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New Series No. 109.

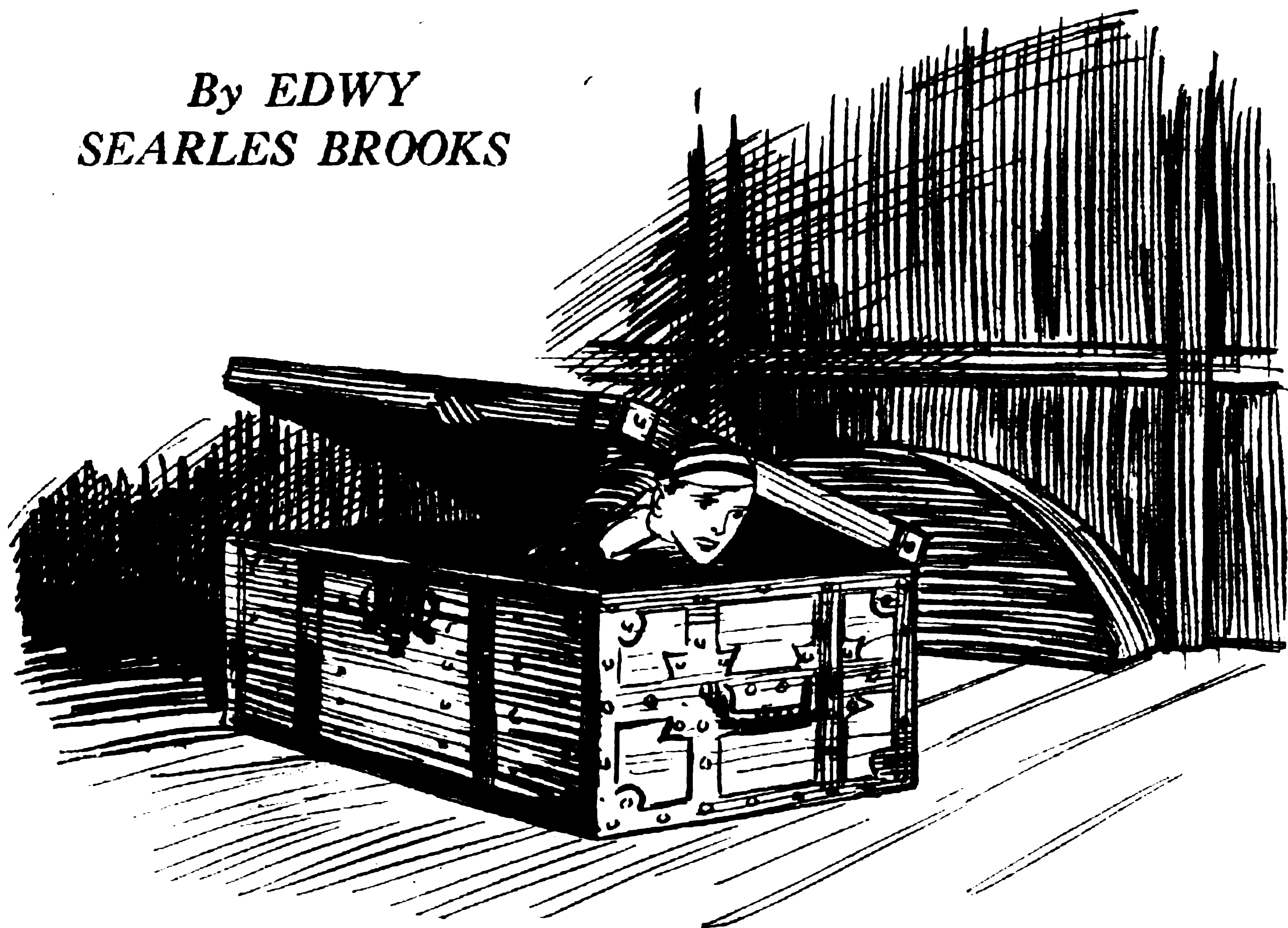
OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

February 20th, 1932.

Nipper shoots a fortune down a coal-chute—which proves a misfortune

FOILED BY

By EDWY
SEARLES BROOKS



They're treasure-chests all right—but the only "treasures" contained inside them are Handforth and Nipper! And it's not a memory Professor Zingrave cares to treasure, for the St. Frank's schoolboys are beating this notorious gangster all along the line!

CHAPTER 1.

The Missing Treasure Chests!

MR. NELSON LEE, the famous detective-headmaster of St. Frank's, was looking very determined. Even Nipper, who knew all his "guv'nor's" moods, had seldom seen him so resolute; so ready for action.

"Make no mistake about it, Lord Edgemore, those people at Moat Hollow are in deadly earnest," he said. "The lust of gold is on them—and when desperate men are seized in that grip they hesitate at nothing. The situation demands drastic action."

It was a hastily-called conference in Nelson Lee's study. The Earl of Edge-

more and his son, "Skeets"—the young Viscount Bellton, of the Remove Form at St. Frank's—were present, to say nothing of Nipper and Handforth. The earl, who was himself a man of action, for prior to inheriting the Edgemore title he had lived his life on a Canadian ranch, was pacing up and down with nervous strides.

"This means a lot to me, Mr. Lee," he said huskily. "As you know, I recently lost everything in the crash of the Anglo-Canadian Assurance Corporation. The Edgemore treasure, which has been lying hidden since my ancestor, Captain Humphrey Rossiter, brought it home from the Spanish Main, would restore my fortunes. These splendid boys discovered that treasure, and now it has been stolen, practically under our noses, by those scoundrels at Moat Hollow."

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for Professor Zingrave in this all-thrills complete St. Frank's story.

ST. FRANK'S!



"The situation may not be so acute as you think," said Nelson Lee slowly. "At all events, Lord Edgemore, you can be quite sure that I am taking prompt steps. I am deeply interested in this case, for these criminals have more than once attempted my life—they have thrown down the gauntlet. And I am not beaten yet."

"Aren't we wasting time, sir?" asked Handforth, almost pathetically.

The burly Removite was jumpy; he was on tenterhooks. He was a practical fellow, and it seemed to him that this conference was unnecessary. Why waste time in talking when they could be acting?

"I'm going to tell you something," said Nelson Lee quietly. "You know, of course, that the crooks got hold of Captain Humphrey's manuscript by accident. An escaping criminal named Tod Millar crashed through the wall of Moat Hollow

—the house, at that time, being empty. The manuscript came to light then, for that section of the wall was really a part of the old original Traitor's Lodge. Captain Humphrey Rossiter, having incurred the anger of his elder brother, was exiled to the Traitor's Lodge after his exploits against the Spaniards."

"Yes, yes, we know that," said Lord Edgemore, almost impatiently.

"Luckily, one sheet of the manuscript was secured by Handforth, and it was that which induced us to believe that a treasure hunt would be profitable," continued Nelson Lee. "Now, as you are aware, Lord Edgemore, your agents let Moat Hollow to a man named Dr. Franz Ragozin, and your own plans were therefore frustrated. The transaction was a legal one, and Dr. Ragozin became the lawful tenant. His object, he openly

declared, was to institute a private zoo in the Moat Hollow grounds."

"But that was all bunkum, sir," said Nipper quickly. "We know—now—that Dr. Ragozin was in league with Tod Millar, and their real game was to locate the Edgemore treasure."

"What I am going to tell you is this," said Lee impressively. "Dr. Franz Ragozin is Tod Millar!"

"What!"

"A very clever disguise," said Lee, nodding. "In the character of 'Ragozin,' Tod Millar leased Moat Hollow. He brought with him a man named Ivan Hess, presumably to look after his private zoo. He brought another man named Ridley, who acted as butler. Actually, they were his confederates, and they have been actively helping in the hunt for the buried treasure. I know something else, too—something which will startle you. You may remember a curious 'monster' at Moat Hollow—a gorilla-like creature that yet resembled a man."

"By George, rather, sir," said Handforth. "That brute gave us an awful scare the first time we met him."

"That brute, as you call it, is an old acquaintance of ours," said Lee. "In a word—Professor Cyrus Zingrave, the one-time chief of the notorious League of the Green Triangle."

Everybody was staggered.

"Zingrave?" ejaculated Nipper. "By Jove! I'm beginning to understand everything!"

"It was Zingrave's active brain which planned the whole programme," continued Lee. "It was Zingrave who, skulking from the police in Moat Hollow, encountered Tod Millar, an old Green Triangle man. It was Zingrave who sent Millar to London, who helped him to adopt the guise of Dr. Ragozin. It was Zingrave, in fact, who evolved the whole elaborate scheme. That master criminal's brain has been behind the whole plot."

Lee, pacing up and down, suddenly paused.

"So you will understand that we are up against desperate men," he went on impressively. "Zingrave is an escaped convict—sentenced to penal servitude for life. He will not be easily taken. Rather will he fight it out, and go under, than be taken back to his imprisonment. Tod Millar is hopelessly involved, and he will fight to the last ditch, too. Added to this, they have that gold in their possession. To attempt to take the men in the ordinary way would be suicidal. They are armed, they are desperate—and they will

kill. They have secured those treasure-chests, and they have got them at Moat Hollow——"

"How do you know that, guv'nor?" asked Nipper quickly. "By this time, perhaps, they have made a break for liberty."

"They haven't," said Lee confidently. "I have given them no chance to make a break for liberty. They are besieged in Moat Hollow."

"Besieged?" repeated the startled earl.

"My first action, on learning that these crooks had secured the treasure chests, was to ring up Inspector Jameson, of the Bannington police," replied Nelson Lee. "Moat Hollow now has a cordon of police round it."

CHAPTER 2.

Nelson Lee Starts Action!

LORD EDMORE and the boys were astonished to learn of Nelson Lee's activities.

"But if these criminals are armed, how can the local police prevent them from escaping?" asked the earl, placing his finger upon the one weak spot. "I am delighted to hear all this, Mr. Lee, but I cannot help feeling that your precautions will be useless."

"We will see about that," replied Nelson Lee smoothly. "I agree that if the criminals make a break, the local police will not be able to stop them. But even Zingrave and his confederates are not super-men. They cannot break for liberty without preparations. They stole the treasure chests, and they got them to Moat Hollow—yes—but it will be rather more difficult to get those chests away from Moat Hollow. Gold is heavy stuff, Lord Edgemore, and you must remember that the crooks know nothing of what I have done."

"But they must suspect, surely, that action will be taken against them?"

"Most certainly, and they are getting ready for flight," replied Lee. "The local police are watching, and if Zingrave and his companions made a sudden break for liberty, we shall know all about it. Somehow, I do not think they will get very far."

The telephone bell rang sharply.

"I have been waiting for this call," said Lee, taking up the receiver. "Hallo, Lennard!" he said, speaking into the mouth-piece. "Yes, that's right. Good man! That will do splendidly!"

"We're starting out at once," came the voice of Chief Detective-inspector Lennard, of Scotland Yard. "Four of our fastest, cars, Lee—with all the best men of the Flying Squad. The commissioner was a bit shirty about it at first——"

"I should not have made this request unless the necessity was urgent," interrupted Lee. "You can tell the commissioner that I can lead you to the hiding-place of Professor Zingrave."

"What!" came a yell over the wire.

"Exactly, Lennard," said Lee coolly. "That's who we're after—Zingrave. There are two or three other crooks with him—notably Tod Millar, who is wanted by the Brighton police for a smash-and-grab raid."

"But—but I had no idea that we were after such big game," came the inspector's voice. "Zingrave—eh? But we thought he was dead, Lee! We gave up looking for him weeks ago——"

"Zingrave is very much alive—and as dangerous as ever," said Nelson Lee. "Hurry those squad cars along, Lennard. Every second is of importance. These local police can keep watch, but that's about all. See that your men are fully armed. There's going to be big trouble here, if I know anything of Zingrave."

He rang off after a moment, and Lord Edgemore and the boys were looking at him eagerly.

"The Flying Squad, guv'nor?" whooped Nipper. "Is it really coming down?"

"In force," replied Lee. "I am hoping that the squad tenders will arrive before the crooks make a break for liberty. In that case, everything will be all right, for the squad will make short work of the raid."

"How long do you think it'll be before Lennard and his men arrive?" asked the earl.

"Their cars are fast, and they will come at full speed," replied Lee, glancing at his watch. "They should be here, roughly, in little over an hour."

"By George! There's going to be some excitement!" said Handforth breathlessly.

"I'll tell you what, guv'nor," said Nipper. "Can we chaps help?"

"I hardly think so——"

"We've been in the game all along, sir," urged Nipper. "It's not particularly late—not bed-time, anyway. And it's a very special occasion this evening. Why shouldn't I get hold of a lot of Remove chaps? We could go down to Moat Hollow and watch."

"And get yourselves into danger, eh?" retorted Lee. "No, Nipper——"

"But we won't, guv'nor—really," declared Nipper. "There can't be many local police there—the cordon must be pretty thin. I propose that we go down and strengthen the guard. We'll only keep watch, with the local police, just to make sure that the crooks don't escape."

"Let's go, sir," pleaded Skeets. "Gee! It's our treasure——"

"Well, you may go on one condition," said Nelson Lee. "You can help the local police to form their cordon, but you must not approach too close to the Moat Hollow grounds. And if the criminals make any break, you must stand well clear. They are ugly customers, and they will not hesitate to shoot. I am trusting you, Nipper, to see that the boys do nothing rash."

"Good enough, guv'nor!" exclaimed Nipper, his eyes blazing. "We'll be careful!"

And the next moment he and Skeets and Handforth were dashing out.

"Better to let them go, I think," said Lee, smiling at Lord Edgemore. "They are very excited, and, after all, we must remember that it was these boys who really discovered the treasure. If I refused to allow them this privilege they would probably disobey orders, and go off on their own."

"So you are giving them permission, and thus preventing them from committing a misdemeanour," chuckled Lord Edgemore. "That's rather sporting of you, Mr. Lee."

"Come; we will go to Moat Hollow ourselves," replied Lee dryly. "I don't intend to let those boys do anything rash. And we might as well be there, ready; the Flying Squad will be on hand almost before we can realise it."

AT Scotland Yard, in London, four powerful cars were zooming out of the precincts of the famous police headquarters. Chief Detective-inspector Lennard sat in the leading car, and with him were the picked men of the Flying Squad. The cars leapt into high speed down Whitehall, and point-duty constables, recognising the familiar sirens of these cars, stopped all traffic to let them through.

Less than two minutes after the squad cars had left Scotland Yard, a man hurried to the nearest public telephone

hook. He put through a long-distance call.

He was ringing up Mont Holton.

CHAPTER 2.

Fans at Reed Hollow

TOD MILLAR, confidence man and international crook, filed his hands with the dull gold pieces, and allowed them to trickle through his fingers.

"Gold—gold!" he muttered unsteadily. He vaguely marvelled at his own action. He had seen such incidents in plays, he had read of them in stories, and he had always laughed with derision. But this was real—real!

The lust for gold had gripped him. It seeped at his veins, it made him reckless; he felt that he could laugh at a thousand caravans.

The scene presented a strange contrast, for the two wondering men chests, so ancient in design and workmanship, were standing within a modern enclosed van. Tod Millar was standing over one of the open chests, diving his hands into a bag of gold. Bidley, the man who acted as butler, was with him, and both were in their shirt-sleeves, for they had been working hard.

"What's it worth, Tod?" asked Bidley, his voice hoarse with excitement.

Dr. Magnate stood back, and his eyes were burning.

"Thousands—ten of thousands—hundreds of thousands—a million!" he exclaimed. "These are guineas, or pieces of eight, or whatever they call them. And in this other chest there's a cadet. You saw it, didn't you? Rubies—emeralds—diamonds! Jewels worth a fortune in themselves."

"And we go share!" said Bidley greedily. "How much do you and I get, Tod? You're not going to be stingy, are you? There are four of us in this, and we ought to split even."

"You've got a nerve!" retorted Tod sharply. "Zingrave and I go fifty-fifty on this job—and you and Flew will get what we please to give you."

"That for a tale!" said Bidley hotly. "We ought to come to some fixed arrangement—"

"Are you two in such a fever that you are quarrelling?" came a soft, but biting voice.

They found Professor Cyrus Zingrave at the end of the van, where the doors stood open.

"I'm not quarrelling," replied Tod. "But this fool seems to think—"

"Come, come, Tod! Pull yourself together," said the professor shortly. "We haven't got the last away yet."

Tod Millar closed the creaking lid of the odd chest.

"That's one of the things I can't understand," he said, almost frantically. "What are you waiting for, Zingrave? We ought to have gone an hour ago. If we keep delaying like this we shall have the chance. And why did you make us empty the chests, cart all the stuff into this van, bring the chests in, and fill them up again?"

"Yes, the chests were too heavy to lift into the van, but why couldn't they have been left behind after we'd emptied them?" asked Bidley. "They're worth nothing. They're only lumber."

"You are fools—both of you," said Zingrave contemptuously. "Have you no knowledge of the law?"

"What has the law to do with it?" growled Tod, staring.

"I am planning a get-away for all of us," replied the wily professor. "My own presence here is unimportant, but Nelson Lee, at least, knows that you are interested in the Edgewood treasure. If my take secured, and we get away, we take the treasure with us. Can't you see that if we left the chests behind we should leave evidence of our theft?"

"But they'll know we've got it, just the same," protested Tod.

"Let them know," snapped Zingrave. "Who cares? But they're got to prove it, haven't they? And they can't prove it without the evidence. That's why we're taking these chests—as you ought to know, if you had a grain of sense. If we can get the chests and the gold smuggled safely away, there won't be a shred of evidence that we took it. The law is with us if we only have wit enough to use it. Nobody can see us take those chests from their hiding-places, and nobody will see us remove them from this house."

"When are we going?" asked Tod suddenly.

"I am awaiting a telephone call," replied Zingrave. "Come inside, both of you."

The seizing of the treasure by the crooks had been a smart piece of work—and such, too, had played an important part.

The St. Frank's schoolboys had discovered the treasure, after nearly losing their lives in a flooded underground



From out of the very depths of the earth, Ripper and Handforth made their way into the grounds of Meat Hollow—wherein lurked Zingrave and his gang, preparing to make their break for liberty.

tunnel. It was the action of the water, in fact, which had revealed the treasure-chests. And it was while the boys were at the chest, changing into dry things, that the clouds had vanished.

For the Meat Hollow crows, attracted by the sounds of excitement, had been drawn across the meadow, and they had overheard much that was totally important. Then they had made a discovery.

The flooring of the tunnel had had an unlooked-for effect. Just within the Meat Hollow grounds, a big subterranean had occurred. Examining this spot, Ted Muller and his associates had discovered that it was possible to enter the tunnel from their end—and, entering, they had immediately come upon the treasure-chests. Thus it was that the boys had so mysteriously vanished. For the crows, having dragged the heavy chests out, had caused a heavy fall of earth, so that the end of the tunnel was blocked.

So now, even they had been working like negroes, and now they were ready for departure. But Professor Zingrave, who was the only cool man amongst them, seemed in no hurry to desert.

The others, left to themselves, would have dashed off with the loot—and, just as undoubtedly, they would have fallen into the hands of the police. Professor Zingrave was an old hand; and he was as lucky as a dog.

He knew the peril of the adventure, he knew that the odds were all against him, but he was determined to make a bid for liberty and wealth. Everything would depend upon the thoroughness of his preparations. The others were ready to make a spontaneous flight. But not Professor Zingrave.

Handy had they got undoes their lean Heer, the Polish exchequerer, came bursting in.

"You make no wait, and now all is lost," he panted, glaring angrily at Zingrave. "You think you clever, yes. But you are not clever. You are just the one big fool."

"Your tongue becomes swollen, my friend," said Zingrave dangerously.

"You talk and you talk," almost screamed Heer. "And now, I tell you, it is too late. The police are everywhere! They surround us!"

TOD MILLAR and Ridley cried aloud with dismay; but Professor Zingrave did not move a hair.

"You think you are telling me something I did not know?" he said contemptuously. "Of course the police are surrounding us. What else did you expect?"

"But we could have gone," panted Ivan Hess. "Yet you, with your talk, you delay us——"

"Silence, you ignorant dolt!" commanded Zingrave, his voice cutting like a knife. "Stand back! Do you hear me? Stand back!"

He spoke as a man would have spoken to a dog. Hess glared for a moment, and then, shrinking, he fell back. He could not face the professor's steadfast gaze.

"We could have gone, yes, but what would have been the good?" snapped Zingrave. "You are babies—all of you! Before we can make a break for liberty, we must be prepared. That is the whole essence of the situation. And while you snivel and moan, I am preparing."

At that moment the telephone bell rang, and Zingrave almost leapt to the instrument.

"Who—who can that be?" panted Tod shakily.

"I am expecting a call," said Zingrave, lifting the receiver. "Yes? Oh! You, Marks? I was expecting somebody else. Well?"

"I kept my eye open as you said," came a voice. "The flyers are off somewhere—and in a hurry, too."

"How many?"

"Four cars—all packed. A couple of dozen, I should say."

"Thanks, Marks."

The professor hung up the receiver, and he found his three companions eyeing him with feverish anxiety.

"Who was it?" asked Tod hoarsely.

