

A MYSTERY NEW BOY AT ST. FRANK'S!

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Who  
NEW BOY  
"DROPS IN!"

A sensational incident from this week's magnificent long school story  
of the famous chums of St. Frank's—complete inside.

New Series No. 110.

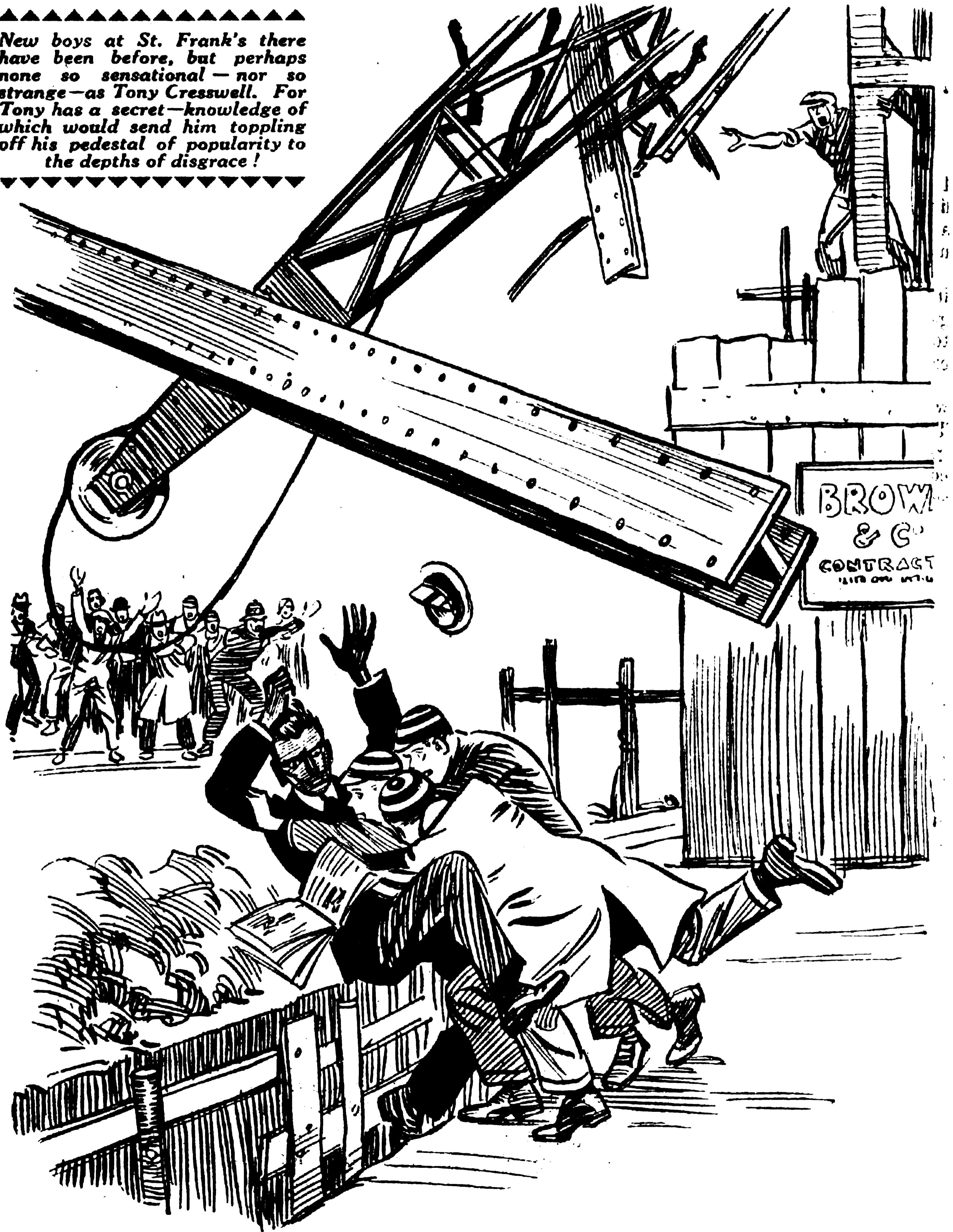
OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

February 27th, 1932.

Meet a new-comer, Tony Cresswell—whose second name should be—

# The MYSTERY

▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲  
New boys at St. Frank's there  
have been before, but perhaps  
none so sensational — nor so  
strange—as Tony Cresswell. For  
Tony has a secret—knowledge of  
which would send him toppling  
off his pedestal of popularity to  
the depths of disgrace!  
▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼



Crane and girder came crashing down with a screaming roar as Nipper, Handforth and Tony Cresswell rushed forward in a foolhardy but gallant attempt to save the life of the Indian.

*Sensation—in this week's superb long complete story of St. Frank's.*

# NEW BOY!

By  
**EDWY SEARLES  
BROOKS**

## CHAPTER 1.

### The Interrupted Match!

**G**OAL!"

"Oh, well kicked, Nipper!"

"Hurrah!"

The playing fields of St. Frank's echoed to the cheering. It was a fine, crystal-clear February afternoon, and on Little Side an important football match was in progress.

At least, the juniors regarded it as important. The Remove versus Fourth game always attracted a big crowd. And to-day the Fourth-Formers were very excited.

They had reason to be. This match was introducing a few surprises. The result of the Remove-Fourth game was always regarded as a foregone conclusion—openly by the Removites, and secretly by the Fourth-Formers. Nobody ever expected the Fourth to win, or even to look like winning.

But they looked like winning to-day—and that was the difference.

Lionel Corcoran and his merry men were at the top of their form; Buster Boots was putting up a magnificent defence; Bob Christine and Corky and Yorke and the other forwards were brilliant.

The Remove fellows, much to their astonishment, were having a hard struggle. The celebrated Edward Oswald Handforth, in goal, had been twice defeated. In fact, the score at half-time had been two—nil in favour of the Fourth. And now, at the beginning of the second half, Nipper had just scored a stunning goal, much to the joy of the Removites.

"Come on, Remove—let's see what you can do!"

"Play up, the Fourth!"

There was a great deal of cheering. All the juniors were full of enthusiasm for football just now. The great game had been sadly neglected of late; one or two matches in the St. Frank's League had been postponed, and the St. Frank's Junior XI was rather behind schedule; but Nipper was hoping to make up for lost time very quickly now.

It would be comparatively easy, because the Cup Competition, which was to have taken place this season, was postponed. The teams in the St. Frank's League,

therefore, could devote themselves whole-heartedly to the ordinary League games.

Football had a renewed interest for the St. Frank's fellows, too, because of late there had been a great deal of excitement over the finding of the old Edgemore treasure. Criminals had been in possession of Moat Hollow, the old house near the village, and the boys had had many hectic adventures. It was good to get back to the healthy thrill of footer, after it had been so neglected during these stirring times.

The game went off again with a rush. The Fourth-Formers were determined to keep their lead, and they played steadily, doggedly. The Removites were just as determined to rob their rivals of that lead, and they attacked desperately.

The droning of an aeroplane, far overhead, attracted no attention—until the droning suddenly ceased. Then it was that many necks were craned, many eyes stared upwards.

"I hope that silly ass isn't going to do any stunts over our playing fields," remarked Tommy Watson, of Study C. "Just in the middle of this game, too! Why can't he clear off?"

"He doesn't look as if he's stunting," said Jimmy Potts, shading his eyes against the sun.

The aeroplane was at a considerable height, and was now circling gracefully over the school. There was scarcely a breath of wind on this crisp afternoon, and the visibility was so good that the machine's colouring and identification lettering could be plainly seen. It was a cabin-type craft, and as she gently glided over the playing fields Jimmy Potts suddenly pointed.

"Look!" he ejaculated, startled.

"Rats!" roared Watson. "Nipper's through again! Go it, Nipper! Shoot, old man! Oh, rats! Buster again! He's mustard to-day. Did you see the way he robbed Nipper just now—"

"Look, I tell you!" shouted Jimmy. "That cabin door is open."

"Cabin door?" repeated Tommy Watson. "What the dickens— Oh! You mean the aeroplane?"

He stared up, and he was just in time to see something drop like a stone from

the opening in the aeroplane's side. Many other fellows were staring upwards now, and a general shout of consternation arose.

"Great Scott! Somebody's fallen out!"

The voices rose to a roar, and Wilson, of the Sixth, who was refereeing the match, blew his whistle sharply. Glancing up, he had seen that falling object, and he was considerably startled.

"Here, I say, I wasn't offside!" yelled Fullwood indignantly. "When Nipper passed—"

He broke off when he saw what all the excitement was about. And at that very second something happened to the falling object—which now could be plainly recognised as a human figure. There was a fluttering of white, which gradually opened and grew larger—and then a parachute burst fully open, checking the headlong descent of that falling figure.

"Well I'm jiggered!" gasped Jimmy Potts, relieved. "I—I thought for a minute that there was going to be an awful accident."

"Of all the nerve!" said Watson. "Making a parachute descent into our playing fields! Who the dickens can it be? Why shouldn't he choose the Half Mile Meadow, or some other place?"

"This is a bit thick, Nipper!" complained Vivian Travers, running up to the Remove skipper on the field. "Interrupting the game—"

"Perhaps there's a reason, although there doesn't seem to be anything wrong," broke in Nipper, as he stared upwards. "Why, hallo— What on earth— Look there, Travers!"

"I'm looking, dear old fellow," said Travers. "And I'm most frightfully surprised."

The aeroplane, far overhead, was still circling; and now, suddenly, several objects came tumbling out of the open cabin door.

They did not fall sheer, as the human figure had done. Parachutes opened almost immediately. Four things dropped, one after the other, and almost at once they were floating gracefully to the ground, the white parachutes looking dazzling in the wintry sunshine.

"Ye gods and little fishes!" ejaculated Nipper, in an amazed voice. "Look, Travers! Do you see what they are?"

"Not exactly," said Travers. "I thought at first— By Samson! One of them is a travelling trunk! That big one!"

"Yes, and there are two suit-cases and a gladstone bag!" yelled Nipper.

## CHAPTER 2.

### Tony Cresswell Drops In!

**N**IPPER was right. Following the figure of the parachutist, a trunk, two suit-cases, and a gladstone bag were dropping gently to earth!

And the aeroplane, with the cabin door now closed, was zooming up into the sky, the engine going all out. The machine disappeared into the distance.

"It looks surprisingly as though somebody is arriving—with all his luggage!" said Nipper, grinning. "Well, I'm blessed! I never knew anything like it!"

The match was forgotten; the spectators were invading the ground; everybody was staring upwards at the floating objects as they descended straight towards Little Side. For, as there was no wind, the parachutes were dropping almost vertically.

"Looks like a bit of cheek to me," said Wilson indignantly. "Who does this fellow think he is—messing up the game? I suppose you kids know that I've an appointment at half-past four? I'm not going to be kept hanging about—"

"Dash it, Wilson, it's not our fault," protested Handforth.

"Well, perhaps not," admitted Wilson grudgingly.

"We can't get on with the game, either," said Nipper. "In another couple of minutes the ground will be littered with suit-cases and things."

By this time the aeroplane's passenger was nearly down; and the footballers and spectators were astonished to see that he was a mere youngster—a boy of about fifteen. Remarkably enough, he was wearing no special kit—simply an ordinary lounge suit and a big belted overcoat. He landed practically in midfield, and the great parachute, billowing and surging, fell all about him. In a moment he was on his feet—just as Nipper and Handforth and Travers and a crowd of others ran up.

"Have I interrupted your game, you chaps?" asked the new arrival calmly. "Sorry!" He glanced upwards. "Better look out for my luggage," he went on. "I thought I'd drop in, you know!"

"You've dropped in all right," said Nipper. "Who do you happen to be, anyway?"

"As a matter of fact, I asked the pilot to drop me in that meadow next to your footer ground," said the newcomer, pointing. "But Bob always was a rotten shot."

"Bob?" said Handforth, staring.

"The pilot—a pal of mine," explained the other. "You see—"

"We don't see!" interrupted Handforth truculently. "Are you a visitor for St. Frank's—or what?"

The new arrival's calm manner somehow exasperated the burly Edward Oswald.

"Hardly a visitor," said the stranger. "I'm for the school, you know."

"What! A new kid!"

"Well, I don't suppose you can call me exactly new—I'm practically fifteen years old."

"If you're not new, you're fresh!" said Handforth, looking round for applause which did not come. "Yes, my lad. Fresh! And by that I mean you've got a nerve!"

"Yes, Bob said that I should require some nerve to use the parachute," nodded the remarkable new boy. "Do any of you chaps belong to the Remove?"

"Most of us," said Nipper.

"Glad to meet you," said the other, extending his hand. "I'm for the Remove. I believe I'm going into the Ancient House."

"Then you'll be one of us," said Nipper. "I'm Hamilton, Remove skipper—usually known as Nipper."

"By Jove," said the new boy, his eyes sparkling. "So you're Nipper, are you? Mr. Nelson Lee's ward? My name's Cresswell—Tony Cresswell. Or, if you want it in full, Anthony Wilmot Cresswell. I'm sorry about the Wilmot."

"Parents are trying at times," agreed Nipper, grinning. "Well, Cresswell, I must say you choose a funny way of coming to the school."

"Pardon me—my luggage," said Tony Cresswell calmly.

His trunk had already dropped, and his suit-cases and gladstone bag were on the point of striking the ground. Various fellows collected them. At first there had been a good deal of indignation; but now the Removites and the Fourth-Formers were tickled by the novelty of Tony Cresswell's arrival. Moreover, Tony's cheery chatter, and his genial, smiling face robbed them of all ill-feeling.

"Sorry about messing up the game," he said apologetically. "I'll clear off—and you chaps can carry on with it. Mind if I stand and watch?"

"We shan't mind a bit," said Wilson pointedly. "I'm a prefect, I might as well tell you—and I shall have to report this affair. I don't know what the headmaster will say about it. You're not supposed to drop out of the sky like that."

Tony Cresswell cleared off the field, and there were many fellows who were ready enough to help him with his luggage. The

parachutes were collected, too, and placed in a heap.

"By the way, being a Remove chap, I shall have to cheer when the occasion demands," said Tony coolly. "Does anybody mind telling me which is the correct team to cheer?"

But interest in the football match had dwindled somewhat. Tony Cresswell's novel arrival had started everybody talking; and by now, too, crowds of Third-Formers, and even seniors, were arriving on the scene—to find out what it was all about.

The game was nearly over—the second half had been in progress for over twenty minutes before the new boy had "dropped from a clear sky." Excitement worked up, however, and even Tony was forgotten; for Travers scored a glorious goal and equalised for the Remove.

But after that the Fourth-Formers put up a dogged defence, and although attack after attack developed, the Remove forwards could not break through.

So the game ended in a draw—with honours even. And then the players gave their full attention to Tony Cresswell.

### CHAPTER 3.

#### A "Frost" for Forrest!

"IT was Bob's idea for me to come down by 'plane," explained Tony, as the crowd surged round him. "Bob had nothing to do this afternoon—that 'plane is his own, by the way—and he offered me a lift. Better than coming by train or car, you know."

"Rather!"

"It was just like the silly chump to drop me into the middle of your game," continued Tony. "I've apologised for that, haven't I?"

"But why didn't you land in the ordinary way?" asked Nipper, with a chuckle. "Why resort to that parachute stunt?"

"Well, Bob didn't know whether there would be any landing facilities, and we wanted to be on the safe side," explained Tony blandly. "Quite apart from that, Bob thought that it would be rather a good stunt to use the parachutes. I wasn't averse to it myself," he added, with twinkling eyes.

"You nervy bounder!" said Handforth. "You knew jolly well that there would be landing facilities. You only used those parachutes so that you could make a bit of a sensation. Strictly speaking, we ought to bump you."

"Go ahead," said Tony cheerfully. "I expected something of the kind, anyhow. I bumped pretty hard, by the way, when I hit the ground."

"We'll let that serve, then," said Nipper. "Well, come on. You'd better come with us to the Ancient House, and we'll show you round."

Nipper was an excellent judge of character, and he had taken an instinctive liking to Tony Cresswell. There was something indescribably attractive about the new fellow.

He wasn't particularly good-looking, yet his face was singularly attractive. His teeth were slightly prominent, and when he smiled he revealed two even rows; his eyes were brown, and a permanent twinkle lurked in them. Judging by first impressions, he would be a decided acquisition to the Remove.

On the Ancient House steps Forrest & Co., of Study A, were encountered. Bernard Forrest, elegant as ever, surveyed the new boy with open and even rude curiosity.

"H'm! So this is the thing that dropped from that 'plane,'" he said disparagingly. "Don't think much of it—do you, Gully?"

"Ugly-looking object," said Gulliver gravely.

"Something out of a freak show, I imagine," remarked Bell.

"Look here—" began Handforth.

Nipper gave him a nudge. This was a personal affair between the new fellow and Forrest & Co., and Nipper could see that Tony Cresswell was giving the cads of Study A a careful scrutiny; he was sizing them up. Not a difficult task, even for an unintelligent fellow.

The dandies of the Remove were so obviously ornamental; they were well dressed; so well dressed, in fact, that they were over-dressed. There could be no mistaking the supercilious sneers on their unpleasant features. Tony Cresswell "got their number" in the first ten seconds.

"Sorry if I don't come up to standard," he said smoothly. "Is there anything I can do about it?"

"I'm afraid there isn't," replied Forrest, shaking his head. "It's not only your face, but everything else about you. I don't like this tie, for example."

He reached forward, seized Tony's necktie, and gave a sudden terrific jerk. The necktie came away in Forrest's hand, ripped and torn.

"Thought so," he said. "One of those cheap, nasty things. We don't have that sort at St. Frank's."

He tossed it carelessly away, and Gulliver and Bell grinned joyously. Some

of the other juniors were grinning, too. Ragging a new kid was a legitimate sport. And most new kids took it meekly.

"This overcoat, too," said Forrest, turning to his chums, and treating Tony Cresswell as though he were a tailor's dummy. "Hardly good enough, eh? It looks cheap, shoddy material to me."

"I wouldn't be seen dead in it," agreed Gulliver.

Forrest whipped out an opened pocket-knife, and with one slash he ripped a foot-deep cut in Tony's expensive coat. Tony could have prevented the action, perhaps; but he had made no attempt to do so.

"Thought so," said Forrest, nodding. "One of those twenty-five bob touches."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Gulliver and Bell.

"You cads!" shouted Handforth wrathfully. "That's a filthy trick—"

"Hold it, old man," murmured Nipper. "Something's going to happen."

"Eh? But look here—"

Tony Cresswell was examining his ruined overcoat with interest.

"Perhaps you'd like to try the suit?" he suggested, smiling into Forrest's face. "I shall have to see my tailor about these clothes. I must tell him they don't meet with your approval."

The new boy's coolness had a disconcerting effect upon Bernard Forrest. For the cad of Study A had been expecting wails and moans. And here was Tony Cresswell invitingly holding out his jacket, so that Forrest could thrust his pocket-knife into the material! Half the humour of the "joke" was killed.

"Well, of course, if you want me to ruin your jacket, I'm perfectly ready to oblige," said Forrest, jabbing in his knife.

Sizzzzz!

At the first touch of the blade a stream of black fluid shot out and splashed violently into Forrest's fancy waistcoat.

"Well, look at that!" said Tony, with annoyance. "You must have dug your knife into my breast-pocket. Careless of me to forget that I had some ink there!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ink!" howled Forrest. "You blithering fool! Look what you've done to my waistcoat!"

"I?" said Tony in astonishment. "But surely you did it yourself?"

"You—you rotter!" hooted Forrest. "People don't carry ink in their breast-pockets."

"I do!" said Tony promptly. "Just one of my peculiar little habits. Pardon me! I'm afraid a few spots got on to your face."

He whisked out a handkerchief, and with deep concern he rubbed it over

Very astonished, very startled, was Edward Oswald Handforth when a long, wriggling snake seemed to be produced from his ear by Tony Cresswell.



Forrest's face before Ferrest could prevent him.

"Ah, that's better," said Tony. "Sorry about your waistcoat, but you can't blame me, can you?"

He calmly put his handkerchief away, and Nipper and Handforth and Travers and the others, after a gulp of amazement, gave a whoop of joy. For Bernard Forrest's face had become a vivid, staring blue.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pleased to have met you," said Tony genially. "Hope we shall come across one another again."

He retrieved his torn necktie and then strolled indoors with the convulsed footballers, leaving Gulliver and Bell to explain to their infuriated leader the reason for all the hysterical merriment.

#### CHAPTER 4.

##### Sensations From Tony!

HAVING had a brief interview with Mr. Alington Wilkes, the Housemaster, the new boy announced that he was to "dig" in Study H with Vivian Travers and Sir Jimmy Potts.

"Good enough!" said Travers promptly. "Glad to have you, dear old fellow."

