

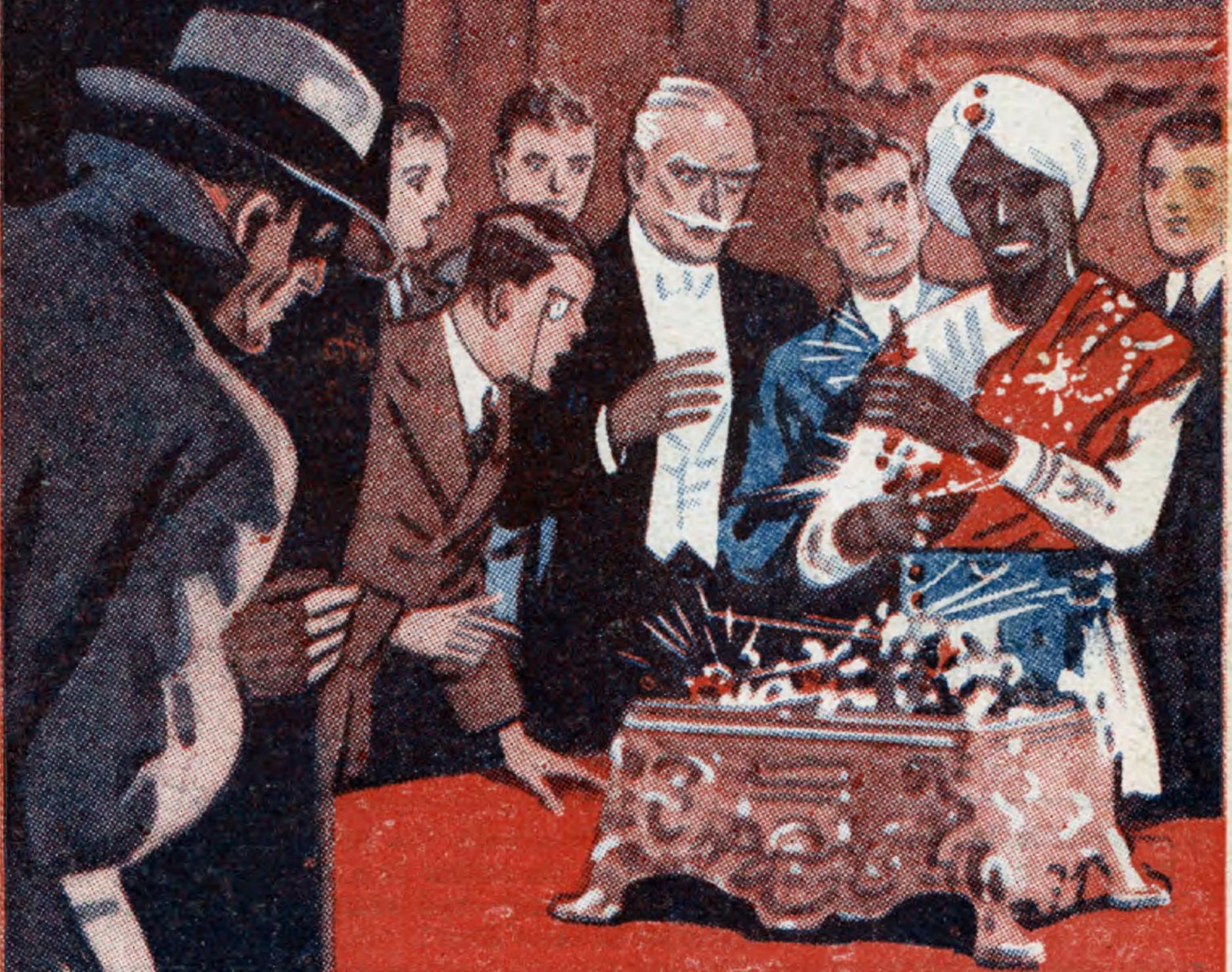
"THE RAJAH'S SECRET!"

*Thrilling complete
St. Frank's story inside.*

THE NELSON LEE

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The
HIDDEN FOE!

A dramatic incident from this week's all-thrills long complete yarn
introducing the famous Chums of St. Frank's.

New Series No. 111.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

March 5th, 1932.

A dramatic long complete yarn of the cheery Chums of St. Frank's.

The RAJAH'S SECRET!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

Intolerable is the position of Tony Cresswell, the new Removite, when St. Frank's learns his dreadful secret—that his father is a gangster. But there's still another secret—unknown even to Tony—and everybody is booked for the surprise of their lives!

CHAPTER 1.

The Police Raid!

A RCHIBALD WINSTON DEREK GLENTHORNE, resplendent from the tips of his varnished shoes to the extremity of his shiny topper, strolled leisurely out of the Ancient House at St. Frank's. He paused on the top step, but whether this pause was designed so that he could admire the scenery, or that people could admire him, was a questionable point.

"Buck up, snail!" said Handforth impatiently. "We've been waiting ages for you!"

Archie, who had been beaming with good humour, turned a glassy stare upon the leader of Study D; it was glassy because a monocle was firmly wedged in his eye.

"I trust, old thing, that you were not addressing me?" he said coldly.

"You can trust all you like—but I was," retorted Handforth. "How much longer are you going to keep us waiting?"

"Good gad! In other words, one mo-

ment!" said Archie, in a chilling voice. "Chappies, on occasion, have called me 'slow coach,' and I've even been compared to a tortoise. But when a blighter likens me unto a snail, I feel that a protest is absolutely called for."

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Handforth.

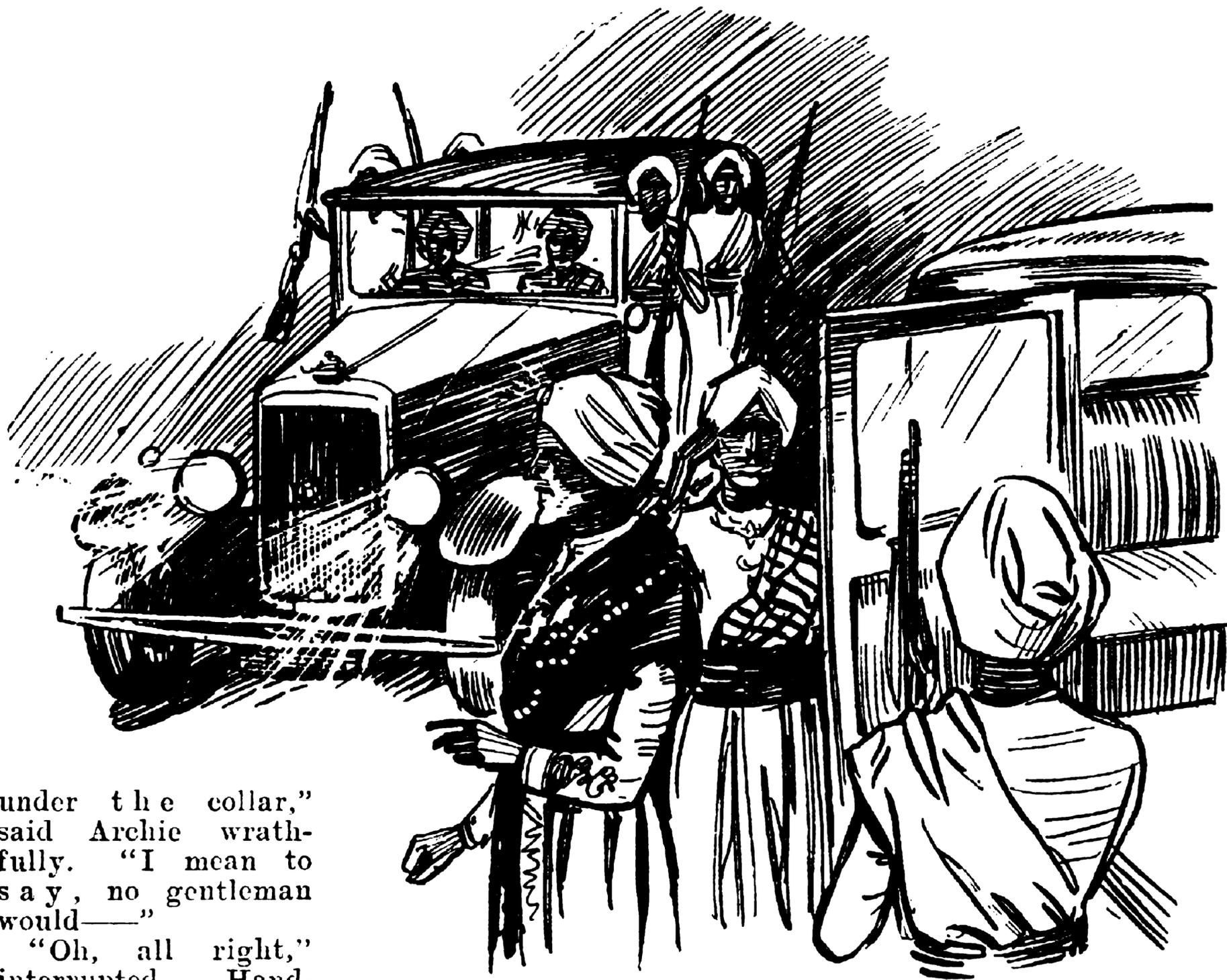
"Snails, dash you, are horrid things," continued Archie, waxing indignant. "I mean to say, first cousins to slugs, what? Absolutely slugs with knobs on!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And when this frightful insult comes from one of my own guests, I get hot

day, or a wedding anniversary, or a celebration to commemorate the flying of the Atlantic by Archie's brothers. It didn't matter. The juniors were satisfied to be invited. A tea at Glenthorne Manor was always a "classy" occasion.

As usual, Archie had been lavish with his invitations. Not only had he insisted upon the presence of Alf Brent, his own study chum, but he had included Handforth, Church and McClure, of Study D, Nipper, Tregellis-West and Watson, of Study C, and Travers, Potts and Cresswell, of Study H. They were all waiting



under the collar," said Archie wrathfully. "I mean to say, no gentleman would——"

"Oh, all right," interrupted Handforth hastily. "I'd forgotten, for the moment, that I am your guest, Archie. I apologise."

Archie Glenthorne beamed.

"What-ho! Peace, and all that sort of thing," he said genially. "As one gentleman to another, Handy, old carcass, we'll say no more. An apology, I mean to say, is absolutely an apology."

It was a big occasion.

Archie Glenthorne, in fact, was taking a few friends home to tea—to Glenthorne Manor, the ancestral mansion of his family. None of the other fellows quite knew what the great occasion was—whether it was Archie's mother's birth-

outside the Ancient House, dressed in their best. Handforth had his Morris Minor, and the other juniors their motorcycles. Those who did not possess motorcycles were riding pillion.

"We shall be late if you don't buck up, Archie," said Alf Brent. "Hop in."

The door of Handforth's little car was invitingly open. Church and McClure were already in the rear seats, and Handforth himself was at the driving-wheel.

"Odds squeezes! I'm not supposed to get into this frightful sardine tin, am I?" asked Archie, horrified.

"Don't be an ass!" said Handforth. "There's plenty of room. When I offered you a lift, you said you'd be glad of it. It's a funny thing to me you don't get a car of your own. Your people would whack out if you only asked them."

"Too much frightful bother, old boy," said Archie, as he proceeded to enter. "I mean to say, the fag of driving a car— Good gad! My topper!"