"Marks—a fellow who has often done scouting work for me," replied Zingrave. "He's been on the watch at the Yard. The Flying Squad—two dozen men strong—have just left."

"You—you mean they're coming here?" gasped Ridley.

"Where else?" retorted Zingrave. "Of course they're coming here."

"Then—then it's all up," panted Tod.

"It is a good thing for you, my friends, that one of us manages to keep a level head," said Zingrave bitingly. "You are pitiful in your confusion. This news is all to our advantage."

"But how? I don't understand——"

"You don't understand because you do not think," broke in the professor. "Now

we can form an accurate guess at the situation. It was Lee, of course, who rang up the Yard and arranged for the Flying Squad to come down. Meanwhile the local police have formed a cordon round the house, and they are merely keeping watch."

"Even now I can't see why you're so calm about it," said Tod, in wonder, but reassured by Zingrave's manner.

"Is it not obvious that the local police—who are, of course, unarmed—have been told merely to keep watch on this house?" asked Zingrave. "They are waiting for the Flying Squad to arrive. It is the Squad men who will make the raid—and we can be sure that they will be armed. If we are off before the Squad arrives, we stand an excellent chance of making a clean get-away. We have at least a full hour—and we need it."

"But why wait?" asked Ridley frantically. "The van's loaded, and we're all ready. Why not make a dash for it at once?"

"Because making a dash for it is only half the programme," replied Professor Zingrave. "There are other things to be considered—other precautions to be taken. I will admit that it is an ordeal, but we must face it with strength. Be ready to leave at a moment's notice. The call may come at any minute. Meanwhile, get upstairs to the upper windows, and keep your eyes well open. Not that I expect any attack. These local people are awaiting the Flying Squad; and that's what gives us our chance."

And the professor, who refused to be ruffled by their desperate plight, sat down by the telephone—and waited.

CHAPTER 4.

The Schoolboy Sleuths!

EVERYTHING seems quiet," said Handforth, in a disappointed voice.

He and Nipper were side by side; they had become separated from Skeets and Travers and the rest of the fellows. Moat Hollow lay dark and silent. Here and there in the lane, and in the meadows at the rear and sides of the house, uniformed police officers were standing on duty.

"I've been thinking, Handy—and I'm puzzled," said Nipper thoughtfully.

"Eh? Well, we're all puzzled, aren't we?" growled Handforth. "I'm not even sure that the crooks are still——"

"They're here," interrupted Nipper. "I don't mean that. I'm puzzled about those treasure-chests, Handy. How did the crooks manage to get hold of them?"

"That's what I can't understand," said Handforth.

Nipper nudged him, and they drifted away into the wood, which fringed the rear of Moat Hollow; and here they were unobserved, and could talk freely.

"When that tunnel was flooded, we escaped by a natural shaft—which leads up to the surface just behind the sports pavilion at St. Frank's," said Nipper. "But look here, Handy; the crooks couldn't have got the chests up in that way."

"I was mystified about that," admitted Handforth. "But if they didn't get the chests up by the shaft, how did they get them? There's no other exit from the tunnel. There was one, of course—the one on Willard's Island—but the tunnel has collapsed at the river, and it's flooded."

"There is that tunnel we made ourselves," said Nipper, frowning. "We borrowed right underground—even under the Moat Hollow property. There's no exit there—that we know of. But I'm curious, Handy, and I'm going to take a chance. Are you game to come with me?"

"Game for anything," said Handforth eagerly.

"The gov'nor warned us not to go too near Moat Hollow," went on Nipper. "But he didn't say anything about our going down into the tunnel, did he? Come on! We'll do a bit of exploring."

They cut through the wood, reached the meadows farther along, and from there it was a comparatively short distance to the St. Frank's playing fields. And here, of course, there were no watching police. Reaching the exit of that shaft, they quickly lowered themselves into the semi-flooded tunnel.

"Plenty of mud," grumbled Handforth, as he wallowed through a foot of it. "Ugh! We ought to have had our rubber boots on."

"Mud won't hurt you," said Nipper. "There's a mystery here, and we've got to clear it up."

The Remove captain had switched on a powerful electric torch, and he was flashing the beam this way and that. The tunnel was old; it was, in fact, part of a secret underground passage which had existed in the time of the St. Francis monks. At one time it had been intact all the way from the old monastery ruins to Willard's Island, passing beneath the river.

The tunnel was completely blocked near the school, and now it had been demolished at the river. The entrance the boys had used was not man-made; it was a natural cleft in the rocky earth.

"Those heavy treasure-chests could not have been taken up this shaft," said Nipper, flashing his light upwards. "Let's explore the new excavations."

They plunged along a narrow, earthy tunnel, which was crude and precarious. Part of it had been hollowed out by the boys several terms ago, but the newest section had been excavated during the past few days. Presently they found themselves at the blocked end, where the roof and sides had collapsed. It was here that the treasure-chests had been seen.

"I say!" burst out Handforth excitedly. "We've taken it for granted that those crooks pinched the treasure, but how do we know? Perhaps there was a collapse of roof and the chests are here all the time."

"No, Handy," said Nipper, steadying his light. "Look! Here's the place where the chests were dragged from—this cavern-like hole. You can even see the marks where they were pulled along. I'm wondering—Hullo! What's this? By Jove!"

He picked something out of the mud, and there was an exultant note in his voice.

"That's nothing," said Handforth impatiently. "Only a twig."

"Only a twig," repeated Nipper. "Is that all, eh? Look at the end of the twig, Handy—almost white. It was only broken away from the tree a few hours ago."

"But—but—"

"And look here," went on Nipper, searching the muddy floor. "Dead leaves! Dozens of them."

"I don't quite see—"

"My dear chap, how did this twig get here—and these dead leaves?" asked Nipper tensely. "If they had blown down we shouldn't have found them here, at the end of this new tunnel. No: there must be an exit here somewhere—and that's how the crooks got the chests away."

"By George!"

Nipper, heedless of his clothes, went down on his hands and knees. There was an irregular hole just here, where the tunnel was blocked. And the next moment Nipper was sniffing eagerly.

"I say, there's a distinct draught here," he murmured. "Yes, and I can smell smoke, too! Coal smoke! Don't you understand, Handy? There's a way out here—right to the open. And we must be

near Moat Hollow, or we shouldn't get the smoke from one of the chimneys."

"My only sainted aunt," said Handforth, staring.

"It was the flood that did it," continued Nipper. "The flood exposed the treasure, and it must have caused the ground to collapse, too. Don't you see? Zingrave and his gang must have found the chests more or less by accident, and when they dragged them through, the tunnel either collapsed by itself or else they deliberately blocked it up. Lend a hand here."

He was tugging at a great, solid mass of earth, and Handforth pulled, too.

"Better go easy, hadn't we?" asked the burly junior. "If this goes suddenly the whole tunnel might collapse, and then we should be buried."

"We've got to take a chance," replied Nipper. "Now then—heave!" And if there's a collapse be ready to dodge back."

With a sudden wrench the solid mass of earth and stone moved, and fell away. A fairly big cavity was now revealed, and, fortunately, there had been no collapse of the roof. The earth which had fallen away was dry and sandy—a sort of gravel soil, with any amount of large stones mingled with it. Nipper, worming his way across, uttered a low exclamation.

"Come on, Handy!" he whispered. "We're through!"

"What!"

Handforth, quivering with excitement, wormed his way through the narrow cavity, and he had a horrible feeling that the earth above him was about to collapse, and crush him with its smothering tons. But the sensation soon passed, for he found himself through—and, what was more, he could feel the cold night air on his cheeks. Nipper had extinguished his torch.

Handforth stood up—and gasped.

For he found himself in a kind of great crater. Overhead was the night sky, and, comparatively near at hand, the dark, ugly bulk of Moat Hollow.

CHAPTER 5.

Peril by Night!

"**W**ELL, I'm jiggered!" muttered Handforth, in amazement.

"Easy, old man," whispered Nipper. "We're in the enemy's territory now, and there might be somebody on the watch. Strictly speaking, we're disobeying the gov'nor's orders, but we didn't get into these grounds by climbing the wall, did we?"

"Of course not," replied Handforth stoutly. "That makes it O.K., doesn't it?"

They were at the extremity of the Moat Hollow grounds—at the far rear, where the garden extended for a considerable distance back. The "crater" was a deep, jagged basin where the ground, in consequence of the undermining, had collapsed. Even in the gloom Nipper could see one spot where the edges were trampled, and where there were long furrows.

"Look, Handy!" he whispered. "The treasure chests were dragged out this way. It's as easy to read as a copy-book."

Handforth nodded, for he could also see the tell-tale marks. Scrambling out of the crater, the two juniors made a closer inspection of the ground. They saw the weeds and the grass flattened out. There was a distinct trail across the garden, with many footprints, showing just how the treasure chests had been dragged to the house.

"Well, that little mystery is solved," breathed Nipper. "Now we know that Zingrave and his pals have bagged the Edgemore gold. Think of it, Handy! The treasure is here—perhaps within fifty yards of us."

"Don't!" muttered Handforth miserably. "We can't do anything, can we? I mean, just we two——"

"Well, we stand a better chance than anybody else," interrupted Nipper tensely. "What do you say, old man? I'm feeling a bit reckless. Shall we push on and do some scouting?"

"Rather!" said Handforth eagerly.

Yet Nipper hesitated. He remembered Nelson Lee's warning. If the crooks should see them they might be shot down before they could dodge. As Lee had said, the men were desperate—and they were ruthless.

"What's up?" whispered Handforth, his mouth close to Nipper's ear.

"Nothing. I was wondering—— Come on!" murmured Nipper. "This is no time for hesitation! But go easy, Handy; keep to the bushes, and at the first sign of firing fall flat on your face."

"Firing?" ejaculated Handforth, startled.

"You might as well understand what we're up against," said Nipper. "If we're spotted, they'll fire at us. They'll take us for police, don't forget. Perhaps we'd better get back through that tunnel——"

"Not likely!" interrupted Handforth. "I'm not scared."

"Good man!"



One by one Nipper dropped the heavy bags of gold down the coal-chute as Handforth passed them to him.

They crept towards the house, their hearts thudding. Fortunately, the grounds were overgrown with tangled bushes, masses of blackberry brambles and creepers. For years the property had been neglected; the garden had grown wild.

By keeping to the cover of the bushes and brambles, the two boys managed to get near to the house. It was not absolutely dark, but the juniors were invisible against the black background, and in the thick undergrowth. Nipper was satisfied, by now, that there were no watchers in the garden. Then suddenly he clutched at Handforth's arm, and bent low.

"What the——" began Edward Oswald.

"Hush! Look!" hissed Nipper.

He was pointing upwards, and Handforth started. One of the upper windows stood open, and for a second he caught the glow of a cigarette end. So there was a watcher up there, and he was foolish enough to smoke!

"Not a sound!" breathed Nipper, right into Handforth's ear. "The beggars know that the property is surrounded, I expect, and they are keeping watch; and you can take it as a cert that they've got guns in their hands. This way!"

He crawled behind some thick laurels, and, keeping to the cover of these, the boys presently found themselves within sight of the front drive. The laurel hedge skirted the entire side of the old house. Now the young explorers lay flat on their stomachs, peering through the lower part of the hedge.

"Hallo! This looks interesting," whispered Nipper tensely. "Do you spot it, Handy? A van—and a covered van, too!"

"You mean——"

"They're getting ready to make a break," said Nipper. "What else can it mean? Look at that van—it's facing the gates, and—— By Jove! I wonder——" A thought had come to him, and now he gripped Handforth's arm tightly. "You stay here!" he breathed. "I'm going to

worm through, and take a look at that van—at close quarters. I shan't be a tick."

He slithered through a gap at the bottom of the laurel hedge, but Handforth, bubbling with indignation, followed. It was like Nipper's nerve to tell him to stay behind!

Thus, when Nipper reached the rear of the van, Handforth was with him. Nipper did not argue—this was not the place for that. Cautiously, he felt the rear doors of the vehicle, and one of them opened.

At that moment a voice sounded from the front door of the house, which was not a great distance away. Some of the crooks were coming!

"Quick, Handy!" breathed Nipper. "In with you!"

It was rash, but the only possible move to make. Like snakes the two juniors wormed their way inside the van, and Nipper pulled the door to.

CHAPTER 6.

Dishing the Enemy!

QUIVERING with excitement, expecting every second to be discovered, the two boys stood stock-still, holding their breath.

Then, to their relief, they heard the soft thud of a closing door. Nipper cautiously pushed one of the van flaps and peeped out. Everything was dark and quiet.

"All serene," he whispered. "I thought the beggars were coming out, but it was only one of them taking a casual look. We'd better get back to those bushes, Handy. Too risky for us to stay here."

"By George, yes!" agreed Handforth.

"Keep those doors closed," warned Nipper. "I'm going to switch on my torch for a second. We might as well know what's in this van—if anything."

Screening the bulb with his hand, he pressed the switch, and a limited beam shot out. And, in the same breath, Nipper and Handforth gasped with astonishment. For they saw two great, iron-bound, mouldering sea-chests. Then Nipper snapped the light out again.

"Ye gods and little fishes!" he grugled. "The treasure!"

"Crumbs!" breathed Handforth dizzily.

For some seconds they stood silent, recovering from the shock of their discovery.

"I don't know why we're so surprised," whispered Nipper, at last. "We might have expected this. The crooks are pre-

paring a get away—and they're taking the loot with them."

"I say, they may come out at any minute—and catch us here," said Handforth. "Oh, blow! Who cares? It's the treasure! Switch on that light—let's see if we can open the lids!"

"It's risky," said Nipper, "but I'm reckless, too."

He switched on, and Handforth, heaving at the lid of the nearest chest, swung it open. Within lay a disordered pile of rough canvas bags, so discoloured as to be almost black. Handforth was disappointed; he had expected to see a chest full of gold coins.

"What a sell!" he muttered.

He pulled at one of the bags, but although it was small it resisted his efforts—until he gave a stronger heave. And then, with a dull chink of metal, it moved.

"Great Scott!" he said breathlessly. "This little bag must weigh a hundred-weight."

He opened the top, and Nipper flashed his torch within. Both the juniors felt their hearts racing madly as they beheld the queer-looking dull yellow coins.

"It's the treasure right enough," whispered Nipper.

"Pieces of eight, by George!" exclaimed Handforth.

"No; these are gold coins," said Nipper. "Pieces of eight were silver. These are real, genuine old Spanish doubloons, Handy. Look how crude and uneven they are. Do you realise that each one is worth over three pounds? There must be thousands of them in this one bag."

"I say, what a fortune!" said Handforth, in an awed voice, as he gazed at the piles of similar bags in the chest.

"We can't let these crooks get away with all this gold," declared Nipper fiercely. "What can we do, Handy? Think, old man—think! How can we prevent them? At any minute they may come out——"

He broke off, and Handforth groaned.

"What can we do?" asked the leader of Study D, in despair. "We can't shift all this stuff! It must weigh tons. No wonder they used this big van! A private car couldn't carry the weight."

"That's just it," agreed Nipper, nodding. "Now, listen, Handy. It's up to us! We're here, and we've got to do something to dish Zingrave."

"Don't forget that the Flying Squad is coming——"

"Yes, I know that, but there's many a slip," interrupted Nipper. "Zingrave is one of the cleverest crooks out of prison, and we can be absolutely sure that he is

not unprepared. Supposing they make a clean getaway? Think of poor old Skeets and his pater!"

"Yes, but——"

"I've thought of something," said Nipper, and his voice was quivering. "Do you think you can heave these bags to the back of the van, Handy—one by one?"

Without waiting for the startled Handforth to reply, Nipper cautiously opened the flap door and dropped to the ground. No lights were showing on this side of the house, and there was no sound. The crooks were evidently satisfied that no unauthorised persons could enter.

Bending down, Nipper felt around with his hands, and he almost cried aloud with satisfaction when he touched the round, iron circular plate of the coal-chute. He had remembered treading upon it just as he was getting into the van.

The coal-chute!

It was the work of a moment for Nipper to remove the plate. Thrusting his electric torch down into the cavity, he switched on. The light revealed a coal-blackened chute, with a pile of coal dust visible in the cellar. Nipper rose to his feet again, and switched out the torch.

"Come on!" he whispered. "The first one, Handy! After that, hand 'em out as quick as you like."

"But—but what——"

"Don't talk—let's have 'em!" hissed Nipper.

With a heave, Handforth got the first bag to the edge of the van. Nipper seized it, lowered it, and released his hold after it had entered the chute. It slid down with a dull sound, and thudded amongst the coal.

"By George!" gurgled Handforth, with a suspicion of the truth.

It was a brilliant plan—if only the boys could carry it through. Even if the crooks made their break and got away—But there was no time for thinking. The two juniors, working as they had seldom worked in their lives, hauled and perspired at the weighty but precious bags.

Once Nipper hissed a warning, and they both stood stock-still, listening to the beating of their own hearts. The front door of the house had opened, and a man had come out. He stood there for some moments; they could see the glow of his cigarette. Then, apparently satisfied that everything was all right, he went back, and they heard the click of the latch.

"We ought to be all right for another five minutes now, Handy," whispered Nipper. "On with the good work!"

Again they laboured, and they kept it up until their muscles felt on the point

of cracking; until the perspiration was pouring in streams down their faces.

They made another wonderful discovery; for in the second chest there was a quaintly-carved casket—and, within, a dazzling mass of jewels—diamonds, rubies, emeralds—stones of perfect quality and immense size. That little casket, alone, represented a fortune.

And thus, all unknown to the crooks, the treasure was being taken from them under their very noses—and by two schoolboys!

CHAPTER 7.

One Minute Too Late!

TOD MILLAR was pacing up and down, within the sitting-room of Moat Hollow, like a caged animal.

"This is madness, I tell you!" he snapped savagely. "Do you hear me, Zingrave? Madness! We're wasting precious time."

"Be silent, fool!" replied Professor Cyrus Zingrave, his voice as steady as a rock.

"I'm not the fool!" retorted Tod. "You're the fool! We had a chance to get away. The van's loaded, and there's nothing to keep us here. What are we waiting for? You know that the Flying Squad cars are on their way——"

"I also know that the police of the entire county—of the whole country, if it comes to that—have been warned," interrupted Zingrave. "What chance have we of getting away—unless we have everything prepared, our plans cut and dried?"

"You don't tell me anything," grumbled Millar resentfully. "How do I know what you're planning? It seems to me that this delay is ruining all our chances——"

He broke off as Ivan Hess came in. The big, shaggy Pole was looking haggard and pale.

"Well?" snapped Tod.

"The police—they are everywhere," said Hess hopelessly. "More have come. Boys from the school, too. We are surrounded. They carry lanterns; in some places they have lit the bonfires. They do not mean us to get away."

"We will get away—at the right time," said Zingrave.

And such was the confidence in his tone that Tod Millar could only stare in wonder. In this hour of crisis, in fact, Tod was beginning to appreciate the amazing strength of the professor's character. Nothing ruffled him. The news that Moat Hollow was completely sur-

rounded by a cordon of police left him smiling; he treated it with contempt.

Zurrrrrh—zurrrrrh!

While the telephone-bell was still ringing, Zingrave snapped off the receiver and put it to his ear.

"Yes?" he said, in a low voice. "Yes—Z. Well?"

He listened intently for a full minute, whilst Tod Millar and Ivan Hess waited, breathless. Finally, Zingrave snapped down the receiver.

"Good! Now we can go," he said crisply.

His manner was completely changed; he was alert, alive—a man of action in every inch of him.

"What—what have you heard?" asked Tod.