"Mr. Wilkes says that I shall only be with you temporarily," said Tony. "There's another fellow who usually shares your study—"

"Yes—Skeets," said Potts. "He's Viscount Bellton, really—the son of the Earl of Edgemore—but he's only a day boy, and he's not really entitled to a study. He's away at present. Some of our chaps helped him to dig up an old treasure, and he and his pater have gone off on a holiday to celebrate."

When they marched into Study H, Nipper and Handforth and a crowd of others had come downstairs after changing.

"Of course, it was a bit of a nerve on your part to rag Forrest," said Nipper dryly. "But good luck to you, all the same. How did you manage about that ink?"

"Perfectly simple," smiled Tony. "I came prepared, you know. The ink wasn't released when he jabbed that pen-knife into my coat; I pressed a little bulb in a special pocket. But it looked pretty effective."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That was a special handkerchief of mine, too," added Tony complacently. "You see, my dad is clever in that way; he has taught me all sorts of stunts."

"Well, let's have tea," said Jimmy Potts briskly. "Any of you chaps staying? Because, if so, we shan't have enough crockery to go round—or enough grub, either. You'll have to bring your own contributions."

He went to the cupboard and snorted.

"I'd forgotten," he went on. "This giddy door is locked, and we've lost the key."

I like the 'we,' you chump," said Travers. "You lost it, you mean. We shall have to have tea somewhere else; all our fodder is in that cupboard."

"Allow me," said Tony Cresswell, going to the cupboard. He bent down, examined the keyhole, and he nodded. "Nothing easier!" he remarked.

Nobody saw him slip the slim, toughened steel wire into the keyhole; his sleight of hand was amazing. But the next moment the cupboard door swung open. The juniors stared in astonishment.

"How the dickens did you do it?" gasped Jimmy Potts. "I'll swear that door was locked!"

"Just knack," said Tony, grinning. "I'm wondering if one of you chaps can lend me a necktie? This one I'm wearing is ruined!"

"Yes, and I suppose Old Wilkey made a few pointed inquiries!" chuckled Nipper. "Come along, we'll fix you up!"

"By the time you get back we'll have tea ready," said Travers. "We've got sardines and veal and ham pie—How about some eggs, Jimmy?"

"No eggs," replied Potts. "We finished 'em yesterday."

"Eggs?" said Tony, reaching his hand up into the air, and making a quick movement with his fingers. "Hallo! What's this?"

Miraculously an egg had appeared in his hand, and he placed it on the table—watched fascinatedly by the others.

"There are some more floating about, I believe," said Tony coolly.

He reached up again, and like magic another egg appeared in his fingers. Then a third—and a fourth.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" ejaculated Handforth. "They're not real, are they? How the dickens did you do it?"

The eggs were certainly real, as the juniors discovered when they examined them. The new boy watched with amused eyes.

"It's nothing," he said modestly. "My dad taught me."

"Does your dad happen to be a professional conjurer?" demanded Travers.

"No; he only does it for amusement," replied Tony. "He's taught me—Pardon me!"

He reached forward, and the others were ready to swear that he withdrew from Handforth's ear a writhing snake, about a foot long.

"What's that?" yelled Handforth, jumping.

"Nasty things to have crawling in your ears," said Tony calmly.

He held it out, gave his hand a jerk, and the snake vanished as though into thin air.

"Now, about that necktie," he said, moving towards the door. "Will one of you chaps oblige?"

He passed out into the corridor, and Nipper went with him.

"My only sainted aunt!" ejaculated Handforth. "That chap's a cough-drop!"

"He's dangerous!" said Jimmy Potts. "I'm not sure that I shall like him in this study. He'll be making tadpoles jump out of our teacups next!"

However, when Tony Cresswell reappeared he gave his assurance that he would attempt no more tricks; and tea proved to be a genial meal. The Removites had taken an instant liking to the new fellow.

"How about running into Bannington on our motor-bikes after tea?" suggested Travers towards the end of the meal. "I want to do a bit of shopping—Have you got a motor-bike, Cresswell?"

"No," replied Tony, "but it's not a bad idea. I suppose a motor-bike is handy at school? I've never really thought about it."

The others stared.

"Oh! But if you find that a motor-bike is handy you'll buy one?" asked Travers politely. "I'd like to remind you that they cost more than twopence!"

Tony Cresswell laughed.

"Yes, I suppose they do," he agreed. "But, seriously, do you fellows use yours much?"

"Always using them," replied Jimmy Potts. "There's a good bus service, of course, but it means walking down to the village. Most of the chaps use push-bikes, and they're pretty good. But motor-bikes are heaps better."

"You can come to Bannington if you like," invited Travers. "I'll give you a ride on my pillion."

"I wish I could open that money-box of mine," grumbled Jimmy Potts. "Over three quid in there—and I can't touch it! I need some cash this evening, too."

"Another lost key?" asked the new boy politely.

"No, it's a case of a lost memory," explained Travers. "Jimmy's lost memory." Potts produced a solid, substantial metal box—a miniature safe—and he twiddled a little corrugated dial in the front.

"You see, it isn't an ordinary lock," he explained. "There's no key. You set this dial with three different numbers—say, three, eight, two—or any other combination. I closed the thing up the other day, and I completely forgot the combination I had used. Now I can't open it."

"That's awkward," agreed Tony. "May I see it?"

"It's no good—you can't do anything without knowing the combination," said Jimmy. "I shall have to use a sledge-hammer in the end—and that'll be a pity, because the little safe cost a bit."

Tony Cresswell took it in his hands; he examined it closely. Then, with his fingers delicately touching the corrugated dial, he held the "safe" to his ear.

"What are you doing?" asked Jimmy curiously.

The new boy had closed his eyes, and he was so intent that the others became silent. A few tiny clicks sounded, and then Tony nodded.

"Easy enough," he smiled, opening his eyes.

And, to the amazement of the others, the door of the money-box swung wide open!

## CHAPTER 5.

### The Mysterious Indian!

"**G**REAT Scott!" yelled Jimmy Potts. "How—how did you do it?"

"Well, it's open, isn't it?" said Tony amusedly.

"Yes, but you didn't know the combination!"

"It wasn't necessary," replied the new boy. "These things are only toys, after all. I don't claim any credit. Just a question of touch and hearing."

"But—but it's uncanny!" said Travers. "We thought that 'waistcoat pocket' safe was burglar-proof."

"Well, I dare say it is," agreed Tony. "Of course, your cash won't be safe from me," he added, grinning at Jimmy. "But that won't worry you, will it?"

"Don't be an ass," said Potts. "I'm still bewildered. Who the dickens taught you how to open safes?"

"My dad," replied Tony Cresswell cheerfully. "My dad's clever."

He suddenly got to his feet, and the others noticed that a slight shadow had passed across his face.

"Shall we be going?" he suggested abruptly. "I'd rather like to run into the local town with you chaps."

It seemed to them that he had deliberately changed the subject; in fact, when they started talking about Jimmy's safe again he walked out of the room.

"The chap's an absolute marvel," said Jimmy, as he looked at the safe. "I spent two solid hours on this yesterday, and I couldn't move it. He sees it for the first time and gets the door open within thirty seconds!"

"A handy chap to have about the place, dear old fellow," said Travers dryly.

Tony was quite comfortable on the pillion of Travers' motor-cycle; he liked the ride so much, in fact, that he was full of enthusiasm when they reached Bannington.

"I had an idea that St. Frank's was near the town," he said. "I mean, I thought it was only a minute's walk. But a motor-bike is an absolute necessity, it seems. I shall have to get one."

"Go ahead!" said Travers, with a wave of his hand. "Take your choice!"

He indicated the brilliantly-illuminated window of a motor-garage near at hand. There were two windows, in fact—motor-cars were displayed behind one, and motor-cycles behind the other.

"I rather like the look of that B.S.A.," remarked Tony, pointing to a semi-racing model.

"That's an expensive jigger," said Jimmy Potts, who had joined them. "Dynamo lighting and everything."

"Let's go in and see," said Tony briskly. They went in, Travers and Potts full of wonder. Nipper & Co. and Handforth and some others, who were also in the town, joined them.

"That B.S.A. model, my boy?" said the salesman. "It's brand-new, of course, and fully licensed. You see, the number-plates are already fixed on."

"I could drive it away, then?" asked Tony.

"We prepared the machine for another customer, but he changed his mind at the last moment," said the salesman. "The machine, as I have said, is brand-new, but in view of the fact that it has been out on the road once, we can make a reduction of five guineas."

"It's mine, then," said Tony Cresswell, taking out a pocket-wallet.

"You mean—you'll pay for it now?" asked the surprised salesman.

"Of course," said Tony, equally surprised. "You're not giving motor-bikes away, are you?"

He went into the office to complete the transaction; and Travers and Potts and Nipper and the other Removites gazed at one another in wonder.

"He's paying for it in cash, if you please!" said Travers. "He buys motor-bikes as though they are oranges!"

"His pater must be a millionaire," said Handforth. "I suppose it isn't some sort of joke?"

The salesman did not appear to think so, for he was all over smiles when he emerged with Tony Cresswell. And Tony, who seemed unaware of the fact that he had caused a mild sensation, wheeled his new purchase out into the road.

"It's all fixed—licence transferred, and everything," he said cheerily. "By jingo! She's a beauty, eh?"

He trod on the kick-starter, and there was a violent back-fire. A man who was about to step on the pavement leapt back, muttering in a strange foreign language.

"Sorry," said Tony, glancing round.

He found himself gazing at a brown-faced man—an Indian dressed in European clothing except for a turban. His eyes were burning, and the glance he bestowed upon Tony Cresswell was so evil that the new boy stood transfixed.

"It was quite an accident—" began Tony.

The brown man strode forward, and he suddenly clutched Tony by the shoulder, staring intently and searchingly into his face.

"What is your name?" he demanded in good English.

"Well, dash it! I don't see that it's any concern—"

"Your name!" snapped the Indian authoritatively.

"Cresswell, since you're so inquisitive. But I don't know you, and—"

"You are—American?"

"Do I look American?" said Tony, returning glare for glare. "I'm English."

The brown man's manner changed; he bowed.

"I am sorry," he said, almost with relief. "I make the mistake. I apologise."

And without another word he turned on his heel and strode off.

## CHAPTER C.

### The Men in the Car.

**W**ELL, I'm hanged!" said Tony Cresswell blankly.

Travers and Nipper and the other juniors crowded round him. Tony was staring at the retreating figure of the Indian. The man turned and entered the hotel doorway of the Wheatsheaf, some distance down the High Street.

"Who was that fellow?" asked Handforth curiously.

"Never seen him before," replied Tony, with a helpless shrug. "Don't know him from Adam. He seems to have mistaken me for somebody else. Beastly-looking blighter, too!"

"That's what I thought," said Handforth. "I wonder where he can have come from? We don't have many Indians in Bannington."

"I believe he got off the Caistow bus," said one of the others.

"That might explain it, then," nodded Nipper.

"How?"

"Haven't you heard about the rajah's yacht?"

"The which?" said Handforth, staring.

"My dear chaps, you don't read the newspapers," said Nipper. "It was reported fully enough this morning. The Rajah of Ghar Kohat has come to England with his suite—some sort of State function, I believe."

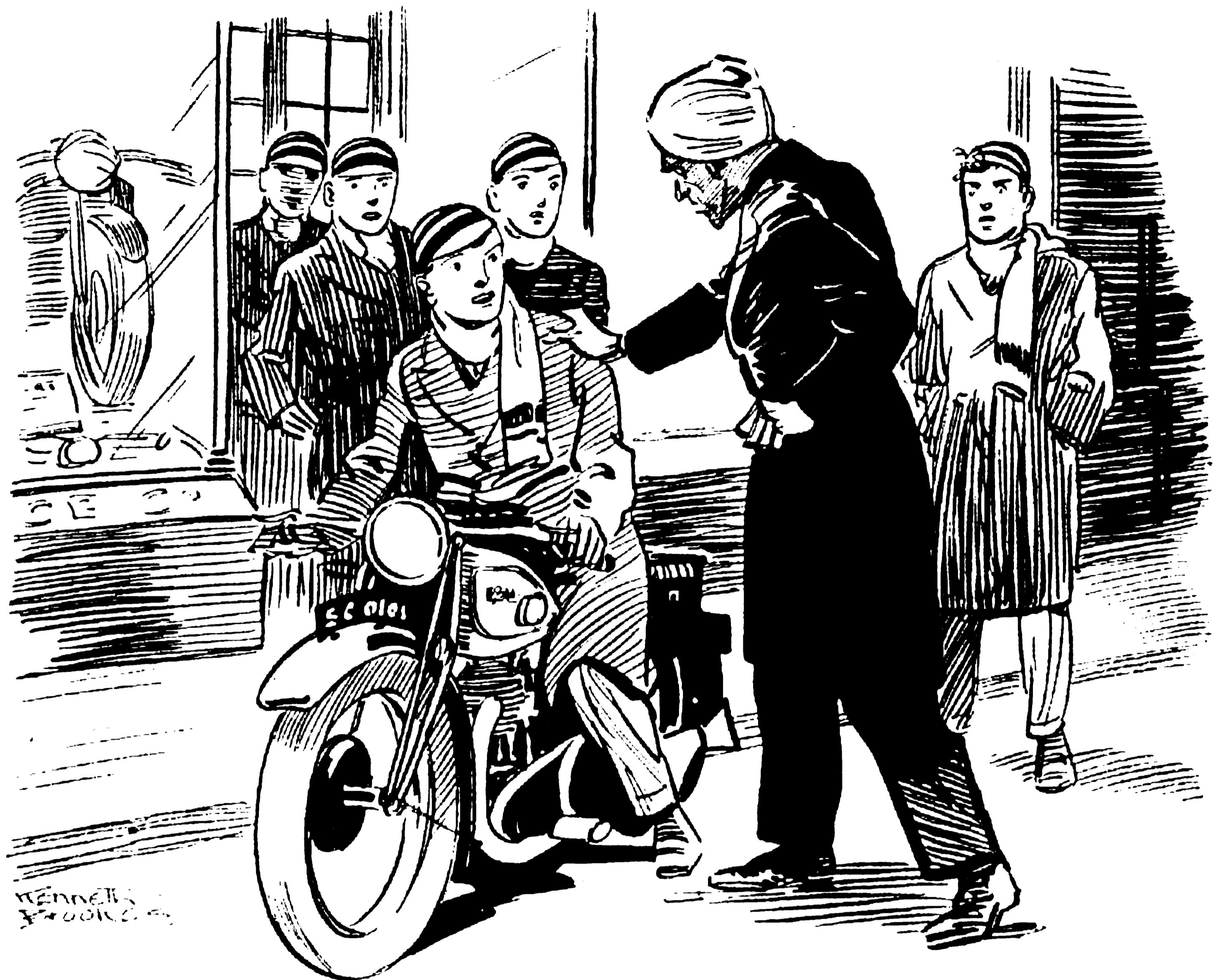
"They don't have State functions at Caistow," said Handforth sceptically.

"Of course they don't, ass," agreed Nipper. "The rajah's yacht was on its way to London; but the propeller fouled a bit of wreckage in the Channel, and the yacht was forced to put into Caistow Harbour. She's lying there now, and the papers say that it'll take a week or ten days to effect the necessary repairs."

"Rats!" scoffed Handforth. "You're not telling me that that ugly-looking merchant was a rajah."

The others chuckled.

"You seem to forget, Handy, old son; that the rajah has heaps of other Indians on board," explained Nipper. "Practically all the members of the crew are Indians—to say nothing of sundry officials."



The Indian came up and clapped a hand upon Tony Cresswell's shoulder. "What is your name?" he hissed sibilantly.

It occurred to me that that fellow might have come from the rajah's yacht."

"And the first thing he does, on arriving in Bannington, is to grab hold of Cresswell and spurt blue fire out of his eyes," said Handforth. "If you ask me, it's jolly mysterious."

"I don't like it myself," admitted Tony quietly. "I felt sort of—queer. I wonder why he wanted to know my name? Oh, well, what's the use? He must have made a mistake. Let's forget it!"

Nipper, at least, was not listening. For Nipper's attention had been attracted by a big saloon car which had just drawn up to the kerb opposite the hotel entrance of the Wheatsheaf. Four men had alighted—and at the very first glimpse of them Nipper pursed his lips.

They were well-dressed men, and two of them were smoking big cigars. Nipper could even see the features of two of the men under the bright lights of the canopy. They looked lean, hard-bitten customers. Another of the men turned, and his face revealed the same unmistakable characteristics. He stood talking animatedly.

"Crooks, or I'm George Washington's ghost!" muttered Nipper.

His long association with Nelson Lee, his familiarity with detective work, had given him a sort of instinct for criminals. Invariably he knew them at a glance. And these well-dressed men were unmistakable. Nipper wondered at the coincidence, too; for these men had arrived almost immediately after the mysterious Indian had gone into the hotel. His natural curiosity on all matters connected with crime was instinctively aroused.

Lately Nipper had been in contact with quite a few notorious criminals—men such as Professor Cyrus Zingrave, Sutcliffe the forger, Tod Millar the confidence man, and others. In a way of speaking, there had been an epidemic of crime round and about St. Frank's.

So Nipper was more or less on the alert. He "placed" the four men instantly. He could not, of course, hazard a guess as to their business in Bannington, but he hadn't the slightest doubt as to their type.

And then it was that a surprising thing happened.

Tony Cresswell, in turning to speak to Nipper, saw the intentness of Nipper's gaze. He looked along the well-lighted pavement; he saw the men under the canopy of the hotel entrance, some distance away.

"Why, what—" he began, and then suddenly stopped.

Nipper glanced round; he saw that Tony Cresswell's face was flushed, his eyes were alight, and the next moment, before Nipper could intervene, Tony was running along the pavement towards the Wheatsheaf.

Then another extraordinary thing happened.

One of those men—whom Nipper had decided were crooks—caught sight of the approaching boy, and he seemed to halt in the middle of a sentence. Then he spoke quickly, urgently, to his three companions. What followed was astonishing.

The first man leapt back into the driving-seat of the saloon car; the others wrenched open the rear door and tumbled in, helter-skelter, nearly falling over themselves in their haste.

With a whirring roar, the car's engine awoke to life. The next second the man at the wheel jerked in the clutch so violently that the car leapt forward like a crazy thing. It swerved out into the road, gathering speed, and, rocking round, it plunged into a side street.

Tony Cresswell was left standing stock-still in the middle of the pavement, and the watching Removites could see that he was trembling.

— — —

## CHAPTER 7.

### Handforth is Inquisitive!

THE incident, following so closely upon the heels of that strange affair of the brown man, gave the

St. Frank's fellows an uncomfortable feeling. Nipper, at least, knew that one of the four men had seen and recognised Tony Cresswell. But why had the men fled so precipitately?

"What was the idea, Cresswell?"

Handforth clapped Tony on the shoulder as he and the others crowded round the new boy.

Tony did not answer; he just stood staring, and now his face was pale, and in his eyes there was an expression of pain and bewilderment.

"What do you know about those crooks?" went on Handforth accusingly.

This time Tony Cresswell jumped.

"Crooks?" he repeated hoarsely.

"That's what Nipper says, anyhow, and I'm inclined to agree with him," replied Handforth. "Nipper just said that those chaps looked like crooks, and it seemed to us that you were just going to speak to them. But they dodged off. What the dickens does it mean?"

"Crooks!" repeated Tony, as though to himself. And then, abruptly, he swung fiercely round on Handforth.

"Crooks, did you say?" he almost shouted. "You're mad! Do you hear me? You're mad! If you say anything like that again, I'll knock you down!"

Handforth started back, astounded. Nipper and the others were equally bewildered at this extraordinary change in the new boy. A couple of minutes earlier he had been genial and care-free; now—

"I—I don't understand," said Handforth blankly. "I didn't mean to—"

"I'm sorry," muttered Tony with a gulp. "I didn't mean to flare at you like that. I apologise."

Handforth started. It was a coincidence, of course, but Tony Cresswell had used almost the same words as the brown man! And now the new boy had turned aside, and he was standing as though stunned. The rest of the fellows felt more uncomfortable than ever.

"It was foolish of me," said Tony suddenly. "I thought I recognised— Well, it doesn't matter, does it?"

"Doesn't it?" retorted Handforth. "At least you might tell us—"

He broke off, for Tony Cresswell had walked off, and a moment later he was sitting astride his new motor-cycle. More remarkable still, he started up the engine, and a moment later, with the machine under perfect control—proving that he was no novice at motor-cycling—he had swung round in the road and was purring away.

"Well, what do you make of that?" asked Handforth in astonishment. "What came over the chap? We thought he was such a corker, too!"

"Well, I don't see that this makes any difference, dear old fellow," said Travers mildly. "He seems to be upset about something—that's all."