Even an enthusiastic owner of a Morris Minor cannot truthfully declare that his car is commodious, and there certainly was not room for Archie's topper in addition to Archie himself. The shiny headgear caught against the roof and dropped into a pool of muddy water.

"That's all right," said Handforth hastily. "Bung him in, you chaps—he can carry his topper in his lap. For goodness sake, let's get going."

Archie protested vigorously. If he had had his way, he would have gone back indoors, and he would have got Phipps, his valet, to clean his topper. And that would have meant another fifteen minutes' delay. So he was ruthlessly "banged" into the seat beside Handforth, the muddy topper was plumped into his lap, and the door was slammed.

"Good egg!" said Handforth, with a sigh. "We're off!"

He ignored Archie's wails of anguish: the little car glided forward and as it turned out of the gateway, into the lane, it was followed by a veritable flock of purring motor-cycles.

"It's a pity they don't make these dashed things a bit higher," complained Archie, turning an aggrieved eye upon the roof. "I mean to say——"

"Say on!" invited Handforth. "You can chatter until you are blue in the face. We're off now and nothing else is going to delay us—not even you!"

"I suppose you know I'm in a most frightful mess?" asked Archie coldly. "There's at least a hundredweight of gravel distributed down my dashed waistcoat! As for my topper——"

"Blow your topper," said Handforth callously. "Toppers ought to be prohibited by law. They're always getting in the way of something."

Archie refused to be drawn into the argument; he relapsed into a dignified silence. And he was still brooding over his troubles when an ejaculation came from Handforth.

"Hallo! What's doing here?" asked Edward Oswald, in an eager voice. "By George! Look at all those bobbies!"

There was some excuse for Handforth's sudden excitement. They had reached

the outskirts of Bannington, and something of a very unusual character was in progress. Half a dozen policemen, with an inspector in charge, were advancing into the front garden of a big detached house. Two other policemen could be seen hurrying round to the rear.

"Looks like a police raid to me," said Church, in wonder.

"And that place is a private boarding-house," added McClure. "I've seen the board outside—— That's Inspector Jameson, isn't it?"

Handforth drew in towards the kerb, and stopped the car. This was too good to be missed. Police raids on respectable boarding-houses were not an everyday occurrence.

As Handforth tumbled out of his little car, the motor-cyclists came up in the rear, all the juniors dismounting. They were on the opposite side of the road, so the police could raise no objections.

"This'll be worth watching, you chaps," sang out Handforth excitedly. "They must be after some desperate crooks—or they wouldn't be in such force."

And at his words there was one St. Frank's fellow present who turned deathly pale.

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CHAPTER 2.

Father and Son!

TONY CRESSWELL, the new boy in the Remove, stood trembling by his motor-cycle.

"Anything wrong, dear old fellow?" asked Vivian Travers gently.

"No! I—I mean——" Tony found some difficulty in speaking. "I was wondering—— I'm terribly afraid——"

"Don't be," interrupted Travers, gripping his arm. "There are plenty of other crooks."

Tony Cresswell winced. The last few days, for him, had been well-nigh unendurable. Vividly he remembered the gay party on board the Rajah of Ghar Kohat's yacht, which was lying in Caistowe Bay.

A crowd of St. Frank's fellows had been invited by the genial Indian potentate—after Tony and Nipper and Handforth had saved the rajah's life in a street mishap. And, strangely enough, that very night a gang of notorious crooks had boarded the vessel in the fog, and had attempted to steal the historic emeralds of Ghar.

The boys had frustrated them, and since then the gang had been lying low—hunted for by the police.

Small wonder, then, that Tony Cresswell felt his heart thudding like a sledgehammer as he stood watching the police

officers as they surrounded the boarding-house. For he knew, all too well, that one of those desperate crooks was his own father!

He had made this discovery that awful night on the yacht. Until then he had believed his father to be the finest man on earth; he had never troubled to bother his head about his father's profession. He had only known that Mr. Cresswell had been away, sometimes, for weeks or months on end—either on the Continent, or in the United States.

Then, on that dreadful night, the juniors had captured one of the escaping crooks; they had unmasked him, and Tony had recognised him as his father. The man he had always loved and respected was none other than "Red" Kress, a safe-breaker of unenviable notoriety.

The fellows had been amazingly decent about it, for after Red Kress had escaped they had kept Tony's awful secret. The school, as a whole, did not know. Nipper and Handforth and the others felt that they were justified, for Tony Cresswell was true blue right through. Whatever his father was, Tony himself was "all right."

The unhappy boy was watching the house with fear in his eyes; and Nipper, at least, realised that the situation was fraught with agony—for Tony.

"Come on, you chaps," said the Remove skipper briskly. "We'd better be getting along."

"Not likely," said Handforth. "We want to see——"

"We're late already—and we shall be later if we hang about here," interrupted Nipper. "What will Archie's people say? Let's go!"

"No!" said Tony Cresswell, gripping himself. "Thanks all the same, Nipper. I know just exactly what you are thinking."

"My dear chap——"

"You're thinking that the police have traced my father and those other crooks," went on Tony relentlessly. "I'm thinking it, too. And I want to know. Do you think I can leave this place, and go calmly to Archie's home? I must know why the police are raiding this house."

The others were silent; they felt uncomfortable and awkward. But they understood Tony's point of view.

"I expect you're worrying over nothing, old man," said Handforth, at length. "There's not a chance in a thousand——"

"Look!" broke in Church, pointing.

Inspector Jameson was satisfied that his men were distributed effectively; he and a sergeant were mounting the front steps of the boarding-house. At that very

moment the door suddenly burst open, and four well-dressed men appeared. The leading man, tall and athletic, had a big automatic pistol in his hand.

"Oh!" gasped Tony, in agony.

For that man was his father—Red Kress! The others were the rest of the gang—Dan Mason, Ambrose Bliss and Gyp Bertelli. So Tony's worst fears were realised. Neither he nor anybody else noticed another motor-cyclist who had drawn up near the kerb, attracted by the unusual happening. That motor-cyclist was Bernard Forrest, of the St. Frank's Remove.

"Keep back—all of you!" came the voice of Red Kress, charged with evil menace. "You're not taking us this time, inspector!"

Jameson, startled by the sight of the automatic, did not forget his duty.

"Put that thing down, you fool!" he said sharply. "I've got a warrant——"

"This gun of mine beats your warrant hands down!" said Tony's father harshly. "Keep back, I tell you! The first cop who attempts to come near us will get a dose of lead!"

Tony uttered a hoarse cry.

"Dad—dad!" he shouted, running across the road. "Don't shoot, dad!"

Red Kress looked up and started violently.

"Keep out of this, Tony!" he snapped. "Get out of the line of fire, you young idiot! Do you think I want you mixed up in this?"

"But, dad, you mustn't——"

He broke off, for at that moment one of the policemen, with rare pluck, made a dash.

Crack!

The automatic spat viciously, almost at point-blank range, and the constable reeled back and collapsed.

"Oh!" muttered Tony dully. "No, no!"

The brutal ruthlessness of the act stunned him—as, indeed, it had stunned all the other spectators. Inspector Jameson was as pale as a sheet, and it spoke well for his courage that he advanced. The St. Frank's fellows had never had much of an opinion of the stout inspector, but they respected him now.

Red Kress did not shoot again; he was running hard, and his companions were at his heels. They were taking advantage of the momentary confusion, for several of the other constables had run to their fallen comrade.

"The car—quick!" shouted Tony's father hoarsely.

Even Handforth did not realise the truth until it was too late. For Red

Kress, with a couple of leaps, reached the Morris Minor—which was standing with its doors open, its engine ticking over. The other three men scrambled in frantically, and without even troubling to close the doors, Kress jammed his foot on the throttle, and the engine roared.

"Hi, come back! What the——" began Handforth wildly.

He ran, but it was too late. The Morris Minor, with a jerk, was off; with screaming gears it swung round in the road and went careering away.

CHAPTER 3.

Rallying Round Tony!

"MY car!" howled Handforth. "They've boned my Minor!"

He stared after the daring crooks, seething with fury. Inspector Jameson, puffing hard, had run out into the road; policemen were hurrying about helplessly.

The four men had made their "get away" by sheer audacity. A moment's hesitation would have been fatal to them. Small as the Morris Minor was, its sturdy little engine was capable of high speed.

"My car!" labbled Handforth. "Hi, you chaps! Get your motor-bikes and——"

Swinging round, he found himself looking at Tony Cresswell; and in that second he completely forgot his stolen car. A curious feeling of selflessness came over him like a wave, and he went hot.

"I—I say, I'm sorry, Cresswell!" he muttered contritely. "What's my rotten car, anyhow? I ought to be kicked for making all that fuss!"

Tony Cresswell did not seem to hear. The expression on his face was so tragic, so despairing, that Handforth, whose heart was of gold, was deeply touched.

"You'll have to bear up, old man," he said, taking Tony's arm. "I'd like to tell you—— I mean——"

He broke off, realising the uselessness of words. He couldn't even think of suitable words.

Tony was stricken. If he had had any hopes that his father was not what he thought him to be, they were now shattered. With his own eyes he had seen Kress shoot point-blank at that unfortunate policeman.

Tony shuddered.

"No, no!" he muttered. "It can't be! My dad couldn't do such a thing—he couldn't!"

"Better take it easily, old fellow——" began Travers.

"Do you think I don't know my dad?" asked Tony fiercely. "He has always been so kind—and—and—— Oh, I must be going mad!"

White as a sheet, he suffered himself to be led away by Travers and Potts and Handforth. Then, suddenly, he seemed to come to himself, and he stared round wildly.

"That—that policeman?" he asked. "Is he—dead?"

"We don't know," said Travers. "He fell, but——"

"I must know," said Tony. "If my dad killed him——"

He choked, and breaking away from the juniors, he ran into the front garden of the house. His heart thudded more rapidly when he saw a helmetless policeman being helped to his feet by two or three of his comrades.

"Keep back there, young man!" said Inspector Jameson sharply.

"I won't keep back," panted Tony. "You don't understand! Is—is this policeman badly hurt?"

The inspector was startled by the boy's strange behaviour.

"Don't let it upset you, sonny," he said, not unkindly. "I suppose the shock of seeing the incident was too much for you—eh? I don't think Smithson is hurt much."

"Oh, thank Heaven!" said Tony fervently.

Such was his tone that Inspector Jameson gave him another sharp look.

"Is this officer a friend of yours, young man?" he asked, misunderstanding Tony's relief. "I'm sorry; I didn't know you had a personal reason."

Smithson, the officer in question, was looking shaky—and sheepish. He was a young constable; in fact, this was his very first encounter with crooks of any kind.

"It's all right, sir," said the sergeant gruffly. "Smithson isn't even hurt."

"Then why did he fall down?" demanded the inspector.

"I—I'm sorry, sir," said Smithson very self-conscious. "I—I suppose it was the shock. He—he fired at me almost point-blank, but the bullet must have just missed my side by a fraction. I can't understand it, even now."

"And you crash over as though you had been plugged through the heart," said the sergeant scornfully. "That won't do, my lad! You'll never make a good policeman——"

"Just a minute, sergeant," said Inspector Jameson. "Leave Smithson alone."

"Why, sir, I—"

"Have you ever had an automatic pistol fired straight at you?" asked the inspector. "All right, Smithson; I understand. Don't let this worry you."