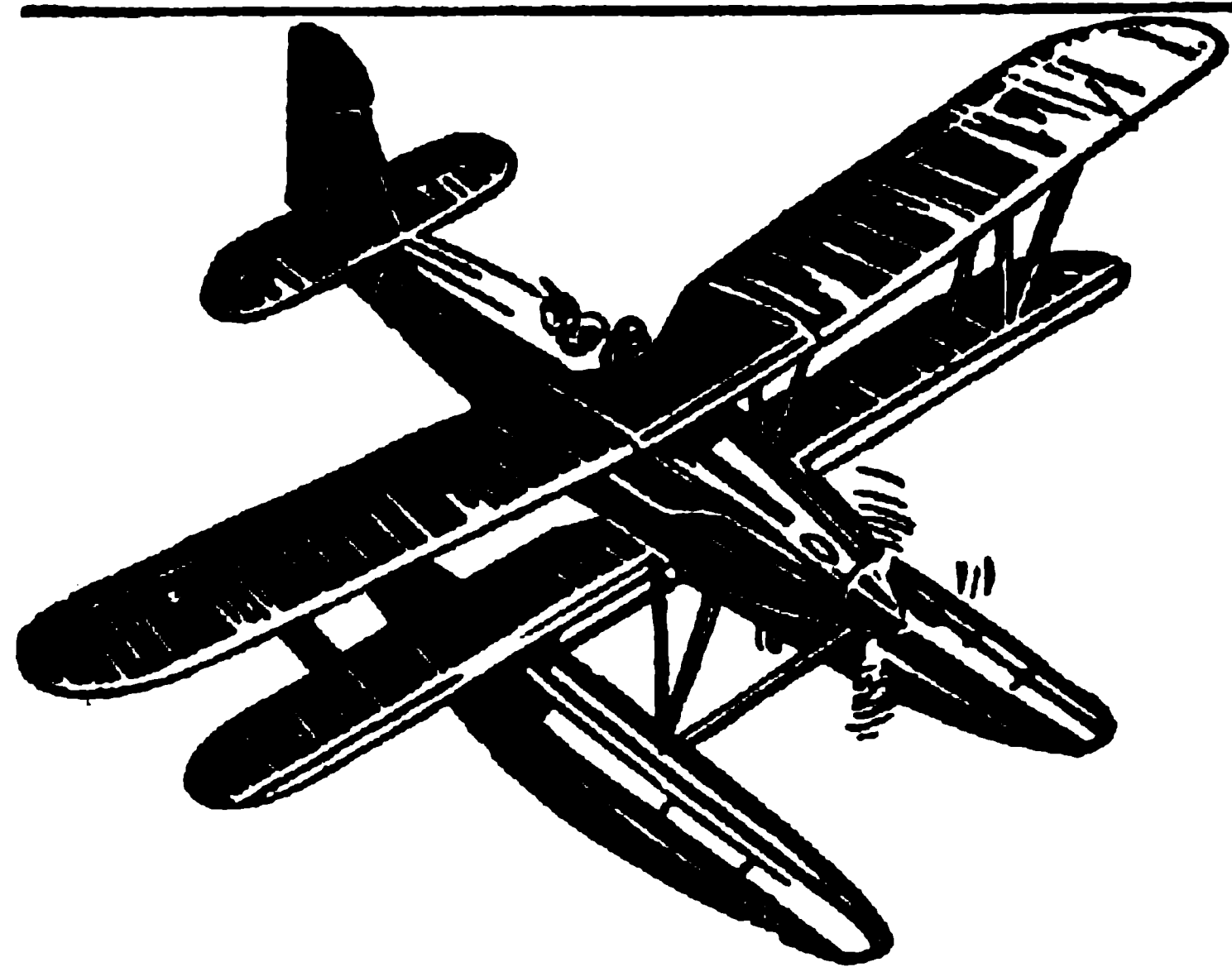
"I will tell you after we have started," said the professor. "You can drive—eh?"

Good! You will take the wheel, Tod. As we go I will tell you what to do. Our way is clear now, and I fancy we shall be the winners in this little battle of wits."

His voice had taken on a gloating note, and Tod Millar knew—then—that the wily professor had been making some cunning and elaborate preparations. Left to himself, Tod would have made a blind bid for liberty long before now. But that was not Professor Zingrave's way.

And outside, at that very moment, Nipper and Handforth had disposed of the last bag of gold. Nipper, to make sure, had slithered down the coal-chute. It only took him a few moments to shift a heap of the coal, and to pile it over the treasure. All trace of it had now vanished; there appeared to be nothing in the cellar but coal.

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With difficulty, Nipper scrambled out of the chute, and the plate was replaced.

"I say," whispered Handforth, "one of those bags leaked, you know, and some of the coins must have dropped out on the floor of the van. Hadn't we better collect——"

"Too risky," interrupted Nipper, breathing hard. "We shall have to let the beggars get away with those odd coins, Handy. Come on! We'll dodge into the bushes and get out the same way as we came."

They were both exultant at their success. They had transferred the whole treasure—with the exception of those few spilt coins! And it was ten to one that the crooks—or anybody else, if it came to that—would never dream of looking in the coal-collar. The treasure would be right under their feet, but they would assume that it had been mysteriously carried completely clear of the Moat Hollow grounds.

Handforth was preparing to jump to the ground when something happened. It was the essence of misfortune that the two daring boys should fail by a mere matter of seconds. The front door of the house was flung open, and voices sounded; worse still, a light was gleaming.

It was a moment for instantaneous decision. Nipper's mind worked like lightning. He saw, in a flash, that if he and Handforth broke away for the bushes they would be seen, and with the crooks in their present desperate mood they would fire.

There was only one thing to be done—and Nipper did it. With a clean leap he reached Handforth's side, and with one movement he closed the van doors.

"What the dickens——" began Handforth.

"They're here—they're on us!" hissed Nipper. "No time to get away; we'll be seen."

"Crumbs!"

"We bagged the treasure, old man, but we haven't had time to get away ourselves," went on Nipper. "A pity, but it can't be helped. Into that chest—quick!"

"Oh, my hat! You mean——"

"Don't talk; get in!"

They were only in the nick of time, for a second after they had leapt into the empty chests, and had closed the lids, the rear doors of the van opened.

"Get in!" came the voice of Tod Millar. "Yes, Ridley—you and Hess. You can sit on the chests. Zingrave will ride with me in front. You won't need any light."

The boys within the chests heard the doors slam, and then they heard the catch being slipped into its socket.

They were trapped!

NELSON LEE, all unconscious of what had been happening within the Moat Hollow grounds, hurried out of the Bellton post-office and leapt into his waiting car.

There was a good deal of excitement in the village, for everybody knew that something "big" was happening at Moat Hollow. Crowds of villagers had drifted in that direction, but were being kept well back by the police. The roads were being kept clear with difficulty.

When Lee brought his car to a standstill, Inspector Jameson, of the Bannington police, stepped upon the footboard.

"Everything's still quiet, Mr. Lee," he said dubiously. "Can't understand it. I thought they would have made an attempt to get away before now. Looks as if we're going to take them without much trouble."

"Make no mistake, inspector; there'll be plenty of activity soon," replied Lee, a grim note in his voice. "I've just been on the 'phone; the squad cars passed through Bannington two minutes ago. That means that they'll be here practically at once."

"That's good hearing," said Jameson, with relief.

"These criminals will not give in without a fight," continued Lee. "I'm rather surprised they haven't made a break——"

Even while he was speaking there came the sound of a racing engine; a low, throaty roar, more like the bark of a powerful racing car than that of a heavy, enclosed van.

"Better look out," said Lee sharply. "They're up to something even now."

He knew that the sound was coming from the Moat Hollow grounds; and as he turned his head he saw the reflection of dazzling headlights. But he was certainly not prepared for what happened immediately afterwards. There came the sound of a shout, the engaging of gears, and then——

Cra-a-a-sh!

With a roaring and splintering, the high-boarded gates of Moat Hollow burst open, and a heavy van came charging out like some Juggernaut.

"Look out!" yelled one of the police officers.

Several men had been standing in the road, just opposite the gates, but now they leapt for their lives. The gates were smashed to scrap iron and matchwood,

and two policemen, at least, were nearly run down. They leapt for their lives, and were only just in time.

The van, swinging round, shot away sharply, taking the narrow lane which led towards the River House School—a winding by-lane which, later on, joined the main road.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Several pistol-shots sounded; Lee saw the livid spurts of flame. And even as the van shot away, the sound of powerful cars came from the village; blazing headlights lit up the scene. The Flying Squad was just arriving!

Nelson Lee remained calm in spite of the fact that Zingrave had beaten him at the post. Never for a moment did he doubt that the Edgemore treasure was loaded upon that fugitive van. The crooks believed so, too, if it came to that.

The van, gathering speed, roared away into the night. There was a wild scene; police, schoolboys, and villagers raced across the road, blocking it. Everybody was shouting at once.

Nelson Lee was one of the few men who kept his head.

"Clear this road, Jameson!" he shouted. "We must give chase, and this crowd will hold us up!"

Jameson, bellowing, ran up and down. Lee, leaping into his car, was at the wheel when Chief Detective-inspector Lennard, of the Yard, stepped off the footboard of one of the squad tenders.

"They've made a break, Lennard!" shouted Lee. "Come on; hop in!"

"Gosh!" exclaimed Lennard. "This is hectic!"

"Get your other cars to follow!" said Lee briskly. "I'll lead the way. Hurry!"

But valuable seconds were lost, and Nelson Lee, fuming, was unable to get his car free of the crowd until the crooks had secured a start of incalculable value. Split seconds counted now.

"What happened?" roared the chief inspector, as they gathered speed.

"A minute before you arrived they broke through the gates in a big covered van," replied Lee. "They've taken this road—and it's a tricky one. I expect they'll make for London—this lane joins the main road farther on."

"It ought to be easy," yelled the Yard man. "A van, you say? You'll soon overhaul them in this racer of yours."

"I hope to," replied Lee grimly. "But they've got a good start, Lennard; and by the sound of that van it's no ordinary commercial vehicle. And if we do overhaul it, there'll be some fancy shooting."

"They've got the loot with them—eh?"

"Yes. Better get your gun out and pull back the safety catch."

The burly Yard man gulped as Lee's car leapt into higher speed; the night air cut like a knife. Behind came the other squad cars. Lennard clutched desperately at the windscreen as they went careering round a bend.

"Don't mind me!" he said philosophically. "We can only die once!"

CHAPTER 8.

Tricked!

NELSON LEE was right about that van.

It was a very special vehicle; for, with its pneumatic tyres and high-powered engine, it was capable of attaining terrific speed.

Tod Millar, at the wheel, took chances. He swung round bends at a death-defying speed. But he was a skilful driver, and his judgment was perfect.

He was thinking of those treasure-chests in the body of the van. Gold! Hundreds of thousands of pounds worth! Gold such as Tod had never even dreamed of! It was worth gambling with death, to secure this stupendous prize!

"Look out! he yelled suddenly. "We turn here—a sharp one!"

Zingrave clutched. The van shot out of the lane, and gained the main road. Two of its wheels left the ground for a fraction of a second; inside, Hess and Ridley were pitched about like hot peas in a shovel.

"My friend, you are too reckless," said Zingrave. "There is an old saying: 'More haste, less speed.' If you turn us into a ditch——"

"Don't worry! I won't!" interrupted Tod. "I know what I'm doing, Zingrave. Leave me to my job. This is something I can do!"

"All right," said Zingrave. "The van rides lightly, doesn't she? I'm surprised—with such a load."

"She's the goods—this van!" gloated Tod Millar. "Hold tight here. Another bend."

As they roared along between sixty and seventy, Zingrave gave some urgent instructions—instructions which took Tod Millar by surprise.

"You mean that?" he shouted, in wonder. "The first turning to the left, beyond the cross-roads outside Bannington?"

"Yes," shouted Zingrave. "I have arranged it. There are heavy trees there,



With a roar and a crash the van smashed its way through the gates. Nelson Lee and the police were helpless. Zingrave had made a spectacular getaway!

and a single signpost. You can't mistake it. I will tell you just before we arrive."

"It sounds good to me," grinned Tod.

The first lights of Bannington were showing ahead; the van roared past one or two private cars and some cyclists. One unfortunate owner-driver drove straight into the ditch in his agitation—for the hurtling vehicle, with its glaring headlights, was making a noise like a track racer, and Tod was sounding an electric hooter in one long, continuous scream.

It was tricky work, for now and again, along the road, they came upon little patches of mist. They hurtled through them blindly, taking appalling chances.

Zingrave, clutching at the cab door, more than once looked back. Blazing headlights showed in the rear—a string of them. The Flying Squad cars were gaining!

"Faster—faster!" shouted Zingrave. "We ought to gain through the town."

The people of Bannington—those who were in the streets—were to remember that night for many a week. At least a dozen pedestrians, in various parts of the town had miraculously narrow escapes—either running madly across the road, after they had been caught unawares, or leaping back on to the pavement for safety.

With a zooming roar, and a howling scream from the electric hooter, the fugitive van tore through the centre of the town. In the High Street there were many policemen; they were strung across the road in a barrier. But the inspector in charge, when he saw the terrific speed of the van, gave a sharp order. The officers leapt for safety. The van went hurtling down the High Street, and people ran in panic-stricken terror. Men shouted, women screamed.

Professor Zingrave had been right in his prediction. For no sooner had the van passed than people ran excitedly into the

roads — hampering the pursuing cars badly.

Nelson Lee, who could have overtaken the fugitive on level terms, was compelled to slow down. He was sounding his hooter continuously; the chief inspector was standing up and yelling. But Lee, unless he wanted to run people down, was compelled to slacken speed. The other Squad cars closed in.

And this was exactly what Zingrave required. He had a clear road; and Tod, driving, took full advantage of the situation. They went roaring out of Bannington as dramatically as they had entered. At the cross-roads there was nearly a terrible smash, for a light car was swinging into the main highway. Tod swerved madly; the light car ran on to the grass verge, and ended up with one wing in the hedge.

Then on—on.

"Careful now," warned Zingrave. "The next turning to the left. Watch for the signpost."

Tod watched, and he cursed the wisp of mist which floated here and there across the road.

"Now—the horn!" said Zingrave.

Tod touched the button; he gave two

long hoots, and followed immediately with two short ones. He eased the throttle, and had his foot ready for the brake.

The signpost came into view. A big covered van, absolutely identical with the crooks' van, leapt out of that side turning, showing no lights. Then suddenly the lights came on—and instantly Tod switched his off.

Careering round madly, he drove the van into that side turning, and at the same moment Lee's car came shooting round a bend, four or five hundred yards in the rear—on the main road.

And even Nelson Lee, astute as he was, did not guess; he had no idea of Zingrave's brilliant stratagem.

In the distance ahead he could see the road splashed with light from the van's lamps; he could see the van itself, and its rear light; he faintly heard the unmistakable note of its horn. To the pursuers, in fact, there was not the slightest indication that they were now in full pursuit of a decoy vehicle!

Lee's car, with all the Flying Squad cars behind, hurtled past that side turning—past the real object of their chase. And on they went into the night, in hot pursuit of the wrong van!

HALLO, HALLO! **Jack Blake calling!**

I am the leader of the juniors in the School House. Tom Merry—you've probably heard of the kid—he's in the mouldy Shell, and thinks he is the leader; but, of course, that's all rot. I frequently have to take him down a peg, but he's very thick-skinned.

There's only one thing that Merry and I agree about, and that is that New House juniors were made to be sat on. We usually join forces against the New House wrecks, but just lately Merry's been so terribly uppish that D'Arcy, Herries and I have decided this week to join up with Figgins and Co., and make a Fourth Form alliance against the Shell.

We've got a great scheme for taking Merry down one, and if you want to know all about it, just buy a copy of this week's GEM and read "The Nobbling of Nobbler Jim!" It's a ripping long complete yarn about me and the other fellows at St. Jim's!

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CHAPTER 9.

Vanished Treasure!

ZINGRAVE, I apologise," said Tod Millar admiringly. "Smart? I never heard of anything like it! Now I understand why you waited! You were fixing up about that second van, eh?"

"We should have been hopelessly beaten in a straight chase," replied Zingrave. "This way we at least have a chance. Go slow now—use only the side lights. You'll find a battered old farm van a little farther on."

"Another dodge, eh?" asked Tod breathlessly. "You do spring the shocks, professor!"

"Are you so easily shocked, then?" said Zingrave, not without impatience. "In your folly, did you assume that we could run off with a fortune without making careful preparations? We have a respite now; the police are off on a wild-goose chase, but we haven't any time to spare. I have prepared a hiding-place, where we can lie low for some days. I fancy we shall confuse the trail so effectively that we shall not be bothered. This van, of course, must be abandoned—and that will give the police another loose end to puzzle over."

They drove on, Tod Millar's mind confused by the unexpectedness of Zingrave's scheming. Tod could now understand why the professor had done so much telephoning at Moat Hollow; why he had waited, in spite of the fact that the grounds were surrounded by police. Zingrave, with rare cunning, had delayed until the most favourable minute.

Presently the lane took a sharp turn; just beyond there was an open gateway and, all round, dense trees. Zingrave leapt to the ground, and a torchlight flashed upon him.

"Chief!" said an eager voice. "Thunder! It's good to see you again, after all these years."

The two clasped hands, and Tod Millar, joining them, wondered afresh.

"This is Major Dayle," said Zingrave briefly. "He is in with us."

"Oh!" said Tod. "If this means another split——"

"You can set your greedy mind at rest," interrupted Zingrave curtly. "Major Dayle will not touch any of your share. Now, open up the van quickly. The stuff must be transferred to this other vehicle, and, remember, there is no time to waste."

Tod was interested in Major Dayle, but in the darkness he could only see a tall

figure. The voice of the man was cultured. Zingrave had had many strange followers in his old Green Triangle days.

Under the trees stood a mud-smothered, ramshackle van.

"How are we going to transfer the stuff?" asked Tod. "We can't lift those chests. It'll mean emptying them——"

"That will not be necessary—if only we use our brains," said Zingrave. "Dayle, will you back your van until it is flush with the rear of this one? The doors of both vehicles must be wide open. There are five of us, and I think we can drag the chests, heavy as they are, from one van to the other. It will not take three minutes."

"That's an idea!" said Tod Millar, with grudging admiration. Somehow he felt small. It was Zingrave who did everything.

Tod opened the rear doors, and Hess and Ridley wanted to know what was happening; they complained about the buffet-ing they had received during that mad ride.

"Don't talk—we're in a hurry," said Tod Millar briefly. "What's your grouch, anyway? A bruise or two won't do any harm, will it?"

Dayle, at the wheel of the other van, backed it up skilfully; within a minute the two vehicles were back to back, and there was not a two-inch gap between them.

"Now!" said Zingrave, flashing his torch. "We must all put out hands to the pumps!"

They gave their attention to the first chest, and, knowing how heavy the gold was, they pulled and pushed with every ounce of their strength. The result was astonishing. The chest shot from one van to the other, and all the conspirators went sprawling. Ridley and Tod were hurt.

"Not so heavy as you thought, eh?" asked Dayle in surprise.

"Very strange!" murmured Professor Zingrave, and there was a peculiar gleam in his eyes. "Tod, quick! Help me with this lid!"

"My leg's broken," groaned Millar.

"Fool! This is no time to wail about your trivial hurts," snarled Zingrave. "By Heaven! Have we been tricked? There is no gold in this chest—or it would not have moved so easily. No wonder the van rocked so much as we drove!"

"What!" gasped Tod. "You mean——"

He said no more, but clutched at the heavy lid. He and Zingrave heaved it up, and the professor's torchlight flashed into the interior.

"Crumbs!" said Handforth, blinking.

"One of those St. Frank's kids!" yelled Tod in amazement.

"The gold! What of the gold?" wailed Hess.

Zingrave clutched Handforth's shoulders in a vice-like grip.

"You will tell us what this means, boy!" he said harshly. "What have you done with the Edgemore treasure?"

"Find out," retorted Handforth defiantly. "And while you're about, you can all go and eat coke!"

"Hold him!" commanded Zingrave.

He ran into the other van, and heaved up the second lid. He was not surprised to see Nipper--whom he recognised on the instant.

"Good-evening, Professor Zingrave," said Nipper, by no means as cool as he appeared to be. "I think this is our trick, eh?"

Nipper and Handforth had been expecting discovery ever since they had started off on this wild adventure. They were half suffocated after their imprisonment in the treasure chests. But neither of them had lost his nerve.

"The gold—the gold!" almost screamed Tod Millar. "These infernal boys have beaten us!"

"Not yet," said Zingrave dangerously. "Close these lids—imprison them again. Shift that second chest into Dayle's van."

And while this was being done Professor Zingrave stood in deep thought. He was the only one who remained cool. The others were in a panic, and furious with disappointment and shock. After all their efforts—to be hoodwinked by two school-boys!

"Yes," said the professor slowly. "That is how it was done."

"What do you mean?" snapped Tod.

"It was while the van was standing outside the house, ready," said Zingrave. "These two boys must have crept up in the darkness. They emptied the chests, but they could not have taken the gold far. Perhaps they only carried it to the cover of the bushes, near the drive. We don't know—but we *shall* know. Then, before they could escape, we came out from the house. And in their extremity they jumped into the chests rather than be discovered."

Three minutes later the Moat Hollow fugitives were in the farm van, and were driving on. Dayle took charge of the other vehicle, and he was soon on a road which led him to Bannington Moor. Everything had been thought of, for Dayle had placed a bicycle in the otherwise empty van.

At that same time there were interesting happenings near Helmford.

It had been a stern chase. The driver of the decoy van had made no attempt to leave the main road. Putting on every ounce of speed, he had driven flat out, tearing along in a mad, exhilarating race. And so fast was the van that even Nelson Lee's own car, which was a racer, could not draw alongside until they were nearly into Helmford.

Had the road been completely clear, Lee might have overtaken the fugitives on three occasions; but in that exasperating way which is familiar to every motorist, whenever there was a long stretch of straight road where overtaking was possible, the headlights of another vehicle, or the feeble lamps of cyclists, were ahead. Again and again Lee was beaten by these circumstances.

But now there was a straight stretch of wide road—and there was no approaching traffic. Lee, with Chief-inspector Lennard sounding the hooter, roared alongside the rocking van. For some moments they raced side by side; and in the rear the other Squad cars were in close attendance.

"Stop!" roared the Yard man, as he glared into the van's cab. "Pull over to the side!"

"Go to blazes!" came an answering shout.

Lennard flourished a revolver.

"All right—we'll blow holes in your back tyres!" he roared. "That won't do you much good at this speed. Are you pulling up?"

"All right!" came the grudging retort.

Nelson Lee was surprised. He had expected gun play; he had been almost certain that the crooks would open fire.

