his horse, and der Riders shall not follow him till daybreak. Den if dey catch him, dey must hang him!"

"I thank you, your Majesty!" cried Turpin, and the moment his arms were free he took off his hat with a sweeping flourish to render his gratitude and homage.

"Good-bye, Dick," added the highwayman, holding out his hand. "You've been the best of comrades, but my company is little good for you, and we must part. I shall keep your coat for a remembrance. Do you keep mine, and a corner in your heart for Turpin the Outlaw."

Wheeling Black Bess, he shot past the Riders, and sped away into the night. Nor did they lay hands on him then or after.

"And now," said his Majesty, stepping into the coach, "come mit me, Dick, for I find you very goot company. Dis is your young broder, of Huntercombe? Ralph, his name? Come with us, too, Ralph. Now, Dick, I hear dis house of yours, Fernhall, is a very fine place. Only fifteen miles from here? We will go dere, and you shall be my host. Send your men on ahead dere, captain, and command that all be made ready. I go to celebrate Dick Forrester's return to his own again! Forward!"

And less than two hours later the royal coach rolled up to Fernhall's doors between long lines of torch-bearers. The walls of the grand old mansion enclosed high revels and glad hearts that night, when Dick Forrester sat on the right hand of King George the Jovial at the head of the great banquet-table, and entered into his own once again!

THE END.

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January 30th, 1932.