"Thank you, sir," said the constable gratefully.

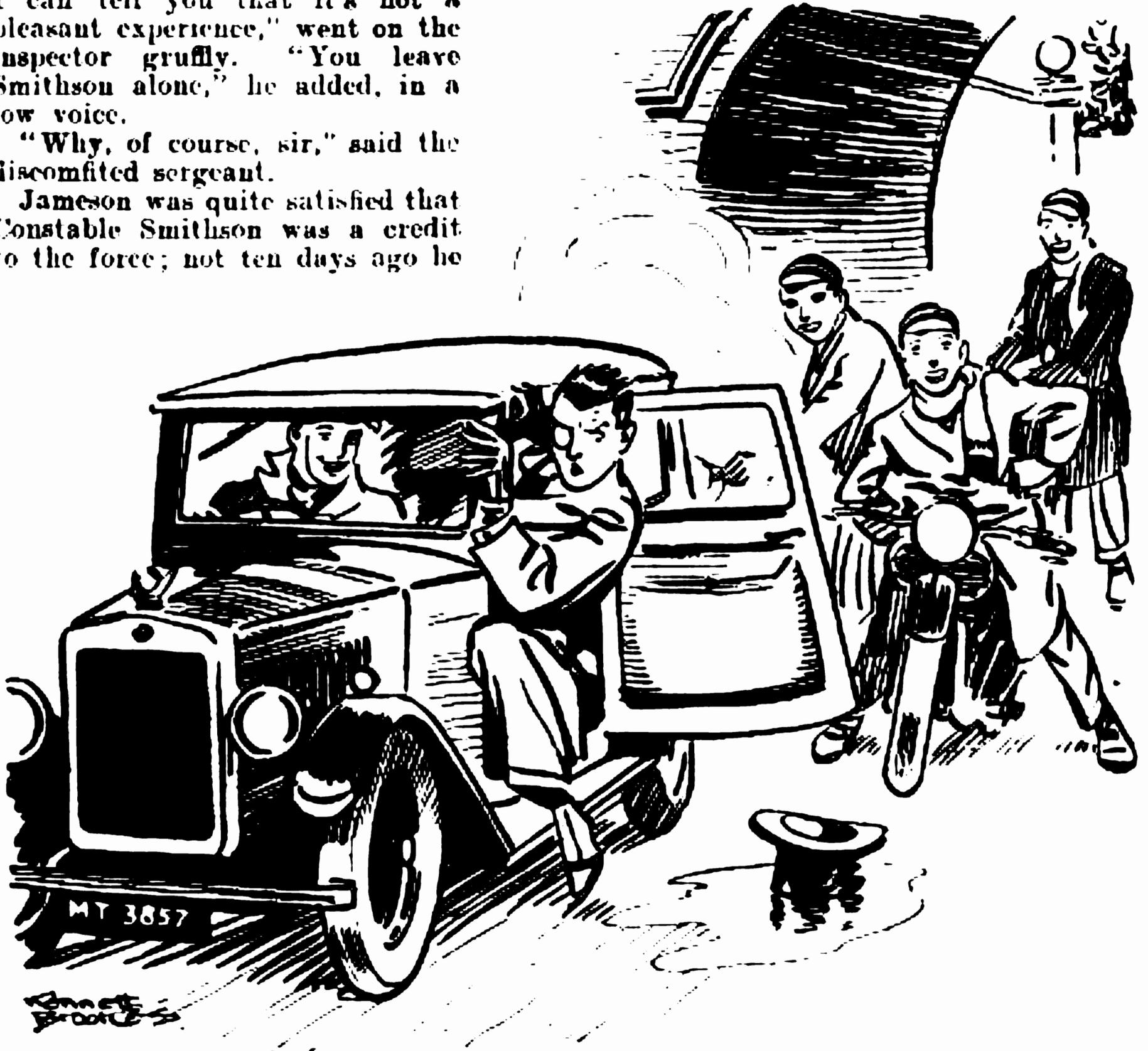
"I've had a gun pulled on me when I've been arresting a man, sergeant, and I can tell you that it's not a pleasant experience," went on the inspector gruffly. "You leave Smithson alone," he added, in a low voice.

"Why, of course, sir," said the discomfited sergeant.

Jameson was quite satisfied that Constable Smithson was a credit to the force; not ten days ago he

Bernard Forrest had not even been noticed by the other juniors. But he had seen everything and he had heard.

"By gad!" he muttered exultantly. "So that's it! That's why that cad, Cresswell, has been looking so queer lately! His father! That crook who just escaped from the police is Cresswell's father!"



Archie caught his head against the roof as he attempted to squeeze into the small car. With a howl of dismay he watched his topper fall into a pool of muddy water.

had stopped a runaway horse with conspicuous bravery. Smithson was all right.

And Tony Cresswell, turning back to join the other juniors, was aware of a great calmness within him. For he knew that there was no blood on his father's hands.

CHAPTER 4. Archie Insists!

THERE was one St. Frank's fellow present at that scene who viewed the whole incident with gloating satisfaction

Forrest glowed with malicious joy. He had taken a dislike to Cresswell ever since Tony had come to the school—mainly because he, Tony, had made Forrest look small. Besides, Tony was "thick" with Nipper and Handforth and the rest of that crowd. This very fact, alone, was enough to make Bernard Forrest bitter.

For Bernard Forrest was a singularly mean-spirited young rascal. His greatest joys in life were those occasioned by the misfortunes of his fellows.

He had hardly been able to believe his ears at first; but there could be no mis-

taking Tony Cresswell's actions. Without doubt, that crook was Cresswell's father.

Forrest remembered a scene in the Common-room, at St. Frank's, when the new boy had been questioned about his father's profession. Tony had been unable to say what his father did for a living.

"Ye gods and little fishes! No wonder the cad was up a gum-tree!" muttered Forrest. "By the look of things, he didn't even know that his father was a gangster!"

The cad of Study A promised himself some keen enjoyment over this big discovery.

Tony, meanwhile, found himself surrounded by Travers, Potts, Nipper, and the others. Everybody was tremendously relieved to learn that the constable had not been injured.

"It's all right, Cresswell," said Travers gently. "Your pater didn't—"

"Oh, what's the good of talking?" interrupted Tony miserably. "If—if you don't mind, Glenthorne, I'll go back to the school."

Archie jammed his monocle into his eye.

"But I do mind, dash you!" he replied promptly. "You're coming with us, old thing, and don't you dashed well forget it!"

"But—but I shall only be a wet blanket —"

"Allow me to say, you frightful chump, that you're a frightful chump!" said Archie firmly. "I'm not going to let you stagger back to the school so that you can brood. You're coming along to the tea-party—and allow me to tell you that we're most frightfully late. I insist, old scream."

"It's good of you, Glenthorne, but I'd rather not," muttered Tony. "I'm terribly worried. As soon as I saw those policemen I guessed the truth. Ever since that affair on the rajah's yacht, the police have been after that—that gang. And to think that my father—"

"It's not your fault, Cresswell," said Nipper quietly. "We chaps aren't going to pretend that we admire your father; it's pretty clear that he's a wrong 'un. But that's not your fault; and, if you'll let us, we'll do all we can to cheer you up."

"Rather!" said Handforth heartily.

Tony looked at them through a kind of mist.

"You're a decent lot," he said, almost choking. "I—I was afraid that you'd cut me dead. I mean, my dad's a crook, and—and—"

Suddenly his expression hardened, and he took a tighter grip of himself.

"It's no good blinking at the facts," he went on pluckily. "It's a terrible shock to me to know what my father really is. There's good in him, I know; he's always been a marvellous pal to me. I—I never dreamed that he had this side to his character—that he'd deliberately attempt to kill a man."

"Look here, old man, you won't do yourself any good by talking like that," said Nipper gruffly. "Pull yourself together! Don't take so much for granted. Perhaps your father purposely aimed wide—perhaps he only tried to scare the constable."

"Yes, of course," said Tony eagerly. "That's possible, isn't it?"

"Not only possible, but I think it's pretty evident that it's the truth," said Handforth. "Your pater couldn't have missed if he had really wanted to kill the bobby. You set your mind easy."

And thus, in this friendly way, the boys did a great deal towards restoring Tony Cresswell to something like his normal self.

"I'd like to know what the rotters have done with my car, though," said Handforth fiercely. "She'll never be the same bus again! The chances are, they'll smash her up!"

Now that Tony was calmer, Handforth felt that he could express his mind on the subject of his beloved Minor.

"I'm not so sure that I'll come to your giddy party, Archie," he went on. "I want to hang about, and if my car is found—"

"Absolute drivel, old chappie," interrupted Archie. "What good can you do? It might be hours before the constabulary trace the dashed vehicle. Some of these lads will be kind enough to give us lifts on their pillions, what? Let's go! I mean to say, I absolutely insist."

CHAPTER 5.

At Glenthorne Manor!

GLENTHORNE MANOR was a splendid old pile; indeed, one of the most noble mansions in the county.

Although not a titled family, the Glenthornes were true aristocrats. For centuries they had been a family of great soldiers.

Colonel Glenthorne was enormously wealthy, for not only did he own vast estates round and about Bannington, but he had much valuable property in the

heart of London. He had served in South Africa, in India, and in Egypt. He had won the V.C., to say nothing of the D.S.O., and he was a soldier to his backbone.

It was one of Colonel Glenthorne's sorrows that his youngest son, Archie, should be such a "spineless young nincompoop"—to use the colonel's own words. But the St. Frank's fellows knew—better than Archie's own father, perhaps—that Archie was a Glenthorne in every inch of him.

The lawns in front of the great mansion, even at this time of the year, were like velvet; the drive was perfectly gravelled, and there was, indeed, some-

NELSON LEE, DETECTIVE, TAKES THE TRAIL . . .

thing rather awe inspiring about this fine old English home.

It was Ferris, the butler, who opened the great door to the young guests. Ferris was well known to them, and he unbent to the extent of smiling benignly—for Ferris, really, was a most dignified individual.

"I'm frightfully afraid we're frightfully late, what, Ferris, old thing?" said Archie.

"No later than I expected, Master Archibald," replied Ferris frankly.

"Eh? I mean, dash it— Oh, well, perhaps you're right," said Archie. "We'll let it pass."

The young guests were welcomed pleasantly by Archie's mother, and boisterously by Archie's father.

Colonel Barclay Glenthorne, V.C., D.S.O., was tall and straight, and his face was florid and bronzed. A bristling white moustache adorned his upper lip, and his manner was invariably noisy.

"What's all this we hear?" he demanded. "I understand that you boys witnessed that infernal police raid? Dolts! Blunderers! So the criminals escaped?"

"Oh, absolutely," said Archie. "You see, pater, it was like this—"

"I'm not talking to you, young man," said the colonel, frowning.

"Really, old thing— I mean, dash it—"

"All you can do is to utter all sorts of meaningless and fatuous ejaculations," said the colonel sternly. "Be quiet, Archibald! Go into a corner, and fall asleep! I suppose you know that you're no earthly good in the world?"

"Oh, really! I mean to say, isn't that somewhat blue round the edges?" protested Archie. "Dash it, no good in the world, what? I provide Phipps with a job, don't I?"

"Well, there's that," admitted his father reluctantly. "And jobs, just now, aren't any too easy to find. Upon my word! It's the first time I knew you had anything to your credit, Archibald! Now be quiet. These other boys can answer my questions—and they won't use five hundred words where five will suffice."