But, sure enough, the van rocked farther to the near side of the road; the brakes were applied, and soon the vehicle came to a standstill. Nelson Lee drove his car in front, and he and Lennard jumped out, the latter with his gun held ready.

"Say, what's this—a hold-up?" demanded the van driver, in a tone of amazement. "I've got nothing——"

Then he broke off, for other cars, with shrieking brakes, were pulling up. Uniformed policemen were leaping out of them—to say nothing of the plain-clothes Flying Squad men.

"Crikey!" said the van driver. "Cops! So that's what it is? You're going to have me for speeding?"

"Surround the van—and be ready for trouble," said Lee, in a low voice. "Take no notice of this fellow. Better handcuff him straight away!"

(Continued on page 24.)

STOP HERE FOR A GOOD LAUGH, BOYS!



HANDFORTH'S Weekly

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THE
EDITOR'S
CHIN-WAG

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February 20th, 1932.

FURIOUS FICTION

By Reggie Pitt.

No. 4: GRAMMALOGUES.

NEXT week, dear readers, we are going to give the poets a chance with our special Poetry Number. Poems grave and gay will, I hope, adorn these pages; though there will probably be more gay than grave.

I have only one of the latter at the moment—an "Ode to Light, by Guy Pepys"—and if I can't find out what it means before next Wednesday, it won't jolly well be published and that's flat.

This week we are letting Nipper have a good deal of space with his piffling puzzle, which I solved in three minutes, sixteen seconds—by my watch! It isn't a puzzle at all, really. It's so childish that a—a child could do it. The missing word, of course, is BLWF. You will find that out when you do the puzzle.

Nipper has pointed out to me that BLWF isn't a word; but that's not my fault, is it? It's the fault of the man who invented the puzzle, I should think. It's Nipper's fault, purely and simply.

The fact is, Nipper's really not much good at puzzles. I've made up a Crossword puzzle that whacks his hollow. I showed it to Churchy and Mac, and they went red in the face with suppressed admiration. I thought they were going to choke with awe.

If I have room, I'll publish it shortly. You'll never do it, of course. Nobody but me could solve it—and I shouldn't be able to do so if I lost my copy of the solution. It's a puzzle created by a master brain, and it can only be solved by other master brains.

I've just got one corner of it to straighten out, at the moment. As soon as I can make sense out of the letters KRKTHWKLTUX, I'll put it in my WEEKLY. So look out for it.

Thine to a cinder,

E. O. H.

SOME of the best and noblest stories that have ever been written are those we find in the Grammar Books, which are given us by unsympathetic masters when we are being taught French. The stories are very mysterious and foreign in their treatment. They consist mostly of dialogue, and the interest is well kept up all through.

There are usually two characters at the start—the hero and the heroine. The book opens at the period when these two are children. Their names, we gather, are John (Jean) and Mary (Maria).

John is first of all shown to us in the picture as standing in a beautiful garden. He is looking affectionately at Mary, and he says these beautiful words:

"Have you, then, not seen the three large books of the gardener?"

We can imagine the childish eagerness with which he asks this question, and we can imagine, too, his disappointment as Mary (Maria) replies very seriously:

"No: but I have with me the larger book (or books) of my aunt and your friend."

This shows us at once that Mary is no relation of John, as Mary's aunt is merely John's friend. But John, who is a thoughtful boy, is not interested in the aunt's book, merely because it is larger than those of the gardener. He goes on eagerly:

"But have we not also seen the gardener and the roses? The gardener has many roses! The roses grow in the garden! The gardener himself grows the roses!"

When I was a child, I could never read this beautiful passage without a secret tear. What a wonderful vision of gardens and roses and slugs and things it conjures up!

A large table of irregular verbs interrupt the drama for a bit just about here, and when we next see the hero and heroine, they have left the garden and are at school in the class-room. Here we are introduced to a very novel school.

(Continued in column 1, page 22.)

Nipper Invites You to—

CRACK THIS SAFE!

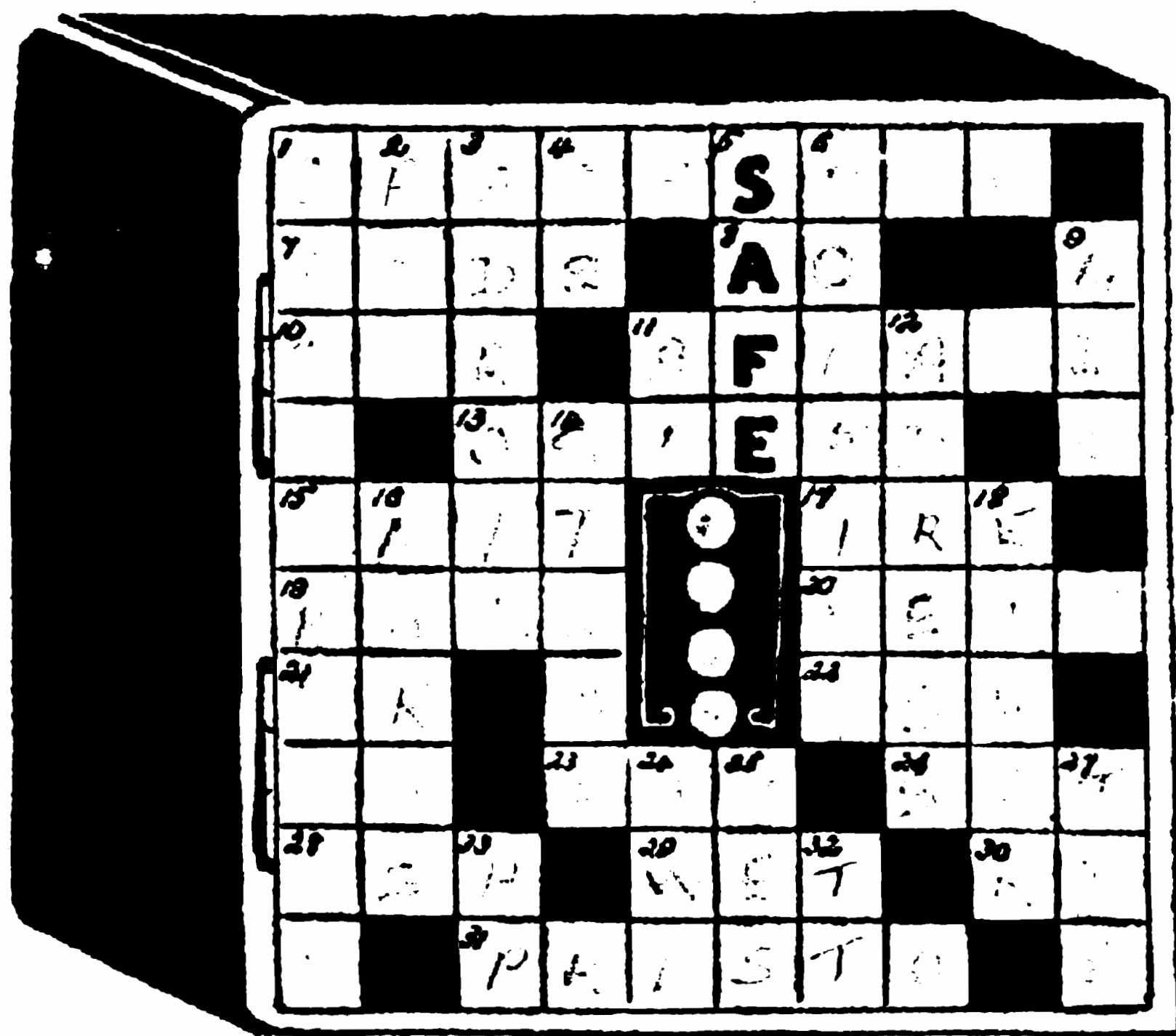
MAY I have the pleasure of presenting another novel little puzzle to you this week? I may? Thanks! This is it!

You are to imagine for a little while that you are a burglar. (This is only imagination, mind!) Below, you see a safe that has to be cracked. It is fitted with a combination lock with four plungers. A secret word of four letters will open this safe, but you don't know what the word is.

How are you to find this word?

Well, first of all, there's the little crossword puzzle on the door of the safe. This will have to be solved in the usual way. But—!

You will find that **FOUR** of the words in this puzzle are wrongly spelt. From each of these four words one letter has been left out—making four letters in all. These four letters form a word which is the combination word of the safe. Put this word in the circles of the lock, and you may take it that you have opened the safe, and the loot is at your mercy.



FURIOUS FICTION

(Continued from previous page.)

mistress, and we make the really rotten discovery that nearly all the children in the school are thieves.

The school-mistress starts:

"William has the pencil of the little boy!"

You can imagine William—one of those large, bullying rotters who *would* sneak a little boy's pencil. But William is not the only one. Even John and Mary are pinching with the rest.

"John," says the mistress, "must give to the small boy (girl) his (her) book."

This is really rotten of John—especially if it turns out that it is, after all, a little girl's book. But, as even the teacher doesn't seem to know whose book it is, perhaps it is really John's own.

"Mary," goes on the teacher, "must be punished. I will punish Mary. Mary has the pen and the ink and the books of John."

Evidently a practised thief. She doesn't stop at a pencil. She goes the whole hog. The ease with which she walks off with John's pen and ink suggests that she could take the poor nut's necktie without his finding it out. No doubt she did.

More irregular verbs follow, and then we find that John is chasing Mary over a rustic-looking bridge. Probably he wants to push her into the river. That's what I should do.

But you know what happens yourselves. You have read it all, the same as I. A tense, gripping and dramatic story, which holds you thrilled from start to finish. And what more can you want than that?

Next Week: **MATHEDRAMATICS.**

Here are the clues. No. 5 down is already inserted.

ACROSS.

1. The man who open safes.
7. Helps.
8. Ancient Order (Ab.)
10. It is rubbish to look at this small mountain backwards.
11. This is how crooks feel when they hear footsteps.
13. First stop from Dover to Belgium.
15. An item. One.
17. Anger.
19. These have to be paid every quarter.
20. Fatal things for fish.
21. Meaning "King George."
22. A tear or slash.
23. This is what a burglar calls a job.
26. To place in position.
28. This tree doesn't change its name even when it is burnt.
29. To sharpen one's appetite.
30. On account of the Royal Engineers.
31. "Hey—!" Magic saying.

DOWN.

1. An athletic burglar.
2. "Rolling down to—" (song).
3. Clever or expert.
4. Civil Service (Ab.).
5. A hard nut to crack.
6. If the burglar comes after midnight, he comes in this.
9. To reckon up.
11. Preposition showing place.
12. To speak or write to somebody.
14. What burglars do.
16. This is what crooks call informers.
18. This puts you to sleep.
24. Great dread.
25. Affirmative.
27. Small heap of sand.
32. Tourist Trophy (Ab.).
33. Houses of Parliament (Ab.).

WORDS O

(The proof is i

FATTY LIT plaining the new recipe dishes.

make something a flavour all its ex

We have the in recommending

BOMBPROO

Take four ounces quarter of a pound three tumblers cement, one or two lead, eight ounces a sprinkling of a pint and a half

Put the glue on a year, and then raisins, prussic acid and powdered glass for ten seconds, at broken lead and hot.

So appetising is body who has one pudding never by anything else.

O U R

Don't take a you fellows. It printer trying to stand on end.

WIRELES

BEFORE we do Handy box They packed it C.O.D.

He'd only got a When they came He gasped "L.S.D."

Since Mac and His monetary He sent out a S.O.S.

De Valerie was By old Handy For cash, he's n I.O.U.

The battery was connected. Enjoyed the ben B.B.C.

F WISDOM

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full of Portland
pieces of broken
of powdered glass,
nails, and about
liquid glue.

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Portland cement,
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then garnish with
old nails, and serve

this dish that every-
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(V.T.—Remove.)

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(WALTER CHURCH.)

Another "burlesque" by William Napoleon Browne.

DREADFUL DIARIES

This week : Archie Glenthorne.

Monday : Yaw-aw! Must write this beastly diary, begad! Very tired, though. Don't want to go to sleep, but must. Tired of dreaming! Odds shocks and nightmares! I don't know where I am or what's happening to me, y'know. So much of my life is spent in dreams and so forth that I don't know which is real and which isn't. Thought just now a greenish-blue dromedary was brushing one of my suits for me; then I imagined it must be Phipps. But which is the dream—the dromedary or Phipps? Can't imagine!

Tuesday : The Remove was taken in maths this morning by a huge, bearded man wearing a sports coat, football shorts and a wig. He started off by asking us what was twice two. When we couldn't answer, he produced a pea-shooter and peppered us with peas. Can it be that it was all a dream? Who knows?

Wednesday : Had a curious dream to-day. Dreamed that I was being bumped by Handforth, Travers and several other ruffians. It was so vivid that it almost seemed real. Yes—judging by the bruises on my person, I'm inclined to believe that, after all, it WAS real. Deuced unpleasant experience! My tea was brought in this

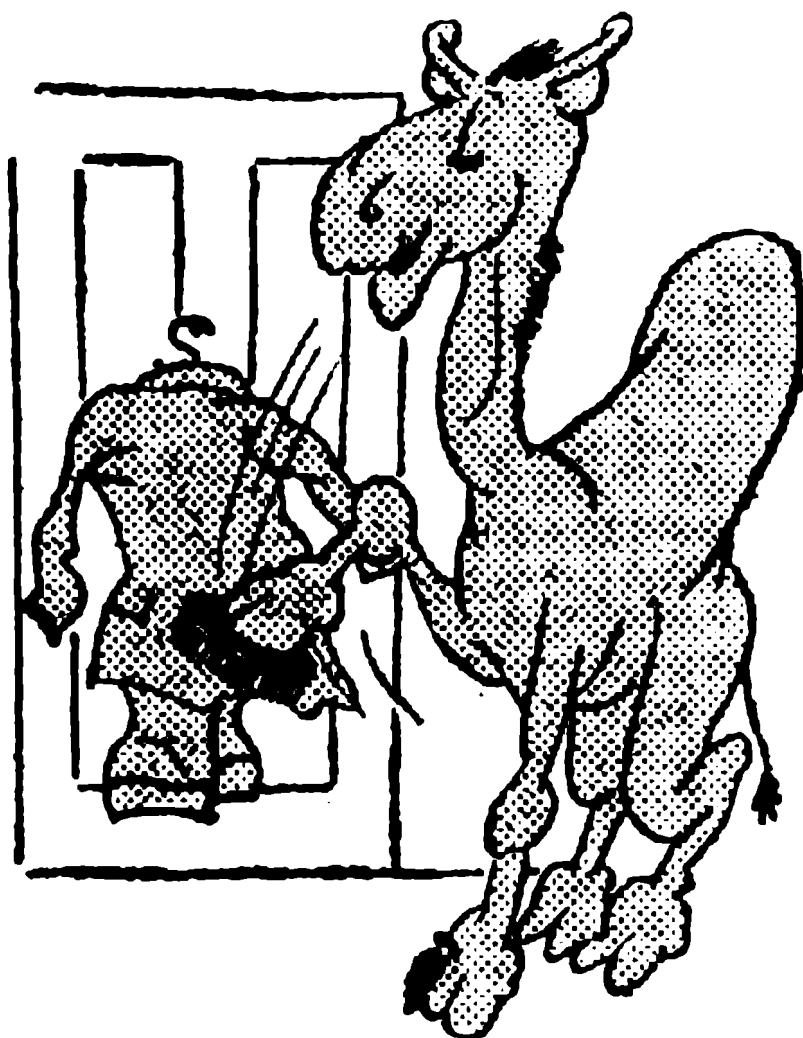
morning by two twin niggers in bathing costumes. Rather surprised at this.

Thursday : Dreamed I bought a delightful purple-blue suit with cut-away lapels this morning. I hope this is real—not just

a dream. I dreamed, afterwards, that Phipps gave the suit to the assistant gardener. I hope this is a dream—not real.

Friday : Too tired to write to-day. I've just dreamed I'm writing this diary. Must be a dream, I think.

Saturday : Dreamed I played football. Odds splashes and mud! That wasn't a dream—it was a nightmare. I don't know what really happened to-day, except that a fleet of airships came over and bombed the school with apple dumplings. That was a real happening, I'm sure.

TRACKETT GRIM
sends in HIS ACCOUNT.

Daniel Dogsboddy, Esq.,
Dr. to TRACKETT GRIM,
Detective.

(Office Hours: 9.41 a.m. to 6.27 p.m.)
£ s. d.

To detecting and putting in clink four (4) burglars at 12s. 6d. per burglar	2	10	0
To sustaining one crack on the beezer at one guinea a go ..	1	1	0
To hospital expenses	1	6	
To assistant's expenses rescuing me from sudden death three times at 10s.	1	10	0
To crack on assistant's beezer at 2s. 6d.	2	6	
LESS one crack on burglar's beezer	5	0	
10% discount for prompt cash ..	10	0	

TOTAL (and cheap at the price) £4 10 0
An early remittance will oblige as we are
stony.

STRAY THOUGHT.

If somebody gave me a million pounds,
I'd count every halfpenny of it.

Drink
SKUNKO!

and live to a ripe old age.

(Advt.)

Solution to Puzzle

As Handy cannot spare the space to reprint the diagram in full, I will give you the words by numbers. Across: 1, Cracksman. 7, Aids. 8, A.O. 10, Tor. 11, Afraid. 13, Ostend. 15, Unit. 17, Ire. 19, Rates. 20, Nets. 21, G.R. 22, Gash. 23, Lay. 26, Set. 28, Ash. 29, Whet. 30, Re (R.E.). 31, Presto. Down: 1, Cat burglar. 2, Rio. 3, Adroit. 4, C.S. 5, Safe. 6, Morning. 9, Add. 11, At. 12, Address. 14, Steal. 16, Narks. 18, Ether. 24, Awe. 25, Yes. 27, Tee. 32, T.T. 33, H.P.

The words wrongly spelt were: A(D)DRESS, G(A)SH, RATE(S), and W(H)ET, and the four missing letters make the word DASH, which is the key-word of the combination. The reason why the owner of the safe chose this word was because this was what he always said when he forgot the combination. And after that, when he forgot the word and said, "Dash!"—it would come back to him.

NIPPER.

POET'S CORNER

There is no Poet's Corner this week, as our poets cannot think of a rhyme for "sea."

FOILED BY ST. FRANK'S

(Continued from page 20.)

"'Ere, go easy," said the driver in an injured voice. "I thought you was one o' them swell sporty gents. I didn't mean no 'arm. The road was clear, so I just gave you a run for your money—that's all. I didn't know you was speed cops."

"That'll do," said Lennard curtly. "Anybody else in the cab with you? All right—come out of it."

The handcuffs were snapped over the man's wrists, and he gasped.

"Chuck it!" he ejaculated indignantly. "I ain't a criminal! You don't put the bracelets on a chap for speedin', do you?"

While he was being hustled into one of the police cars, Nelson Lee and Lennard, with many other Squad men, forced open the rear doors of the van. They had their guns ready—for they were expecting resistance.

"Hands up—all of you!" rapped out Lennard, as the doors swung open. "It's no good thinking—— Hallo! What the —— Empty, by glory!"

It was Nelson Lee's electric torch which had revealed this astounding fact. Lee ruefully regarded the Scotland Yard man.

"Very clever, Lennard," he said. "We could have sworn that we kept the van in sight the whole time—but at some spot there was a substitution."

"What—what do you mean?" gasped Lennard.

"Isn't it obvious? This isn't the van which left Moat Hollow."

"But—but——"

"It's the same make and the same colouring," went on Lee, "but it's not the same van. We've been tricked, Lennard—and tricked cleverly. We might have expected something like this from Zingrave."

"Well, I'm hanged!" roared Lennard in fury. "What are we going to do?"

They turned upon the van driver, who looked a respectable enough fellow.

"Me?" he said, in answer to Lennard's questions. "You don't think I'm a crook, do you? What did you expect to find in my van—the Crown jewels? You've been goin' to the films, an' they've got into your head."

"Now, look here, my friend——"

"I ain't your friend," growled the man. "My name's Bob Hooper, an' my firm is Harvey & Gregg, Limited, of Camberwell. We're haulage contractors. What's the matter with you? I took a load of stuff down to Appleby's Farm, just outside Bannin'ton, an' was comin' home when I 'eard your 'ooter, an' I thought——"

"Never mind what you thought," broke in Lennard. "Let's have those particulars again. We shall have to verify them. Harvey & Gregg, Camberwell. You took a load of stuff to Appleby's Farm? What sort of stuff?"

"A lot of new farm implements—ploughs, an' things," growled the man. "You can't do anything to me—except fine me, p'r'aps, for speeding'. But I didn't think I was doin' any 'arm——"

"We're going to hold you, anyhow," said the Chief Inspector. "So you delivered a perfectly legitimate load of stuff at Appleby's Farm? You don't happen to know anything about another van—just like this one?"

"I don't know what you're talkin' about."

"You wouldn't," said Lennard. "All right—take him along to Bannington, you fellows, and put him in a cell. There's work for me here."

Nelson Lee was full of reluctant admiration.

"We've got to start all over again, Lennard," he said. "Zingrave's organisation is as brilliant as ever. He has secured a valuable start. While we've been chasing this decoy van, Zingrave and his associates—and the treasure—have got completely away."

CHAPTER 10.

In the Hands of the Gang!