"But what about those four men—those crooks?" said Handforth. "If Cresswell recognised them, they recognised him. That stands to reason. Otherwise, why did they bolt? And, in any case, why should they bolt from a chap like Cresswell?"

"What's the good of asking me?" said Travers. "I don't know anything about Cresswell's family history; I've only known him a couple of hours."

"Oh, well, it's mysterious," growled Handforth. "And I don't like anything mysterious."

"There, of course, he was fooling himself. He loved mystery. And he decided then and there to investigate this mystery, and probe it to the bottom."

When he and the others got back to St. Frank's they naturally drifted towards the Junior Common-room; and it was just as natural that a great deal of the general conversation should revolve round the new boy. Everybody was talking about the calm way in which Cresswell had whacked out cash for a new motor-bike.

Vivian Travers and Jimmy Potts went straight to Study II, and, as they had half expected, their new study mate was there. Tony seemed to have completely recovered, for he gave the pair a genial smile as they came in.

"Just getting settled down," he explained. "I don't have to do any prep. to-night, I understand. You don't mind my looking at these books, do you?"

"Not a bit," said Jimmy Potts, giving Tony a straight look. "Feeling better now?"

"Better?" repeated Tony. "I've felt first-class ever since I—er—dropped in."

He was deliberately ignoring that incident in Bannington; and his study mates had sufficient sense to shelve the subject.

"Why not come along to the Common-room?" suggested Travers. "Some of the chaps are keen on seeing a few of your tricks."

"I hope they're not expecting too much," said Tony dubiously. "I'm only an amateur conjurer, you know—I can't give a regular performance."

He went with them willingly enough, and in the Common-room he was introduced to many Removites who had not yet met him.

"Well, I must say that you seem to be a lucky bargee," remarked Reggie Pitt, of the West House, who had come over. "Not content with arriving at the school by aeroplane, you go out and buy motor-bikes as though they were marbles."

"I only bought one," protested Tony.

"Yes, and that one made a nasty mess of a hundred quid," said Handforth. "I'll bet your people are rich, eh?"

"I haven't any 'people'—only my father," replied Tony quietly.

"Sorry! Hope I haven't said—"

"That's all right," smiled Tony. "I don't remember my mother—she died when I was two years old. And I haven't any aunts or uncles or cousins—just my dad." His eyes sparkled. "Dad's the finest man on earth!" he went on. "I don't

see him often but we're pals. There never were two such pals as dad and I."

"You've been spoilt, my lad," said Handforth severely. "So that's why you get so much pocket-money."

"Perhaps so," said Tony dreamily. "I don't remember my dad refusing me anything. Oh, I'd love you all to meet him! That's why I can't understand—"

He broke off and frowned for a moment. It seemed that a train of thought had suddenly disturbed him.

"He can do everything," he went on, the sparkle coming back into his eyes. "You know what I mean—everything a chap loves his father to be able to do. Yes, he's the greatest chap on earth, is dad!"

"What are we supposed to do—cheer?" asked Bernard Forrest sneeringly.

"I—I'm sorry!" said Tony, with a start. "I didn't mean—"

"Don't take any notice of the rotter, Cresswell!" said Handforth, with a glare at Forrest. "What's that you were saying about your pater? What can he do?"

"Everything," said Tony promptly. "He can box like a champion, he can swim like a fish, he can ride like a cowboy, he has won motor-races at Brooklands, he can pilot an aeroplane. Oh, dad can do anything! He's just great!" It was clear enough—by the light in Tony Cresswell's eyes—that he regarded his father as a sort of hero. Yet, in another way, he seemed to be speaking of a friend—a pal.

"What is your pater?" asked Handforth. "I mean, what does he do?"

"I don't quite know," was Tony's surprising answer.

"Isn't he a banker, or a broker, or a lawyer, or something?"

"Does it matter?" asked Tony abruptly.

And it was obvious to everybody—except Edward Oswald Handforth—that he was anxious to change the subject.

**N**IPPER pushed forward.

"About Saturday's match," he said briskly. "It'll be a pretty stiff game against Caistow High School—"

"We're not talking about footer," interrupted Handforth. "I was asking Cresswell about his pater."

"Yes, I know, but—"

"Don't butt in, then," said Handforth severely. "I suppose your pater plays footer, Cresswell?"

"Not Soccer—Rugger," replied Tony promptly. "He has played for England—twice."

"By George, then he is a corker!" said Handforth enthusiastically.

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"Are we supposed to believe all these assertions?" asked Forrest, with a sniff. "We've only got Cresswell's word—and, according to him, his pater seems to be a magician."

"Yes, he's a bit of a magician, too," nodded Tony calmly.

"Where do you live?" demanded Handforth. "I mean, where's your place?"

"We don't live anywhere," said Tony, looking slightly uncomfortable. "I mean, we haven't any—place."

"No country home—no London house?"

"No"

"You don't mean to say that you live in hotels?"

"Hardly that," replied the new boy, who was beginning to lose his geniality under the fire of this thoughtless cross-examination. "Sometimes my dad has a flat in town. You see, he's away a lot. He'll go across to the Continent for weeks

—or over to the United States. But he generally manages to be free during the summer holidays, and then we have a great time together. Of course, it doesn't matter much during term; I can't see him, anyhow."

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Handforth, looking at Cresswell with new interest. "But even now you haven't told us what your pater *does* for a living. What are these mysterious jaunts he takes—"

"Did I—I say they ere mysterious?" broke in Tony, flushing.

"Well, you don't seem to know why he goes away."

"Why should I want to know?" demanded Tony hotly. "Are you always questioning your father about where he goes and what he does? What does it matter to me? I only know that my dad is a grand chap, and I'd slaughter anybody who breathed a word against him!"



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He suddenly turned on his heel, and amid a dead silence he strode out of the Common-room.

"Here, I say!" shouted Handforth. "What the dickens—"

"Now I hope you're satisfied with yourself!" said McClure scathingly.

"Eh?"

"You ought to be boiled!" said Church.

His study chums had closed in on him, and they were both looking indignant. Many of the other fellows were glaring at Handforth, too. Handforth couldn't understand it.

"What's the matter?" he asked, bewildered. "What have I done?"

"I don't think you meant to be nosy—" began Church.

"Nosy!" roared Handforth.

"Well, what else do you call it?" said Nipper. "Churchy is right. Couldn't you see that you were making the chap uncomfortable with all your silly inquisitive questions?"

"But—but—but—"

"Cresswell is a good chap—one of the best," went on Nipper. "You can see it a mile off. And if he is so fond of his father, you can be pretty sure that Mr. Cresswell is a great chap. But why bother with all those questions?"

"I was only asking him," growled Handforth, flushing, uncomfortably. "Dash it, I didn't mean to be nosy!"

"A new kid is supposed to answer questions and sing small," remarked Forrest. "I think the blighter ought to be fetched back and bumped."

"Hear, hear!" echoed some of the others.

"You—you fatheads!" roared Nipper, exasperated. "Cresswell didn't like being questioned about his father, and I don't blame him. It's his business, not ours!"

"I'm sorry," growled Handforth. "I think I'll go out and find him."

Nipper, in spite of what he had said, knew that there was more in it than he implied. Tony Cresswell had a very definite reason for walking out of the Common-room as he had done. And Nipper was convinced that Tony was, in all truth, utterly ignorant of his father's occupation. It was this, perhaps, which had upset him.

And Nipper was right.

For the new boy, strolling out into the Triangle to think, was startled by his thoughts. It came to him rather as a shock that he had never bothered—until now—about his father's occupation.

It was something like a blow between the eyes. Nobody had ever questioned him before; he had never even thought of his

father, except as a pal. What did his father do for a living?

His business took him away for long periods—for irregular periods. Sometimes he would be home for weeks on end, apparently doing nothing; at other times he would be away and Tony would scarcely hear a word. Just a postcard from Berlin, or from Vienna, or Milan. Then suddenly his father would unexpectedly come to see him, bringing him some new present, and whacking out heaps of cash.

Tony Cresswell was worried for the first time in his life.

## CHAPTER 8.

### The Figure in the Shrubbery!

A FIGURE, dim and shadowy, stood in the Triangle. It was very dark and gloomy near the shrubbery, and the figure was invisible. Beyond the lighted windows, the various Houses glowed warmly. A chill, wintry breeze had sprung up now, and it was rustling through the leafless branches of the chestnuts.

The figure was that of a tall man in a heavy overcoat; a soft hat was pulled down over his evil-looking face. Both hands were thrust into his overcoat pockets, and his eyes were watchful.

Two minutes earlier he had slipped noiselessly over the school wall. For some reason best known to himself, he had not cared to walk through the open gateway.

Now he waited, and he seemed to be uncertain.

He eagerly scrutinised every figure which came from the school buildings, and after a while he muttered impatiently. What was the good of this? He might wait for hours.

Yet what could he do? It was risky to speak to any of the boys.

Nobody was about at the moment, but just then a solitary figure emerged slowly from the Ancient House doorway. It descended the steps, and for a moment, as the figure half turned, the face was clearly visible.

"People say I'm lucky!" murmured the man with satisfaction.

For he recognised the figure—and the face—at once. Tony Cresswell! The very boy he had come to see. Not a minute earlier he had convinced himself that there wasn't one chance in a thousand that he would be able to get hold of Tony alone.

This man, who was one of the four the juniors had seen in Bannington High Street with the saloon car, moved forward stealthily. He watched Tony closely, his eyes burning.

Then suddenly he slunk back into the shrubbery. Two seniors had just emerged from the West House, comparatively near by. They went up the Triangle and passed Tony Cresswell on the way.

"Hallo, kid!" said Morrow, one of the seniors. "What are you doing out here—trying to catch cold?"

"It's all right, thanks," came Tony's voice. "Just mooching about."

"Well, don't stay out too long," said Morrow. "You're the new Remove chap, aren't you? I hear you're good at picking locks. I'll get you to have a look at my suitcase sometime. I've lost the key and I can't get it open."

"I don't mind having a look at it," said Tony. "It's funny how a fellow gets talked about."

"Not at all," replied Morrow. "A fellow who can do things that you can do is bound to get talked about."

The seniors passed on, chuckling; and Tony Cresswell, thrusting his hands deeper into his pockets, strode towards the shrubbery—as though drawn by some invisible force to the man who lurked there.

Tony had much to think about. Not merely his father, and the puzzling features of his father's "job" which Handforth's cross-examination had aroused, but that strange incident in Bannington.

There had been two incidents, in fact. The brown man! Who was he, and why had he questioned Tony in that extraordinary way? Then the four men with the car, and one of them—

"Oh!" ejaculated Tony, jumping.

It seemed to him that a black shadow suddenly materialised out of the night. The next second a steel grip was placed on his arm and a voice spoke.

"You!" shouted Tony hoarsely.

Handforth & Co., emerging from the Ancient House at that dramatic moment, heard the cry distinctly. Handforth was upset. Until Nipper had pointed it out, he had not realised that he had exceeded the limit of good manners. Now he wanted to find Tony Cresswell and assure him that he wasn't really an inquisitive chap, and to express his apologies.

"Hallo!" said Handforth, with a jump. "That was Cresswell's voice, wasn't it?"

"Yes, I think so," said Church. "Look, he's over there—and somebody's with him! Great Scott, the other fellow has grabbed hold of Cresswell—"

Handforth did not wait. He dashed out, and in the same moment he lugged an electric torch from his pocket. On these dark wintry evenings he generally carried a torch. He flashed it on as he ran,

and the beam wavered up and down. The figures of Tony and the man with him were vaguely revealed.

"All right, Cresswell—we're coming!" yelled Handforth. "By George, who's that man? What's he doing?"

The man, with an impatient, savage mutter, spun round on his heel, releasing Tony. Like a hare he bolted, racing straight for the main gates.

He was furious. After that lucky meeting with Tony Cresswell, it was galling to be forced to flee in this ignominious fashion. Yet he dared not face those juniors; he dared not allow himself to be seen at close quarters.

He had almost reached the gates when a knot of fags, chatting noisily, turned into the gateway from the lane.

"Hold him!" yelled Handforth excitedly. "Hi, you kids! Grab that man and hold him!"

And Tony Cresswell seemed to awaken from a dream. He ran after Handforth, clutching at the burly junior's arm.

"No, no!" he gasped. "You mustn't—"

"You silly ass, you don't understand!" said Handforth. "I recognised him! He's one of those crooks we saw in Bannington!"

The fags in the gateway wasted no time. This was because Willy Handforth was there; and the redoubtable Willy was one of the quickest-thinking fellows in the school.

He saw the running man; he heard his major's shouts; and he acted.

"Right-ho, Ted!" sang out Willy. "Leave it to the Third!"

He flung himself headlong. It was a glorious tackle, and would have done credit to a Rugger International. Willy's arms curled themselves round about the fugitive's shins, and the man, hopelessly tripped, went sprawling.

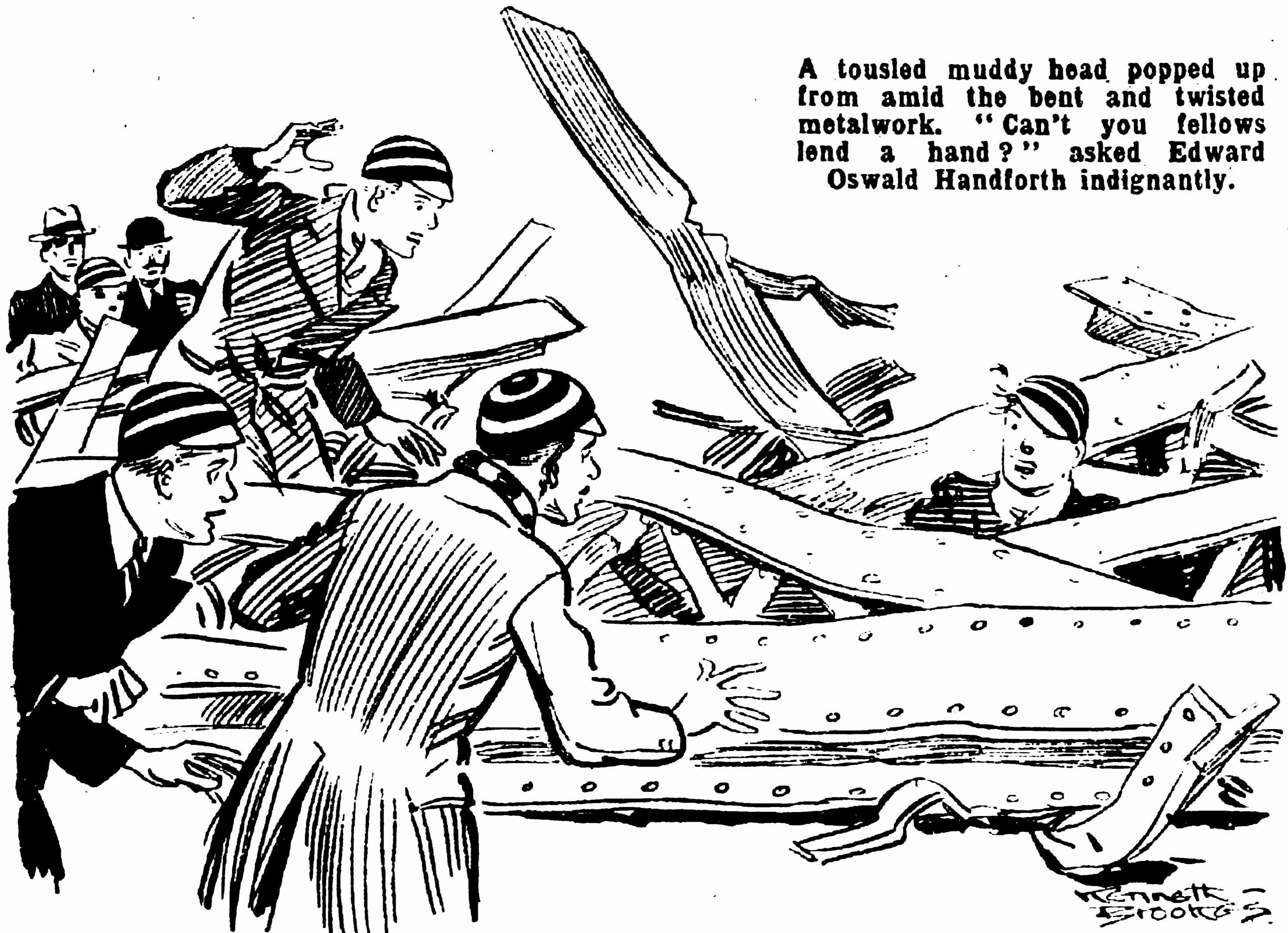
"Good work!" roared Edward Oswald Handforth. "Hold him, you kids!"

Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon and Owen minor threw themselves at the stranger. There wasn't time to ask any questions; what Willy did was good enough for them. The startled man found himself attacked on all sides.

"You young demons!" he gasped feverishly.

With a tremendous heave, he flung three of the fags away from him; he wriggled frantically, and got to his feet.

Handforth and Church and McClure were practically on the spot now. Within another second they would have grabbed at the man, and would have held him.



A tousled muddy head popped up from amid the bent and twisted metalwork. "Can't you fellows lend a hand?" asked Edward Oswald Handforth indignantly.

But, exerting all his strength, he seized Willy and flung him away. Then, panting hard, he ran. There was no time for him to choose his direction. He made off blindly.

"Sorry, Ted," gasped Willy. "My only hat! That chap's got muscles like steel!"

"Look!" ejaculated Church.

The stranger, finding himself running at the school wall, went upwards in a magnificent leap; he clutched at the wall top, skimmed over, and vanished.

Handforth & Co. raced through the gateway, and they were in time to hear the swift footfalls of the running man as he sped down the lane into the darkness.

"It's no good, Handy," said Church breathlessly. "We'll never catch him now—he's gone off like a hare!"

Tony Cresswell had run up to the gateway, his face aflame with excitement; but now he halted. For Willy Handforth had picked up something from the ground, and he was turning it over in his hands.

"Look at this, Ted," said Willy significantly.

Handforth came up, and he flashed his electric torch again. An exclamation escaped him as he saw the nature of the object which Willy was holding.

"Great Scott! A revolver!"

"It's not a revolver, Ted—it's an automatic pistol," said Willy. "Fully loaded,

too. It must have fallen from that man's pocket when we bowled him over."

They all looked at Tony Cresswell, who was standing motionless. The colour had drained from his face, and there was an expression of incredulous consternation in his eyes; an expression, almost, of horror.

"Seems to me we were just in time," said Handforth. "It's a lucky thing for you, Cresswell, that we came out at that moment."

"Lucky?" muttered Tony, passing a hand over his brow. "Yes, I—I suppose so."

"Did you know that man—that crook?"

"Know him?" repeated Tony dully. "Yes, of course—I—I mean, no! I don't know any crooks! Why should I know any crooks?" he went on, with sudden fierceness. "What do you mean?"

"Steady, old man," said Handforth, staring. "I didn't mean to startle you. But you must admit that it's rummy. Why can't you explain? Decent people don't go about carrying automatic pistols; they don't run as that man did, anyhow. He's a crook, and you know it. What was he doing to you?"

"Nothing," said Tony quietly.

"But we saw him—"

"Thanks to you, he had no time to do anything—to me," said Tony unsteadily.

"Thanks. You meant well, of course. It--it was decent of you. Well, he's gone!"

He turned aside, as though to walk away, but Handforth detained him.

"Just a minute," said the leader of Study D. "Aren't you going to explain?"

"What can I explain?" retorted Tony bitterly. "How can I explain something I don't even understand myself? I can't believe it!" He was looking at the automatic. "I tell you, I can't believe it!"

He was like a fellow in a daze, and there was an agonised note in his voice. When he walked off he was unsteady. He went indoors, but instead of going to his study he went straight upstairs—and locked himself in his dormitory.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Handforth, out in the Triangle. "That fellow is a mystery, if you like! One of the best, I should say—and yet he acts so queerly! Who the dickens could that fellow have been, and why did he come here to talk to Cresswell? There's something squiffy about the whole business, in my opinion."

"He's that new chap in the Remove, isn't he?" asked Willy. "Well, it's nothing to do with us. What about this 'gat,' Ted?"

"This what?"

"This 'rod'!"

"Gat! Rod!" ejaculated Edward Oswald indignantly. "You silly young ass! Where do you think we are—in Chicago? You'd better give it to me—and don't let me hear you using any more of that American slang."

"Oh, yeah!" said Willy coolly.

"You—you—All right, I'm not going to argue with you," said Handforth. "I'll take that pistol, and I'll give it to Old Wilkey."

"You can't do that, Handy," said Church. "If you do, you'll have to explain how you got hold of it. Better give it to Cresswell, I think."