"Oh, well, a chappie can't eat and talk at the same time," said Archie resignedly. "I must say these tomato sandwiches look priceless."

"You've heard about the raid, then, sir?" asked Nipper.

"The inspector 'phoned me up," replied the colonel, nodding. "It was I who signed the warrant, as a matter of fact. I never did think much of Jameson. Blundering idiot! Just like him to let those criminals escape."

"I think you're a bit hard on the inspector, sir," said Travers. "Those crooks were very daring."

The boys knew that all this was very painful to Tony, but they could not avoid it. The colonel was intensely interested, and he reconsidered his opinion of Inspector Jameson when he had all the facts.

This conversation, of course, naturally led to an account of the affair on the rajah's yacht. Mrs. Glenthorne was particularly interested, and Handforth was in his element. Assisted by the other fellows, he gave all the details of that

. . . IN NEXT WEEK'S EXTRA LONG STORY!

exciting adventure. Not that the other fellows had much chance of getting a word in edgeways.

"How really remarkable," said Archie's mother, as the meal proceeded. "So you have encountered those terrible men twice."

Archie was beginning to believe that Tony had been right. Perhaps it would have been better if Tony had returned to the school. All this talk was agony for him.

"I've heard so much about this wonderful rajah," went on Archie's mother. "They say that he is a very charming young man."

"He's a corker, Mrs. Glenthorne," said Handforth heartily.

"A—cr—what?"

"He's the real goods," continued Edward Oswald. "Only a young man—and he's a sportsman to his finger-tips."

"Did he show you those amazing emeralds of his?" asked Mrs. Glenthorne eagerly.

"Well, no," replied Nipper. "We knew they were on board, of course—that's why the crooks raided the yacht. But I understand that the 'Green Stars of Ghar,' as the emeralds are called, are well worth seeing."

"I'd love to see them," said Archie's mother fervently. "I have a passion for emeralds."

"Huh!" grunted the colonel. "Far better not see them, my dear. They'd only make you envious. These Indian princes have so many jewels that they don't know what to do with them. The Ghar emeralds are worth a million. They've been in the family for nearly a thousand years, I believe. Marvellous stones."

"I'm rather envious of you boys," said Archie's mother, smiling. "But I'm afraid the rajah won't invite me aboard his yacht. How I would love to go—just to have a glimpse of those perfectly wonderful stones."

And Tony Cresswell, listening dully to this conversation, was destined to remember it again—and very soon.

CHAPTER 6.

His Secret Known!

IT was an intense relief to the troubled Tony when, in mid-evening, the young guests took their departure from Glenthorne Manor. Tony had borne up well, and the host and hostess had not noticed anything particularly striking about him—except, perhaps, that he was pale and ill-looking.

On the way through the town, Handforth called at the police-station. He was disappointed—and rather indignant—to discover that nothing further had been heard about his Morris Minor.

"Well, it's a bit thick, inspector," he grumbled. "I shall jolly well hold you responsible for my car, you know! If anything has happened to it——"

"That's all right, young man," interrupted the inspector gruffly. "We'll let you know as soon as we get any information."

"That's a fat consolation," grumbled Handforth.

Tony was relieved when he heard that his father and the other three crooks had eluded capture. Tony was in a peculiar position. Much as he wanted his father to escape he knew, in his heart, that Red Kress deserved punishment. The unfortunate boy was gravely troubled—and, certainly, he was in no condition to face the unexpected storm which broke as soon as the party arrived back at St. Frank's.

"Better do our prep straight away, I suppose" said Nipper, after they had put their machines away, and were in the Ancient House lobby. "That's the worst of visiting; we get behind with our work."

"It's a pity they can't let us miss prep at times like this," said Handforth, with a sniff. "How do you suppose I can do any work this evening? I'm too worried about my Minor."

"What's he been up to?" asked Travers.

"Eh?"

"You said that you were worried about your minor."

"You silly ass!" said Handforth, glaring. "Wouldn't you be worried if you lost a Minor?"

"Well, well! Is he lost?" inquired Travers. "I shouldn't bother about him, Handy. Willy is well capable of looking after himself——"

"Willy!" howled Handforth. "I didn't mean my minor—I meant my Minor!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it may be clear to you brainy chaps, but I give it up," said Travers, with a shrug. "Come on, dear old fellow. Prep."

He and Jimmy Potts and Tony Cresswell went to Study H. Tony was clenching and unclenching his hands as Travers poked the fire.

"I can't do any prep!" he muttered. "My mind is all in a whirl. After what happened this evening——"

Before he could get any further the door opened, and Gulliver looked in. If anything, Gulliver was looking more unpleasant than usual—and that is saying a lot. He was flushed, and the look he bestowed upon Tony Cresswell was supercilious and scornful.

"You're wanted—you!" he said rudely.

Travers glanced round,

"There are three 'yous' in this study," he pointed out. "We all have names, too."

"I'm talking to this—this outsider," said Gulliver, indicating Tony. "He's



“Red” Kress and his gangsters jumped into Handforth’s car and drove away at a furious speed. “Hi, come back!” yelled Handy frantically.

wanted in the Common-room. Wanted urgently, too.”

“Who wants me?” asked Tony.

Albert Gulliver ignored him.

“You understand, don’t you?” he said, looking at Travers and Potts. “This precious pal of yours is wanted.”

“I don’t like the tone of your voice, Ugly,” said Travers. “Cresswell may be wanted, but you’re not wanted. Clear!”

“But I tell you——”

“Clear out!” roared Travers violently.

He shrewdly suspected why Tony was wanted, and he was suddenly angry. Gulliver, with a little gasp, bolted. Tony looked at his study mates in anguish.

“The other chaps must have found out,” he said, in a low voice.

Before they could reply, Nipper looked in.

“Awfully sorry, Cresswell, old man, but I think you’d better come to the Common-room,” said the Remove skipper quietly. “There’s a bit of—trouble.”

“I’ll come,” said Tony, very quietly.

Nipper gave the others a significant glance, and they all went out. From the direction of the Common-room came the sound of uproar. They went in, and they found that a large number of West House Removites had come over for the occa-

sion, and the majority of them were “nobodies”—such as Doyle and Owen major and Canham. The uproar died away as though by magic as Tony Cresswell walked in.

“There he is!” said Bernard Forrest jeeringly. “Very clever with his conjuring tricks—eh? It’s marvellous how he makes quid notes disappear by a flick of his fingers, isn’t it? It’s wonderful how he grabs such things as eggs and half-crowns out of the air! I wonder where he gets the quid notes and half-crowns from?”

Tony looked at Forrest with burning eyes.

“What do you mean—exactly?” he asked, although he knew just what Forrest meant.

“Quite an expert at unlocking doors—without the aid of keys, aren’t you?” went on Forrest contemptuously. “I hear that you can open safes, too. By gad! And you’ve even admitted that your father taught you how to do these handy little tricks!”

“If you’re trying to hint——”

“I’m hinting nothing,” broke in Forrest loudly. “Your father is a burglar, a gunman, a crook—and you cannot deny it!”

CHAPTER 7.

The Form Against Him!

HANDFORTH, red of face, pushed his way forward.

"Just a minute, Forrest——" he began.

"You can keep out of this!" snapped Bernard Forrest. "This is an affair for the whole Form—and don't you forget it!"

"Hear, hear!" went up a swelling murmur.

"I was in Bannington this evening," continued Forrest. "I saw those crooks escape from the police, and I heard Cresswell run forward and shout 'Dad' when one of them tried to kill that policeman!"

Tony felt suddenly weak, and everything seemed hopeless.

"Well?" came Forrest's mocking voice. "Do you deny that your father is a crook?"

"No!" said Tony, in a low tone. "How can I deny it?"

"There you are! He admits it!" shouted Gulliver shrilly. "Did you hear him, you chaps? He admits that he's the son of a crook! And he's a St. Frank's chap, and we've got to treat him as an equal!"

"That's not necessary at all," said Travers promptly. "Don't put yourself to the trouble, Gulliver. Cresswell could never be your equal."

"I should hope not!" said Gulliver, with fine scorn.

"No; he could never be such a rotter as you."

"What!"

"You heard what I said," snapped Travers. "What sort of cads do you call yourselves? You—and you—and you—and you!" he went on, pointing to Forrest, Gulliver, Bell, and Gore-Pearce in turn. "You seem to be the ringleaders in this bright little affair. Do you think it's clever to add to Cresswell's misery? Don't you think he's suffering enough already?"

"Suffering!" jeered Forrest. "I'll bet he's hand in glove with his gaol-bird pater! He was in the plot to rob the rajah——"

"Just a minute!" interrupted Nipper grimly. "You've no right to say that, Forrest. Cresswell knew no more about that job than we did. He had the shock of his life when he found that one of the crooks was his own father."

"Why should we believe that?" asked Forrest sneeringly. "Like father like son! Cresswell's pater is a thief!"

"Stop!" shouted Tony thickly. "Don't you dare to say another word against my father!"

"Why, you silly fool——"

"I don't care how bad things look—I don't care how my father earns his living!" went on Tony passionately. "All I know is that he has always been the finest pal any chap could have! With me he's been straight—he's been honest and true."

A silence fell, for there was something in the boy's impassioned vehemence which compelled attention.

"Ever since I was a tiny kid I've never known my father to tell me a lie, or to do a mean action," went on Tony, his voice thick with emotion. "He's always been true blue with me. I've loved him, and respected him, and never once has he let me down! I can't believe it, even now—I can't believe that he's a thief and an associate of crooks. And if anybody dares to insult my father, I'll——"

"I like that!" shouted Forrest angrily. "Insult him—eh? How can you insult a rotten crook——"

Tony leapt forward, and his fist, swinging with deadly force, crashed into Forrest's face. The cad of the Remove went over like a ninepin, roaring with pain and fury.

"I warned you!" panted Tony. "Don't you dare to say that again!"

"Grab him!" yelled Gulliver shrilly.

"Yes, yes! Hold him back! Smash him!"

"No fear!" roared Handforth, elbowing his way through the excited juniors. "This is going to be a fight! Stand back, you miserable rotters! Go it, Cresswell! Give Forrest a hiding!"

"Yes, let's have fair play," appealed Nipper.

But for once the forces against them were too heavy. Forrest, picking himself up, and scowling evilly, shouted encouragement to his followers. Tony Cresswell was seized and dragged back, and Handforth and Nipper and Travers and a few others who were eager to go to Tony's assistance, found themselves barred by a seething mass of excited boys.

"I'll make you pay for that, you thieving cad!" snarled Forrest. "Do you think I'm going to fight you? Do you think I'd soil my hands by fighting with a burglar's son? We're going to see that you're kicked out of the school. Understand? We don't want you here!"

"Yah!"

"Son of a crook!"

"If you had any sense of decency, you'd clear out of your own accord!"

"Hear, hear!"

"You're a disgrace to the school!"

The storm of shouting was deafening, bewildering, and Tony Cresswell, backing away before that infuriated mob, was horrified.

His brain was throbbing. What had he done to deserve this? These fellows knew nothing against him. And then the bitter truth came to him.

It was the sin of the father being visited upon the child!

TONY CRESSWELL stood back like an animal at bay; he was almost frightened by the ferocity of the demonstration against him.