MAJOR DAYLE—he had held a temporary commission during the Great War—took the "wanted" motor-van miles across the moor; he drove it to one of the remotest and wildest spots.

He knew that it was a risky task; for if he encountered any police cars he would be compelled to drive like mad and then chance his luck. But, as it happened, he met nothing on the road, and the moor itself was thick with mist.

Finally, he took the van well off the road, and ran it into a steep hollow. Here he removed his bicycle, walked it back to the road, and mounted. He did not mind—now—how many police officers he met.

Major Dayle was well known in Bannington; he had started a chicken farm nearly a year since, and he was accounted an enterprising, honourable gentleman.

Zingrave had been particularly cunning in choosing Dayle as a helper; for Dayle lived comparatively near to St. Frank's. That was the cleverness of it. The police would be scouring the main roads hundreds of miles away. Zingrave planned to "lie

low" at Dayle's Farm for some days—perhaps weeks.

But the whole programme was now ruined—and ruined by two schoolboys.

All that remained of the treasure was a handful of dull gold coins which had been collected from the floor of the van.

In spite of Zingrave's careful preparations—which had been gloriously successful up to this point—everything was upset by what the schoolboys had done. Tod Millar and Ivan Hess and Ridley were in such a fury that it would have gone hard with Nipper and Handforth but for the presence of Zingrave. It was Zingrave who kept his head—as usual.

After a very short drive the party arrived at a quiet, old-fashioned farmhouse which stood some distance back from the road, which was reached by means of a private lane. There were some sprawling outbuildings, with clumps of trees standing here and there.

"What's this place?" asked Tod. "What's the good of coming here? We've got to be after that gold——"

"Cannot you understand that we must first find a safe hiding-place?" interrupted Zingrave. "This is Dayle's Farm. Don't worry about him—he's trustworthy. I've known him for years. He started this chicken-farm nearly a year ago. You can see the huts and the chicken-runs," he added, pointing.

"Anybody else here?" asked Tod.

"Nobody—Dayle lives alone," replied the professor. "And even Dayle won't be back for an hour or two yet."

The van drove up to the rear door of the farmhouse, in a paved yard, and, under Zingrave's orders, the chests were hauled out and carried indoors. Then the van was taken to an open-fronted shed, such as one can find on almost any farm.

Zingrave did not allow any light until the shutters of the farmhouse kitchen were tightly closed. Then a smelly oil lamp was lit, and Zingrave sent one of the men outside to discover if any chink of light escaped. The men came back to report that there was none.

"Then we can talk freely," said Zingrave. "The police will not come here. We have given them plenty to do, my friends. Open these chests!"

His calmness helped to restore the others. They were feeling the reaction, too, after that hectic flight. This respite was welcome. As Zingrave had told them, Dayle's Farm would never be suspected—or Dayle's van, either, for that old vehicle was always passing to and fro with farm produce.

The ancient sea-chests were flung open, and Nipper and Handforth, both looking defiant, were hauled out. They found themselves within a circle of grim-faced men.

"You young dogs!" snarled Tod. "Where's that gold? What did you do with it?"

"Leave them to me," said Zingrave quietly.

And there was something in his tone which caused Nipper and Handforth to shudder.

NIPPER had managed to give Handforth a warning glance.

Both the juniors were determined to say nothing. The treasure, they knew, was beneath the coal in the cellar at Moat Hollow. It was any odds that the gold was safe there—unsuspected by a living soul.

"Now, my young friends," said Zingrave, his voice very silky. "We don't want any unpleasantness, do we? You have been clever—but you weren't quite clever enough to get away. Now, supposing we have a little chat?"

"You can't scare us," said Handforth defiantly.

"It is evident that you removed the gold bags, and the casket of jewels, just before we left Moat Hollow," said the professor. "If you had had any time at your disposal you would have removed yourselves, too. But you were evidently caught at the last moment—and, in desperation, you concealed yourselves in the empty chests."

The boys were silent.

"Now, all this is very interesting," continued the professor softly. "Tell me, Millar—and you, Ridley—and you, Hess. You were at the upper windows, were you not, during our last hour at Moat Hollow?"

"That's what I can't make out," said Ridley. "I was at one of the front windows nearly all the time, and when I went away for a bit Hess was there. We could see right down into the drive."

"And you saw no movements?"

"Nothing."

"Yet these boys must have been working then," said Zingrave slowly. "They were very careful about it—and I have an idea that they worked alone."

"How can you think that?" asked Tod quickly. "There must have been others——"

"They could have done it alone," said Zingrave. "And if there had been others, those others would have revealed their presence at the last moment—when these two were trapped."

Yet the professor was filled with alarm. The only explanation, it seemed to him, was that the boys had emptied the chests, and placed the gold bags in the cover of the bushes. That meant only one thing. By now the police, having searched the Moat Hollow grounds, would have found the treasure!

And then Handforth, who had an extraordinary way of unintentionally blundering, gave Zingrave new heart.

"You can question us from now until the end of the year—but we won't tell you anything," said Edward Oswald fiercely. "We've hidden that treasure."

"Hidden it?" repeated Zingrave sharply.

"Hidden it where you won't find it, or anybody else, either!" said Handforth, unconscious of Nipper's warning glance. "Nobody will find that treasure until we give away the hiding-place!"

"Oh, Handy!" groaned Nipper.

"Eh? Why, what—" Handforth stared. "I didn't mean—"

"So the hiding-place is a secret?" snapped Zingrave, seizing Handforth by the shoulder, and peering fiercely into his face. "Good! I had been fearing that you had merely dumped the gold in the bushes, but now I know differently. You will tell me what you did with the treasure. Yes, my young friends—you will tell me."

"It's not too late, then?" asked Tod Millar, his eyes burning. "If nobody else but these kids knows—"

"Exactly," said Zingrave. "We may recover the lost ground yet."

"But we can't go back," said Ridley nervously. "These young whelps have robbed us! There's only a handful of gold to split between us!"

"And you wouldn't have had that if one of the bags hadn't burst," said Handforth. "You thought you'd won, didn't you? But we St. Frank's chaps have had you whacked all the time!"

THE infuriated men were looking more and more dangerous. Nipper was expecting some violence. Professor Zingrave, however, was pacing slowly up and down the stone floor of the kitchen, and he was looking thoughtfully at the ancient oak beams, overhead.

"In the old days, no doubt, they hung rows of hams on these beams," he said smoothly. "A quaint and interesting custom."

"Is this a time to talk about ham?" snarled Tod, in exasperation.

"The beams, you will observe, are quite low," continued Zingrave interestedly. "And those stout hooks—"

"Have you gone out of your mind?" demanded Tod frantically.

"Not at all," said the professor. "Those hooks, although placed there for the receptions of hams, will serve us well, Millar. Get me some cord—not necessarily thick cord, but it must be strong."

"What in blazes—"

"Get it!" said Zingrave, and his voice was curt.

One of the men produced some lengths of stout cord. Zingrave examined it, and nodded with satisfaction.

"The very stuff," he said. "Now, tie a length securely to each of these boys' wrists."

"Oh!" muttered Nipper, with full and dreadful understanding.

"By thunder! I get you now!" said Tod Millar breathing hard. "Those hooks, eh? So you're going to string them up? That'll make 'em talk!"

"No, no!" gasped Handforth. "You can't do that! That would be torture! You rotters—you fiends—you blackguards! You can't—"

He broke off as Hess, with animal-like strength, seized him from behind and held him fast. Handforth was a burly junior, but his struggles were useless against that tremendous grip. Lengths of cord were tied with cruel tightness to each of his wrists. Nipper was being treated in the same way.

"Don't argue with them, Handy," said Nipper quietly. "It won't do any good. Keep cool—that's all."

"And excellent advice, too," nodded Zingrave. "But I wonder, my good Nipper, how long you will remain calm? I mean to have that information out of you. At least, out of one of you. I don't care which."

"Shall we string them up?" asked Hess. "You say the word, yes? We make them talk?"

But Professor Cyrus Zingrave was clever. A little mental torture, he decided, should precede the physical torture.

"Place those stools beneath this beam," he ordered. "Stand the boys upon the stools, and then draw their arms up, and tie the other ends of those cords to the hooks. But do not hurt our young friends—yet."

While this was being done, Nipper and Handforth felt almost physically sick. For they knew exactly what was in Zingrave's mind. They were to be given the chance to speak—and if they refused the stools were to be kicked away, leaving them suspended by their wrists!

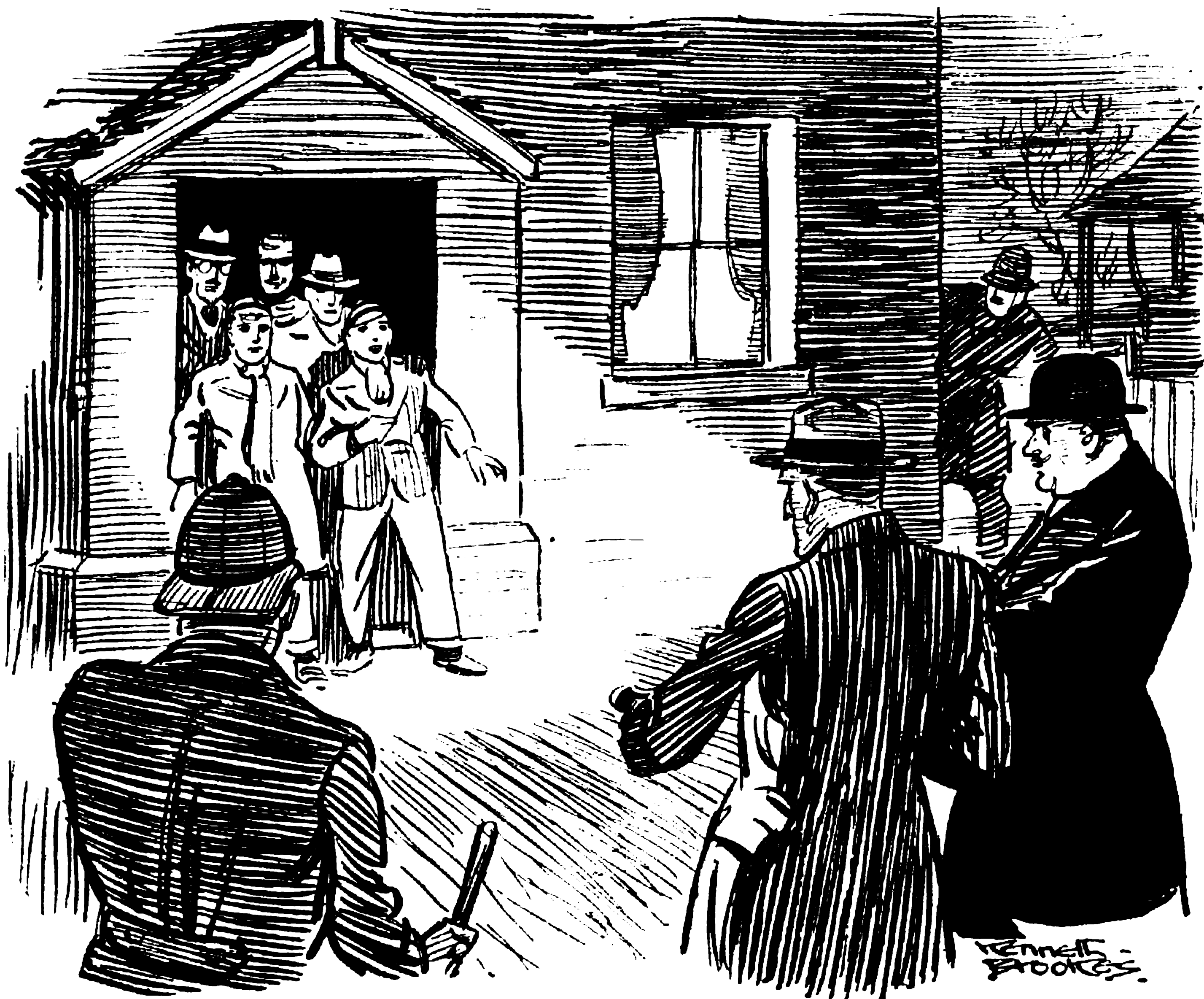
CHAPTER 11.

Nelson Lee on the Trail!

THE light from Nelson Lee's electric torch splashed through the darkness and steadied itself upon the road surface.

"This looks rather interesting, Lennard," he said.

"If it's a clue, show it to me!" said the blunt Scotland Yard man. "This affair baffles me, Lee. We were well after those crooks, and yet they slipped us. But how?"



Revealed in the torch-beams were Handforth and Nipper—prisoners of Professor Zingrave, who smiled in mocking triumph. One move from Nelson Lee or the police would result in the schoolboys' death !

The inspector was more than exasperated. He and Nelson Lee were alone; Lee's car was drawn up by the side of the road, twenty or thirty yards away. The other Squad cars were flying in all directions over the district, but so far no news of the vanished crooks had come to hand.

Nelson Lee had been systematically examining every side turning along the main road from that spot where the decoy van had been overtaken. For Lee had formed a theory. He was certain that this second van had been lying in ambush, ready to take to the road at a second's notice. And the real van had slipped away down one of the many by-lanes.

"But there's more in it than that, Lennard," said Lee, when he told the inspector of his theory. "The crooks wouldn't use their own van for long—it would be too risky. I'm certain the treasure was transferred."

"You mean into a third van?"

"Either that, or into a building of some kind," said Lee. "A barn—a cottage, perhaps. Look here."

He indicated the road. He had already found skid marks on the surface—telling him, as surely as though he had witnessed the inci-

dent with his own eyes, that a powerful van had swung out of this side turning at high speed. It was a significant discovery.

But the one he now pointed out to Lennard was even more significant. On the road there was a pool of black oil. It was some distance up the side lane, near to the grass verge.

"A car has stood here, eh?" grunted Lennard. "I don't see——"

He broke off as he heard the familiar warning of a police-car siren. He ran to the end of the lane, and was just in time to attract a car as it was shooting past. It contained Inspector Jameson, of the Bannington police, and three constables. Nelson Lee joined them.

"We've found the van!" said the inspector triumphantly.

"Empty, of course?" asked Lee.

"Well, yes," admitted Jameson with reluctance. "It was abandoned on the moor. A bit of luck, really. One of our foot patrols happened to see car lights on the moor, and he watched them. He was surprised when the car seemed to leave the road and go down into a hollow. Then the lights went out. He thought he'd better go down and have a look

—and he found the van. He didn't know anything of the Moat House affair, but he thought he'd better hurry to a telephone and give information."

"So we come to another dead end, Lennard," said Nelson Lee, nodding.

"Well, it's just what you said," growled the Yard man. "The crooks must have transferred the treasure—and then the van abandoned. By glory! We're left absolutely stranded now."

The Yard man, with a vast experience of motor bandits, knew how difficult it would be to trace the fugitives. The chances were that they had transferred into another car, and the police had no knowledge or description of it.

"I cannot help thinking that we shall find our quarry fairly close at hand," said Nelson Lee shrewdly. "Zingrave is clever, Lennard. He knows that every main road is being watched—every car is being stopped, and the drivers questioned. With two treasure chests aboard—and that means a heavy van—it would be a risky trip. It's far more likely that our friends are lying low somewhere close at hand."

They went back to the spot where the patch of oil lay on the road.

"You see," said Nelson Lee, "the car was clearly standing on the near side—pointing up the lane. And look at these tyre marks—they are quite distinctive."

Getting into his own car, Lee drove slowly on, keeping the faintly visible tyre tracks in sight. The Chief Inspector stood on the foot-board, and, in the rear, came the other car, with Inspector Jameson and the police officers.

"Hallo! What's this?" said Nelson Lee suddenly.

The tracks left the lane here, taking to a narrow private road. In the gloom some vague buildings could be seen. Footsteps sounded just then, and the figure of a farm labourer appeared from down the lane.

"Just a minute," said Lee. "Can you tell me where this private road leads to?"

"Why, certainly, sir," said the man respectfully. "That be the chicken farm—Major Dayle's place."

"Major Dayle is known to you?"

"Why, yes, to be sure, sir," said the man. "A real nice gent is the major. Makin' a big success of the chicken-farm, too, I reckon. This old place was dead for years before the major came along. Is there any trouble, sir?" he added curiously.

"We're looking for an escaped convict," replied Lee truthfully. "Do you happen to know how many there are in Major Dayle's household?"

"Why, nobody, sir," replied the labourer. "Major Dayle lives alone, I've heard. A woman comes in during the day time, to look after him, sort of. I hope no harm has come to him, sir."

"That's all right," said Lee. "Thanks. Come on, Lennard."

They left the cars on the road, and advanced towards the farmhouse.

"But this is a waste of time, Mr. Lee," protested Inspector Jameson. "Major Dayle couldn't be mixed up in this wretched business. I've heard of him, of course. He's doing well with this chicken farm. His van, full of produce, is always coming into the town."

"I am interested in Major Dayle's van," said Lee shortly.

"Why, you don't think——"

"We have heard that Major Dayle lives alone," interrupted Lee. "This is a lonely farmhouse. How do we know that something has not happened to the major? At any rate, we are not wasting much time."

As they approached the old house they saw that no lights were showing, but presently they spotted the ramshackle van standing in the open-fronted shed.

A hard glint came into Nelson Lee's eyes as he felt the radiator. It was not merely warm, but hot.

CHAPTER 12.

Professor Zingrave's Way!

"JAMESON, I want you to post your men round these grounds," said Lee crisply. "Place them so that they observe all windows and doors."

"Yes, Mr. Lee!" said the local inspector, rather breathless.

The officers hurried off.

"This old van was used within the last half-hour, Lennard," said Lee, in a low voice. "I will agree with you that I may be on a wild-goose chase, but we had better be on the safe side."

"Of course," agreed the Yard man. "It's funny, too, that this farm van should have been standing in that lane. There might be a perfectly simple explanation——"

"I wonder if there is a perfectly simple explanation of this?" broke in Lee.

The tone of his voice made the Chief Inspector jump. Lee's torch was on, and the beam was directed to the ground. At first Lennard saw nothing of special significance; then suddenly he bent forward eagerly.

"What's that—a coin?" he asked.

Nelson Lee picked it up—a dull, uneven, brownish-yellow coin.

"Very interesting, Lennard," said the detective smoothly. "A Spanish doubloon."

"By the Lord Harry!"

Lee stepped swiftly forward and flashed his light into the interior of the empty van.

"Look at these marks," he said. "Heavy objects have been dragged in and out of this van, Lennard. The treasure-chests, eh? Somehow, I think we did the wise thing in coming to this place."

Inside the old farmhouse, at that very moment, a dramatic scene was being enacted.

Nipper and Handforth, standing on those stools with their arms outstretched above them, were in agony—both mental and physical. Yet what was this pain compared with that which lay in store?

It was a grim looking scene.

The smelly oil lamp cast weird shadows, and round the two boys stood the enraged crooks. Of the three men there, only Professor Zingrave remained outwardly calm, but his calmness was a thousand times more menacing than the fury of his companions.

"Now, my young friends, I am sure that you will be sensible," he said, in his silkiest voice. "You, my good Nipper, have had some experience of my ways. This other boy is plucky—but foolishly obstinate. I am giving you a chance to save yourselves from needless agony."

"We won't speak—we won't say anything," panted Handforth defiantly.

He glanced at Nipper as he spoke. Nipper's face was set. He realised—better than Handforth—the appalling nature of their predicament. But both the boys steelled themselves for the ordeal. They had removed the Edgemore treasure—they had placed it where it was not likely to be found. And they each swore that they would keep the secret.

"Now!" said the professor. "We are quite ready, I think. Will you tell us what you did with the contents of those chests—or shall we—er—remove these stools?"

"Go ahead—kick them away!" gasped Handforth pluckily. "We don't care! We're not going to tell you what we did with the treasure! It belongs to Skeets and his father! You rotters—you thieves! We dished you, and we're not going to——"

"I can't stand this any longer!" snarled Tod Millar. "Away with the stools! They'll speak then."

"Yes, I think they will," agreed Zingrave. "You take one, Millar—and you the other, Ridley."

Nipper and Handforth closed their eyes; they steelled themselves for the dreadful ordeal——

The door burst open, and Ivan Hess came in, his eyes wild, his face pale.

"The police!" he gasped. "They are here!"

Zingrave and the others swung round. Tod Millar and Ridley, aghast, felt for their guns.

"Hurrah!" yelled Handforth wildly. "Help—help!"

Zingrave smiled gently. "This is good!" he said. "Good?" shrieked Tod. "You heard what Hess said? You heard——"

"Keep your head, fool!" snapped Zingrave. "We can now play a trump card. Cut these boys down."

"What!" gasped Tod. "But—but——" "Cut them down, do as I say," ordered Professor Zingrave. "Hurry!"

There was such authority in his voice that even Tod Millar did not hesitate now. In a moment, Nipper and Handforth, bewildered by this new move, were released. Then, under Zingrave's orders, they were seized and whirled to the front door of the farmhouse.

With a crash the door was flung open, and at that moment the concentrated beams of several electric torches flashed into the dark porch.

"Hands up, all of you!" came the clear-cut voice of Nelson Lee.