"All right," agreed Handforth. "It might be as well to keep this thing mum; we don't want any masters butting in. Don't forget, you kids—not a word!"

Willy and the other fags grinned.

"If it's safe with you, Ted, it's safe with us," said Willy cheerfully.

They walked off, and Handforth stared after them.

"Now what the dickens did Willy mean by that?" he asked suspiciously.

"Better puzzle it out for yourself, old man," advised Church.

## Am I Scotch? Of COURSE!

My name is George Francis Kerr, and I am one of the New House Co.; Figgins is our leader, while Fatty Wynn looks after the cooking—and the eating, believe me! On the face of things I don't do anything in particular, but you see I'm a Scotsman, and I'm careful, so I often save the Co. from getting into scrapes. Ca' canny is my motto, and it's saved us more than once.

We're feeling very bucked this week, because Marmaduke Smythe, the millionaire's son, is coming back to St. Jim's. He used to be a member of our Co., but some time ago he left. We're making special preparations to welcome him, and if you want to know all about his return, just get a copy of this week's GEM and read "The Treaty of St. Jim's!" It's an extra special double length yarn, and runs from cover to cover. I'm a Scotsman—I'm careful—but it's well worth twopence!

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## CHAPTER 9.

## Tony Settles Down!

**I**N the lobby Handforth & Co. ran across Nipper. Vivian Travers and Jimmy Potts were with him.

"Well?" said Nipper. "What's been happening? Where's the new chap?"

"Can't talk here," said Handforth mysteriously.

They looked at him wonderingly.

"Something funny has happened," said Handforth, when they were all in Study H—Travers having led the way to that apartment, half expecting to find Tony Cresswell there. "You remember those crooks we saw in Bannington?"

"What about them?" asked Nipper.

"You're sure they were crooks?"

"I wouldn't swear to it, of course, but if those men weren't crooks, then I've never seen a wrong 'un in all my life," replied Nipper slowly. "But I don't see—"

"One of them came to the school—and he came to see Cresswell!" said Handforth triumphantly.

"What!"

"I'm pretty sure that Cresswell wasn't expecting him, and luckily I happened to be on the scene—"

"You would be!" said Travers. "But why can't you explain?"

Handforth did so, and the others, hearing the story, were as much mystified as he. But before they could make any comment, the door opened, and Tony Cresswell himself appeared. There was an awkward silence.

"Talking about me, I suppose?" asked Tony quietly.

"Well, yes," said Nipper. "We're a bit worried about you, Cresswell. Was that man threatening you in any way?"

"It's my belief he was going to shoot the chap!" said Handforth, looking at the automatic on the table.

"He dropped that, didn't he?" asked Tony. "Do you mind if I keep it? I want to lock it away in my trunk—as—as a souvenir. And please don't say anything to any of the masters. It's my first day at the school, and I don't want to—"

"We understand," said Nipper. "You can trust us."

"Thanks awfully," said Tony eagerly. "And—and I'd like you to drop the whole matter. I can't explain—I can't tell you anything. Do you mind?"

He was so earnest, his gaze was so frank, that the juniors felt rather awkward.

"Well, of course—" began Handforth. "I mean—" He paused. "We don't want to butt into your affairs, but you

must admit that it's a bit rummy for a new kid to—"

"I know!" interrupted Tony, in a low voice. "But I'll swear to you that I've done nothing dishonest. I believe you think that I'm mixed up with crooks—and I'm not. I tell you, I'm not!" he added fiercely, looking round at the juniors with burning eyes.

"All right, old man—don't get excited," said Nipper. "We believe you."

"First there was that queer-looking mob in Bannington," said Handforth. "As soon as you walked towards them, they bolted. Yet one of the men actually comes here and attacks you—"

"He didn't attack me," said Tony sharply.

"I know he didn't—we didn't give him a chance," nodded Handforth. "But he was going to attack you, my son! Why, he even had that pistol on him."

"I can't understand it," muttered Tony, as though to himself. "It all seems so impossible!" He pulled himself up with a start. "Do you fellows mind dropping the whole subject?" he went on earnestly. "I—I don't think anything else will happen to me. And after to-night I daresay I shall shake down in just the ordinary way. I haven't any right to ask favours of you, but I hope you'll say nothing about what's happened."

Nipper glanced at the others; he could see that Tony Cresswell was distressed.

"Come on, you fellows," he said briskly. "We've got some work to do, haven't we? All right, Cresswell—we don't understand, but one of these days, perhaps, when you know us better, you'll tell us what it's all about."

"Thanks," said Tony gratefully.

Handforth did not quite like being hustled out, but he had no option. Travers and Potts chatted about football, and it wasn't long before Tony was feeling more comfortable. By bedtime, in fact, he had practically recovered his old poise. The next day he was cheeriness itself. A letter had come for him by the morning's post, and he made no secret of the fact that it was from his father. It bucked him up enormously. Nipper and Handforth and the others were beginning to feel vaguely envious of Tony Cresswell. The bond of affection between Tony and his father was something to wonder at.

In all sorts of ways, during that day and the next, the new boy showed that he patterned himself upon his father. Everything that his father did was right; every time that he spoke of his father his eyes glowed. There were some who sneered;

but the majority felt a warm respect for Tony.

He became popular, too. His clever little conjuring tricks—and he was very fond of springing them at unexpected moments—amused and mystified the juniors. He proved to be clever on the football field, too, and it was felt that he would be a useful man in the Remove.

Thus Tony Cresswell settled down—and Saturday came.

—

## CHAPTER 10.

### A Shock for Handforth!

SATURDAY was an important day for the juniors, for there was the St. Frank's League match—away—against Caistowe High School. The fellows were eager to go to Caistowe for another reason; they wanted to catch a glimpse of the wonderful cream-and-gold yacht which was riding at anchor in Caistowe Bay—and which everybody had been talking about.

"I expect it's a lot of hokum," remarked Handforth, as the team started off. "I'll bet the rajah's yacht is just ordinary."

But he was wrong. In the clear sunlight of the bright winter's day, the vessel was like a gem in a setting of blue. Her metalwork shone dazzlingly, her white hull was spotless; gay bunting fluttered between her masts; her single funnel was gold-coloured and it shone and gleamed like burnished metal. The vessel made a superb picture as she lay at anchor in the bay. It was small wonder that people had come from far and near just to stand and look at her.

"By George!" said Handforth grudgingly. "She certainly is a corker!"

"I'll bet she's luxuriously equipped," remarked Church. "A floating palace, eh? I'd give a quid to go aboard."

"You couldn't get aboard for a hundred quid," replied Handforth. "All sorts of people have tried, and they've failed. This rajah is an exclusive sort of blighter; I've heard that he won't invite anybody on to his precious yacht." He shrugged. "But then, of course, you never know with these Indian princes," he added vaguely. "They're rummy merchants, some of them."

"I don't think this particular rajah is rummy," said McClure. "I was talking to Hussi Khan yesterday, and Hussi says that he belongs to the same caste as the rajah. He's one of the richest princes in India—millions and millions, you know. He could have a dozen yachts like this if he wanted to."

"H'm!" said Handforth. "She looks pretty good—but a bit too showy for my liking."

They garaged the Morris Minor in the town—for there was a hint of carburettor trouble, and Handforth thought that it was a good opportunity to have it attended to. It was only a comparatively short walk to the High School playing fields.

Having left the car at the garage, the chums of Study D ran into Travers and Potts and Tony, and they were talking about the rajah's yacht.

"Impossible, dear old fellow," Travers was saying. "Nobody is allowed on board—not even the giddy mayor."

"All the same, if we took a boat out we could get a look at close quarters," said Jimmy Potts. "There's no law against that, I suppose?"

"And no fun in it, either," chuckled Tony Cresswell. "I hear that the rajah has gone to London with all his suite."

But Handforth was not listening; he had seen a figure on the opposite side of the road, and a sudden gleam had entered his eyes.

"Just a minute, you chaps," he said, trying to speak casually.

Church and McClure, as it happened, were watching the movements of a great crane near by, which was hoisting a girder from a motor-lorry. A new building was being erected here, in the heart of the town, and the main street, in consequence, was somewhat disorganised. For trenches were being dug in the roadway, and half the road was barricaded off.

Handforth had gone before Church and McClure realised it; and nobody else took any notice. As a matter of fact, the leader of Study D had caught sight of a man in neat uniform—a man with a brown face. On the instant Handforth had recognised him as the Indian who had spoken so strangely to Tony Cresswell in Bannington.

There was nothing subtle about Handforth; he was ramheaded in all things. He ran up behind the Indian, and suddenly clapped a heavy hand upon the man's shoulder.

"Just a minute!" he said authoritatively.

The result of his action was surprising. The Indian spun round, and like a flash his hand went to an inside pocket. Handforth was horrified to see the thin blade of a gleaming knife pressed against his chest.

"Herc, what the——" he began.

"The young sahib will forgive," muttered the Indian, adroitly slipping the

(Continued on page 24.)

**SPECIAL POETRY NUMBER OF—**



# HANDFORTH'S Weekly

No. 45. Vol. 2.

## POETIC PIFFLE

By  
THE EDITOR.

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Literary Editor	E. O. Handforth
Art Editor	E. O. Handforth
Rest of Staff	E. O. Handforth

February 27th, 1932.

## A SCHOOL MARCHING SONG

(NOTE.—This being a Special Poetry Number, the Editor has written his chat in rhyme, and, as he himself admits that he is not good at verse, you can guess what this is like.)

**N**OW, you chaps, feeling as cool as a cucumber,  
I must admit that this is our Special Poetry Number.  
I can think out jolly fine verses ad infinitum,  
But I'm not so good when I come to write 'em.  
Somehow or other, I can't fit in the metre—  
(The only rhyme I can think of here is "mos-  
quitter.")  
But still, I'm not so bad, and of course a fellow can't be expected to be as good as Chaucer.  
Some fellows have, I know, a tre-  
Mendous gift for writing poetry,  
But I'm really ever so much better at prose,  
As every fellow knows.  
My fine stories of Trackett Grim.  
Showing how burglars have a smack at him,  
Have never jolly well been surpassed  
Or outclassed.  
And I can state without fear of contradiction,  
That they're absolutely pure fiction.  
The Ode I have printed by Guy Pepys (pronounced Peeps)  
Fairly gives me the crepys (pronounced creeps).  
Poets who write those kind of shockers  
Are off their giddy rockers.  
Well, you chaps, good-bye. I mustn't be late for class or Crowell will say, "Boy! Stand forth!"  
And I shall get it hot—

Yours truly,  
E. O. HANDFORTH.

## THE WORLD'S SHORTEST POEM

HIRE D.  
TIRED.  
FIRE D.



(In time of trouble, St. Frank's advances, shoulder to shoulder, to the catchy jingle of this marching song, written one day by William Napoleon Browne.)

**E**AST House! West House!  
Ancient House and Modern!  
Standing side by side  
In unity and pride;  
East House! West House!—  
Feuds are all forgotten!  
In the threatened hour of danger  
We are side by side.  
When our courage calls for spirits of adventure;  
When the risky situation must be met;  
When with courage high and cool,  
We must represent our school,  
Shall we take the coward's method, and  
forget?  
Or shall we brave the certainty of censure  
By those who dare not step into the ring,  
And our life and prospects join  
On the toss of fortune's coin,  
And we jauntily march on, and gaily sing—  
East House! West House!  
Ancient House and Modern!  
All the four are we,  
In splendid unity!  
East House! West House!—  
That is all forgotten  
Before the fact that all St. Frank's  
Is side by side.

## AN ORIGINAL POEM By TEDDY LONG

The cerfyoo tolls the nell of parting day,  
The loing heard winds slowly or the leo,  
The plowman hoamward plods his weery way,  
And leeves the world to—  
(You'll leave the world—suddenly!—if you  
don't stop this original poem. Original, my  
foot! Milton wrote this poem years ago—I  
know that.—E. O. H.)

## CHILDREN'S CORNER

Conducted by  
UNCLE JIMMY POTTS

## NEW NURSERY RHYMES

**L**ITTLE Bo-Peep has gone to sleep  
At the wheel of a motor-car;  
We hope for her sake  
She'll decide to awake  
Before she has gone very far.

Little Miss Muffet sat in the buffet  
Eating some ham and bread;  
But the guard said, " Beg parding !  
Your train is just starting—" —  
She turned (without paying) and fled.

Tom, Tom, the Piper's son,  
Stole a pig and away he run;  
He couldn't go home his pa to meet,  
So he now sells " pipers " in the street.

Hickory, dickory, dock !  
Two cats gave me a shock ;  
But the clock struck one  
And she ran like fun  
As I just caught the other a sock.

The king was in the parlour  
Counting out his money :  
As he was tenpence-halfpenny short  
He thought it rather funny.  
He knew he'd only got a bob  
Before he started on the job,  
And so it didn't take him long  
To guess that there was something wrong.

## OLD SONGS MADE NEW

By HARRY GRESHAM.

## " Widdicombe Fair."

**T**OM PEARCE, Tom Pearce, would you like a nice cake ?  
We've made them ourselves for the villagers' sake" ;  
Said the girls of Moor View as they offered them to  
Bill Brewer, Jan Stewer, Peter Gurney, Peter Davey,  
Dan'l Whiddon, Harry Hawk, and Old Uncle Tom Cobley and all.

" Why, yes," said Tom. " Sure I would !  
Thanks very much ! " —  
And took one with greedy, self-satisfied clutch ;  
The whole bally lot were then scoffed on the spot  
By Bill Brewer, Jan Stewer, etc., etc.

But all of a sudden Tom jumped up and cried,  
" I've a most extraordinary feeling inside" ;  
And, as he said this, he saw something amiss  
With Bill Brewer Jan Stewer, etc., etc.

Tom Pearce then appeared to take leave of his sense,  
For the ache in his pantry was growing intense.  
" I'm poisoned ! " he cried as he dropped by the side  
Of Bill Brewer, Jan Stewer, etc., etc.

They took them to hospital that afternoon ;  
On Tom they are going to operate soon.  
And when he comes through he will call at  
Moor View  
With Bill Brewer, Jan Stewer, etc.

## LIGHT

An Ode by GUY PEPYS.

**S**TARS of eternal night !  
Suns of another noon !  
Depthless water, now reflecting bright  
The unwaning moon !  
Black are the shadows : blacker for the gleaming  
Of a silver-fretted pathway streaming  
Over a wide lagoon.

Low is the voice of night !  
A murmured symphony !  
No chords, no discords, nothing save the right  
Of its own harmony ;  
Yet in its music, a subtle question drumming :  
" Who on this path, this silver path, is coming  
To trace my mystery ? "

Flashes in blackest night !  
Gleams from its silken pall  
Are born and die : the firefly's shotted light  
Lives but to fall ;  
Yet, in the softness of that greater presence,  
Seems by the virtue of its incandescence  
To emphasise the call.

Oh, all-enfolding night !  
Lift but thy veil apart,  
Then, if a human eye may bear the sight,  
I, too, will start,  
On that clear path, to learn by bitter chiding  
The source of light—yes, even thine—is hiding  
In my own heart.

Last verse parodied by Bernard Forrest :—

Oh, idiotic night !  
Lift but thy veil apart—  
Then, if no prowling prefect comes in sight,  
I, too, will start  
On that clear path, to learn, my time abiding,  
The source of winning brass at cards is  
hiding  
In my own art.

## OUR POET'S CORNER



I asked the artist to do an illustration for this feature—and this is what the prize chump did. Of course, I'm rather inclined to agree with him—but the same cannot be said for our tame poets, who are now on the warpath.—E. O. H.

## FURIOS

By REG  
This Week :

**T**HE thrillin  
" So-and-  
Fifty-Nine  
quite easy  
are thinking of w  
school magazine  
you to fashion yo

In the first pla  
invent names of  
You call them b  
quite easy to save  
usually form a litt  
Y. and Z. And  
themselves.

In the second  
of time by statin  
are doing, without  
doing it. For  
begin :

" X carries 183  
well and drops t  
the water—"

In an arithmetic  
trouble to show th  
this, and this is a  
of brain-work. I  
even a first-rate a  
put to it to invent  
X carry 183 brick  
and drop them in  
water.

Again, you can  
do the most ou  
your readers wo  
the least. But th  
all your character  
They must be g

There are no  
world so generou  
arithmetic book.  
instance :

" A has 86  
third of these ar  
mainder to B ;  
left and 8 apples  
of the remainder  
D—"

Hero's generosity  
is pure kindness  
course, A does  
can't be this, be  
he gives all som  
always, of cour  
tions.

Sometimes he  
he does this, he  
awkward fashion  
whether he is ou  
That has to be  
quantities of figur

On looking over  
I use myself, I a  
A who gives the  
always B C and  
These three are e  
friends. When A  
away, he'll lose hi

CTION

ITT.

ramatics.

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s away, and  
o take them.  
y fair-weather  
giving things  
ionate friends.

## HEARTLESS LIMERICKS

By TOMMY WATSON.

**S**AID a famous explorer, "I've learnt  
Of the white men these natives  
have burnt ;  
They've got a bad name,  
But I bet they're quite tame ;  
I will see ! " And he did ! And they  
weren't !

(Shed a tear for him, old beans ; shed a  
tear.)

There was a young fellow of Maine  
Who jumped off the back of a train ;  
I do not know why  
He did it, but I  
Rather think he won't do it again.

(You get these ideas, don't you ? Pre-  
sentiments, they call 'em.)

A certain scholastic professor  
Once stood on his head on the dresser,  
And said to his boys,  
"Look at this ! What a poise ! "  
And they giggled with mirth and said  
"Yessir ! "

(Rather worse than Prof. Tucker was  
this old bean.)

A hare-brained young fathead named  
Paul  
Once dreamt he jumped off the Town Hall ;  
Half-way to the ground,  
He woke up, and found  
That is wasn't a dream, after all.

(Just shows you how careful we should  
be, doesn't it ?)



The last words of Patrick O'Flynn  
Were said with an agonised grin :  
"Next time I'll make sure  
That the lift's at the floor  
When I open the door and step in."

(A jolly good resolution that, don't you  
think ?)

A curious chappie named Frazer  
Objected to wearing a blazer ;  
When they said : "It's the fashion ! "  
He flew in a passion  
And cut up his boots with a razor.

(And quite right, too, if he felt like that.)

A burglar of Upton-cum-Thwaxby—  
(That's enough, that's enough ! You'll  
hurt yourself if you do any more of that  
one.—E. O. H.)

## ROMANCE

A potty poem composed of lines lifted from  
various well-known pieces of poetry by

C. de V.

**A** CHIEFTAIN to the Highlands bound  
Doth walk in fear and dread ;  
The stars that in the heaven abound  
Shone round him o'er the dead ;  
And brightly shone the moon that night  
Like angels' visits, short and bright  
On his devoted head.

"Oh, friends and comrades, tell me true  
Where have they put my bride ;  
Age cannot wither her ; we grew  
In beauty side by side ;  
Oh, gentle shepherd, tell me where ? "  
"None but the brave deserve the fair,"  
The dear old man replied.

"On the banks and braes of Bonnie Doon  
I am monarch of all I survey ;  
I swear by yonder blessed moon  
They've taken my love away ;  
We've cam fra' ben, fra' moor and glen,  
And fifty thousand Cornishmen  
Shall summon their array."

"Who touches hair of yon grey head  
Or harms this maiden fair,  
Dies like a dog ! March on ! " he said,  
And dropped one silent tear ;  
"Tis true, when honour's at the stake,  
Stone walls do not a prison make—  
(Hear, hear, old chap ! Hear, hear !)

Then up rose the Abbot of Aberbrothock,  
For a Titan bold was he,  
And with his sword, born in the rock,  
Won a famous victory ;  
Week in, week out, from morn till night  
Never a moment ceased the fight  
Of the one and the fifty-three.

Evil is wrought by want of thought  
Some morning unaware ;  
And the Abbot had brought his 'beautiful  
daught.

The beautiful—

(ED. : Here, what's all this ? That  
wasn't a line from a poem.

C. de V. : No, Handy, it was not. It was  
a far, far better line than any from a poem.  
I made it up myself.

ED. : Well, you won't make up any  
more. Hop it ! Buzz off ! Vamoose !  
Seat ! Travel ! Jear me ?)

# THE MYSTERY NEW BOY

(Continued from page 20)

knife into his sleeve. "I make the mistake."

Handforth blinked.

"Look here—"

"The young sahib wishes to speak with me?" asked the Indian, staring into Handforth's eyes.

"No! Nun-no!" gasped Handforth. "That is to say—"

He broke off as the man turned on his heel and walked away. Edward Oswald was badly shaken, although he did not like to admit it. The way in which that knife had menaced him made him shiver.

The Indian, unperturbed, walked into the post-office. He entered a telephone booth and gave a Bannington number. The connection was quickly made.