He hardly realised that it was the minority which made most of the noise; all the cads were banded against him, and a number of ordinarily decent fellows had been carried away, and they were acting in a manner which was not true to their real character. They would be ashamed later on, when they cooled down.

"I've got something to say here!" shouted Nipper angrily. "What's the matter with you idiots?"

"You're going to defend the cad, I suppose?" yelled Hubbard.

"Why should I defend Cresswell?" retorted Nipper. "Cresswell's done nothing that requires any defence. That's just the whole point. What have you against him?"

"Yes, what?" bawled Handforth, glaring round.

"He's the son of a criminal!" shouted Forrest. "Isn't that enough?"

"Don't you think he's suffering enough agony from that discovery—without you thoughtless rotters adding to his misery?" demanded Nipper. "I'm satisfied that Cresswell is true blue. I don't care what his father is. Cresswell isn't responsible for his father's actions. Not a fellow in this room can name one dishonourable or dishonest act that Cresswell has done."

"Well, we don't want him at St. Frank's!" said Bell viciously.

"Don't take any notice of them, Cresswell," said Nipper angrily. "You're worth the whole pack of them."

"You're as bad as he is, for sticking up for him!" shouted Forrest. "We don't want him in the Remove!"

"It's not for you to sit in judgment on Cresswell!" retorted Nipper. "I'm standing by him——"

"And so am I!" yelled Handforth.

"Count me in," drawled Travers.

Jimmy Potts, Tommy Watson, Tregellis-West, Church, McClure, and a good many others rallied round the new boy in this hour of trial. He warmed towards them.

"It's—it's decent of you fellows——" he began.

"Rats! What is there decent about it?" demanded Handforth. "If these other fellows weren't snobs and cads——"

"You can jeer all you like," said Forrest. "But you'll find that we have the general body of opinion behind us. Not merely the Remove, but the Fourth and the Fifth and the Sixth! We don't want the son of a crook amongst us — as an equal!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Clear out, Cresswell!"

"You're not wanted!"

"We'll give you until to-morrow to make up your mind," went on Bernard Forrest. "Either you get out on your own accord, or we'll rag you so unmercifully that your life will be a misery. We're not going to tolerate you in the Remove, Cresswell, and don't you forget it."

"Hear hear!"

Tony, his face pale and drawn, turned to the friends who were clustered round him.

"I—I can't stand it!" he muttered. "Let me get out—please!"

"We'll all get out," said Nipper. "These cads make me sick!"

And Tony, surrounded by a considerable crowd, moved towards the door.

"Well, anyway, we're going to sew up our pockets!" yelled Gulliver. "We're going to put new locks on our cupboards—and burglar-proof locks, too!"

"Don't wait," growled Handforth. "I'll join you chaps in a minute."

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

"Wipe up the floor with that cad, Gulliver!"

"Don't do it, old man," said Nipper. "You'll only have the whole mob on you! It's not worth it. Let them jeer—let them howl! They're not worth fighting!"

"By George! You're right!" agreed Handforth disgustedly.

And so they went out, leaving the Common-room in an uproar. They went to

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Study H, and poor Tony, suffering as he had done earlier in the evening, felt that he could bear no more.

"I can't understand it," he muttered dully. "I can't understand it. I've done nothing to them. Yet I suppose they're right—"

"They're not right—they're wrong!" said Nipper.

"I oughtn't to stay in the school," went on Tony, suddenly bracing himself. "My father's a crook—you know it, and I know it. And now everybody else knows it. I can't stay here," he went on. "Those fellows are right, I tell you! I'm going!"

"Yes, my son—you're going to bed!" said Nipper firmly. "And, look here, you've got to give us your word of honour that you won't do anything dotty."

"Really, I'd better go," said Tony miserably. "You heard those fellows—

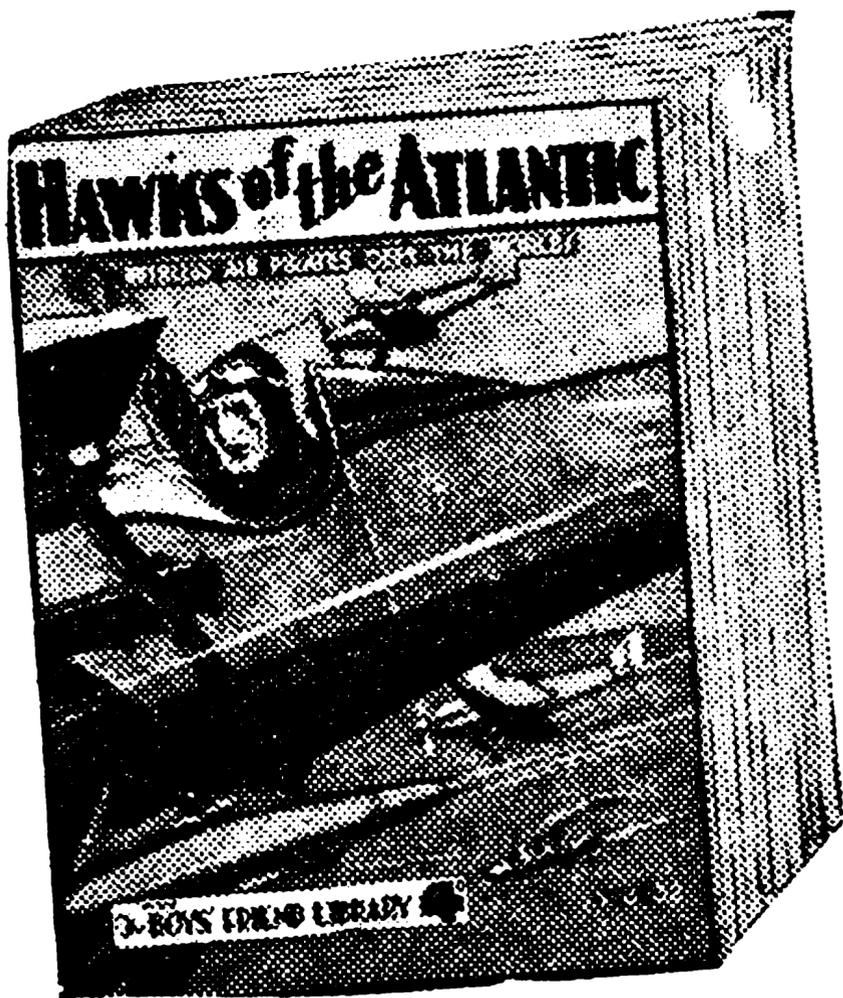
and before long the rest of the school will be saying the same things. Life won't be worth living for me!"

"And where do you suppose you're going?" asked Handforth, glaring. "What are you going to do—run away?"

"I don't care what I do—or where I go," replied the boy wretchedly. "Nothing matters—now. Knowing what my father is— And yet I can't believe it!" he added fiercely. "Dad's always been so fine—so wonderful! I can't believe it, even now! There must be some sort of explanation—he must have got mixed up with these crooks, and he couldn't help himself— Oh, I'm mad! Didn't I see him with that automatic? Didn't I see him fire—"

"You won't do yourself any good by going on like that," growled Nipper. "I can understand your feelings, old man.

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CHAPTER 8.

Handforth is Happy!

TONY CRESSWELL looked round at the juniors with warm, grateful eyes.

"You're bricks—all of you!" he muttered.

He was so full of gratitude that he hardly knew what to say. It was fine, indeed, to have these staunch friends in such an hour as this.

Tony was prevailed upon to go straight to bed—a night's rest would do him good—and he went upstairs to the dormitory with Travers and Potts. The others separated and went to their own studies.

"I believe the chap's right," said Church, when he and Handforth and McClure were alone.

"Right?" repeated Handforth. "Right about what?"

"About going away from the school——"

"Why, you miserable rotter——"

"Keep your hair on, Handy," growled Church. "I've been trying to put myself in Cresswell's place. What sort of life will he have at St. Frank's after this? It's all very well for us to rally round him. He's a decent chap, and we know it. But do you really think that he'll ever be able to live down his disgrace?"

"What disgrace?" asked Handforth, staring.

"Oh, don't try to fool yourself," said Church soberly. "I'm all for Cresswell—I think he's been treated rottenly by those cads. But can't you understand, Handy, that it'll go on week after week—term after term? Even those chaps who don't openly sneer at him will avoid him. He'll be a marked man from to-night."

"H'm! I hadn't looked at it like that," admitted Handforth grudgingly.

"There are other things to think of, too," put in McClure. "Supposing his father is arrested? It's pretty certain he will be, you know. What then? He'll be sent up for trial, and he'll go to prison. Cresswell's position will be a lot worse then—because he'll have a father who is a convict."

"Rot!" said Handforth, with sudden vehemence. "Piffle! Bunkum! I don't see that it makes any difference to Cresswell himself. He'll still be the same. By George! If he's driven away from St. Franks by a lot of cads, I'll jolly well leave the school myself."

"Well, I don't suppose there'd be a great outcry about it," said Church, with brutal frankness. "The school would go on just the same without you, Handy."

"Some chaps would say that it would go on better," remarked Mac.

Before the outraged Handforth could think of a suitable reply, the door opened, and Fenton of the Sixth looked in.

"Oh, you've heard about it, have you?" asked Handforth aggressively.

"About Cresswell, you mean? Yes."

"Well, look here, Fenton, if you're going to be down on the chap because his pater——"

"Why should I be down on him?" interrupted Fenton quietly. "I'm sorry for the kid. It's rotten rough luck on him. I'm afraid he'll go through a pretty tough time."

"By George! I'm glad to hear you say that," said Handforth eagerly.

"What did you expect me to say?" demanded the school captain, with some annoyance. "It may interest you to know that I've just come away from your Common-room—and I've tickled a few of those young blighters with my cane. I'm going up to Cresswell now—to have a quiet word with him. The poor kid is feeling just about done up."

Handforth & Co. warmed towards the kindly skipper. Yet it was just like Fenton to take a personal interest in the new boy's misfortunes.

"Oh, by the way, I nearly forgot what I came about," went on Fenton. "You're wanted on the 'phone, Handforth."

"Eh? Who wants me?"

"The police," said Fenton, shaking his head. "Things have come to a pretty pass, my lad, when you're wanted by the police!"

"Why didn't you tell me?" yelled Handforth excitedly. "I'll bet it's about my car!"

It was. Inspector Jameson, at the other end of the wire, informed the clated Handforth that the Morris Minor, quite unharmed, had been found abandoned on Bannington Moor. The car was at the police station now, and Handforth would be able to collect it on the morrow.

"You're sure she's all right?" asked the junior eagerly.

"Not even scratched, young 'un," replied the inspector. "You see, those men daren't go far in a car of that sort—they knew that we should have all the roads watched. They only used her to get away from the immediate neighbourhood. They realised that they would be safer on foot."

"Have you found those wanted men?" asked Handforth breathlessly.

"No, worse luck," admitted the inspector. "But I don't think they can elude us for long. Every main road and every railway station is being watched. They've either taken to the moor or to the woods. We'll get them in the end."

Handforth hung up with mingled relief and anxiety. And although he knew it was quite wrong of him, he had a sneaking hope that Tony Cresswell's father would get clear away.

CHAPTER 9.

Four Men in Hiding!

ON Mr. Jeremiah Holt's farm, separated by a ploughed field and a couple of meadows from the farm buildings, stood an isolated barn.