"Just a minute, my friends—just a minute!" said Professor Zingrave coolly. "The advantage is with us! Move one step forward, and these two boys will drop dead!"

CHAPTER 13.

Zingrave Takes a Trick!

ATTRACTED by the voices, Inspector Jameson and the constables had come running round. They were now in full sight, too. But at a word from Lee they held their ground.

It was a dramatic situation.

In the porch stood the four desperate crooks—but with them were Nipper and Handforth. Outside stood Nelson Lee, Chief Inspector Lennard, and the police officers. And Lee, dumbfounded by the sight of Nipper and Handforth, knew that Zingrave held the trump card.

"Not so fast, my good friends—not so fast!" said the professor calmly. "I am ready to admit that we are in a desperate plight. I say 'desperate' deliberately, so that you will understand that we are in no mood for trifling."

"Guv'nor!" shouted Nipper, and his voice was hoarse. "Don't take any notice! Come on and get these crooks!"

Even as he spoke he felt the barrel of a revolver thrust into his side. Handforth felt the same.

"At this moment, guns are pressed to the sides of these boys," said Zingrave. "If any one of you moves a step, we shall fire. These boys will die. So I advise you to be careful."

Nelson Lee looked round.

"Hold still—all of you," he said. "Zingrave means it."

Although Nelson Lee showed no sign, he was horrified. These criminals, filled with the lust of gold, would carry out their threat.

"What do you propose, Zingrave?" asked Lee. "Do you require your liberty as the price of these boys' lives?"

"Not at all," said the professor. "There is something of much greater importance. It may interest you to know that these youngsters have robbed us of the Edgemore treasure."

"That's a lie!" shouted Lennard. "We traced you here, Zingrave—we found an old Spanish coin near Dayle's car."

Zingrave sighed.

"I wonder why people will be so careless?" he said. "But one Spanish coin, my friend, does not make a fortune. When we opened the treasure chests, we discovered no treasure in them—but these enterprising boys. Before leaving Moat Hollow, they had removed the gold."

"Is that true, Nipper?" asked Lee.

"Yes, guv'nor," replied Nipper, exultantly. "We dished 'em! We hid that gold—and they were going to torture us to make us speak."

"But we wouldn't have said a word, sir," added Handforth.

"They will speak now!" said Zingrave, his voice becoming sharp.

"Never!" roared Handforth.

"It shall be left to you, Lee," went on the professor. "They will not obey me—but you are their headmaster, are you not? Perhaps they will obey you. And here is the situation. Unless they tell me just what they did with the contents of the chests within one minute, one of them will be shot dead. Remember, I am in earnest."

"They're bluffing, guv'nor," cried Nipper. "We're not going to tell."

"Ridley, take out your watch," said Zingrave. "When a full minute has passed, tell me."

Outside, Lennard nudged the detective.

"Think they mean it?" he whispered.

"I do not think—I know," replied Lee. "These men will do anything to get the gold. Boys, you had better speak," he added loudly. "Speak at once."

"But, guv'nor—"

"Tell your captors what you did with the Edgemore treasure," commanded Lee.

"But that's dotty, sir," gasped Handforth. "We've held out all this time—"

"And there is no reason why you should hold out any longer," interrupted Lee, pale with anguish. "In telling them, Handforth, you are telling me. And I desire to know the hiding-place of the treasure just as much as they."

"By George, that's true!" said Handforth excitedly. "Don't you see, Nipper, old man? It doesn't make any difference now. These

rotters will be collared, and everything will be all serene."

"The minute is up," said Ridley, his voice shrill with the strain.

"Boys! Tell the truth," cried Lee urgently. He was fearful for their safety. Their lives hung almost by a thread.

"All right—we'll tell," said Nipper. "We took the gold out of the chests, and we dropped it down the coal-chute into the cellar."

"So!" muttered Zingrave, his eyes glowing. "I might have guessed! The coal-chute was just at the back of the van, eh? Yes, yes! So that is how you did it."

"And it's there now," growled Nipper. "But you needn't think that you'll get it—"

"Silence!" commanded Zingrave. "Now, Mr. Nelson Lee, I fancy I have the upper hand. You will come forward alone—but first of all you will throw on the ground in front of you, any weapon you possess."

CHAPTER 14.

Turning the Tables!

NIPPER was furious.

"Don't do it, guv'nor!" he shouted. "You tricky devil!" he added, glaring at Zingrave. "We've given you the information you wanted—"

"But the advantage still lies with me," interrupted Zingrave amiably. "Lee, see



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.

ENTERTAINMENT TAX.

"Please I want a tooth pulled out," said the small boy who had entered the dentist's, followed by a number of other youngsters.

"And what do these other boys want?" enquired the dentist.

"Oh, they're my pals. They're paying me a penny each to see if I yell when the tooth comes out."

(J. Cox, Oakwood, 104, Wakegreen Road, Moseley, Birmingham, has been awarded a handsome watch.)

HIS GOOD DEED.

Scoutmaster: "What good deed have you done to-day?"

Scout: "Please, sir, mother had only one dose of castor oil left, so I let my little sister have it."

(E. Woolston, 2, Kettering Road, Rothwell, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

NO MIKING FOR MIKE!

Pat: "Go easy, there! We've another seven miles to walk yet."

Mike: "Sure, that's why I'm hurrying. I want to get there before I'm tired out."

(D. Paine, The Reeds, Tilford, Surrey, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

WHERE, OH WHERE?

Enthusiastic House Agent: "This is a house without a flaw."

Customer: "By gosh, what do you walk on?" (C. Smith, Box 21, Ganmain, Australia, has been awarded a useful prize.)

SEZ YOU.

Father: "Now, Tommy, don't let me hear you say, 'Oh yeah' again or I'll stop you from going to the cinema."

Tommy: "Okay, chief!"

(A. Cartwright, Alder Hey Hospital, Liverpool, has been awarded a penknife.)

WITHOUT NOTICE.

Tactful Maid: "Please, mum, cook's left very sudden."

Mistress: "Oh, dear! Well, can you manage for lunch with the new gas stove?"

Maid: "Please, mum, that's gone with cook, and half the kitchen wall!"

that your men keep their places. Need I again warn you that if one man makes a false move, these boys will die?"

The professor was taking full advantage of the unique situation. The boys, after thwarting him in the first place, were now proving his saviour. By threatening death to the boys—and there was no pretence about that threat—Zingrave rendered Nelson Lee and the police officers helpless.

"Come along, Lee," invited Zingrave gently. "Your gun first. Throw it down, please. After that you will advance." He turned to Hess and Tod, who were holding the prisoners. "Shoot, and shoot to kill, if there is the slightest sign of treachery," he ordered. "And you boys had better remain quite still, for any sudden jerk might have disastrous consequences. Revolver triggers are apt to be precarious."

Chief Inspector Lennard clutched at Lee's arm as the latter was about to move forward.

"We can't do this, Lee!" he muttered. "Hang it, there must be another way——"

"There is no other way," interrupted Lee fiercely. "We've got to do it, Lennard! For Heaven's sake, dismiss any other idea. I tell you, the lives of these boys depend upon our obeying orders. For their sake we must give in."

"I suppose you're right," said Lennard gruffly.

Jameson and the constables were standing like statues. They were unarmed, and they

were in no way inclined to precipitate a gun fight.

"I know when I am beaten, Zingrave," said Lee, flinging down his automatic. "You can take my word that we will not give you any trouble. But if you harm these boys——"

"We shall not harm them," said Zingrave. "We require nothing but strict obedience from you, and the men with you."

Nipper and Handforth groaned as Nelson Lee, striding forward, was seized. Lee knew better than to offer resistance. Quickly he was bound hand and foot, and thrust indoors. Then Lennard was ordered to fling his own weapon away, and to come forward. In just the same way, he was secured.

"How many more of you are there?" asked Zingrave, striding out of the porch. "An inspector and three constables, eh? Is that all?"

"That's all," said Jameson hoarsely.

"Are you armed?"

"No."

Zingrave made sure. He went out, and he quickly passed his hands over the uniforms of the officers. He was satisfied.

"Good!" he said, with the utmost calmness. "You will all please enter the house. And do not forget that it will go hard with you—to say nothing of the boys—if you show fight."

Nelson Lee and Inspector Lennard, both tightly bound, were flung on to the floor in

(D. Lawson, 167, Balsall Heath Road, Birmingham, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

AN ALSO RAN.

Jockey (to angry trainer): "I wasn't the last in the race. There were two others behind me."

Trainer: "Yes, they were the two leading horses in the next race!"

(J. Bryant, 66, Hill Street, Kingswood, Bristol, has been awarded a penknife.)

CLEVER.

Employer (engaging new boy): "Well, my lad, is there anything you can do better than anyone else?"

Boy: "Yes, sir; read my own writing."

(C. Price, High House, Horderley, Salop, has been awarded a penknife.)

QUICK WORK.

Policeman: "Look here, miss, you were doing sixty miles an hour."

Bright Young Lady: "Oh, isn't that splendid! I only learnt to drive yesterday."

(C. Rutland, 10, Upperthorpe Road, Killamarsh, Sheffield, has been awarded a penknife.)

A BAD CASE.

Friend: "So you use three pairs of glasses, professor?"

Professor: "Yes, one for long sight, one for short sight, and one to look for the other two pairs when I lose them."

(K. O'Hare, 182, Knowle Road, Sparkhill, Birmingham, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

HARD LUCK.

Tramp (in shop): "Sorry, sir, but my bread has dropped in the treacle."

Shopkeeper: "Sorry, too, sir; that's not treacle—it's tar."

(N. Ley, 29, The Gill, Ulverston, Lancashire, has been awarded a penknife.)

WHAT HE NEEDED.

He was trying to get the scared passenger to buy his ancient car.

"I'm afraid it jolts a bit," he said. "I hope you don't mind."

"Not at all," replied the passenger. "I took some medicine this morning, and forgot to shake the bottle."

(A. Ashton, 61, Inchmery Road, Catford, London, S.E.6, has been awarded a penknife.)

HAD TO BE FOUND.

Old Gent: "What! Road up again! Didn't I see you filling it in only last week?"

Workman: "Yes—but we've been and lost the foreman's pie-fish."

(A. Patrick, 312, King Edward Road, South Dunedin, New Zealand, has been awarded a useful prize.)



the sitting-room. Inspector Jameson and the three constables, obeying orders, were lined up. Professor Zingrave and Ridley were free to move about, but Tod Millar and Ivan Hess still had their guns thrust into the backs of Nipper and Handforth.

"This is very much better," said Zingrave gently. "Inspector, will you be good enough to strip?"

"To—to what?" gasped Jameson, scandalised.

"You heard what I said—strip."

"I will not!" roared the pompous inspector. "Confound it, you can't place this indignity on me——"

"You will either strip, or one of these boys will die," snapped Zingrave. "Need I tell you again that I am in earnest?"

"You had better strip, Jameson," said Lee, from the floor. "Your dignity is not so valuable as the lives of these boys."

And reluctantly the unfortunate inspector stripped; after which he was tightly bound and flung to the floor.

Then the three constables, one by one, were ordered to do the same. They stripped, too—and, one by one, they were bound. Finally Nipper and Handforth were roped and rendered helpless.

Professor Cyrus Zingrave had completely turned the tables.

ZINGRAVE, being a small man, did not trouble to take his own clothes off before donning Inspector Jameson's uniform. But Millar and Hess and Ridley removed their own suits. Within five minutes they were all in uniform—and, at a casual glance, it was difficult to detect that they were not genuine policemen.

"Even now I don't understand what your game is, Zingrave," said Tod breathlessly.

"You will know soon," replied the professor. "We have spent weeks in searching for the Edgemore treasure. We are not going to be tricked out of it at the last moment. That gold is ours! After I have completed a trifling task here, we are all going back to Moat Hollow."

"It is madness," said Ivan Hess, frightened.

"We shall succeed," said Zingrave quietly. "Leave this to me, my friends."

He went over to a table, and began writing rapidly. When he had finished, he passed the paper to Tod Millar; and again Tod was impressed by the professor's thoroughness.

It was a short note to Major Dayle, instructing him to keep the prisoners bound as they were for a full twelve hours; then he was to lock them up, after gagging them, and meet his friends at "the old place."

"He will know what that means," whispered Zingrave. "He will be back almost any minute now."

"But we're not going to wait for him?" asked Tod quickly.

"No; there is no need—and certainly we cannot afford to wait," replied Zingrave.

"There is only one other little thing to be done now."

A chango had come into his voice. Its silkiness had gone, and it contained a tigerish note. Yet he was still calm and gentle as he pinned up that note in a prominent place just inside the hall door.

Drawing his automatic, he crossed over to the spot where Nelson Lee, helpless, was lying on the floor. The light from the oil lamp was not good, but it was sufficient.

"Have no fear, Lee; I am not going to indulge in heroics like a stage villain," said Zingrave mockingly. "I will merely bid you good-bye."

"I fancy it will only be *au revoir*," said Lee.

"No!" snarled Zingrave, suddenly becoming like a wild animal. "It is good-bye! Do you hear, you dog? For you it is good-bye!"

He snapped back the safety-catch of the automatic, and thrust the weapon downwards. Next moment Tod Millar leapt forward. He kicked the weapon out of Zingrave's hand. It hurtled across the room, and crashed through the glass front of an old-fashioned cabinet.

"You fool!" panted Tod harshly.

"You dare to interfere?" snarled Zingrave, turning upon Tod. "This man has hindered me for years—and to-night I mean to settle with him! It was he who spoilt our game at Moat Hollow; it was he who ruined that elaborate plan of mine regarding Crag House! If he lives, he will——"

"I'm not standing by and seeing you shoot him in cold blood," snapped Tod Millar. "Get that—and get it good!"

Zingrave was surprised at Tod Millar's forcefulness; he had never seen the man so determined. Ivan Hess and Ridley were looking dangerous, too.

"Let's go!" panted Ridley. "It's madness to stay here."

"It is worse madness to allow Nelson Lee to live," retorted Zingrave.

And never had he spoken truer words.

CHAPTER 15.

Rescue—By Telephone!

PROFESSOR ZINGRAVE was almost hustled out of the house; there were three grimly determined men against him, and he had sufficient sense to see that if he persisted in his plan there would be a definite break. And when it came to brute strength, Zingrave was at a disadvantage.

"This is no time for us to quarrel," muttered Tod, as they all went out. "We're going back to Moat Hollow, aren't we? Gosh, it'll be a tricky thing, Zingrave! Think it's worth it?"

"Listen, my friends," said Zingrave. "What is our position now? We are fugitives—we are hunted. And we are practi-



With police surrounding the house, Zingrave made his last desperate stand for freedom—and the siege of Moat Hollow began.

ally at the end of our resources. To hide successfully from the police, one needs money. Either we bolt for freedom straight away, or we take a glorious chance and return to Moat Hollow. If we succeed, we get away with the Edgemore gold. That means a fortune for each of us."

"Come on—we'll try it," said Ridley desperately.

"Yes, yes—it's worth the risk," agreed Tod Millar. "Look! That's Lee's own car! All the police know it. It's fast, too!"

"But it won't hold all that gold," said Ridley.

"Perhaps, my friends, it will be better for us to abandon the gold," said Zingrave quietly.

"What!"

"Gold is difficult to dispose of these days," continued the professor. "Furthermore, we cannot very well carry it away. We will take a few bags, perhaps—but not the entire treasure. It is the jewels we want. They are the most valuable. Come! Let us see."

They leapt into Nelson Lee's car, and, with Tod Millar at the wheel, they drove off.

Within the farmhouse, the helpless prisoners were all talking at once. Jameson was spluttering with fury, and outraged dignity; Chief Inspector Lennard was railing at Zingrave's cleverness; Nipper and Handforth were

blaming themselves for everything that had happened. Only Nelson Lee took a calm view.

"These youngsters are always putting their noses where they're not wanted," Jameson was saying. "Interfering young scamps—that's what they are! If they hadn't been here——"

"Don't waste your breath with that sort of talk, Jameson," said Lee suddenly.

"But he's right, guv'nor," groaned Nipper. "It is all our fault."

"And we thought we were being clever, too, sir," said Handforth dismally.

"You two boys may have disobeyed my orders, but you have every reason to congratulate yourselves," said Lee, to their surprise—and relief. "The way in which you transferred the treasure from the van to the coal cellar was plucky."

"It wasn't smart for us to be trapped at the last minute, guv'nor," said Nipper in disgust.

"Your activity has made all the difference," continued Nelson Lee. "If the gang had got away with the treasure, there would have been a different story. Zingrave and his associates may have eluded us completely. As it is, we have hope."

"Hope?" grunted the Chief Inspector. "Where do you get that from? What do you suppose we can do? You know, don't you, that the beggars are going back to Moat

Hollow? And it's any odds that they'll succeed, too. In the darkness they'll be mistaken for real police officers."

"That—that rogue, Zingrave, is impersonating me!" said Jameson, almost choking.

"My dear man, it's no good railing at misfortune," said Lee. "We are in this present position because we saved the lives of these boys. Let's say no more about it. The boys have done more to frustrate the rascals than any of us."

Ever since the door of the house had closed, Nelson Lee had been struggling with his bonds, and at first he had hoped that he would succeed in getting free. But the crooks had used thin cord, and the more Nelson Lee pulled, the tighter it became.

"It's no good, old man," said Lennard, from another part of the floor. "I've tried that, too. But they made a sound job of it. We can't do a thing."

Nelson Lee lay quiet, recovering his breath. It was dark in the room, for the crooks had taken the lamp with them. From where Lee lay, he could see across to the window, and certain objects of furniture were mistily outlined. He could see the window table clearly, with a vase standing upon it; he could see another table, at the side, and the vague silhouette of what seemed another vase. Rather a peculiar looking vase, with an oddly-shaped piece—

And then, suddenly, Lee recognised it for what it actually was.

A telephone instrument!

Until that moment Lee had not known that the telephone was installed in this farmhouse. But now, in a flash, he realised the possibilities.

It has been frequently said that criminals no matter how clever, make one slip somewhere or other. And Professor Zingrave had certainly made a slip here. It would have been easy enough to disconnect the wire of that 'phone, but he had not even given the matter a thought.

At that moment, Nipper was attempting to struggle free of his bonds. He was nearest the table on which reposed the telephone, and in his desperate efforts his legs kicked the piece of furniture with violent force.

The table must have been rickety on its legs, for it rocked uncertainly and then overturned. The telephone was flung to the floor.

Everybody in the room except Lee was surprised by the unexpected noise. Lee himself had watched the whole incident with drawn-in breath; and now hope gleamed in his eyes. For the telephone, in falling to the floor, had become "alive." The receiver had jerked from its hook, and both receiver and transmitter were lying not a foot from Nipper's head.

"Good for you, Nipper!" said Nelson Lee, to everybody's amazement.

"What do you mean, guv'nor?" asked the boy in surprise. "I can't get these wretched ropes undone—"

"No—but you've done the next best thing—quiet, all of you!" said Lee tensely.

And in the sudden silence a thin, metallic voice sounded:

"Number please?"

Again a dramatic silence. Then Nipper gave a whoop of excitement.

"Great Scott! The telephone! Guv'nor——"

"Ask to be put through to the Bannington Police Station, Nipper," interrupted Nelson Lee swiftly. "When they answer, tell them to hang on. I'll be across in a few seconds."

While the detective wriggled his way across the room, Nipper lay flat on the floor so that his mouth was within a few inches of the telephone.

COMING NEXT WEDNESDAY!



"Hallo! Get me Bannington Police Station," he told the operator. "It's very urgent."

A short pause, during which Lee, watched breathlessly by the others, wriggled across until he had reached Nipper's side.

Again came a metallic voice from the telephone receiver.

"Hallo! This is Bannington Police——"

"Is that you, Sergeant Williams?" called the detective into the mouthpiece. "Nelson Lee speaking—and listen carefully to what I am saying."

"Oh, hallo, Mr. Lee! We've had no news yet," said Sergeant Williams. "Those crooks seem to have got well away——"

"Sergeant, do you know Dayle's chicken farm?"

"Why, yes, sir," said the sergeant, surprised by the question. "I know where it is, if that's what you mean."

"That is what I do mean," said Lee. "Send a fast car out here as quickly as you can, with two or three officers. We have had a slight—misadventure. Several of us are bound and helpless. See to it that at least four heavy overcoats are brought along with the men."

"Tell him to bring my spare uniform," shouted Jameson. "There's a new one—he'll find it in the store-cupboard. There are other uniforms there, too, Mr. Lee."

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

Lee gave the instructions to the astounded sergeant.

"Get in touch, if you can, with Inspector Lennard's men," continued Lee. "There's a Squad car outside the police station now? Good! Send it straight to Moat Hollow, with as many more men as possible."

And, briefly, Lee explained that the crooks, disguised as police officers, had stolen his car, and were returning to Moat Hollow in an attempt to grab the Edgemore treasure. Sergeant Williams scarcely knew whether he was on his head or his heels—but he took full details, and he promised that he would get things moving immediately.

"I'll send a car out to you at once, sir," he said. "It ought to be there within ten minutes."

"If you have no car to spare, don't bother about us," replied Lee. "The main thing is to get to Moat Hollow—to catch Zingrave and the others."