"Monday night, at the twelfth hour," he said briefly.

"Good!" came an eager voice. "You will be ready?"

"You will find me," said the Indian.

"What about his High—"

"Be silent! You are rash," warned the Indian.

"All right. What about the— One?"

"He will not be there," said the brown man.

Without giving the other a chance to question him further, he hung up.

— —

## CHAPTER 11.

### Excitement in Caistowe!

THE match against the High School provided only one or two thrills.

Handforth, still shaken after that remarkable incident, failed to settle down in the early part of the game, and the Caistowe boys scored a quick goal. It was an easy one, too, and the goalkeeper should easily have saved.

"What's the matter with you, Handy?" asked Church and McClure, in one voice.

They were the St. Frank's backs, and Handforth was generally so safe in goal that they were disconcerted.

"Sorry!" gasped Handforth. "I—I didn't see it. I—I mean—I was thinking about something else!"

"That's a fine thing to be doing—when an opposing forward is kicking a goal," said Church witheringly.

After that Handforth bucked up. He was on his mettle now, for he knew that he had let his side down. He had told his chums nothing of that incident, or they would have understood.

Fortunately, Travers scored for St. Frank's soon afterwards, and then Nipper

added another goal. And in the second half the Caistowe boys literally "went to pieces." They failed to stay the course, and the game proved to be an easy victory for the Saints.

Not that there was much credit attached to it. The High School boys were at a great disadvantage, for their regular goalkeeper and two of their best forwards were out of the team on account of illness.

"Well, you licked us pretty easily," said the Caistowe skipper at the end of the game. "Not that we didn't expect you to be all over us."

"In that case, old man, you're not disappointed," said Nipper blandly.

"Yes, we are," said the other. "A chap always hopes for a miracle to happen in football. But you Saints are hot. Well, you ought to be. You're well at the top of the table, and the Championship Cup is as good as yours."

For once Handforth was not noisy. Now that the game was over his mind had gone back to that brown man. And as he couldn't keep a secret, he took Tony Cresswell aside and, with Church and McClure, he described what had happened.

"So that's where you dodged off to?" said Church, staring. "My only hat! Mac and I have only to leave you to yourself for a couple of minutes and you find trouble!"

"Aren't you mistaken, Handforth?" asked Tony, looking worried. "Are you sure that this was the same man? Was he dressed the same?"

"No; he was wearing a sort of uniform, like a steward," replied Handforth. "But he was the same chap—I'd know his face in a thousand. But why should he draw a knife on me?"

"Perhaps he mistook you for me," said Tony quietly.

The same thought had occurred to Church and McClure, but they had not voiced it.

"But why should he draw a knife on you any more than me?" demanded Handforth. "You say that you don't know the man—that you'd never even seen him."

Tony was troubled. That brown man, then, belonged to the rajah's yacht, and in some way he was associated with the four mysterious crooks of the saloon car. And one of those crooks— Tony's thoughts jibbed, and he shook himself.

"There may be nothing in it," he said in a low voice. "These Indians are queer. I expect you startled the man."

"Well, as a matter of fact, I did," admitted Handforth. "He didn't know I was behind him, and I clapped him suddenly on the shoulder. But you ought to have seen the way he spun round!"

"Oh, forget it!" said Church impatiently. "We shall catch cold staying here. Let's go and change."

Later they went into the town to collect the car, and Nipper and Travers and most of the others were there, too. There had been some talk, in fact, of the High School boys treating their conquerors to a feed at the local confectioner's. Naturally, there were plenty of customers.

The St. Frank's fellows, as it happened, arrived at the shop first, and they did not like to go in before their hosts. So they waited outside, interested in the activities of the great crane. There was something fascinating in watching that great steel arm, with its length of steel cable, lifting girders weighing many tons.

A particularly heavy girder was now being raised from a special lorry. With enormous clamps and great chains, the massive girder was attached to the crane cable, and foot by foot it was rising into the air. Crowds of other people had paused to watch.

And then it was that the terrible thing happened.

The first indication that anything was wrong came when the great girder was being swung across the pavement and into the spidery net of steelwork of the half-constructed building. The pavement on this side of the road was, of course, clear of all pedestrians. There came a terrific crack, just as sharp but much louder than a rifle shot, and the vast, towering crane seemed to shudder up and down its entire length!

## CHAPTER 12.

### The Crane Catastrophe!

"WHAT was that?" asked Handforth, staring.

"Something seemed to snap," said Tony quickly.

Nipper was there, too—the three happened to be standing close together. They all stared with sudden alarm at the crane.

Not many people, however, had taken any notice of that strange crack; a heavy steam truck was passing along the road at the time, and it was making a considerable amount of noise. People on the opposite pavements were going about their business normally.

That something was wrong was obvious, for the crane man had immediately stopped the mechanism, and the great girder was now suspended in mid-air. Men were shouting.

"It's nothing," said Tony, after a moment. "I was beginning to think—"

"Look! She's going again," said Handforth.

The crane man had started up; but the girder, instead of rising higher, was now being lowered. After that ominous crack, the man evidently intended to be on the safe side.

"I don't know whether it was the cable or the crane itself," said Nipper. "Of course, that's a terrific load—"

Crack—crack!

This time the sounds were like miniature cannon reports. The boys were thoroughly startled, and many other pedestrians halted in their stride and stared round. A few people cried aloud.

The great crane was quivering, shuddering even, and there came the horrible whine of straining metal.

"Hi! Look out, there!" roared one of the workmen. "She's falling!"

"Oh!"

"Run—run!"

In a second there was wild confusion. Women screamed, children cried in terror; men shouted hoarsely. The St. Frank's fellows, staring up at the crane, saw the whole great structure swaying dangerously.

"Great Scott!" gasped Handforth. "She's going to collapse! Get back you chaps!"

They were in a position of comparative safety, for they could see that the crane, if it fell at all, would crash diagonally into the road—and they were well clear of its path.

The crane man, in a desperate and plucky effort, was letting the girder down with a noisy rush—hoping, by this manoeuvre, to release the great strain. At such a speed the girder would undoubtedly shatter the lorry, but that was of minor importance. The lorry driver, and other workmen, were scattering madly.

It was all happening quickly—and yet, at the same time, there was something hideously slow in the way the great crane staggered to destruction.

"Look out! She's going!" yelled the crane man hoarsely.

With rare courage he stuck to his post—perched up there in his little control-box. Two police constables were shouting a warning, and mercifully it seemed that the road would be clear in the nick of time.

Fascinatedly the boys watched. There was something awful in the way the vast crane-arm sagged slowly forward, and now came a rapid, staccato series of pistol-shots—caused actually, by the snapping of the rivets.

At that dramatic second a man emerged from a shop, twenty paces from where Handforth and Nipper and Tony were standing. He came out briskly, examining a magazine—and, to everybody's horror, he was walking right into the path of the falling tons of metal.

"Back—back!" went up a dozen frantic shouts.

The man looked up, startled. Handforth gulped. He was an Indian—and he was dressed in a steward's uniform. Yet, in that first second, Handforth saw that he was not that other brown man. This fellow had a much more pleasant face.

"Look—the trench!" yelled Nipper. "We can save him! Come on!"

He dashed forward recklessly—thinking only of the steward's appalling danger.

Handforth and Tony Cresswell, understanding in a quick flash what Nipper meant, leapt forward, too. And hurtling down towards them came the collapsing crane.

Really, it was a crazy thing to do—a mad, impulsive juggle with death. Yet, had they hesitated, no power on earth could have saved the Indian from a horribl death.

As one, the three boys hurled themselves at the man. He was bewildered, confused, and even now he did not realise what all the shouting was about.

Crash!

The collision was such that practically all the wind was knocked out of the Indian's body. He and the three boys were sent staggering, and they tumbled in utter disorder into the deep trench which had been dug for the fitting of drains.

Cra-a-a-a-sh!

It was like the end of the world. The three boys, wallowing in thick, clinging mud, heard the screeching shriek of shattering metal.

The very ground shook with the terrible force of the impact; earth came tumbling down upon the boys as they sprawled at the muddy bottom of the trench. Overhead the shattered crane sprawled itself over the trench, and one torn scrap of metal, a foot long, buried itself in the mud not five inches from Nipper's head. Had that piece of steel struck him, he would have been killed on the instant.

And then, following that hideous uproar, came silence. It was a silence so tenso that it was almost as dreadful as the crash itself. But only for a moment. Babel broke forth; shouts and screams and wild cries.

Nipper, looking up, saw a tangle of twisted and wrecked metal overhead, bridging the trench. He also saw that Handforth and Tony and the Indian steward were unharmed. But it had been touch and go during those few hectic seconds.

## CHAPTER 13.

### Heroes of the Hour!

**T**HIE scene, from the road level, was sensational.

The enormous crane-arm had fallen diagonally into the road, and now it lay twisted, battered, and smashed—just a mass of wreckage.

A great section of scaffolding and wooden hoarding had been torn away, and poles and scraps of wood and odd pieces of metal were lying all over the road.

By a miracle, the crane man was not fatally injured. He had jumped at the last moment—after he had done everything in his power. He suffered a broken leg and his skull was slightly fractured.

Several other workmen were injured, too—struck by the falling scaffolding. There were all sorts of casualties, yet mercifully nobody had been killed. Nearly all the injuries were slight.

These details were learned later, of course. At the moment the consternation was great, for most people believed that there had been an appalling tragedy.

Such spectators as Church and McClure, Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West, Travers and Jimmy Potts, were certain that three of their chums had been killed.

For they had seen the plucky action of Handforth and Nipper and Tony; they had seen the three boys dash forward and hurl the Indian steward into the road trench. And after that—

Now there was nothing to be seen but twisted and battered wreckage.

"Handy!" panted Church, white to the lips. "Mac! Did—did you see? Handy's gone!"

"I know!" whispered McClure. "Gone! Nipper, too—and that new chap!"

"They're buried under that pile!"

The two boys ran forward, and they were joined by Travers and Potts and the others. Many of the Caistowe High School boys were running up, too. Workmen were trying to keep them back; policemen were attempting to control the surging crowds.

"Get back, you boys—get back!" ordered one man, who seemed to be in authority. "You'll do no good—"

"You won't keep us back!" panted Church. "Our chum is under this wreckage!"

"Our chum, too!" croaked Tommy Watson. "We're going to find him!"

"Better leave it to us, sonny!" said the man. "Poor beggars! They were mad to run forward like that—"

"They weren't mad!" shouted Church furiously. "I've never seen anything so plucky! They tried to save—"

"All right—all right," said the man. "I know, sonny. But you'll do no good by losing your heads. We'll get your friends out."

He went grey as he spoke. For he, like the others, had forgotten the trench. Everybody believed that there had been a dreadful tragedy.

"Better get your workmen to help us, Mr. Benson," said one of the constables, hurrying up to the man who had spoken to Church and McClure. "We shall have to make a cordon round this place."

"Yes, I know," said Mr. Benson. "Have you sent for the ambulance?"

"Yes—" And then the policeman broke off with a gasp.

A head, tousled and untidy, and a face smothered with mud, poked itself up amid the confusion of twisted metal.

"This is a bit thick!" bawled the head complainingly. "Can't some of you people lend a hand? We can't get out until you help us. Do you think we like wallowing in this filthy mud?"

"Handy!" yelled Church wildly.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Mac. "And—and by the sound of his voice he isn't hurt much."

Very impressive the three St. Frank's boys looked in their Indian attire, although Handforth rather spoilt the effect by tripping over his long flowing robe.



"Hurt?" came Handforth's wrathful voice. "Who said I was hurt? I'm muddy—but that's all."

"Hurrah!" shouted Church. "Oh, thank goodness, Handy! We—we thought—What about the others?"

"Instead of asking silly questions, why don't you lend a hand?" retorted Handforth tartly.

Nothing could stop the boys now. They went scrambling over the broken metalwork, and it was then that they realised the glorious truth. The fallen crane was hiding the narrow trench, and down there, below the road surface, the three boys were safe. The man they had rescued was safe, too.

Handforth, naturally, had acted with his usual impatience. There was no need for the tons of metalwork to be shifted. He and his companions, by crawling along the muddy trench, could easily reach a spot where the trench top was open. And this is what they did.

Cheers rang out when the four of them were seen; eager hands reached down and helped them up. Except for a few bruises, they had come off unscathed, but the fall into the trench had smothered them with

thick, clinging mud. They were sticky and dripping with it. Not that anybody cared. Strangers leapt forward and clapped their muddy backs and grasped their muddy hands.

"The bravest thing I've ever seen!" puffed one stout old gentleman. "Splendid! Wonderful! You boys deserve—"

"Cheese it, sir!" protested Handforth. "We didn't do much—we only pushed this Indian chap into the trench and followed him in."

"If you had hesitated for a split second you would have been killed," said one of the policemen. "And even after you were in the trench there wasn't any certainty that you'd be safe. If one of those girders had fallen in, you would all have been killed."

"But we're not killed," said Nipper cheerily. "Phew! What a mess we're in!"

"And to you I owe my life," said the Indian, his voice low. "I can thank you, yes, but of what use are words? Here"—he hammered his chest—"here I feel it. You save my life, young sahibs."

He stopped abruptly, almost choking. And his schoolboy rescuers felt strangely uncomfortable.

## CHAPTER 14.

## A Surprise for Nipper &amp; Co.

IT was only after a hard tussle with the enthusiastic crowd that the Indian and his muddy rescuers were able to have a breathing space. They found themselves upon the waterfront, and they were surrounded by crowds of other St. Frank's fellows and many of the High School boys. Everybody was excited.

"It is like a dream, young sahibs," said the Indian quietly. "I come from the shop and I hear shouts; but I do not know what they mean. Then you hit me so hard that the breath is taken from me. I think you play the foolish tricks, and I am angry. But then, with the great crash, I know. To save my life you risk your own. For that I owe you an everlasting debt."

There was a refinement about this steward; he was utterly different from the Indian the boys had previously met. He spoke earnestly, and it was clear that his gratitude was genuine.

"I wish you wouldn't say anything more about it," said Nipper awkwardly. "We saw that you were in danger, and we just ran forward—that's all. I'm very pleased to hear that nobody was killed."

"I suppose that great girder was too heavy," said Tony Cresswell.

"I don't think it was that," replied Nipper, shaking his head. "There must have been a flaw in the metalwork of the crane, or its supports."

He looked down at his muddy clothing, and he glanced at his companions. They were all in a terrible mess.

"Well, we shall have to go and clean up," went on Nipper, grinning. "Personally, I'm not feeling very comfortable."

The Indian steward looked at them with sudden interest.

"You have far to go?" he asked.

"Well, St. Frank's is two or three miles away—"

"I am the fool!" said the Indian, with deep annoyance. "In five minutes we can be aboard the yacht. You will come? The launch is waiting, young sahibs. You come aboard, and there you quickly have the hot bath."

"That's very kind of you," said Tony awkwardly. "But we're hardly in a fit state to go aboard that fine yacht. Besides, what would the officers say?"

"The officers, they will understand—I will tell them what you have done," said the Indian. "You come?" he added eagerly. "You will, yes? You must."

"But the rajah mightn't like it," said Handforth. "He's away—"

"His Highness will not object, young sahibs," said the steward.

There were a few idlers standing by, and they heard the steward's words. The other boys were interested, too. They all moved

down towards the quay, where a beautiful cream-and-gold launch was waiting.

"These are your friends?" asked the Indian, glancing at his muddy rescuers.

"Yes, most of them," replied Nipper. "All right, you chaps—we'll come ashore as soon as we've got cleaned up a bit. Perhaps you'd better not wait."

"But how are Mac and I to get home?" asked Church. "He brought us in his car, you know. We'll wait for him."

Tregellis-West and Watson promised to wait for Nipper; and Travers and Potts said that they would wait for Tony. The Indian steward smiled, and his face became very pleasant.

"If you will wait, then you will come aboard," he said. "Here, it is cold. I will make it right with the officers. After what you have done for me, they will not raise the objection."

Church and McClure and the others were keen enough. Thus, when the launch sped away from the quay, it carried a big load of passengers. The other fellows were somewhat envious.

A mist was creeping over the bay as the launch drew alongside the luxury yacht. Neatly-attired sailors were standing at the top of the accommodation ladder; two officers were also there, and the boys were surprised to see that these were white men—Britishers.

"That's done it!" murmured Nipper. "I shouldn't be surprised if we're turned back. This steward hasn't any real authority to invite us aboard."

But the Indian was the first up the ladder, and before he reached the deck he was talking rapidly in his own tongue. When the boys stepped aboard the officers were regarding them curiously.

"You are very welcome, my young friends," said the elder of the uniformed men. "I am Captain Allister, in command of this yacht. I would like to add my personal gratitudo for your fine and noble act."

"Why, that's—that's all right, sir," said Nipper, flushing. "I expect that man exaggerated."

The steward had hurried away.

"No, he does not exaggerate," said Captain Allister quietly. "He has told me of your bravery. You saved him from certain death, and the freedom of this yacht is yours."

"But that steward—" began Handforth.

"Steward!" interrupted Captain Allister, a sharp note coming into his voice. "Even were that so, your act of bravery would be none the less noteworthy. You saved the life of His Highness, knowing nothing of his rank; you saved him because he was a fellow human being in danger."

"His—his Highness?" stammered Nipper.

"You didn't know, did you?" asked the captain kindly. "Yes, my boys. You have saved, not a steward, but His Highness, the Rajah of Ghar Kohat!"

## CHAPTER 15.

## An Invitation From His Highness!

BEFORE the amazed and startled boys could offer any comments, they were taken in charge by a veritable army of Indian servants; they were escorted below, and they were treated like honoured guests in a magnificent palace. They felt as though they had been suddenly transported into the "Arabian Nights."

It was all very amazing.

The revelation had come to them as a shock. They could hardly believe that the "steward" was, indeed, the rajah himself. But they hadn't much time to ponder over this subject.

The three rescuers were taken below to some superbly appointed marble bath-rooms, where the fittings appeared to be of solid silver. The other boys, almost overawed, were taken below to a lounge, where their feet sank into deep carpets, where they sat upon silken-covered divans, and where the lights were soft and beautiful, and the air delightfully warm and delicately perfumed.

Presently, attired in rich robes, Nipper and Handforth and Tony made their appearance. Handforth literally tripped on to the scene, treading upon the long flowing robes he wore, and nearly coming a cropper. The three boys had cleaned themselves up, and in their unusual attire they looked rather impressive. The others, surveying them incredulously, didn't know whether to grin or not.

"Ye gods and little fishes!" said Nipper. "We shall wake up soon, you chaps!"

"It's—it's like a giddy fairy tale!" said Handforth breathlessly. "We've been waited upon hand and foot—natives have bagged our clothes, and I understand that they're going to be cleaned—the clothes, not the natives."

"It beats me!" said Tony Cresswell helplessly.

He looked about him in wonder as did the others. They had seen many beautifully-appointed rooms, but this lounge almost took their breath away. Every part of the yacht, in fact, was rather unbelievable. By merely coming below from the deck, the boys had been transported, as though by magic, from the chill of an English winter evening to the exotic glories of the East. The very electric light, the source of it cunningly concealed, filled the lounge with an artificial Eastern sunshine.

And then came the man they had rescued. The change in him was startling. He was no longer dressed in a steward's uniform, but in rich Eastern robes. A turban sat somewhat jauntily on his head.

"Splendid!" he said cheerily. "Make yourselves thoroughly at home, my children! The yacht's yours! Feeling better, eh? I can give you my word I'm glad to get rid of that infernal mud."

The juniors could only gape. Not only was the man different in appearance, but he now spoke perfect English. His eyes were twinkling with kindly contentment; but suddenly the amusement died out of them.

"I'd like to tell you just what I feel," he went on quietly. "I can never repay you, of course, for what you did. If there is anything I can do for you, just say the word. I don't want to insult you by suggesting a reward—"

"We wouldn't hear of it, sir," put in Nipper quickly. "If you really want to do us a good turn, please don't mention that incident again."

"And that goes for me, too, sir," said Handforth gruffly.

"I thought you were that kind," said the rajah, nodding, his eyes kindly. "Sorry, old fellows. I won't offend again. But you will make yourselves at home, won't you?"

They seated themselves, and he nodded sympathetically.

"Afraid to sit down properly, eh?" he said. "I don't blame you. I feel that way myself. I hope you don't think that I like all this beastly display of wealth. Personally, my tastes are quite simple. But, in India, I'm accounted to be rather a big bug. This sort of lavishness is expected of me. Supposing we get out of here? Let's be thoroughly comfortable, eh?"

The rajah led the way out of the exotic lounge, and the boys were further astonished to find themselves in a simply furnished apartment which resembled the library of an old country house. There were some comfortable chairs, a quiet mahogany desk, with an electric standard table-lamp, and mahogany bookcases in harmony with the rest of the furniture. A quiet, dignified room, and startlingly different from the rest of the yacht.