It was a typical rural structure, with walls of tarred weatherboards, and a thatched roof. There were big double doors, padlocked at night, and the interior of the barn was littered with sundry heaps of mangold-wurzels, swede-turnips, and so forth. In one corner stood a chaff-cutter, in another, a number of rusty old ploughs, and in another an equally rusty tractor.

There was a much newer barn near the farmhouse with brick walls and a corrugated iron roof. Despite the fact that this edifice was a blot on the landscape, it was the apple of Farmer Holt's eye.

The other barn, with its weatherbeaten but picturesque thatched roof, was always contemptuously referred to as "the old barn," and its very isolation, in Farmer Holt's eyes, invested it with disagreeable properties. In wet weather, for instance, it was almost impossible to get near the barn, owing to the atrociously muddy condition of the one lane which led to it.

In the upper part of the barn there was a hay-loft, partially filled with hay, and, providing one was not too particular, that loft wasn't at all a bad place. There were bats in the rafters, of course, and a colony of rats regarded the barn as their own particular property—but four hunted men, badly wanted by the police, were not inclined to view these drawbacks in a spirit of carping criticism.

That loft was quiet, it was an excellent place of refuge—and the hay was comfortable.

"I'm not so sure that we're safe here, boys," muttered Dan Mason, for the twentieth time. "Supposing the cops come? What chance shall we have?"

"Beggars can't be choosers," replied Red Kress shortly. "We ought to be thankful we've got a roof over our heads."

"We're done—we're finished—that's what we are," said Gyp Bertelli in a wail. "We'll never get to London—the cops are keeping too good a look-out, and if we stay here we shall starve to death. What's to be done?"

The others were silent. It was an humiliating position. Until that afternoon they had considered themselves to be fairly safe, but now, with warrants issued for their arrest, they were in a tight corner. As for their plans to steal the Green Stars of Ghar, these, of course, were knocked very thoroughly on the head.

"You birds make me sick," said Tony Cresswell's father suddenly. "We're safer here than anywhere else. The police won't think of looking for us so near at hand. And we've got to think of some plan, too."

"Plan?" asked Bliss, who was stoutish and comfort-loving. "What do you mean—plan? Think we can get hold of those emeralds now?"

"There might be a way," said Kress slowly.

"You're crazy!" snapped Dan Mason. "We're sunk—that's what we are! After that mess-up the other night, we don't stand a dog's chance."

Ambrose Bliss groaned.

"And to think that we nearly had the emeralds!" he said dismally. "All those cursed boys! How were we to know that they were on the yacht on that particular night? They ruined everything."

"Nearly got me, too," growled Tony's father. "I had to swim for it."

"I can't understand how the cops got on to us," said Bertelli. "We thought we were safe in that boarding-house. Gosh! You took a chance, Red, when you pulled a gun on that cop!"

"What are you kicking about?" snapped Kress. "If I hadn't pulled that gun, we wouldn't have got away!"

The others were silent for a while. They knew perfectly well that Kress was right. They owed their liberty to him.

"About that shooting," said Dan Mason suddenly. "You've been darned close about it, Red, haven't you? You wouldn't answer our questions when we talked to you before. Who was that kid who ran half across the road?"

"Forget it," said Kress sharply.

"That be hanged for a tale," retorted Dan. "That kid shouted 'Dad!' when he spotted you, and the more I think of it, the more I realise that he looked a bit like you."



“You’re wanted in the Common-room—you outsider!” sneered Gulliver, addressing Tony Cresswell. Tony blanched. His dreadful secret was known to the school.

“Yes, and there was that Indian steward we bribed—that chap Jehan,” put in Bliss suddenly. “He said one of the kids looked like you, Red, and you half-throttled him. Spill it! That kid is your son.”

Red Kress was silent. He had been expecting this, and if those other men could have seen him they would have been alarmed by the ferocious light in his eyes.

IN the darkness of the hayloft Red Kress waited.

He knew that it would be dangerous to deny his relationship to Tony Cresswell, for such a denial would not be believed, and his confederates would instantly become suspicious. Crooks are sceptical people, and these men would imagine, perhaps, that Kress was attempting in some way to double-cross them. They could not conceive it possible that he, a safe-breaker, should have a son at St. Frank’s.

Ever since Tony had shouted out to him, Kress had been expecting trouble. But

he and his companions had been on the move; there had been very little time for conversation. Now that they were in the safe haven of this loft, however, the other three were thinking. Red Kress knew that the time for a full explanation was at hand.

And it wasn’t going to be easy.

“Better come clean, Red!” came Bertelli’s voice.

“You fool! Do you think I’ve anything to hide?” snapped Red Kress, his voice full of ferocity. “Yes, that’s my kid! I’m not denying it. And I’m telling you right here—all of you—that if you lift a finger to hurt my Tony I’ll kill you!”

“Gee! I don’t get it!” complained Gyp. “A guy like you having a kid at a big English school! You never told us, Red —”

“Why should I tell you?” demanded Kress harshly. “What business was it of yours?”

“That kid helped to spoil our game——” began Bliss.

"Don't make me laugh!" interrupted Red Kress impatiently. "The kid knew nothing—he didn't even know that his own father was one of the crooks. Do you think I would have gone aboard that night if I had known he was there? Gosh! I'd rather have lost my right arm!"

"Say, are you telling us that he didn't know what you were—until then?" asked Gyp.

"That's what I'm telling you," replied Red Kress grimly. "Listen to me, boys! I'll tell you something. I'm not trying to hide the fact that I've got a kid! I'm proud of him—I love him. Yes, he's my kid, and I love him!" he repeated passionately. "Guys like you don't understand that, hey? But that boy of mine is clean—clean right through. Gosh, I didn't want him to know what I am—how I live!"

They were silent.

"When that boy was a baby his mother died," went on Red, becoming calmer. "I was in the game then—oh, yes, right in it. I promised his mother I'd bring up Tony clean, and I've kept my word. No matter where I was—France, Germany, America—I kept the truth from that

kid. I sent him to the best private schools, I gave him a high-sounding name—he's Anthony Cresswell, and he thinks I'm a real swell gentleman. I've spent thousands on him, and I've set my heart on giving him a good education, bringing him up honest. I'm bad, but that's no reason why he should be bad. Aw, I don't expect you guys to understand—"

"I guess we do, Red," said Bertelli gently.

"We didn't think you were that kind of a feller, Red," added Bliss, in a surprised voice.

"Well, I am," said Kress fiercely. "Can't you understand my feelings now? That kid, after all these years, has got to know what I am. It hurts, boys—it hurts bad. He's been at these boarding-schools, and at holiday times I've always taken care to be clear of any job. Tony and I have spent those holidays together—he thinking that I'm straight. I sent him to St. Frank's because it was a swell college—and then, by the rottenest luck, the rajah's yacht puts into Caistowe. I didn't even know, then, that Caistowe was so near St. Frank's. Remember that evening in Bannington, when I hustled you

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fellows away? That's when I first saw Tony."

"Yes, we got thinkin' things, too," said Bliss. "Why didn't you tell us this before, Red?"

"Because there wasn't any need," replied Kress. "But I'm telling you now—and if you hurt Tony, I'll kill you for it! We're pals, Tony and I—always have been pals. It'll take everything I know to square myself with him."

"You can't do it," said Dan Mason. "The kid knows—and there's an end of it. Say, that school isn't far from here, is it?" he added, as a sudden idea came to him. "Maybe the kid could help us!"

"Forget it!" rapped out Kress. "I'm not having that kid mixed up in this game."

"But, listen, Red," urged Dan eagerly. "Maybe he knows of a better place where we can hide—say, for a week. He'd do anything for you——"

"No!" interrupted Tony's father. "I've told you that I won't have the boy mixed up with us. That's final!"

But it wasn't, for Dan Mason, by a logical sequence of thought, had hit upon an idea—an idea that was to make Tony the means of helping these crooks to secure the rajah's priceless jewels!

RED KRESS climbed down the rickety ladder to the main part of the barn, and a minute later he was outside in the cold night air. That old-fashioned padlock which secured the doors had offered no resistance to the crooks when they had come across the old barn.

Red Kress walked slowly at first, as one deep in thought. He was on his way to St. Frank's—to see Tony. How he hated the task before him! The thought that he was going to ask Tony—his own son—to help him and his gang in their nefarious activities appalled him.

In vain Red Kress had argued with the others after Dan Mason had suggested his idea. Keep Tony out of this or there would be trouble! But it was one against three, and those three were determined; also this was the only way in which the rajah's emeralds could be secured. And so Kress had agreed.

Cautiously he approached the school.

No light was showing from any of the buildings. St. Frank's was asleep.

Like a shadow, Kress slithered over the school wall, and dropped into the Triangle. Unerringly he made his way into the West Square, and soon he stood beneath the window of the dormitory where he knew Tony was sleeping.

With the agility of a monkey he climbed the ivy.

CHAPTER 10.

The Midnight Visitor!

BED-TIME had brought a measure of relief to Tony Cresswell.

He was thankful for the unusual dormitory system at St. Frank's. Junior boys, in most big schools, slept in great dormitories, but at St. Frank's the Removites were provided with comfortable little bed-rooms. Three fellows in each was the customary rule.

Tony, therefore, slept with Vivian Travers and Jimmy Potts—and they were friends. He felt that he could not have endured a crowd, particularly with most of the crowd antagonistic.

Fenton had spoken kindly to him, and the school captain's comforting words had gone a long way towards banishing any ideas he had had of running away from St. Frank's.

Then Travers and Potts had come to bed, and very considerately they had confined their conversation to football, the week's wireless programmes, and similar subjects.

Now, when it was nearly midnight, Travers and Potts were sleeping soundly, but Tony did not sleep. He could not even close his eyes. He tried to repeatedly, but it was an effort. He felt better lying on his back, his eyes wide open, staring at the gloom of the ceiling.

His mind was far too active for sleep.

He tried to picture his father as he had always known him—and then he saw the man who had "pulled" that gun on the policeman. They were the same, and yet—so different. He even found himself wildly hoping that there was some sensational explanation of all this—that his father, perhaps, had fallen into the hands of criminals, and that one of those criminals was impersonating him. But even as he formulated these fantastic theories, he dismissed them.

More than once an impulse seized him to get up and to wander out into the night. Why should he be resting in this comfortable bed whilst his father, a fugitive, was fleeing through the darkness like a hunted animal?

If only he could learn something definite!

He sat up suddenly. A dim, vague shadow had shown itself for a moment at the window. Tony blinked. For a moment he thought that his imagination was playing tricks with him. The school

clock had just chimed the three-quarters. It was nearly midnight.

The shadow at the window became bulkier, and then, with a shock, Tony recognised the head and shoulders of a man! Somebody had climbed the ivy, and was now pulling himself up upon the wide stone window-ledge.

With his heart thudding rapidly, Tony sat up. He had not heard a sound, and again he had an impression that his imagination was playing tricks.

Creak!

The spell was broken, for suddenly the window gave forth a trifling sound as it was opened wider. This figure, then, was no imaginary intruder.

"Tony!" whispered a soft voice.

"Oh!" gasped the boy.

He leapt out of bed and ran across to the window. And now, at close quarters, he recognised the man who was perched precariously upon the window-sill.

"Dad!" panted Tony, almost choking.

"Hush, lad—hush!" warned Red Kress, inwardly startled and pained by the evidences of the boy's distress.