IT was impossible to ring off, of course, but that did not matter. The whole situation was changed. Lee and the police officers, to say nothing of Nipper and Handforth, were glowing with excitement. They had fresh hope.

"It was brainy of you, guv'nor, to use that 'phone," said Nipper breathlessly.

"It was amazingly careless of the crooks to leave the instrument connected," replied Lee. "I have an idea—Hush! What was that?"

As he spoke he swung round, and with his feet he kicked the telephone out of sight behind an easy chair. There were sounds out in the old-fashioned hall. Major Dayle had just come in—and he was reading that note.

He came into the room, his face aflame with consternation and annoyance. The light from his electric torch flashed upon the prisoners, and he was relieved to find that they were all helpless.

"What's been happening here?" he demanded angrily.

"You're Major Dayle, aren't you?" asked Jameson.

"Yes, but—"

"We are police officers," said Jameson. "Some criminals sought refuge in your house during your absence. If you'll be good enough to release us—"

"I'm not sure that I can," said Dayle. "How do I know that you are not criminals? I think I'll leave you bound up."

"Don't I know your voice, major?" asked Lennard suddenly.

He had, in fact, recognised it. And it occurred to the Chief Inspector that it would be an excellent scheme to keep Dayle engaged in conversation. Far better than letting him leave this room, for the rescue car from Bannington might arrive at any minute.

Dayle's torch swung round, and illuminated Lennard's features. For a moment the torch shook.

"Yes, we've met before, major," said Lennard coolly. "But you called yourself Major Langdale then, didn't you? No doubt you thought it better to drop the 'Lang' after serving a three-year stretch?"

"I—I don't know what you mean," said Dayle harshly.

"Oh, yes, you do," replied the Chief Inspector. "I'm Lennard, of the Yard. Weren't you cashiered from the Army, just at the end of the war? Dishonourable conduct, eh? Playing cards with foolish young officers, and using a marked pack of your own. I seem to remember something about it. Then you were engaged in smuggling work—By the Lord Harry! I wonder if you're at your old game?"

"I've never seen you before in my life!" shouted Dayle furiously.

"Chicken farming, eh?" went on Lennard mockingly. "You may be making a profit out of the chicken farm—but I'll wager you're making a whole lot more profit out of your smuggling, my friend. So that's what this farm is? A sort of rendezvous? There's been a good deal of dope smuggled into the country of late, and it seems to me that it might be worth while to search this old dump."

Dayle controlled himself with an effort.

"You're in a fine position for searching the house, aren't you?" he jeered. "I'm going to keep you here—all of you!"

He failed to hear the soft footfall behind him, but he heard the sudden jingle of metal, and he swung round.

Click-click!

Like a flash, the handcuffs were over his wrists, and the burly figure of Sergeant Williams was visible for a moment before the torch was knocked to the floor.

"No, you don't, mister!" said the sergeant.

"Smart work, Williams!" said Lennard.

"Good man!"

More torches flashed on, revealing that two constables in addition to the sergeant had entered.

"We heard voices as we came up," explained the sergeant. "Found the front door open, too, and as soon as we heard what this chap was saying I thought I'd better bring the handcuffs out."

"You're wrong—you're wrong!" panted Dayle. "You know me, don't you? I'm Major Dayle! I don't know anything about —"

"That'll do," interrupted the sergeant. "Hold him, Robbins. Sorry to see you in this fix, sir," he added, as he beheld Inspector Jameson in his underclothes. "I've brought your new uniform, sir."

"Get these infernal ropes off us," muttered Jameson.

Within three minutes they were all free, and while they were still in agony from the sudden restoration of their circulation, Jameson and his men struggled into the substitute uniforms.

"Hurry up, you fellows," said Nelson Lee crisply. "You want to come with us, I suppose? The last act in this little drama promises to be the most exciting of all!"

CHAPTER 16.

The Lost Treasure!

MOAT HOLLOW was silent and black as the police car, with blazing headlights, roared across the bridge and pulled up just outside the main gateway. The gates themselves, smashed and splintered, had been cleared away.

It was mistaken for a police car because it contained an inspector and three constables; at least, they looked like an inspector and three constables. Actually, it was Nelson Lee's car, and the occupants were Professor Cyrus Zingrave and his associates.

"Leave this to me," muttered Zingrave briefly.

He was not surprised to see the old house in darkness. The others had half expected it to be over-run with Scotland Yard men and local police officers.

It was late now, and the villagers, after the earlier excitement, had gone home. The St. Frank's boys, much to their disgust, had been marshalled back to the school; they were now in their dormitories, although not all of them were asleep. It was known that Nipper and Handforth had failed to turn up, and in the Remove, at least, there was a great deal of speculation.

A burly figure loomed from the Moat Hollow grounds; he could dimly see the figures in the car. The headlights had now been extinguished.

"Who's that?" demanded Zingrave pompously. And his voice was a perfect imitation of Inspector Jameson's.

"Didn't know it was you at first, inspector," said the burly figure, saluting.

"Who else did you think it would be?" snapped Zingrave. "How many of you here?"

"Only me and White, sir."

"Where's White?"

"On duty indoors, sir."

"Bring him out."

"Yes, sir," said the constable.

He suspected nothing—and could not be blamed because of that. For in the gloom it was impossible for him to detect the real character of these newcomers. It was equally impossible for him to know that he had not been addressed by Inspector Jameson.

"Gosh!" breathed Tod Millar. "It's easy!"

"Didn't I tell you so?" hissed Zingrave. "There are only two of them! Now, Millar—and you, Hess! Be ready!"

Zingrave was already gloating. Lee and Lennard and the others were safely disposed of at Dayle's Farm. These two constables could be dealt with easily. And Moat Hollow was otherwise empty! There wasn't a chance in a thousand that any other police officers would come near the place until the morning. For the chase was elsewhere. As Zingrave could see it, he and his companions could work leisurely; they could load up the treasure and be off without hindrance.

The two constables, utterly unsuspecting, came down from the house. They saw the figures of the supposed Inspector Jameson and his men coming to meet them. What happened afterwards was swift.

In one movement the two helmets of the policemen were swept off, and then—thud, thud!

It was Ivan Hess who wielded the bludgeon—a short length of leaded rubber tubing. The two men crumpled up without a sound.

"Good! You did that well, Hess," said Zingrave, nodding. "Drag them indoors. Quickly, now."

The two constables, once indoors, were tightly bound, and then bundled into a cupboard.

"They'll not recover for a couple of hours, at least," said Tod Millar, his voice husky with excitement. "Now—the cellar. If those boys lied to us——"

"They didn't lie," interrupted Zingrave. "The situation was too grave for them to lie."

Swiftly they made their way down to the cellar. Frenziedly they tore at the coal—after the first shock of seeing nothing but that black mass. And almost at once they came upon the bags of gold and the casket of jewels.

"It's here—it's here!" almost screamed Tod Millar. "Look! Gold! It's ours! We've got it at last!"

"Less noise, you fools!" said Zingrave harshly. "How many more times must I tell you? How far would you have got without me? You're like children—or savages! You'll get neither gold nor liberty unless you keep your heads."

"We can't leave this gold behind, Zingrave," panted Tod. "Look at it! Hundreds of thousands of pounds worth! We can dispose of it, can't we? Even if we have to keep it for months, it won't matter. I know men who'll take it——"

"All right—all right," interrupted Zingrave. "Perhaps we can take the gold. Things are going even better than I expected. But we must be quick—and that means that you must control yourselves. Come outside."

They all went out, and in the grounds they found a motor-van. It was of a peculiar type, for the body was a sort of circus van. It had been used by Tod Millar when he had first come to Moat Hollow in the guise of "Dr. Franz Ragozin." The village people had thought that it contained a wild animal for his "private zoo."

"We can take it away in that!" said Tod feverishly. "It's strong enough to carry it all."

"But it is too slow," objected Zingrave. "Now, Lee's car——"

"The police know Lee's car—and they might stop us," interrupted Tod cunningly. "If we go in this van we shall be safer. We shall still be wearing our uniforms, and if we're stopped we can say that we're under orders to take the van up to Scotland Yard, or—or somewhere. You'll know what to do, Zingrave."

"Perhaps you are right," said the professor. "Yes, we'll go the whole hog—we'll take the lot. Luck is with us, and we'll take full advantage of it."

The engine was started up, and the van was backed across the grounds until it stood close up against the front door. Zingrave himself, during this operation, stood near the gates. He was ready if anybody should come making inquiries. But they were undisturbed. Only those two constables had been left in charge; the village was asleep.

Working like navvies, struggling under the loads of heavy metal, the crooks carried the precious bags up from the cellar, and loaded them upon the van. At last the final bag was dumped aboard.

"All ready now?" asked Zingrave sharply. "You drive, Tod. I'll sit beside you. You others will take your places at the back—and have your guns ready."

They leapt aboard, the engine sprang into life, and the lights flashed on.

And it was at that very moment that they heard the zooming, ominous roar of approaching cars.

CHAPTER 17.

The Siege of Moat Hollow!

"WHAT'S that?" gasped Tod Millar. "You know what it is," snapped Zingrave. "Police cars! We're too late, you fools! If we hadn't stopped for the gold we might have been away! Didn't I tell you, from the first, that we should have been satisfied with the jewels?"

"But—but——"

"Quick—get the casket," shouted Zingrave. "Into Lee's car—all of you!"

They were bewildered and frightened. This sudden arrival of police cars took them completely unawares. They had not expected anything of the sort. They were half-way across from the van to Nelson Lee's car when the Flying Squad—or, at least, a portion of it—arrived. Two cars swept up to the open gateway, and men poured from them.

"There they are!" shouted Sergeant Mills, one of Lennard's lieutenants. "Hey, you'd better give in. We've got you covered."

"What does this mean?" demanded Zingrave, in Jameson's voice. "We are carrying out orders——"

"Come off it!" retorted Mills. "We know you—Zingrave! Not so clever as you thought, eh? Mr. Lee 'phoned through, and we know just how you pinched those uniforms. Are you coming quietly?"

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"Yes—like this!" snarled Zingrave.

Crack-crack-crack!

His automatic pistol spurted fire and lead, and Sergeant Mills dropped like a log, a bullet through his shoulder.

"Get back, you fellows!" he gasped. "They mean to resist us!"

"Are you hurt?" asked one of his men, running up.

"Nothing much—shoulder," grunted the sergeant, getting to his feet. "Quick—get behind these walls!"

Crack-crack-crack-crack!

Other guns were barking, and bullets were flying dangerously. The Flying Squad men either dropped flat to the ground or ran for the cover of the high walls. Meanwhile, the four criminals, knowing well enough that they were trapped, were determined not to be taken. They retreated into the house, and the door was slammed and bolted.

"Get to the upper windows," ordered Zingrave. "You have plenty of ammunition? Good! From the upper windows we can command a full view of the grounds. We'll keep them back. Leave this to me—I'll think of a way out!"

AT St. Frank's, in more than one Remove dormitory, juniors were excitedly leaning out of the windows.

"Shots, I tell you!" Church was saying. "Didn't you hear them? Revolver shots!"

"It—it might have been a car back-firing, or something," said McClure.

The door burst open, and Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West came in.

"Did you hear them?" asked Tommy. "Gun shots!"

They were all thinking of their missing comrades—Nipper and Handforth.

Crack-crack-crack!

Faintly, but distinctly, they heard the sounds repeated. Then, on the night air, came the strident sound of a hooter and the low roar of a powerful car. A moment later the car itself went shooting past the St. Frank's gates, towards the village, at anything between sixty and seventy miles an hour. It was one of the Flying Squad cars which, answering the call, was dashing to Moat Hollow.

"It's down there—down at Moat Hollow!" said Church excitedly. "There's something happening! Perhaps those crooks didn't get away, after all! Who's game to get dressed and dash down?"

"All of us!" said Tommy, with a gulp.

And they were not the only ones, either. Skeets—otherwise the young Viscount Bellton—had not had a wink of sleep. Neither had Vivian Travers and Jimmy Potts, who shared the same dormitory with him. They dressed like lightning—and so did Gresham and Duncan and Fullwood and others. The alarm was spreading. Juniors in the other Houses were aware of the excitement.

Seniors were up, too, and nobody seemed to think of ordering the juniors back to bed.

So it came about that presently half St. Frank's, wildly excited, was dashing away from the school and streaming down the lane towards the scene of Zingrave's last stand.

CHAPTER 18.

A Fight for Freedom!

WITH shrieking brakes, another car came to a standstill before the high wall of Moat Hollow. Nelson Lee leapt out, followed by Nipper and Handforth and Chief Detective-inspector Lennard.

"Well, we're here!" shouted Handforth excitedly.

"Better keep back, sir," said one of the Squad men, running up. "They're resisting—and shooting! Better keep clear of these open gates."

Crack-crack-crack-crack!

As though to prove the man's words, the firing recommenced.

"My only sainted aunt!" gasped Handforth. "What a night!"

"Handy, old man, it's our night," said Nipper breathlessly.

"Eh? What do you mean?"

"They haven't got away—that's what I mean," replied Nipper contentedly. "It means that the treasure is here—safe. As for these crooks, we can leave it to the guv'nor and Mr. Lennard and the Flying Squad to settle with them. They'll never escape now."

Nelson Lee drew the two boys aside.

"I'm not telling you to return to the school—because for one thing you wouldn't obey me, and for another thing it wouldn't be quite fair," he said. "But I do want you to stand well clear. Stray bullets are nasty things."

"All right, guv'nor—you can trust us," said Nipper promptly.

They got well out of range, backing away until they were right out in Bellton lane. And here they were pounced upon by Church and McClure and the other St. Frank's fellows, who had just arrived.

Nipper and Handforth went through a hectic time. They were punched, they were thumped, and they were cheered to the echo. Skeets was nearly crazy with joy.

"It's all right, Skeets, old man," said Nipper, when he could make himself heard. "The treasure's safe."

And then it came out—Handforth doing most of the talking—how the treasure had been transferred from the crooks' van to the Moat Hollow coal cellar. Nipper and Handforth were again the heroes of the minute.

Meanwhile, the grim siege of Moat Hollow continued. It was impossible for any of the Scotland Yard men to get near. The crooks, at the upper windows, were firing almost continuously.

(Continued on page 44.)

The Editor's own corner—in which he chats with his reader-chums,



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

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

THANKS for your letter, Douglas Quayle (Johannesburg), and for the bright suggestions you make. I can assure you that I very much appreciate your enthusiasm and interest in the Old Paper. I have shown Mr. Brooks the ideas you put forward, and if he can possibly incorporate them in future stories of St. Frank's he will do so.

* * *

Dick Hamilton was first called "Nipper" because, when Nelson Lee found him, his parentage was unknown, and as he was only a kid he was called "Nipper" by his pals. The nickname stuck, as nicknames will. This, "Reader" (Wood Green), should satisfy your curiosity on this point. I am very glad to hear that you and your two friends are so pleased with the Old Paper and that you think it is such splendid value for money.

* * *

Lionel Corcoran, the cheery captain of the Fourth Form, is very closely associated with the Blue Crusaders Football Club, "F.N." (Luton), being, in fact, the owner of the Club. Mr. Piecombe is the team manager, and "Corky" leaves the running of the Blues entirely in Mr. Piecombe's hands.

* * *

Pen-sketches of three more St. Frank's Removites: STUDY F. JERROLD ("Jerry") DODD. An Australian, hailing from New South Wales. Loose-limbed, wiry and active. A good-natured and breezy fellow with a cheerful smile and a happy word for everybody. Devoted to his pet pony, "Bud," and a clever trick-rider. A fine all-rounder at cricket. CHARLEY ("Boomerang") BANGS. Another Australian, also hailing from New South Wales. One of Jerry's old "cobbers." A remarkably tall boy, and so thin that his arms and legs resemble broomsticks. His face is long and lean, and his neck incredibly scraggy. Something of a demon bowler—but only on a wicket which exactly suits him. Very clever with the boomerang. HUBERT JARROW. Quite ordinary-looking, but not very ordinary in him-

self. He is a happy soul, with a habit of ramb-ling on in his conversation from subject to subject in the most disconcerting manner. The only successful way to stop him is to gag him.

* * *

Irene Manners is about fifteen, and rather tall for her age, K. F. Thatcher (Caterham Valley); her hair is very fair. I must warn you, however, that it is rather risky to ask these questions about Irene, for if Handy sees them he'll jolly soon be on your track.

* * *

Fatty Little is a genial youngster, Rosemary Thornley (Preston), but he is a boy with one idea in life. That idea, as you will probably guess, is food. Lessons, to him, are merely an interruption of meals. This being the case, a dose of Fatty in each story would lead to such repetition that Mr. Brooks seldom introduces him. I note, in your charming letter, that you entirely approve of this, and I think the majority of readers are with you. Fatty is a remarkably good footballer, but as he plays in goal, and as Handforth is in tip-top form, he seldom gets a chance.

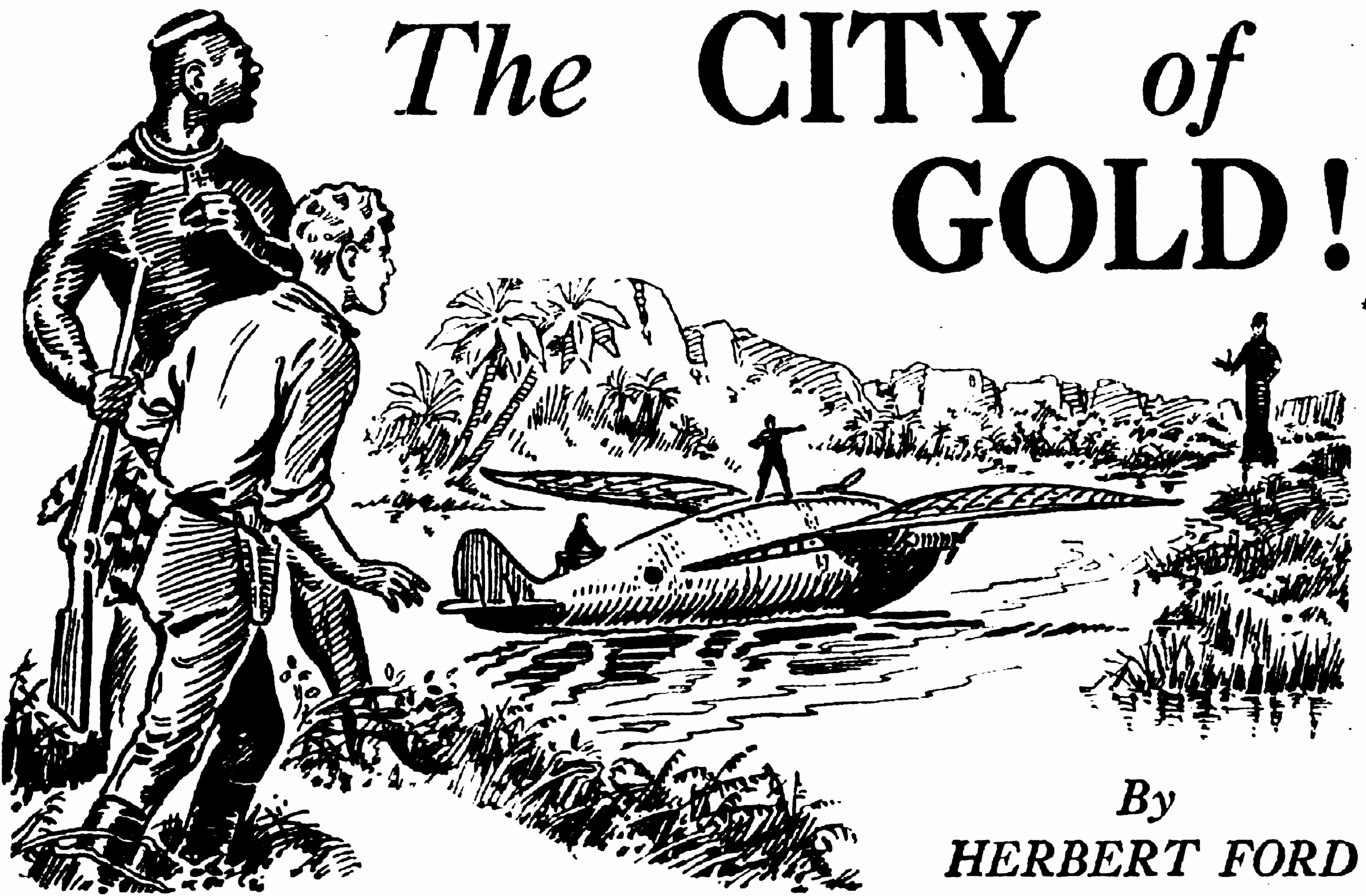
* * *

The River House School boys, Jack Godden (Hilton, South Australia), are friendly with the Moor View girls, of course, but none of them has any special girl chum. The St. Frank's fellows, living so much nearer to Moor View, see that Hal Brewster & Co. never get a look in! Lord Dorrimore was not a very wealthy man when he inherited the title, but owing to fortunate investments and discoveries of valuable properties during his wanderings, he has become a millionaire.