"Now we can breathe," said the rajah, smiling. "This is my own little private den—and I may as well inform you that you are the first strangers who have ever entered it."

"We don't understand even now, sir," said Handforth. "I mean, we thought you were a steward—"

"I'm supposed to be in London, with the rest of my suite," explained the rajah. "But, as I think I have often hinted, I am not over fond of pomp and display. You see, I have someone—a grand vizier sort of chap—who takes my place for the edification of the crowd. My own tastes are more simple. I frequently go ashore, dressed as a steward, and wander about sight-seeing. You may not believe it, but I'd rather be an ordinary human being than a rajah. Being stared at is not particularly entertaining."

Perhaps it was a hint, for the boys were staring at him open-eyed; but he had succeeded in putting them at their ease, and they all grinned with full understanding.

WITHOUT question, his Highness the Rajah of Ghar Kohat was a man first and a potentate afterwards.

The boys liked him immensely. The more they got to know him, the more they admired him. His free and easy talk, his ready smile, captivated them. He was, in very truth, a corker.

## "THE FIGHTING MIDDY." A stirring story of the Navy.

Something very like magic was performed aboard that yacht, for within half an hour Nipper and Handforth and Tony were able to don their own suits again—and those suits were not only cleaned, but beautifully pressed and almost like new. After they had dressed they felt very much better.

They were beginning to realise, too, the service they had rendered. For, in saving the life of the Rajah of Ghar Kohat, they had done something rather sensational.

The rajah was a very important Indian potentate, and his presence, at a great State function in London, was of vital importance—not only to the people of his own state, but to the peace of India itself.

He was a young man, but he was a man of fabulous wealth, a man, moreover, with almost incalculable power and influence. He was one of Britain's staunchest friends, as his father and his grandfather had been before him.

"I was thinking of running up to London to-morrow," he said suddenly. "But there's really no reason why I should go, and I'd rather stay here, to tell you the truth. I am not required—officially—for another week or two. I wonder if you youngsters would honour me by coming to a little informal party? You and your friends—as many friends as you like to bring, eh? Will you come? To-morrow night, say?"

"Thanks awfully, sir," chorused the eager boys.

"Can't make it to-morrow night, sir," said Nipper. "It's Sunday."

"So it is," agreed the rajah. "Well, Monday evening, then? I'll tell you what. I'll come along to your school now, and have a little talk with your headmaster. Leave it to me. I'll fix it up. If you can let me know how many of you there will be, I'll make all the arrangements. We'll have quite a jolly time."

The rajah was as good as his word, too. He not only accompanied the boys back to St. Frank's, but he even rode in Handforth's Morris Minor, and thoroughly revelled in the novelty of it. He, who usually rode in a magnificent Rolls-Royce, found untold pleasure in that ride in a baby car.

The news of the rescue, of course, had reached St. Frank's long before the return of the boys themselves; but nobody had known of the real identity of that "steward." When the tale got about, the whole school was agog.

The rajah spent a very happy hour with Nelson Lee, and such was his eloquence that the famous detective-headmaster readily consented to the suggested dinner-party for the Monday evening.

When the news of this got about the rest of the school was openly envious. Everybody wanted to go to that party, but Nipper thought it only right to confine it to a limited number. It seemed fair and just to him that



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.

### HE'D STAY IN BED.

**Grandfather:** "Well, Jackie, what would you like for your birthday present?"

**Jackie:** "Buy me a telephone, so that I can answer teacher's questions without going to school."

(R. Warren, "Stanley Villa," Bredfield Road, Woodbridge, has been awarded a handsome watch.)

### SEZ JIMMY.

Master (teaching class the alphabet): "What comes after 'O'?"

**Jimmy (a film fan):** "Yeah!"

(B. Hughes, 10, Council House, Sawtry, nr. Peterborough, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

### NO WONDER.

**Old Gent:** "You seem to have seen better days, my man. Have you any friends?"

**Tramp:** "No, sir. I was a football referee."

(E. Bourner, Back Cottage, Cross Oaks, Barnet, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

### SUCH ELOQUENCE!

**Lawyer:** "Are you sure that defendant is the man who stole your car?"

**Plaintiff:** "Well, I was until you cross-examined me, and now I don't believe I ever had a car."

(H. Faulkner, 15, Montpelier Road, Birmingham, has been awarded a penknife.)

### S-CANDLE-LOUS!

**Mistress:** "How came that horrid greasy mess in the oven, Bridget?"

**Bridget:** "Why, the candles fell into some water, and I put 'em in the oven to dry."

(F. Trinder, Spinner Piece, Bagley Wood, nr. Oxford, has been awarded a penknife.)

### WHAT LUCK.

A sportsman and his game-keeper were discussing the day's sport.

"Well sir," said the keeper, "we've been wonderfully lucky, I reckon."

"Lucky!" exclaimed the sportsman. "Why, I've only shot one partridge."

"Yes, but you haven't shot me, nor the dog!" replied the keeper contentedly.

(S. Plumb, Blackmore End, Braintree, has been awarded a penknife.)

the members of the Junior XI should be the guests, with a few special friends as make-weight. Tony Cresswell went, of course, and such stalwarts as Archie Glenthorne, Hussi Ranjit Lal Khan, Travers, and Potts.

The young guests themselves were overjoyed, although they were inclined to feel a bit uncomfortable about it. They could not help thinking that the rajah had invited them as some sort of repayment for the service they had done. But this was not the case. The genial Indian potentate was genuinely bored, and the idea of entertaining a number of lively schoolboys appeal to him strongly.

As he pointed out to them, when they came aboard that memorable Monday evening, he was utterly selfish in the matter. Whatever pleasure they were getting out of this party, he was getting at least double as much. Thus he made them thoroughly comfortable.

The dinner was a great success, and the young guests, some of whom had been expecting all manner of queer Indian dishes, were relieved and delighted to find that the food was thoroughly and delightfully British.

There was no ostentation, either. Their host treated them as his equals, and he was so genial, so care-free, that they grew to like him more and more. In a word, they had a fine old time.

The hours fled rapidly—all too rapidly—and almost before they were aware of it, it was time for them to go ashore. Naturally, they

had permission to be out two hours later than usual. It was understood that everything would be all right if they arrived back at the school at eleven o'clock.

At ten-thirty they suddenly realised that it was time for them to be making a move; but the rajah, who had been on deck, now returned to the saloon smiling with great cheeriness.

"Good!" he said, his eyes twinkling. "A most impenetrable fog has come in from the Channel. Can't see a hand in front of your face on deck."

"By Jove! Really, sir?" asked Nipper.

"Come and see for yourselves," invited the host.

The boys soon saw; the yacht was wrapped in a dense white pall. It clung to the sides of the ship like a blanket, and no sign of the water was visible.

"I suppose the launch can get to the quay all right, sir?" asked Handforth.

"You suppose wrong, my lad," replied the rajah coolly. "It can't do anything of the sort. Or if it could, I'm not going to chance it. No; you can't go ashore to-night. You're staying here—and that being the case, we can take things very easily and enjoy ourselves for another hour."

The guests were startled.

"But—but we've promised to be back, sir," said Nipper earnestly.

### HE DIDN'T CARE.

Father: "You lazy, good-for-nothing scamp! You don't know which side your bread is buttered."

Son: "What's the odds? I eat both sides."

(G. Ellis, 112, Baldow Road, Chelmsford, has been awarded a penknife.)

### FORCE OF HABIT.

Tram Inspector: "Are you aware that none of the passengers upstairs has a ticket?"

Conductor (new to the job): "Bless my soul, that's through living in a bungalow. I'm not used to going upstairs."

(E. Rowlands, 15, Viola Street, Bootle, Liverpool, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

### METHOD IN HIS MADNESS.

Neighbour: "Why are you painting one side of your car red and the other side blue?"

Speed Fiend: "It's a fine idea! When I appear in court for speeding, you should just hear the witnesses contradicting one another."

(D. Jones, 12, Keyes Avenue, Rosebank, Johannesburg, S. Africa, has been awarded a useful prize.)

### PARTING DEPARTED.

Two bluebottles alighted on the head of a shopkeeper who was very nearly bald.

"Believe me or not," said one reminiscingly, "when I was a lad there was only a footpath across here."

(J. Whittle, Village Hall, Knotty Ash, Liverpool, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

### THE PROFESSOR WAS RIGHT.

Professor (running his hands over Tommy's head): "This is the bump of inquisitiveness."

Tommy (ruefully): "I know. I was peeping into Sammy Green's desk yesterday, and the lid fell on my head."

(J. Gibson, Police Station, Askev Road, Shepherd's Bush, London, W.12, has been awarded a penknife.)

### PARTLY CORRECT.

The teacher was explaining that most forms of life are associated with a particular substance or object.

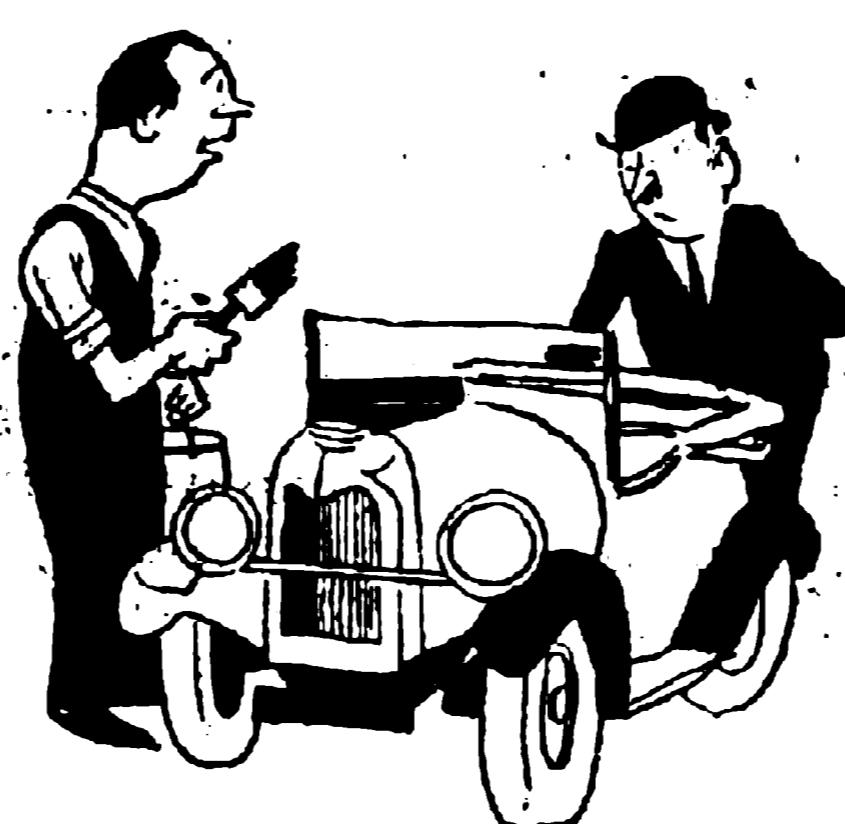
"For instance," he said, "you find plants where there is soil, birds where there are trees, and so on. Now, can anyone tell me what is usually associated with fish?"

Instantly a hand shot up in the back row.

"Yes, Willie?" asked the teacher encouragingly.

"Chips!" was the prompt reply.

(A. Cooke, "Alanco," 93, Scotchmer Street, Melbourne, Australia, has been awarded a useful prize.)



"That's all right," grinned his Highness. "I made arrangements with Mr. Lee. If there was any fog, I'd keep you aboard until morning, and he said that that would be quite all right. Well, you can't go ashore in this, can you? Burrrrrh! Come along inside—you'll sleep aboard to-night, and you can trust me to get you back to the school to-morrow morning just in time to miss your morning lessons!"

"I say, sir, you're the real goods!" said Handforth heartily.

And all the other young guests agreed with him.

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## CHAPTER 16.

### Thieves in the Night!

**F**OUR men waited in the fog.

They were seated in a big saloon car, and the car was parked on the grass verge in a lonely lane on the outskirts of Caistowe. The time was eleven-thirty.

"Curse this fog!" said one of the men, for the tenth time.

"You make me tired, Dan," said one of the others impatiently. "The fog will help us. The thicker it gets, the better."

"And how d'you think we shall find that blamed yacht?" demanded the first man. "We're no sailors. And what about that bird, Jehan?"

"He fixed it, didn't he? He'll be on the look-out at midnight."

But here, as the four men were soon to find out for themselves, a hitch was to occur. Jehan, the steward—and he was a real steward—had been in the pay of these crooks even before the yacht left India. Owing to the vessel being under repair, he and some other members of the crew had been granted leave over the week-end.

Jehan, therefore, knew nothing of the presence of the St. Frank's boys aboard the vessel, and thus he had been unable to warn the four. Furthermore, he had been unable to get aboard, owing to the fog. In just the same way, he did not know how to get in touch with the men who were relying upon him.

These men, let it be said, were international crooks.

They had trailed half across the world in order to bring off the biggest coup of their careers. There had been three of them at first—three hardened criminals, men of the world, men who had each served long sentences at various periods of their lives.

There was Dan Mason, lean, saturnine, very dapper, and wearing gold-rimmed spectacles. Dan was a specialist in precious stones, for in younger life he had been employed by a firm of manufacturing jewellers; he could tell poor quality stones from good ones almost by sense of touch.

Then there was Ambrose Bliss, stoutish, complacent, and smiling—but one of the most dangerous men outside of prison. A gunman, a safe-breaker, and a "con" man.

The third was Gyp Bertelli, a dark, sallow-skinned rascal, well known in the underworld of Chicago; a man who had been driven out of that particular racket by rivals who had attempted to kill him. Bertelli had influential friends in high places—he knew all the best "fences"—that is to say, receivers of stolen property.

They had made their first attempt to rob the rajah in Eastern waters, but had been compelled to throw it up. When the vessel had called at Marseilles, they had tried again. Here they had fallen in with "Red" Kress, a crook of international notoriety. And such was Kress' personality that he had virtually become the leader of the gang. Clever as Dan Mason was at opening safes, he was a novice in comparison with Red Kress.

They had taken Kress in eagerly; for they knew well enough that the safe aboard the rajah's yacht was a veritable strong-room. It would require the keenest of brains, the most delicate of hands, to conquer that safe.

The prize was worth waiting for—nothing less than the historic "Green Stars of Ghar."

For centuries back these marvellous emeralds had been in the possession of the Rajahs of Ghar Kohat. The emeralds were reputed to be worth a cool million, if not more.

Only twice before had the renowned emeralds left India—once when the present rajah's grandfather had made a State visit to England, and once when his father had done so. The present rajah—Prince Gartama Asoka—was obliged, by a time-honoured custom of the family, to wear the emeralds upon the occasion of his State visit to his Sovereign.

**R**ED KRESS, tall and energetic, opened one of the doors of the car and stepped out.

"Come on, boys," he muttered. "Let's go." But he turned back before the others could get out. "There's just one thing," he added, and his voice was tense. "I'm not standing for any gun-play. Get that, and button it up!"

"Seems to me, Red, you say a whole lot too much," growled Bliss. "This is our racket, and we're running it how we please."

"Your job is to open that safe when we get to it," added Dan Mason. "And if we grab the emeralds, we split four ways."

"I'm not arguing about how we split," retorted Kress impatiently. "What you birds don't understand is that this job is soft."

"Soft!" sneered Bertelli. "Where do you get that stuff from? You haven't seen that safe!"

"There's not a safe built that I can't open," said Red curtly. "I can get inside this blamed thing with a can-opener! Half the crew is away, and so is the rajah and all his suite. I tell you, boys, it's soft picking, and this fog makes the whole game just jam."

"I don't get it," growled Dan. "That nigger guy, Jehan, tells us that the stuff is still aboard—that it won't be shifted until the yacht gets into London. Strikes me as queer

Handforth whipped the mask off the cracksmen's face. "Dad!" exclaimed Tony Cresswell, gazing at the prisoner in horror.



that the rajah didn't take the family jewels along with him."

"These birds get careless," said Kress impatiently. "Besides, he figures they're safer aboard the yacht. Maybe he's right—and maybe he isn't. Anyway, go easy on the gunplay."

They stole off into the mist.

They had chosen this spot well, for the lane led in an almost straight line to a side-turning which was really a track down to the beach.

The beach, on this side of Caistowe, was a barren, deserted wasteland. There were practically no cliffs here, as on the other side of the town--just a wilderness of shingle, with wind-swept marshes and a weather-beaten hut or two, which, during the summer months, were used by bathers.

"Looks like we'll have to give it up," muttered Gyp nervously.

They had reached the beach, and the mist was utterly impenetrable. They could hear the breaking of the waves, ghostly and mysterious, close at hand.

"Come on!" said Ambrose Bliss. "We'll never have another chance like this. I reckon half the remaining crew went ashore this evening, and they were unable to get back. We'll have the yacht to ourselves."

"Sure!" muttered Gyp. "But I guess we've got to find the blamed thing first."

"Not so much talking," said Red Kress. "Here's the boat, just as we arranged. Get in, boys."

The boat had been easy to find. The rowlocks were not only oiled, but muffled. The boat, when it was pushed into the calm sea, made scarcely a sound. And now even Kress himself was anxious.

He was the first to admit that this was very much like a game of hide-and-seek. It would be very easy for them to lose their bearings, and then their plight would not be pleasant. It was quite possible, in fact, that they would row aimlessly about throughout the whole night.

But Kress, far more than the others, possessed an uncanny sense of direction. His hearing, too, was amazingly acute. Every now and again he commanded the men at the oars to cease pulling while he listened.

Far away, vague and indistinct, could be heard the fog signal on the Shingle Lighthouse. Near at hand came the tolling of the bell-buoy, which marked the harbour entrance. It served as an excellent guide. Red Kress was placing all his faith in that bell-buoy. For he knew that the rajah's yacht was moored midway in the bay.

Suddenly, unexpectedly, vague lights, yellowish in the mist, loomed up near the little rowing-boat. They seemed to hover in mid-air overhead.

"Steady, boys—steady!" whispered Kress tensely. "I reckon we've found her."

There wasn't a doubt of it. A wall seemed to rise up before the boat, and the men soon recognised it as the hull of the yacht. Lights were gleaming from some of the ports overhead. As the little boat crept noiselessly along, the men distinctly heard the clanging of a bell, a voice giving an order, followed by the tramping of feet.

"Couldn't have timed it better," whispered Red exultantly. "It's just midnight, boys! That nigger will be on the watch for us, and he'll be ready with the rope."

But Red was wrong.

The brown-skinned steward they had bribed so heavily was not in evidence. They cruised silently up and down, they passed under the stern, and came round to the starboard side. Still there was no whisper from the deck above.

In this way twenty precious minutes slipped past—twenty anxious, feverish minutes.

"The fool!" muttered Ambrose Bliss. "He's given us up, I expect—he reckoned that we shouldn't come in this fog. What are we to do?"

"Get aboard without him," said Gyp fiercely. "There's the ladder, isn't there?"

"Yes—and a man on guard at the top, perhaps," breathed Dan nervously. "We decided against that way—"

"I guess we'll have to chance it," said Red Kress, between his teeth. "Curse that nigger! Well, what's it to be, boys? Shall we take the chance?"

The others did not hesitate. There was to be no turning back now.

## CHAPTER 17.

### Uninvited Visitors!

"THIS," said Archie Glenthorne with serene contentment, "is my dashed idea of Paradise, what? I mean to say, who wouldn't be a rajah?"

Archie was gracefully wallowing in the softest bed it had ever been his fortune to encounter; the sheets were of silk, and the pillows were dreams of softness.

"It seems a shame to sleep in such beds," said Tommy Watson, awed.

"Good gad! I'm going to ask the jolly old rajah for the name of his house furnisher," said Archie firmly. "I'll have one like this at St. Frank's, what?"

There were four of the unexpected guests in this particular state-room—Nipper, Tregellis-West, and Watson, with Archie Glenthorne thrown in as make-weight. There were two of the luxurious beds, and, although they were really single beds, the boys had assured his Highness that they would prefer to sleep in this way.

"I mean, it's a bit thick," said Nipper afterwards to the fellows. "We should have used up half the state-rooms, and it's not worth it for a single night."

"Thank goodness that fog came up!" said Watson. "Move over, Archie!"

"Eh? What?" ejaculated Archie, opening his eyes. "You don't mean—Odds rot and piffle! You don't want to get into this bed, do you?"

"Think I'm going to sleep on the floor, fathead?"

Archie moved over reluctantly, and Tommy revelled in the glories of the silken sheets.

## COMING NEXT WEDNESDAY!



The state-room itself was in harmony with the bed; it was the very last word in luxury.