"Dad! Oh, dad!" muttered Tony, clutching at his father's arm. "I—I've been wondering—I thought—It's you, dad! Oh, you don't know how I've been longing to talk to you—"

"Easy, lad," muttered the man, his voice strangely husky. "Who else is there in this room?"

"Only two others—they're both sound asleep."

"Well, I'd better not come in—it's too risky," said Kress. "Can you dress quickly?"

"Yes—yes!"

"Slip anything on—just your trousers and jacket over your pyjamas," said the boy's father. "It's not cold. Then climb down the ivy. I'll be waiting for you. We've got to talk, lad."

Without another word Red Kress lowered himself from the sill, and vanished. Tony turned back into the dormitory, his eyes glowing, his heart thumping. That voice! The old voice he had known so well—full of kindness. Now, perhaps, he would learn something of the truth—for he persisted in telling himself that there must be something behind it all.

He was so excited that his fingers were all thumbs. In his desire to dress silently, he knocked his waistcoat off a chair, and his watch thudded noisily on the floor. Travers stirred, but did not awaken. Then Tony discovered that he had put his trousers on back to front. When he took them off he did so with such haste that he

turned them inside out. It seemed ages and ages before he was dressed. And all the time he was expecting his chums to awaken—and to question him. They would think he was running away! Well, he wouldn't tell them—

But what was the good of wasting time on such thoughts? Travers and Potts weren't even awake. He padded to the window, wearing tennis shoes, and he swarmed down the ivy with even greater agility than his father had displayed.

"Good lad! You've been quick!" whispered a voice, near by.

"Quick!" echoed Tony. "I—I thought I'd been an age!"

"Come along; we can't talk here."

Red Kress seized his son's willing arm, and they both slipped across the West Square, passed through the dark archway, and soon they were in the friendly blackness and isolation of the shrubbery.

"This will do," muttered Kress. "Tony, lad! I hate to drag you out like this—"

"Oh, dad, what do I care?" broke in Tony eagerly. "You're here! And we can talk! There's such a tremendous lot I want you to tell—"

"What's that?" hissed his father abruptly.

With one hand he seized the boy, and another hand was clapped over his mouth.

"Sorry, old chap," whispered Red, into Tony's ear, "but I can't take any chances. There's somebody—"

He broke off, for three figures had appeared amongst the trees.

"Better stick around here," murmured a voice. "Red can't be far off."

The men were the other three crooks, and clearly something was wrong, for they were breathless from hard running.

CHAPTER 11.

Tony Helps!

BEFORE Tony or his father could move or speak, one of the other men had spotted them, and he uttered a gasping cry of alarm.

"What's wrong with your nerves, Gyp you fool?" snarled Red. "Keep your trap shut, can't you?"

"It—it's you!" panted Bertelli, with relief.

"Who did you think it was—the Demon King?" retorted Red scathingly. "What are you fellows doing here? Didn't I tell you to stay—"

(Continued on page 24.)

This week's supply of fun by the St. Frank's laughter merchants!



HANDFORTH'S Weekly

No. 46. Vol. 2.

EDITORIAL STAFF.

March 5th, 1932.

THE EDITOR CHATS ABOUT NOTHING

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

DIRT TRACK RACING AT ST. FRANK'S

COMING—come—gone!

What has? I'll tell you.

The other day I had a brainwave. Nothing remarkable in that, because I'm always having brainwaves. But this was an extra-bright one—even for me.

"How about a special Lazy Slackers' number for the WEEKLY?" I said to myself; and nodded my agreement.

I told Mao and Churchy about it, and they thought it quite a novel stunt—to my surprise. They're usually scathingly rude when criticising my ideas.

"Better get Archie Glenthorne to write everything; he knows all about slacking," said Church.

"Rats!" I retorted. "This has got to be an extra-good number, written by an expert who knows what he's talking about. So obviously I'm the fellow best suited to do it."

For some obscure reason the two chumps laughed till their teeth rattled. I should still like to know why they laughed.

Anyway, I decided I wouldn't be selfish and do all the work myself, so I went round to my various contributors and explained the idea. They were enthusiastic—extremely so.

"And remember, I want all the copy in by Tuesday morning. If you don't, you get the sack!" I told them.

Of course, that awful threat had the desired effect. When I came down first thing Tuesday morning the fellows were all lined up outside the Editorial sanctum.

"Morning, sir; nice morning, sir," they chanted respectfully, and then each handed me his contribution in an envelope.

I opened them, and the sheets of paper inside were all—blank!

"What's the idea?" I roared.

"You said a special Lazy Slackers' number, didn't you?" inquired our tame poet.

"And there it is," chipped in our puzzle king. "A lazy slacker does nothing and we've written nothing."

So that's the story of my invisible Lazy Slackers' number. I hope you all enjoyed reading it.

Cheerily, E. O. H.

THE school enjoyed a new thrill the other day when Forrest and Travers had a race round the Triangle on their motor-bikes. Of course, it didn't last long—Mr. Wilkes saw to that—but it certainly was exciting while it lasted. Incidentally, they're both doing stiff impositions now and neither of them feels much like sitting astride a motor-cycle for some time.

Forrest started the ball rolling in the Common-room, when he boasted that his machine would do 70 m.p.h., and that nobody else could touch him for speed. Travers immediately accepted the challenge, and both of them being of a reckless nature, they decided to fight it out.

They got out their jiggers, and at the word "Go!" started whizzing round the Triangle. The irrepressible Edward Oswald Handforth had elected himself referee, and created a further sensation by careering round the track in his Morris Minor. Naturally, the other two easily outsped him, and the enthralled spectators were reminded of the hare and the tortoise.

Bernard Forrest may be a rotter, but there is no denying his pluck. The way he skidded round the Triangle at terrific speed was simply marvellous. Travers was just as reckless, and the spectacle of these two whizzing round in a series of skids left everybody gasping.

However, trust the masters to poke their noses in when they're not wanted. Old Pieface was the first on the scene, and the unpopular Fourth Form master nearly came to a sticky end. He dashed out of the Modern House right in the path of the oncoming speed merchants.

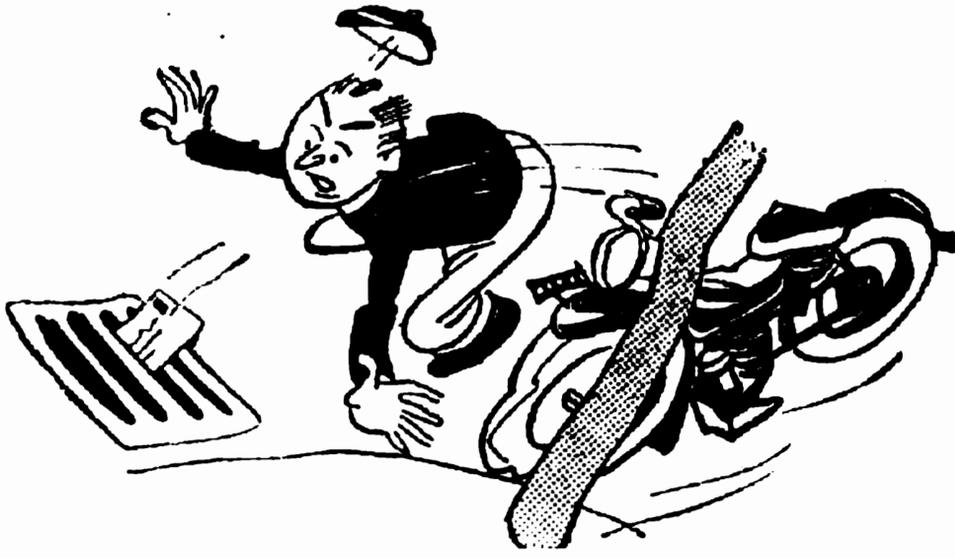
With a roar they hurtled past, one on either side of him, so fast that Pieface was left twirling round and round until he

(Continued on next page, column 1.)

DREADFUL DIARIES

By WILLIAM NAPOLEON
BROWNE

This Week: Teddy Long.



Monday: Decided to become a little gentleman; to stop being a sneak and a slacker; to make myself a credit to the Form. Rose early this morning—I wanted to be down early to collect the post for Archie Glenborne. Very cold and no hot water. To save the school's soap, didn't wash. Fetched the letters and took them to Archie. To save him the trouble, opened the one which contained a fiver. Archie booted me out of the study. It's an unjust world.

Tuesday: Remembering my good resolutions, removed the mouse-trap which Forrest had put inside Mr. Crowell's desk. "You shouldn't put mouse-traps in Mr. Crowell's desk, Forrest," I said loudly, as the master walked in, for I didn't want to sneak. Forrest got the cane from Crowsfeet; and I got a black eye from Forrest. It's a hard world.

Wednesday: Fenton gave me a letter for Australia to post. Borrowed Nipper's motor-cycle when he wasn't looking. Couldn't drive it and had a smash. Took all the trouble to wheel it to the nearest garage, and further obliged Nipper by bringing back the bill. He wasn't at all grateful. Fenton wanted to know what had happened to his mouldy letter, not considering the fact that I'd nearly killed myself. Told him it was on its way down under—but didn't mention that I'd dropped it down a drain!

Thursday: The Remove sat for an examination. Because I wanted to dis-

tinguish myself and come out top of the Form, I "borrowed" the answers to the questions from Mr. Crowell's study. When he found out he didn't congratulate me upon my earnest endeavours. Just caned me and said I was asking for expulsion. I'm fed up with this miserable world.

Friday. Hearing that Handforth & Co. were stony, offered to lend them half-a-crown if they would pay me back four shillings. They weren't agreeable, and Handforth offered to give me a thick ear for nothing. In spite of such base ingratitude, washed up their tea-things when they went out. "Accidentally" broke two cups, a saucer and a plate. Didn't tell Handy because I wouldn't like him to hurt his fist when hitting me.

Saturday: Took up sport to-day. Had a race with Fullwood after I'd removed a meat pie from his study, because I didn't want the school cat to pinch it. I won the race, but nobody congratulated me. Had a game of football in the Triangle, and broke a window. Let Mr. Wilkes think it was Potts because I thought he might like to be in the limelight. Removites came and bumped me because of this kind thought, and now I've resolved to forget my resolutions and report the matter to Mr. Wilkes. It's an unfair world.

POOR OLD TRACKETT GRIM

(An unusual short story written and published when E. O. Handforth wasn't looking.)

Trackett Grim, the famous detective, was chasing Moggy Noggs, the notorious cat-burglar. They had a terrific scrap. Grim was arrested for being in possession of firearms without a licence. Moggy got away and lived happily ever afterwards.

THE END.

To-day's Misprint in the News.

"Boat race crews entraining."

That won't do them much good. They want to get out and start rowing.

ANNUAL TOUR

Special Report by our
AST night the
Frank's was
stirring fight
of the sch
tournament.

There were many
and the proceeding
style with Comm
all the spectators
fighting each other
was not according

A great sensation
James "Fatty"
"Wonder" was
expected to win
instead he LOST
down—on the
knocked him out
the fight.

At the call of the
from his corner he
slipped on a band
the ring by some
spectator, and crash
was pitched on top
on top of him. He
once like an iron
Waldo remained
terrific weight had
all the breath out
was counted out

I understand the
complaint.