* * *

Here are the answers to the three questions I put to you last week. 1. Grosvenor Avenue, London, W. 2. The Pine Hill Reservoir. 3. Demon's Gap. This week's questions: 1. What is the name of the fantastic little building on Willard's Island? 2. What is Juicy Lemon's Christian name? 3. Who is the owner of the ironmonger's shop in Bellton?

More exciting chapters of our superb African-adventure story.



By
HERBERT FORD

On the banks of the mighty Zambesi Phil Cook defends his trading station against a horde of hostile Salukis. All seems lost—until young Tom Cook arrives with Lulu, his magnificent Zulu pal. And now the Salukis can look out for a big packet of trouble!

Bold Ben Bold!

LULU whooped like a demon as he planted the machine-gun down on its tripod and started turning the handle, rattling off belt after belt of cartridges into the huddled savages. They were taken completely by surprise by this rear attack, never expecting any force to come down the swollen river. After a few futile attempts to fight back, they broke and fled for the dense bush at the back of the station, yelling wildly in their confusion.

"That's that!" Tom gasped, wiping the sweat from his brow after a very strenuous five minutes hand-to-hand with a bunch of the enemy. "Where's dad?"

He scrambled over the wall to where the few remaining Kaffirs were gathered round the still form of the trader. With his heart thumping, Tom knelt beside his father, and breathed a heartfelt sigh of relief when the elder man's eyes opened and he looked up into his son's face with a smile. There was a deep cut at the back of his head; the blood from the wound had dyed his shirt crimson, but he looked a lot worse than he really was, which the old trader himself quickly realised.

"Don't worry! I'm all right, Tom, boy," said Phil Cook. "I got a swipe at the back of my head with a throwing hatchet that laid me out only a few minutes ago, but I've got a thick skull and it's not broken. Thanks be you're back safe and sound, Tom, though it's not much of a welcome home for you. Had a good trip? I s'pose you had no end of a surprise when you found us entertainin' that little tea-party? By the great joss, we'd have been taken completely by surprise if that medicine-man chap hadn't come and warned us. A curious little bloke! I couldn't make head or tail of what he was talking about at first. He was here a few moments ago, fighting against his own fellers like a good 'un. What's become of him?"

"Okay, chief! I'm parked right hyar!" came in a high, nasal voice from under a heap of Salukis who had climbed the wall to their everlasting regret. "Guess I got kinder mislaid in th' shuffle, but I'm more or less sound in wind an' limb!"

From underneath the heap of slain Salukis crawled a strange and weird-looking spectacle. He was wearing one of the reed cloaks such as the Saluki medicine men wore, but the top of it had been split open, and

through the aperture appeared a wizened little face, wrinkled like an apple. It had once been white—or, rather, a sallo—sort of yellow—but was now streaked with blood, soot and powder stains.

He grinned cheerfully at the astonished white men.

"Howdy, folks?" he cackled in a strong Yankee accent. "I jest guess it's up to me to interdooce meself, seein' thar's no one else hyar to do so for me. We've met afore, bawss"—to the trader—"though I wuz some rushed at the moment an' didn't git time to pree-sent me card. My name is Ben Bold, my native State Massachusetts. I am th' pussonal valet an' engineer-in-chief to Alva Vandeck, Ess-quire. We have come on a visit to these hyar parts, but havin' had a pressin' invite from some savages on t'other side th' river, we have been stationed in what they calls a kraal.

"Me an' th' bawss left our air-cruiser, th' Flyin' Fish, down river at Livin'stone," went on the newcomer, who was obviously an American. "We came up t'roo th' forest, th' bawss wishin' to have a spot o' shootin' and what not. We wuz t'other side o' th' river w'en them thugs jumped us an' takes us to this hyar kraal an' chucks us inside. I happens to overhear 'em plannin' to raid this hyar ranch. I manages to cut me way out of th' shack they'd stowed us in, bein' somewhat of a contortionist, bats one o' th' medicine guys over th' napper, gits inter his clobber an' beats it!"

"But what of my nephew, Alva?" asked Phil Cook, interrupting the little man's flow.

"Say, air yuh Mister Cook? Wa'al, strike me han'some, if thet ain't a co-incidence! Hyar's th' very spot we're set on visitin'. Where's the bawss? He's a-holdin' up th' centre pole in a clay hut, over thar, I reckon. By present arrangements, he's due to form th' first course in a roastin' an' torture performance afore royalty to-morrer evenin'—or rayther, to-night, seein' it's dawnin'—"

"You mean to say Al's a prisoner and likely to be sacrificed?" interrupted Mr. Cook in horror.

"That's right, dad!" said Tom. "I heard as much up river, from some of Oboona's men. There's a Voodoo village across there, and if he's in their hands—it's good-bye, unless we can get to him quickly. They'd show no mercy after gettin' a drubbing over here!"

"Yuh've spilt a bibful, young feller!" said the little Yank. "What say yuh, me, th' bawss an' this hyar outsize buck nigger makes up a li'l rescoo party? What say, ol' King Coal? Yuh willin' to make one? Yer a hefty sorter guy, judgin' by yer muscles, though I dunno what yer heart's like!"

"I do not wear my heart upon my sleeve for daws to peck at!" quoted Lulu in his rumbling voice, and with much dignity.

"Sleeve?" gurgled the Yank, surveying the huge figure with much enjoyment. "I'll tell th' cock-eyed world that yuh wear neither sleeves nor pants, brudder; but

yuh'd sure make Carnera look like a row o' pins in th' way o' strippin'! Let yuh an' me go into committee, bo, an' kinder dope out some way to rescoo th' boy inventor from these hyar savages!"

Tom to the Rescue!

BY dint of questioning the little Yank engineer, and one of the Salukis who was wounded but still able to talk, they managed to get a line on the whereabouts of the Voodoo village. Also, they found out other facts from the Saluki, who did not mind telling all he knew once he was assured that the white men were not going to harm him.

It appeared that Oboona, besides being a crafty and ambitious savage, was very superstitious. He had succumbed to the wiles of a notorious and cunning Voodoo priest who had settled in the village, and who had proclaimed himself as the prophet who was going to lead the black races to victory and sweep the white "usurpers" into the sea. The priest promised Oboona that if he would lend his aid, he would make the Saluki chief of all the Zamesi country, with rich loot gathered from the white men's "kraals."

Tom had an idea forming at the back of his mind to turn the superstitions of the natives to account. He realised it would be a long time before help could be got from troops at either Livingstone or Buluwayo, and time was the essential and important thing.

For he knew that after sunset his cousin's fate would be sealed unless he could be rescued before the Voodoo ceremonies started.

"We'll have to work in a small party and keep the main body back in reserve," he said, after giving them an inkling of his idea.

"Small party?" grinned the Yank, and then looked at the Zulu. "Thet sure let's yuh out, Dusky, for yer an outsize an' then some. Yuh ain't unlike th' heathen idol these savages have got stuck up in their temple. He's about twelve feet tall, and the high priest kids these poor mutts that this black idol walks about at night and kinder acts as a guard'in angel, shooin' away any enemies as is prowlin' about!"

"By Jove—I've got it!" roared Tom, bringing his flat hand down on the little man's shoulder.

"Have yer?" squeaked Ben Bold, rubbing his shoulder. "By gosh, so have I! But I'll ferget it this time, young feller. Spill th' beans, bo'!"

Tom proceeded to unfold his great idea, and the others enthusiastically agreed that it was "the goods."

"Dad will stay behind with all the kaffirs he can get together, and only attack on our signal," Tom said. "Just Lulu and I will steal through the forest, as we know the ropes and can move without being seen. Ben, you will stay with dad—"

"Ses yuh!" cried the little Yank indignantly. "Say, what d'yuh think I am, anyway? Nothin'? Ferget it, big boy. It's my bawss we're goin' to rescue, an' take it from me thet li'l Ben Bold is going to be thar wi' both feet. Leave me behind wi' dad? I don't think, papa! I'm in th' front row, orchestra stalls, an' doncher ferget it!"

"Ail right—all right!" laughed Tom. "You shall go if you're so set on it! I guess we can easily find room for a little 'un like you, and you certainly tricked these niggers and got across here in fine style to warn my father. That reed cloak and the medicine man's mask you're wearing may be useful yet."

"Yuh betcher! But thar's another o' th' heathen priests jest over yonder under thet wall. His cloak an' mask is somethin' special. He must have been a grade higher than mine wuz; a sorter sergeant-major. I knocked him out sudden when he wuz tryin' to hand th' bawss hyar one over th' bean. I'll show yuh!"

He led the way to where the dead Voodoo priest lay. They found that he had worn a mask of a particularly terrifying aspect, and a reed cloak inscribed with various painted signs and tokens, which seemed to indicate that he had been a leading light of the Voodoo cult.

"And say," drawled Ben Bold, "hyar's th' whistle thing he used to make thet screechin' sound thet gives 'em th' creepin' horrors. Then hyar's a box o' paint thet shows up all shimmery at night."

"Just what we want!" cried Tom delightedly. "We'll make these niggers think their idol's got a double that walks about the forest at night on his own. We'll cross the river and take a short cut through the forest—up that little stream that you and I discovered through the marshes, Lulu!"

"But don't those marshes swarm with crocodiles?" asked Phil Cook anxiously. "It's too dangerous——"

"Oh, shucks, dad! We can't make omelettes without breaking eggs, and we can't rescue Alva without running a risk or two, eh?"

It was no use arguing, and in half an hour they set off in a narrow and very light bark canoe, through which any crocodile could poke its nose if so disposed. But Tom and Lulu knew that crocodiles will seldom touch a human being unless actually in the water, or unless he be showing too much of a limb over the side of a boat. Tom had a small outboard engine of very light construction which would be quite strong enough for the light craft, and which would do away with the necessity for paddling.

They chugged along up the sluggish stream that was little more than a ditch, winding through the marshes, which were infested with all sorts of wild fowl, as well as the deadlier snakes and the inevitable crocodiles. These lay upon the surface like

logs, but they seemed to pay no attention to the canoe as it glided almost noiselessly past them. Tom held his rifle ready in case of accident, but had no necessity to fire it.

At long last they reached a lake which was within a short distance of the native Voodoo village, and here they left the canoe concealed amongst the reeds, and then stole ashore to prepare for their daring attack. Their preparations were fairly simple.

Lulu anointed his muscular limbs with some of the preparation they had found in the medicine man's outfit. It gave out a fiery glow, and made the giant Zulu's massive limbs look treble their size. Tom had fashioned a long sheet of canvas, which had been painted black and daubed here and there with phosphorescent paint. He himself donned a mask of hideous aspect, which he also daubed with the paint. He then mounted to Lulu's shoulders with the sheet covering them both, making a moving "idol" over ten feet high and of appalling aspect.

Ben Bold arrayed himself in the dead medicine man's fearsome-looking reed cloak and mask, and armed himself with the siren whistle with which the defunct priest had scared the superstitious natives. It certainly let off the most bloodcurdling shrieks and groans when blown hard, and Ben put in a little quiet practice whilst the other two were arraying themselves.

The Walking Idol!

IN the meantime the young American they had come to rescue was contemplating his fate with a philosophy that did him credit. Not once had he allowed the Voodoo men or the Salukis to see him flinch. He had been taken outside the kraal where he and his chauffeur-mechanic-valet had been confined.

The Voodoo men were astonished to find that one of their prisoners had managed to make his escape, and made certain of the other by strapping an elephant belt around his waist and chaining him to the upright wooden columns of the "temple" in which the hideous Voodoo idol was concealed.

It was lucky that Alva Vandeck did not understand the language or the bloodcurdling threats of what was going to be done to him in the approaching ceremonies. Calmly he lolled up against the post; with a disdainful smile he surveyed the prancing blacks who danced around him, yelling and brandishing their spears. In his eye was stuck the eyeglass without which he was seldom seen, and which had occasioned much wonderment amongst the savages whose prisoner he was.

"I guess this is where I take off the deep end!" he muttered, as he saw a crude altar being erected, under which a fierce fire was laid. "I'm goin' to form the first course of a Zambesi menu, from all the signs. I'm

afraid Ben hasn't been able to get through, and likely he's been done in by some of these niggers. Hallo! Here comes some more of the procession. I reckon the business is just about to begin!"

The whole crowd had swung round and were now staring in the direction of the entrance to the kraals, whilst from the forest there came a series of the most appalling shrieks and bellowings. There was a frightened yell from the Saluki warriors, and a hurried consultation amongst the Voodoo priests, who seemed at a loss to understand the proceedings.

The crowd parted to admit a prancing, capering figure in reed cloak and fearsome-looking mask, from the mouth of which came the awful shrieks which were making the night hideous. Then it halted in the middle of its spinning dance and pointed towards the forest. An enormous booming voice sounded from the depths of the trees:

"Way—WHOO-HOO—way for the true Voodoo! The Bull of the Forest—the Elephant from the Swamps! Way!"

The bellowing voice seemed to shake the trees, and the natives threw themselves on the ground face downwards as an enormous, weirdly-glowing figure strode forth from the trees.

Through a megaphone, Lulu's bull-like voice resembled thunder, and out from under the glowing phosphorescent cloak there came rockets, squibs, crackers and coloured lights that burst amongst the terrified crowd.

"Where is the impostor who usurps my place and calls himself by the sacred name of Voodoo?" bellowed the fearsome-looking idol, strutting forward majestically. "Let him come forth and do battle with me; him and his priests! Where is the white man these impostor priests would offer up to my rival? Show him to me that I may prove I am indeed Voodoo the Mighty! Ha, yonder he stands! Fetch him hither!"

Yelling like a fiend, Ben Bold, in the reed cloak and mask, bounded forward towards his "boss." One of the Voodoo priests, uttering a snarl of rage, tried to intervene as Ben produced a knife and made to cut the prisoner's bonds.

There was a sharp cr-rack! from beneath the reed cloak, and the priest dropped with a bullet through his shoulder. One slash of the heavy blade, and the elephant belt that bound the young American was severed.

"Okay, hawss; it's me!" shouted Ben. "Excuse me if I'm kinder rough!"

He grabbed the slight figure, and with surprising strength slung him across his shoulders. Then he staggered towards the idol.

"Now will Voodoo accept the sacrifice, that all may see!" bellowed Lulu. "Leggo th' blue fire, baas Tom!"

From the mouth of the hideous mask which formed the idol's face there came a stream of coloured fire. Alva was lifted in the Zulu's strong arms and apparently disappeared down the huge maw. Actually he

was taken under the concealing cloak and lifted on to Lulu's back, whilst all the time the idol continued to belch flames, and the priest danced around frenziedly, covering the trick.

"Now shall the false Voodoo meet with the fate he deserves for daring to take my place!" bellowed Lulu. "He shall die, and be no more!"

Tom hurled a couple of dynamite cartridges, with their short fuses already fizzing, straight into the door of the temple. There was a mighty roar, and up in the air went the frail mud structure, whilst fragments of the great hideous idol within were blown sky-high. The crowd bolted in fear, whilst Ben, Tom and the Zulu assisted the flight with round after round from their guns.

"I guess this is whar we beat it, fellers!" panted Ben. "Go whilst th' goin's good, or they may pluck up heart to come back an' investigate."

Tom and his cousin dismounted from the Zulu's shoulders, and they made a bee-line for the canoe. Even as they piled into it the forest resounded with the yells of the terrified Salukis and the commands of the priests, who had a suspicion that they had been tricked by the perambulating idol. The Salukis had had enough, however, and even Oboona declined to venture any more attacks on the "big baas" station just at present.

But the chief still coveted the great stores of goods which he imagined the trader possessed, and deep in the forest he made plans for another attack when the white men had been lulled to security once more. His spies infested the forest on the opposite bank to Phil Cook's station, and every move on the ranch was reported to the cunning chief.

Patiently he was awaiting the time when he could make another attack in force.

He sent out fleet-of-foot messengers to his outlying tribes, requesting that their finest warriors be sent immediately—prepared for war.

In their hundreds the painted savages assembled in the Voodoo village, and soon Oboona had a formidable army at his command.

Old Phil Cook and Tom watched these preparations uneasily. They knew that trouble—big trouble—was brewing with the hostile Salukis. Inevitably the clash would come—how soon they could not tell.

They also made preparations. The defences of the trading station were strengthened. Rifles and any weapons available were collected, and together with all ammunition, laid out ready for instant use.

Lulu, the giant Zulu, was a happy man these days. He loved nothing better fighting, and he was eagerly awaiting the forthcoming battle with the Salukis.

(Gee, boys, make sure you don't miss reading next week's chapters of this grand story. They hum with excitement—are packed with thrills!)

FOILED BY ST. FRANK'S

(Continued from page 38.)

Nelson Lee made a suggestion, and Lennard gave swift orders. There were a few crack shots amongst the Flying Squad men, and with great caution they mounted to the top of the wall, only their heads showing just over the parapet. Then they waited. When spurts of flame showed from two of the upper windows, there came answering shots.

Crack-crack-crack-crack!

The police officers were firing back. A wild scream sounded. One of the crooks had been hit. There immediately followed a mad orgy of random firing—and after that an ominous silence.

"Better give them time," murmured Lee. "I fancy that this is a trick, Lennard. They're trying to make us believe that they're out of ammunition—and when we show ourselves they'll let fly."

Suddenly, unexpectedly, the engine of the motor-van, which was standing at the front of the house, started up with a roar. The headlights sprang to life, and the vehicle lurched forward.

Shots sounded from the van, and the Flying Squad men leapt into action. But the van did not attempt to leave by way of the open gateway, which was guarded by armed officers. It charged at full tilt straight for the high wall.

"Look out!" gasped Lennard.

The van was coming straight for the spot where he and Lee were perched. They leapt wildly to the ground and ran. And only just in the nick of time.

Cra-a-a-ash!"

Nelson Lee knew that this was the last desperate throw. Just as the old manuscript, telling of the treasure, had been found—by Tod Millar's car crashing through the Moat Hollow wall—so the crooks were attempting to make a spectacular get away. But it was an absolute failure.

Tod's car had sliced clean through the wall because of its terrific speed. The van had no speed; it charged the wall, and the wall collapsed, the van jamming between piles of brickwork which smashed through the wind-screen, badly injuring Tod Millar. Zingrave leapt clear—straight into the arms of Nelson Lee and Lennard.

"Not this time, Zingrave!" snapped Lee, wrenching the automatic out of the professor's hand. "I think I told you it would be 'au revoir,' eh? We meet again!"

"You win, Lee," said Zingrave silkily.

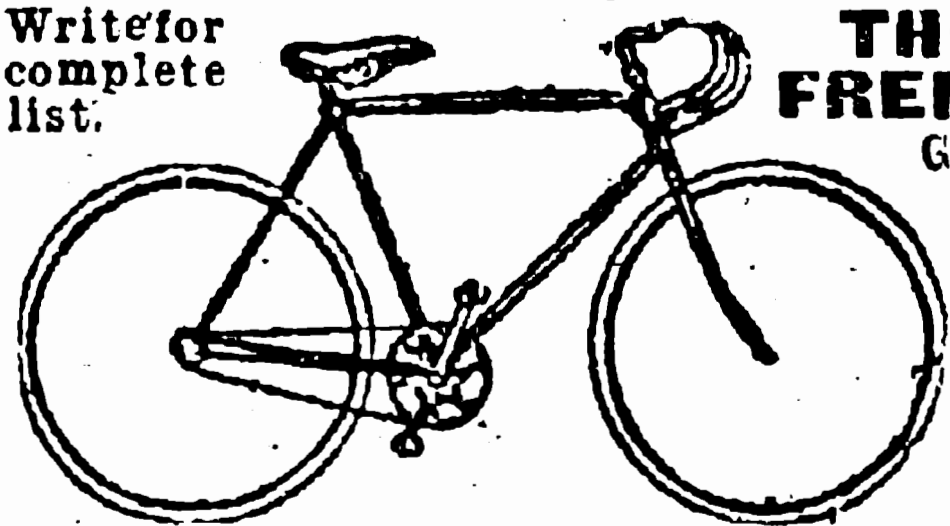
The others, of course, stood no chance. The handcuffs were snapped over their wrists, and the excitement was over. A roar of cheering went up from the St. Frank's boys.

When the treasure came to be examined, it was found to be practically intact. It meant the full restoration of Lord Edgemore's fortunes. And so, as Handforth said when he luxuriously got into bed that night: "Everything in the garden was lovely."

THE END.

(Zingrave is beaten—but only for a time. He will be appearing in another series of stories shortly. Meanwhile, look out for next week's magnificent long complete yarn of the Chums of St. Frank's, which is entitled: "The Mystery New Boy!" Order your copy in advance.)

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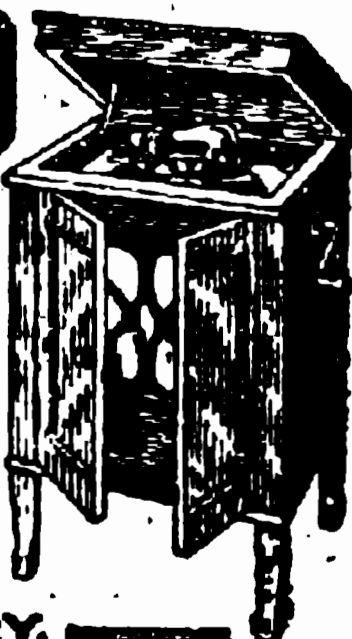
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