In the other state-rooms, Handforth & Co., Tony Cresswell, Travers, and the rest were also having the time of their lives. It was late—practically midnight—but they regarded the whole affair as a glorious lark.

For their host, with twinkling eyes, had assured them that there would be no rising bell. They would not be awakened until about nine o'clock, and then a big breakfast would be awaiting them in the dining-saloon. After that he would take them for a little cruise in his private motor-boat—a speed craft—and then he would motor them all over to the school in time for dinner. The programme was not only gilt-edged, but jewelled in every hole.

"And the rajah will make everything all serene with the Head," grinned Handforth happily. "It only shows you, my sons, that virtue has its own reward."

There can be such a thing as too much comfort. The boys found this out when they attempted to get to sleep. Perhaps they were excited over the events of the evening, and because of the prospects for the morning. Anyhow, sleep did not come to them all.

Archie Glenthorne, of course, dropped off at once—he could sleep anywhere, at any hour of the day or night. But Nipper, at least, found himself very wakeful.

He had no idea of the exact time, but he

was telling himself that he must have been dreaming, when he stiffened.

Something, he was sure, had momentarily scraped against the door, and he felt, rather than heard, stealthy footsteps. A shadow of annoyance passed over Nipper's face.

"Dash it, this is a bit thick," he muttered. "I'll bet that's Handforth! He ought to have more sense than to prowl about after we're all supposed to be in bed."

So convinced was he that some of the other juniors were taking advantage of the situation to play some sort of rag, that he slipped out of bed and went to the door. Noiselessly he opened it, and peeped out. Then he jumped.

For he was just in time to see two limp legs being dragged out of sight through a narrow doorway, some distance down the corridor.

"What the dickens—"

Nipper pulled himself up. Some instinct, perhaps, warned him. He had seen that the legs were in uniform. One of the sailors! But what had happened to the man? Why was he being dragged in that fashion? And there had been something strangely limp about the legs.

Before Nipper could come to any decision, a fresh situation arose. A figure appeared in sight, followed by another. As silently as a cat, Nipper backed into his cabin, closing the door till only a tiny slit remained.

His heart was thudding. For a moment he believed that he must be dreaming, after all. This thing was fantastic!

The two men he saw were dressed in heavy, dark overcoats; one man was tall and slim, and the other was stoutish. They wore hats pulled over their faces—and their faces were heavily masked!

## CHAPTER 18.

### Tony's Secret!

ONLY for a moment did the two men show themselves; then they turned off round a bend of the corridor.

Nipper waited for some minutes, but nothing happened. Complete silence reigned.

He tried to think of some logical explanation. Perhaps, after all, it was some silly jape—some of the fellows dressed up. But that idea he dismissed at once. Those two figures he had seen were far too tall for schoolboys. And he remembered, too, the man who had been dragged through the narrow doorway.

Nipper hesitated no longer. He crept out of the state-room, padded softly down the carpet, and reached the narrow doorway—which was, in fact, the entrance to a bath-room. He softly opened the door and peered in. The bath-room was in darkness, and no sounds came to his ears.

"Funny!" muttered Nipper.

He felt round for the switch, and found it at once. He pressed it down—and then he had some difficulty in keeping back the cry

## "THE RAJAH'S SECRET!"

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Gleaming, glittering jewels—worth a king's ransom. At Glenthorne Manor, the rajah proudly shows them to his schoolboy friends of St. Frank's.

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## "ORDER IN ADVANCE!"

thought it must be about twelve-thirty. The yacht, in the main, was sound asleep. Naturally, there were no officers on the bridge; no officers on duty at all. There was a watchman, perhaps, but his work would be a mere matter of form on such a night as this. Now and again, perhaps, he would walk round the deck.

Nipper heard the steady breathing of his companions; the lights had been extinguished. He dozed himself; he felt himself dropping off into a perfect sleep—

Then suddenly he was wide awake.

He did not know why, but he seemed to have an impression that he had heard a strange thud. The sound had come from the carpeted corridor outside. He raised his head, listening, but there was no sound now. He

which arose in his throat. For there, stretched on the floor, was the uniformed figure of one of the yacht's white officers!

One look at the unfortunate man's face was enough. He was as pale as death. Nipper dropped on his knees beside the man, and he was relieved to find that he was breathing regularly, if faintly. On the top of his head there was a terrible bruise. He had been bludgeoned!

It was a startling discovery, and Nipper knew, in that second, that he had made no mistake about the masked men.

"Great Scott!" he ejaculated, aghast.

For two thoughts had occurred to him, one tumbling on the top of the other. And Nipper, let it be remembered, was no ordinary schoolboy. He had been trained by Nelson Lee, and his mind was unusually acute—particularly in regard to all matters connected with crime.

The first thought that came to him was of a saloon car, drawn up against the kerb near the Wheatsheaf Hotel in Bannington. He remembered those four men—men whom he instinctively knew to be crooks.

And he also remembered the brown-skinned man who had entered the Wheatsheaf first. Even at that time, the boys had hazarded a guess that the brown man had come from the rajah's yacht. There was some sort of connection there! That man had had an appointment at the Wheatsheaf with those four crooks of the saloon car!

The second thought which raced through Nipper's mind was connected with the rajah himself. Not two hours ago, his Highness had been talking animatedly of the wonderful "Green Stars of Ghar," which were on this very yacht—locked away in the vessel's strong-room! The fabulous emeralds of Ghat Kohat!

Nipper's heart thumped. Why, it was simply a matter of adding two and two together and making four! A member of the crew had been bribed, and he had helped the four crooks to get aboard.

Nipper did not hesitate. He saw that he could do nothing for the unfortunate officer; he also saw that the man would come to no harm if he was left for a short while. There was something more important to be done.

Nipper opened one of the state-room doors, crept in, and closed the door behind him. He switched on the lights. In the beds were Handforth, Church, McClure and Reggie Pitt. He awakened them all.

"Get up, you chaps," he whispered tensely. "Don't trouble to dress! Come out—all of you."

"What--what's happened?" gasped Handforth, starting up. "Are we sinking, or something?"

"No, ass! There are burglars aboard!" hissed Nipper.

"What!"

"For goodness' sake, keep your voices down," warned Nipper. "Stay here a minute—I'll soon be back."

He was as good as his word, and when he returned he brought with him Travers, Potts,

Tony Cresswell, Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West.

In a few brief words Nipper explained what he had found—and what he had seen.

"It's as certain as sunlight," he said. "Those crooks are after the rajah's emeralds. Come on, you chaps! We can't waste time in awakening the rajah—we don't even know where he sleeps. But we do know where the strong-room is."

"But——" began Tony.

"While we're standing here talking, those scoundrels might be getting away with the emeralds," interrupted Nipper. "Come on—all of you! And, remember, not a sound until I give the word."

They crept out, very excited and thrilled. It was fortunate, indeed, that the rajah had shown them the situation of the vessel's strong-room. It was on the next deck, lower down, and it opened out from the yacht's library. The rajah had very proudly shown the boys the cunning way in which a great picture concealed the safe door.

Like shadows they crept down the wide, ornamental stairway to the next deck. They reached the library. Nipper in advance. Everything was dark here—everything was quiet and shut up for the night.

"Are you sure——" began Handforth.

"Hush! They might hear us!" warned Nipper, gripping Handforth's arm.

He felt, rather than saw, his way. There was a door on the other side of the library—the door which led into the apparently innocent reading-room which really contained the safe.

Nipper decided to take a chance. It was, indeed, the only thing to be done. With a sudden bound he reached the door and flung it open.

Startled exclamations sounded; for a moment the boys saw the scene clearly. Three men with powerful electric torches crouched near the safe—which was fully exposed, the picture having been drawn aside. And kneeling before the safe was another man, also masked, and in his hand he held a curious-looking tool which gleamed dully.

"On them!" yelled Nipper, at the top of his voice. "Hi! Help!"

The surprise for the four crooks was absolute. Until this second they had not suspected the presence of these boys aboard. Curses sounded, the electric torches were snapped off—and then, suddenly, came a lurid blaze and a deafening report.

"Drop!" gasped Nipper. "They're shooting!"

There was utter confusion. Furniture crashed over, and men muttered savagely. The boys yelled to give the alarm.

A door crashed open on the farther side of the reading-room, and the sound of stumbling footsteps came. There was a companionway there, leading up to the next deck. Two of the men were escaping; the boys, utterly reckless, gave chase. By now shouts could be heard from the deck above.

Nipper found himself grappling with somebody, but his opponent wriggled free.

He heard Handforth's voice, and then Travers' voice. They were struggling. Then came a crash.

"Quick! We've got him!" gurgled Handforth. "We've got him down! Lend a hand here, you chaps."

Nipper leapt, and he heard Tony Cresswell's voice, too. Four or five of the boys, at least, had got the man down, and were holding him. The rest were in full chase after the other crooks.

"Lights!" exclaimed Nipper.

Somebody—it turned out to be Church—found a switch, and he pressed it down. Soft lights flooded the room; and on the floor, with boys swarming over him, was one of the crooks.

"Got him!" gloated Handforth, breathlessly. "It was I who tripped him up, you chaps! By George, he's masked, too!"

With one wrench he tore off the mask, revealing the man's face. Tony Cresswell uttered a hoarse, strangled cry—a cry of horror and agony.

"Dad!" he exclaimed.

And the man on the floor was "Red" Kress!

## CHAPTER 19.

### For His Father's Sake!

"RED" KRESS regarded Tony Cresswell with eyes that were full of distress and pain. He smiled twistedly.

"Sorry, son," he muttered. "I tried to keep it from you—"

"Dad—dad!" panted Tony wildly.

Handforth and the others stared in absolute consternation.

"But—but Cresswell," shouted Handforth thickly, "you—you don't mean that this man— Oh, it's impossible!"

"Cresswell," said Nipper dazedly, "this man isn't really your father?"

Tony's jaw became squared, and his eyes blazed.

"He is—he is!" he said defiantly. "He is my father! Let him go! Do you hear me?"

"But—but he's a crook!" exclaimed Handforth. "We caught him red-handed! He's the man who was trying to open the safe—"

Handforth broke off, for, like a flash, he had remembered that other incident in Bannington High Street. Things were becoming clear. Nipper was remembering, too. It was like the last pieces of a jigsaw puzzle being put into their correct places.

"My only sainted aunt!" exclaimed Handforth. "I can see now! I can understand why these men ran away when they spotted you, Cresswell—they didn't want us to know. And it was your father who came to see you that night. He had a revolver on him. And that Indian, too—he thought he recognised you. He must have seen the likeness—"

"I know!" broke in Tony harshly. "But until then I hadn't any idea what my father really was. I can't believe it now," he

added in agony. "Dad, dad, tell me it isn't true! You—a crook!"

"No wonder you're able to pick locks so easily," said McClure impulsively. "Sorry! I—I didn't mean—"

Shouts sounded from the deck above, and there came the sound of tramping feet.

"Dad, you've got to get away," muttered Tony, with sudden, frantic alarm. "If the rajah comes and finds you— It'll mean the police—and prison!" He turned upon the boys who were still holding the prisoner. "Let him go!" he cried. "You can't hold him here. He's my father! I tell you, he's—"

"Steady, Cresswell," said Nipper sharply. "Whether he's your father or not— Hang it. I don't know what to do," he added helplessly. "Goodness knows, I don't want to hurt you, old man, but—"

He broke off, for Tony Cresswell was lashing out savagely. One fist caught Nipper a hard, deadly drive on the side of the face, and the Remove skipper reeled back, momentarily stunned.

Crash! Thud! Crash!

"Let him go—let him go!" almost screamed the distracted boy.

He was fighting with terrible ferocity. His fists whirled right and left. Handforth received a blow on the point of his jaw, and he went hurtling over as though he had been struck by a sledge-hammer. Church reeled in another direction. Tony's father—the notorious "Red" Kress—suddenly found himself able to get to his feet. He shook off the remaining boys and leapt up.

"Tony—" he began, his hoarse voice full of concern.

"No, no!" croaked Tony brokenly. "Go away! Do you hear me, dad? Go! It's your only chance! The others are coming, I tell you—the officers—the rajah! Go, while you've got the chance!"

The man stood still for a mere split second; he was looking at his son with glowing, burning eyes. And in them there was an expression of wondering admiration. For just that moment his eyes became soft—for he knew



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how much he owed his boy. Then, in the next flash, those eyes became steely hard; his face twisted into its old, ugly expression. Like a panther he swung round and ran.

He did not make the mistake of heading for the door. There was a window in this cabin, and when Tony's father tore it open, there was ample room for him to pass through.

"Good-bye, Tony—forgive me!" he muttered.

Headlong he made his exit. There was no deck here—nothing but the icy-cold sea. Down he went, down into the murk. Tony, rushing to the opened window, heard the splash as his father struck the water. The boy turned, his eyes ablaze.

"He's gone!" he said triumphantly. "They'll not catch him now!"

**N**IPPER picked himself up; Handforth and the others did the same. Everything had happened so quickly that that they were still dazed and bewildered. They saw Tony standing by the open porthole, with the mist coming into the room in curling vapour.

"He'll be drowned!" said Handforth dully.

"My dad!" retorted Tony, his voice full of scorn. "Oh, no! My dad can swim like a fish. Didn't I tell you that? The cold won't hurt him, either. He'll get away now—he'll escape!"

And then, suddenly, Tony went as white as a sheet; he swayed as he stood.

"Hold him, you chaps," said Nipper urgently. "Quick—get him out of here! Take him into the library."

Handforth and Travers took the unfortunate boy and half carried him into the library.

"My dad—my dad!" he kept muttering. "A crook—a burglar—a safe-robber! Oh, it's horrible! I wish I were dead!"

If the others had thought harshly of him, they changed their minds now. Tony Cresswell's distress was pitiful to witness. It was obvious that this thing had come to him as an overwhelming shock.

"Didn't you know?" whispered Handforth, his voice full of compassion.

"Not—not until my dad came to see me that night at the school," muttered Tony brokenly. "I—I half guessed then. He wrote to me—he told me that everything was all right—that I wasn't to worry. But now I know—I've seen!"

He shivered, and looked round at the juniors appealingly.

"You won't tell, will you?" he whispered. "It's my secret—you'll keep it, won't you? I never stopped to think what my father did for a living; I knew that he went off for long periods, that he went abroad. Like a fool, it never occurred to me—"

He choked. The blow was a knock-out one.

"I—I'm sorry I lashed out at you chaps," muttered the new boy wretchedly. "I didn't know what I was doing."

"That's all right," growled Handforth,

tenderly rubbing his chin. "By George, you've got a fist like cast-iron! I think I'm glad; we shouldn't like anything rotten to happen to your pater, Cresswell. Hang it, it's not your fault that he's—he's—"

Further talk was impossible, for the rajah had just come into the library with Nipper and all the others. Some of the excitement had died down. It now came out that all four men had got away—three of them dropping into the boat which they had had waiting. The other—Tony's father—had swum for it.

"Very little hope of catching them, of course," said Captain Allister, with regret. "In this fog they're certain to get away. Still, I've sent out the launch, and Mr. Waters might be lucky. I've told him to go and report to the police, too."

"How's that poor chap who was bludgeoned?" asked Nipper.

"He's recovering—a nasty knock, but I think he'll be all right," said the captain. "Well, your Highness, it's a lucky thing that these boys were aboard. Smart work, eh?"

"Very smart," said the rajah shortly.

Nipper and the other juniors looked at him curiously. Some of the geniality had gone from his Highness; he was showing signs of annoyance, in fact.

"I am in your debt again, boys," he said, seeming to pull himself together. "It was splendid of you—and I am appreciative. We cannot be sure, of course, that the rascals would have opened the safe, but it is quite certain that, had they not been disturbed by you, they would have worked unhindered for several hours. I thank you deeply; and now that the excitement is all over, you had better go back to your beds."

His manner was curt, and in great contrast to his former geniality. Tony Cresswell noticed nothing of this, however; he only knew that not one of the boys had said a word to the rajah about his relationship to one of those criminals.

They were keeping his secret—and, what was more, they promised to breathe no word to the police, or to anybody else at the school. They liked Tony—they knew that he was true blue—and they were ready to stand by him in his hour of trial.

As for the rajah, they wondered.

Why had his Highness been so annoyed? Could it be possible that he had known something of the plot—that he wanted his famous emeralds to be stolen? It seemed incredible. Yet why had he expressed displeasure—instead of relief, as one would have supposed?

It was a mystery that puzzled the boys, and they slept little that night.

THE END.

(Now Nipper & Co. know Tony Cresswell's secret—and there are many more astounding developments in next Wednesday's long complete yarn of the *Chums of St. Frank's*, entitled "The Rajah's Secret!" Order your copy to-day; and also look out for full details of a smashing new story programme which will be starting shortly.)

*An Important Announcement to all Readers!*



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

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

**T**HIS week I feel that I must put you wise to a tip-top, first-rate, bang-up treat which has been specially prepared for you.

The adventures of Nelson Lee, the popular schoolmaster-detective, have always been so eagerly followed by my thousands of readers that the news of a "case" which undoubtedly ranks as the hardest he has ever tackled, and which takes him to all quarters of the globe before it is brought to a conclusion, will send you wild with excitement.

Such is the basis of the big treat I have mentioned above. Nelson Lee—the man who has never lost a case—becomes involved in a thrilling mystery which taxes his marvellous powers to the full. Readers will hold their breath as they follow his daring deeds, narrow escapes from unexpected perils, and his clever deductions.

The stories dealing with this amazing case are so good that I have arranged to publish them in a special series. Furthermore, they will be many thousands of words longer than the present stories, and of such quality that you won't want to put down your copy until you have read the entire story.

These paragraphs are only intended to give you a hint of what is in store for you. Next week, in this page, will appear full details of this stupendous treat, so don't fail to make certain of your **NELSON LEE** for the next few weeks, chums.

Only nine years old, Neville Barker (Hastings), and you are a regular reader of the Old Paper, eh? Good business! You cannot possibly start too young. As you grow older you'll like the stories more and more. There's no reason why you should be shy in writing to me, and I hope you'll write again.

Answers to last week's three questions: 1. Willard's Folly 2. Christopher. 3. Mr. Sharpe. This week's questions: 1. How many St. Frank's boys have sisters at the

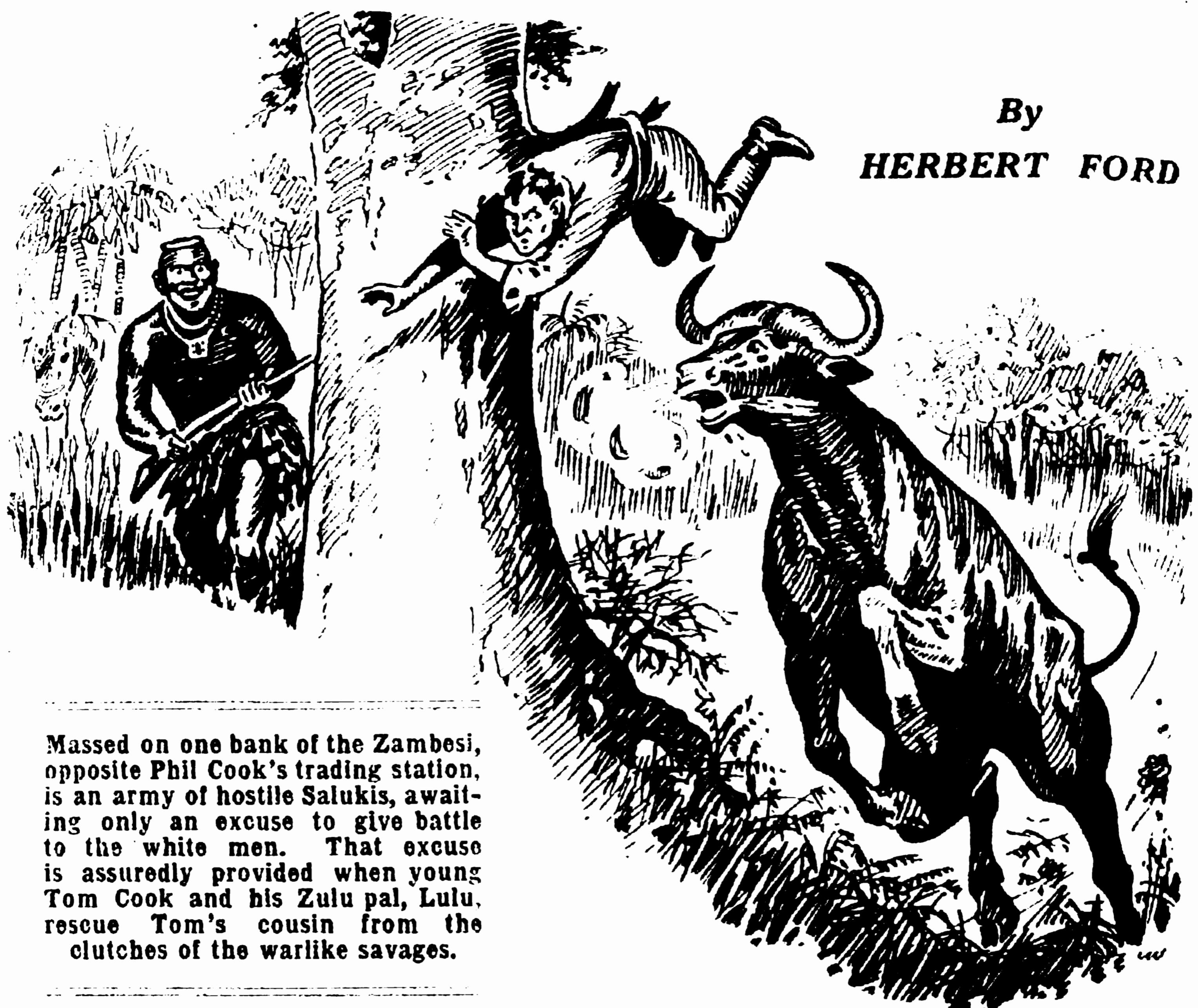
Moor View School, and who are they? 2. When is Archie Glenthorne's birthday? 3. What are the names of the four page-boys, of the Ancient House, West House, Modern House, and East House respectively?

\* \* \* \* \*  
Pen-sketches of two more St. Frank's Removites: **STUDY G. CECIL DE VALERIE**. A slim and elegant junior. He has an unusual type of face for a boy; sallow complexion and almost black hair. Rather weak-willed, and easily led. **HUBERT ARTHUR ALARIC CAVENDISH, DUKE OF SOMERTON**. The fact that he is a duke in his own right does not prevent him from being the untidiest boy in the Remove. He is active and energetic, and one of the best.

\* \* \* \* \*  
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*All the thrills of a big game hunt in this week's rousing chapters.*

# The CITY of GOLD!



Massed on one bank of the Zambesi, opposite Phil Cook's trading station, is an army of hostile Salukis, awaiting only an excuse to give battle to the white men. That excuse is assuredly provided when young Tom Cook and his Zulu pal, Lulu, rescue Tom's cousin from the clutches of the warlike savages.

## The Lion Hunt!

**T**OM, don't you and Alva go wanderin' too far afield. With the Salukis as restless as they are, and no word come from Livingstone yet, there may be danger. So—safety first—see, son?"

Phil Cook, trader on the Zambesi, owner of the big cattle station fifty miles above Victoria Falls, spoke very quietly, but his son, Tom Cook, knew that his word was law.

And what the old trader had said was only too true. The warlike tribe of Salukis was encamped on the opposite bank of the river, and the white men were expecting an attack in the near future.

"Right-ho, dad; I'll be careful!" said Tom cheerily. "We're goin' south, anyway, so we're not likely to fall in with any of the Salukis. Alva wants a shot at a lion, and I reckon I may be able to scare one up for

him, as Lahgib came in with news of fresh spoor out Kaluki way."

His father gave a doubtful glance towards Alva Vandec, son of his own cousin, the American millionaire inventor. Alva had been educated in England and France, and bore little of the marks of his American birth. He sported an eyeglass and was always immaculately dressed in appropriate costume for the occasion. He spoke in a bored, drawling manner, and usually seemed half asleep.

But as he had been captain of footer at his school, and had won the welter-weight Public Schools' Boxing Championship, it was evident that he possessed a good deal more "ginger" than was apparent on the surface.

Five years older than Tom, the younger lad had cottoned to him in spite of their totally different natures and upbringing.

For Tom had spent all his life "at the back o' beyond," and was his father's right hand in trading with the natives and on their hunting expeditions.

"Dunno what sort o' a shot Alva is, or whether he can hold his end up in a tight corner," said the trader doubtfully. "Lions are mighty tricky beasts, and if he lost his head—"

"Oh, Al's all right!" protested Tom loyally. "He don't say much, but he's got tons o' grit. Besides, we'll have Lulu with us, and he'll see that we don't run into danger."

He grinned as he looked towards a gigantic Zulu who was saddling up a little Basuto pony, and exchanging chippy remarks with a wizened little man with a face like a withered apple.

This was Ben Bold, who acted as Alva Vandec's chauffeur, valet, and mechanic during his racing spins at Brooklands. He was a typical American, and had had a varied career as an acrobat, cowpuncher, boxer, aviator, and as a bluejacket in the American Navy.

"Say, are these th' best yuh got, Nugget?" he asked the big Zulu, looking disparagingly at the lean but hardy little beasts. "Looks like they might break in th' middle if yuh got on 'em!"

"Plenty big enough for you, little one!" replied the Zulu complacently. "In truth would you need a ladder to mount a bigger horse. Take care of those nether garments you are so proud of!"

"Cain't say th' same for yuh, Tarbrush, seein' yuh don't wear none. Say, don't yuh never ketch cold, runnin' aroand with next to nothin' on?"

"Nay, I do not, small man!" replied Lulu with dignity. "My epidermis has become acclimatised to the action of sun and air, and is impervious to—"

"Aw, cut it out, big boy! Yuh'll sure break your jaw one o' these days wi' them tongue-twisters o' yours. Speak plain English, yuh big elephant!"

Lulu the Zulu was a curiosity. He had been adopted at an early age by an eccentric old professor who had a theory that he could make a perfectly civilised man from a born savage if he took him in hand early enough. Thus Lulu had absorbed the learned man's high flow of language, of which he was intensely proud.

He was a lineal descendant of the great Zulu chief Cetewayo, and a chief in his own right. He was a magnificent specimen, six feet in height with a chest like a barrel.

He was a formidable opponent in a scrap, though gentle as a lamb and cheerful and good-humoured in the most trying circumstances.

He and Tom were great pals.

Lulu led the way astride his little pony, that looked as if the Zulu ought to be carrying him. After an hour and a half's

steady riding, he picked up the spoor and pointed forward through the bush.

"Springbok!" he whispered, finger on lip. "Baas Tom and your baas creep thro' and get liou while he feeds. You stay with me and keep silent, Humpty Dumpty!"

"Who're yuh callin' Humpty, Coalbox?" growled Ben, obeying the Zulu, none the less, for above the faint bleatings of the antelope's pain and terror had come the furious roar of a great lion.

"Follow me!" whispered Tom to his cousin, with a quick glance at the dude's face. But Alva's placid features showed nothing but interest and a desire to do the proper thing. He imitated Tom in dropping on hands and knees, and made a very fair attempt at a noiseless crawl.

Tom, who had been born and brought up in a big game country, was not too sure about the other's nerve or his shooting ability. And he knew that to face a full-grown lion, disturbed at a meal, took a whole lot of doing.

He held his own rifle in readiness and watched his companion as he signed to him to take the lead. Alva was crawling forward stealthily, crouched double, with his rifle at the trail. Then, just as they got to the top of the ridge, his foot caught in a trailing vine and he pitched forward on his face.

Tom was so close behind him that he could not avoid him, and he also tripped. His rifle flew out of his hand, sliding down the other side of the rocky ridge whence they could hear the cries of the springbok and the growling snarls of the lion as he devoured his living prey.

Tom's heart thumped painfully. It was impossible to recover his rifle without exposing himself to the mercy of the lion, and everything now depended upon Al's nerve and aim. The lion had spotted them, and with an ear-splitting roar of rage and defiance, stood over his kill, glaring with fierce green eyes at the intruders.

Alva's eyeglass reflected the rays of the sun, and this seemed to puzzle the great beast for a split second. Tom waited for the shot, quaking. He knew that a lion, even hit through the heart, will often travel forty feet at least. There was only a scant twenty between them, and the great beast was now poising for a spring. He daren't murmur any advice for fear of "rattling" the other—but he clenched his teeth and prayed for Al not to miss.

"Between the eyes, you said, eh?" whispered the American coolly, as the lion sank almost on his haunches ere he launched himself through the air.

"Y-y-yes!" breathed Tom, half-choking, for he knew that even if fatally wounded, the lion, being "wound up" for the spring, would be carried right on top of them, and he and the other lad would probably be mauled in the animal's death flurry.

Ping!

Alva pulled the trigger the hundredth part of a second before the lion leapt.

The bullet entered right between the eyes. With a terrific roar the great beast shot up ten feet into the air, turned a complete somersault, fell upon his back and lay there with kicking legs. Then he straightened out stiff, and Tom let out a quavering cheer.

"Thanks be!" he murmured, as he wiped the sweat from his forehead. "By Jove, Al, I thought you were never goin' to fire!"

"Didjer?" said the American boy calmly. "I wanted to make sure, see? I'd—I'd never shot anything as big as that before, and he kept jogglin' his head about, the silly old thing! I was afraid if I missed it might have been jolly awkward for us, what?"

"Awkward? I should say so! Jumpin' cats, man, we were as near death as we're ever likely to be and live to tell the tale. By jinks, old man, but you've got a nerve!"

— — —

### Ben—And a Buffalo!

WHILST the two lads superintended the skinning of the lion, Lulu and Ben rode off over the veldt, the Yank surveying his surroundings with a critical eye.

"Um, some ranch, I'll say!" he said, elevating his snub nose and sniffing the scented air. "How many miles d'yuu reckon yer bawss owns, Cherry Blossom?"

The Zulu waved his ham-like hand casually around.

"As far as your eye can see, and far beyond that. Some day this will be a vast cattle farm, and when Baas Phil Cook departs, Baas Tom will be a wealthy young man; a chief in his own right!"

"Shucks; he'll have to be more'n a cattle dealer to have half what my young bawss has got. Millionaire? I sh'd say so! Why, his father owns railroads, umpteen inventions bringin' him in a thousand dollars a minnit, an' it'll all come to Al! Hallo, thar's some o' yer cattle 'way over thar. Long way from home, ain't they? Whar's yer cowpunchers?"

Lulu chuckled as he screwed up his eyes and sighted the slowly moving mass on the other side of the kloof.

"Cattle?" Lulu scoffed. "Them buffalo—wild buffalo. Are you any good as a shot, tiny man?"

"Shot? I sh'd smile!" boasted the Yank. "Say, bo', th' late Willum Tell had nuthin' on me! I kin hit th' ace o' spades at fifty yards, shootin' from th' hip!"

"Do not try to shoot buffalo from the hip," said the Zulu impressively. "Be cautious, and wait until I give the word. I opine that the big baas will be glad of fresh meat. And when you shoot—"

"What—shoot them moo-cows?" cried Ben in derision. "Say, that ain't sport! I'd as soon go shoot th' milk cans in a dairy!"

I've shot buffaloes as is buffalo. I like to shoot somethin' that kin hit back!"

"Do not be deceived, little one!" grinned the Zulu, showing his magnificent teeth and winking broadly at the native bearers who accompanied them, and they chuckled their appreciation. "These 'cows' will give you all the sport you desire—and maybe more!"

Lulu directed the runner and the bearers to remain where they were, and led the way at a fast gallop towards the scrub in which the buffalo were feeding.

To give Ben Bold his due, he was no coward, and a very fair shot. He was looking forward to telling Al that he had brought down something with his own gun. He followed the giant without a qualm.

"Take care with these animals, little man," warned Lulu as they galloped across the kloof. "They are like none other on the veldt; wily, and full of tricks. If they had hands instead of hoofs, they would hunt us, not we them!"

"Tryin' to scare me?" said Ben scornfully. "Brudder, yuh are sure wastin' yer time! Lead on to these moo-moos!"

Before they could get in range, however, one of the buffaloes had spied them, and the whole bunch moved off rapidly through the thick scrub.

"Come!" hissed the Zulu, putting his willing little beast to the gallop until his own feet nearly touched the ground. "Now must we divide the herd and ride one of them away from the others. You follow?"

"I'm with yuh, Pongo, an' I'll soon be ahead of yuh!" bragged the Yank, sitting down and riding like a jockey, crouched monkey-wise over the withers. His lighter weight enabled him to forge ahead, regardless of Lulu's warning to keep in touch.

The fever of the chase had entered his blood, and he wanted to show the Zulu what an American could do when put to it. He could hear the sound of the herd moving through the high veldt grass, and reckoned on riding them down in the open.

He tried to pull his pony's head round to get nearer to the herd, but the little Basuto knew all about buffalo, and was not having any. He continued in a straight line for a curiously shaped mound in the middle of a bunch of rocks, surrounded by stunted thorn and a few trees.

"Gee, but this animal's got a mouth like Wall Street!" grumbled Ben, as he tugged in vain at the bridle. He heard the thunder of hoofs to his right, then for a few seconds glimpsed the herd as they emerged from the scrub and disappeared behind the curiously shaped rocks. "Come up, yuh obstinate cayuse, or I'll pull yer fat haid off!"

Then the bridle snapped, and Ben absolutely lost control.

Down towards the rocks they galloped, and just as they reached them out charged an enormous old bull.

If Ben knew nothing of buffalo and classed them as "moo-moos," that Basuto

pony knew all about them. He swerved violently away from the charging fury, sending the unwary Ben over his head into a thorn bush, and then bolted like mad in the opposite direction.

Ben's rifle went flying, and for a few seconds he lay in the thorn bush, dazed and half stunned. But he caught one glimpse of the infuriated buffalo bull, big as a railway truck and speeding like a racehorse, and he had no wish to see more of him, on foot and unarmed as he now was.

Ben had been something of a sprinter in his time, and now he broke all personal records. He could almost feel the hot breath of the bull on his trousers, and in imagination saw the great head, with its spreading horns, eager to toss him high and catch him again.

Ahead of him was a tall thorn tree, looming up like a winning-post in his eyes, and Ben pelted towards it as fast as he could go.

Closer and closer the thudding of the bull's hoofs sounded; then there was a crash and a bellow. Ben did not know what had happened, and he certainly did not turn round to find out. The bull had put his forefoot into a hole and had taken a toss, but was soon up again resuming the chase.

However, those seconds had made all the difference to Ben. He gained the tree, jumped for the lowest branch, and hauled himself to safety as the disappointed buffalo charged and just scraped the soles of his shoes.

Blowing like a grampus, Ben climbed upwards from branch to branch, anxious to put as great a distance as possible between himself and that roaring terror pawing up the earth below. All went well until he was some fifteen feet up, when he trod on a rotten branch which broke under his weight. He caught frantically at the branches as he slid down, but could get no grip to stay his progress.

"Golly, gee-whiz, it's all up now!" he breathed—and was brought up with a sudden jar. His broad leather belt had caught in a jagged broken limb, and he was left dangling like a butterfly pinned to a wall.

Again and again the bull made frantic efforts to get at him, and Ben had to lift his feet out of danger at each attempt whilst he hung, sweating, praying that the belt might hold.

After a few futile charges the bull got tired of the game, and began to graze within a few feet of the tree, cocking a wicked red eye up now and again to see that his quarry was still there.

"Golly! I'm hyar for ever, I reckon!" groaned Ben. "Whar's that Lulu feller? If he had th' sense he was born with he'd know I was hanging' hyar like th' babo in th' wood—glory be!"

Lulu appeared in sight leading Ben's pony, which had first given the Zulu an inkling of what had happened to his diminutive white pal. He grinned derisively.

Ben could make no suitable sally. For one thing, he was hanging almost upside down, and also he felt the disgrace of his position. Bold Ben Bold—being kept prisoner by a beast he had scornfully classed as a "moo-moo!"

Then the bull spotted Lulu as he dismounted and advanced slowly towards him. The animal pawed the ground, tearing up the coarse grass and throwing it behind him. Then suddenly he charged with head down at the speed of an express train.

Lulu stood like a statue, immovable, rifle loosely held hip high.

"Shoot, yer sufferin' idgit!" yelled Ben in terror.

But Lulu calmly waited until the bull was within twelve yards. Then his rifle cracked, and the huge carcase slumped, collapsed and slithered down head first at the Zulu's feet.

With a broad grin Lulu strode over to release the Yank, just as Ben's belt gave way and he dropped in a heap to the ground.

"I warned you to beware of damaging your nether garments!" said the Zulu gravely, as he picked him up. "I fear they are damaged beyond repair. How do you like the 'moo-moos' on this small ranch now, little man?"

### Salukis on the Warpath!

**A**S they rode home in the gathering darkness, Lulu, who was riding ahead, suddenly reined in and allowed Tom to catch him up. The Zulu pointed to a red glow in the sky just over the horizon.

"Something up, baas?" he said in a low voice.

"Forest fire, I reckon," replied Tom lightly. "Why, what on earth—"

He pulled up abruptly as the distant crackle of rifle fire came to his ears, and he realised that the red glow in the sky was in the direction of his father's trading station. In a moment, too, he thought of the hostile Salukis.

"Come on!" he yelled. "If that's the station afire it means that the Salukis have risen, an' dad'll want all the help he can get. Ride all you know, boys!"

They lashed their ponies to a gallop, and as they fairly tore over the hard-baked veldt they could see the glow of the fire growing redder and redder, whilst the rattle of rifle fire kept up a running accompaniment.

They were within five miles of the station when they saw a mounted figure approaching, which pulled up as they neared it. Then

an old Kaffir slid to the ground. Tom saw that he was a native who had been in their service ever since he could remember.

"Why, Kootala, what is it?" he cried, lifting up the Kaffir and seeing for the first time that the blood was streaming from a great gash in his head.

"Salukis—attacking baas!" quavered the exhausted man, as he threw off his blanket and showed another wound in his side. "I—ridin' fo' yo'—baas—badly hurt—"

Tom gave him a drink from his canteen and the flagging energies revived.

"All servants—killed!" mumbled the man. "Big baas—fight bravely—but—too—many Salukis! Me see him beat down—carry off—river—ah!"

He slumped forward, and Tom laid him down gently, for he knew that the faithful old Kaffir had passed beyond aid. Tom signed to one of the bearers to take up the body and put it across his pony.

"Alva, if dad's been carried off—I'm goin' after him!" he said quietly. "If he's been killed and I'm too late—I shall still be in time to avenge him. Lulu will go with me!"

"So shall I, old hoss!" said his cousin. "What about you, Ben?"

"Me? Oh, I'm goin' whar yuh goes!" said the little wizened American.

With Tom in the lead, they galloped furiously over the veldt. Fifteen minutes later his gallant little Basuto pony faltered in its stride and all but fell.

"Better take mine, baas," said Lulu, who was the only one who had kept up with the boy.

He had long given up the idea of trying to make his little beast carry him, and merely ran beside it with one hand resting on the pommel. The others were strung out some distance behind.

Without halting his pony, Tom swung from one saddle to the other, allowing his tired little beast to go free.

He groaned as he saw the end of a long string of canoes lining the backwater of the great river upon which his father's station stood. He could see that the Salukis were still fighting desperately with the station Kaffirs, whom Phil Cook had armed with modern rifles. They had fought bravely, but had been hopelessly outnumbered, and now the firing from the station hands had practically ceased.

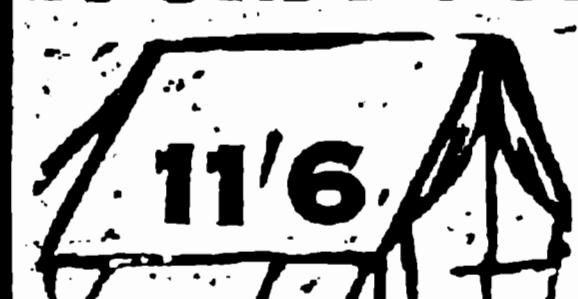
The bobbing heads swayed to and fro, and the lights of torches gleamed on the oily, sweating backs of the crowd of Salukis, who seemed to be dragging something into the last canoe. It was Tom's father!

Phil Cook had fought a gallant fight against odds, but now he was about done. With the crowd of blacks hanging on to him like hounds on to a gallant old stag, he was gradually being forced towards a big canoe which was tied up to the mooring-steps!

*(The Salukis have captured Tom's father.)*

*Will the boy be in time to rescue him and against such overwhelming odds? Don't miss reading next week's exciting chapters of this grand story.)*

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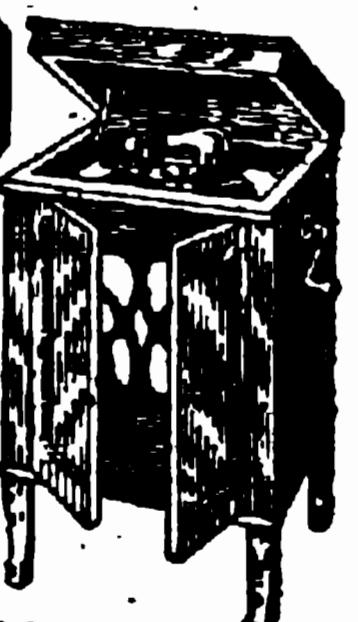
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