The fight of the
Nipper and Lawrence
distance, and Fent
ing, brought in the
This decision was
everybody except
selves and the offic

Here are a few
verdict:

E. O. Handforth
piffle! Nipper was
of points."

Buster Boots:
for Lawrence. No
Lawrence was mil

Tommy Watson
just about won on
Lionel Corcoran
Lawrence as the

Archie Glenborne
doze of forty one
but Nipper is an
so naturally the of

MY verdict is
barring myself—
referee's a referee
know what he's de

The fight between
and Clive Russell
knock-out for R
didn't strike a so
slept before, durin
When he was hat
fell asleep on the
had no option but

became giddy and tottered into the fountain.

Then Mr. Wilkes appeared, and he soon brought the race to an abrupt conclusion.

Travers was leading Forrest slightly when pulled up by Wilkes, but it was a neck-and-neck thing. I should like to see these two on a track in a real race. But sitting down ordinarily—after Mr. Wilkes had exercised his "caning" arm—looks like being a painful experience for these two speed merchants for days to come, let alone sitting astride a roaring, bumping speed-iron!

BOXING MENT

ing Correspondent
nasium at St.
scene of some
the first round
annual boxing

prising results,
cluded in lively
Boxing—with
ing parts and
that, of course,
rogramme.

as caused when
to beat Stanley
Waldo was
nds down, but
s, feet and body
—when Fatty
e first minute of

Fatty rolled out
huge barrel. Ho
skin thrown into
reless idiot of a
into Waldo, who
floor with Fatty
y bounded up at
rubber ball, but
e he was. Fatty's
mpletely knocked
his body—and ho
id pandemonium.
do is to lodge a

ning was between
It went the full
who was referee-
erdict of a draw.
tly contested by
e fighters them-
e.

omments on the
“Rot, rubbish,
by a good margin

Decidedly a win
er was good—but
better.”

“I thought Nipper
ints.”

“I plump for
er.”

“I indulged in a
s during the fight,
cient House man,
pie won, what?”
all these critics—
atheads, and if a
olly well ought to

Archie Glenthorne
oved a technical
ell, although ho
y blow! Archie
nd after the fight.
into the ring he
or, so the referee
count him out.

TO-DAY'S WIRELESS PROGRAMME

- 7.30. Rising bell, relayed to all dormitories.
- 7.35. A talk by Professor Cheer-up: “Why boys should be allowed to sleep until nine o'clock every morning.”
- 8.0. Feeding-time at the St. Frank's Zoo (outside broadcast) with running commentary between Willy Handforth and Priscilla the Parrot. Relayed from the Pets' Quarters.
- 8.10. Feeding-time at the St. Frank's Zoo (inside broadcast) relayed from Big Hall. A special feature of this broadcast will be the various noises attendant to this ceremony.
- 10.0. Time signal, relayed from Buster Boots' seven-day striking clock. (On strike six of the seven days.)
- 10.30. Tipping forecast by Josh Cuttle. (You're not getting a tip out of me to-day, Josh.—E.O.H.)
- 11.0. Surprise item from the Remove class-room. We hope to be able to broadcast an actual swishing in progress.
- 12.0. A talk by Fatty Little: “How to keep slim.” (If the speaker suddenly ceases broadcasting, listeners will know that he is seeking food for thought.)
- 12.15. Station closing down for five hours while the announcers have their afternoon nap. (Their snores will not be broadcast owing to possible damage to the sensitive microphone.)
- 5.15. Children's Hour. (Relayed from the Fags' Common-room.) Grandfather Klock will give a running commentary on the Ink Fight between Juicy Lemon and Chubby Heath. Willy Handforth will give a paper-and-comb recital standing on his head.
- 6.0. Time signal (as before). Weather forecast will not be read because it is unnecessary. Weather as usual—depressions, anti-cyclones and rain. If there should be any sun expected, this will be specially announced, accompanied by a fanfare of trumpets.
- 6.30. Weekly talk on books by Nipper, who will review the year's most sensational thriller, “The Mystery of the Lost Kipper,” by Filleta Plaice.
- 7.0. Dance music by Charles Payne and his Sixth Form Pain-in-the-Necks.
- 7.55. Weekly talk by world-famous celebrities (relayed to every station in the Universe). This week:
E. O. HANDFORTH,
who will tell awe-inspired listeners:
“I am what I am because what I am I am.”
- 8 & 9. As Handforth will still be talking we'll close down. Good-night, everybody. Good-night!

Old Poems Made New

FATHER WILLIAM.

By Tommy Watson.

“**Y**OU are old, Father William,” the young man said,
“And you ought to need every attention,

Yet still you can sleep in an apple-pie bed,
And not think it worthy of mention;”

“In my youth,” said the sage, “when I travelled to sell

My new patent washable mangles,
I frequently slept at seaside hotels.
So I've got fairly used to the tangles.”

“You are old,” said the youth, “and your strength, I suppose,

Has grown correspondingly older,
Yet you climb to the roof and hang down by your toes

While balancing chairs on your shoulder;”

“I keep up my strength,” said the old acrobat,

“For chaps who start asking me questions;

I give them a tap on the boko—like that!
And I wait for their further suggestions.”



EDITORIAL ANNOUNCEMENT.

Will writers of detective stories please note that I have now sufficient material to last me until February, 1987? All detective stories should now bear some reference to television, inter-planetary communication, wireless-controlled aeroplanes, and other marvels—which will be quite commonplace when the stories are published.

There seems to be some game on among the Remove poets. An attempt to pull the Editorial leg. No fewer than seven different juniors have each sent in the same poem—beginning, “Under the spreading chestnut tree, the village smithy stands.” The poem is not bad, but I cannot print it until I find out which junior really composed it.—E. O. H.

THE RAJAH'S SECRET!

(Continued from page 20.)

"Who—who's that with you?" muttered Ambrose Bliss.

"The kid," said Red curtly. "All right, son, don't be alarmed," he added, in a whisper, to Tony. "These guys—I mean, these men—are friends of mine."

"Yes, dad," said Tony. He knew just who they were.

"We had to quit, Red," said Dan Mason urgently. "We thought it was all up."

"You mean—the cops?" asked Red, a catch in his voice.

"Not as bad as that," replied Dan. "Some blamed dog nosed us out soon after you had gone; we figured that the brute must have heard you. He came sniffing around the barn, and then he set up a howling and barking that was enough to awaken a graveyard!"

"We had to clear out, Red," added Bertelli. "We reckoned that the farmer might hear and come along. So we crept down and took a chance. The dog bolted when we showed up. He streaked back for the farm like lightning."

"And we streaked the other way," said Bliss. "Thought we'd best come here; we knew you were here, Red."

"Well, things don't look too good to me," said Kress harshly. "This is a fine place to come to!"

"Maybe the kid can put us somewhere?" suggested Dan eagerly.

"Yes, yes, of course!" said Tony. "I know of a place—and it's near by, too. You'll be safe there."

"What sort of place?" asked Bertelli suspiciously.

"It's an old vault," said Tony, ignoring the man and looking at his father. "Hundreds of years ago there was a monastery here, dad, and there are still a lot of ruins. There's a stairway leading down to an ancient vault. Nobody ever goes down there—except, perhaps, in the summer-time."

"Don't like it," grunted Dan Mason. "We get down there, and we're trapped. No chance of getting out if we're cornered."

"But there is," said Tony eagerly. "There's another exit—by an old tunnel which leads to the deserted quarries on the moor. I've never been down there, but one of the fellows was telling me—"

"Show us this stairway," interrupted Red sharply. "The kid's right, boys; we couldn't have a better hide-out."

"If this boy's double-crossing us—" began Dan.

"Say that again, you skunk, and I'll knock your head off!" snarled Kress savagely. "He's my son! Do you think he'll double-cross me?"

"Aw, I'm sorry," muttered Dan, frightened.

Tony himself was frightened, too. Never before had he heard his father use that brutal tone. He was like a different man. Quivering in every limb, Tony led the way through the shrubbery, and they were soon within the crumbling walls of the monastery ruins.

It was a simple enough task to find the ancient stairway which led down to the vault, and at last they were in that cold, dank place. With a powerful electric torch, Red Kress made a quick examination. He found the low tunnel entrance, and he was satisfied.

"This is soft," he said, with genuine relief. "Not so comfortable as the barn, but a darned sight safer. The cops will never think of coming to St. Frank's to look for us, hey?"

"Have you told the kid?" asked Dan, who was thinking only of his scheme.

"I've told him nothing yet, and I'll do all the talking," replied Red. "Tony, lad, I guess you know what all this means. You're no fool. I hate to tell you—"

"I know that you and—and these men are hiding from the police," said Tony, striving to keep his voice steady. "I know that you tried to rob the rajah of Ghar Kohat. It's been like a nightmare to me, dad."

"Take it on the chin, kid," said Red, not unkindly. "I expect it has been a big shock to you; but the worst is over now, eh? You know me for what I am, and you think I'm just two cents. Sorry, Tony. I've kept the truth from you all your life, and I never wanted you to know. But I guess luck was against me."

Tony listened dully. In spite of the dreadful revelation, he still loved his father. The man was a crook, but never had he done an unkind thing to Tony. The boy clutched at Red's arm, and held it tightly.

"I'm with you, dad," he muttered. "We've always been—pals."

"Gosh! That's taken a whole load off my mind," said Red, returning the pressure. "Now listen, Tony. I'm in a jam, and maybe you can help."

"That's—that's what I've been hoping, dad," said Tony eagerly. "But what do you want me to do?"

"Brace up, kid; this is going to be hard," replied Red Kress grimly. "I'll tell you in a dozen words. We're after

the rajah's emeralds, and you've got to help us to get them!"

CHAPTER 12.

Drawn Into the Net!

THE harsh bluntness of Red Kress' statement took Tony's breath away. The boy was startled—bewildered—horrified.

"No, dad!" he panted. "You—you don't mean that!"

"But, Tony, you're well fixed," said Red. "You know this rajah fellow, don't you? Quite pally with him?"

"Yes, but——"

"With you working on the 'inside,' we can bring it off," continued Red. "I'm not tacking any fancy words on to this conversation, kid. I'm blunt. It's the best way. After you've got over the shock, you'll see things differently."

"I won't—I won't!" said Tony fiercely. "You want me to—to become a thief! You're trying to make me help in this

Well, now it's your turn to do something for him. You ain't goin' to quit on him, are you?"

"It's not fair," muttered Tony, his head swimming. "How—how can I help you to steal those emeralds?"

"We don't want you to help us to do any stealing, Tony," said Red. "All we're suggesting is that you should fix up something with the rajah. You're friendly with him, and he'll think it's all on the level. We don't come in until later, and you can take it from me that we won't want you to do any stealing."

"And if it comes off, young 'un, it'll be your father's last job!" said Dan Mason quickly. "Get that—and hold it! Help him now, and he'll go straight afterwards."

Tony's eyes gleamed.

"Is—is that right, dad?" he asked.

"I swear it!" said Red Kress, a note of absolute sincerity in his voice. "I'll go straight, kid. As soon as this business is over I'll quit the game for good!"

NEXT WEEK'S THRILLING SURPRISE FOR "N.L." READERS

Stupendous new series of detective stories featuring Nelson Lee starts in next Wednesday's bumper issue.

THESE YARNS ARE EXTRA LONG—AND EXTRA GOOD!

awful robbery. Dad, dad! You don't mean it! You can't mean it!"

"Aw, cut that out!" said Bertelli. "What's eating you, you young puppy?"

"That's enough from you, Gyp!" snarled Red.

"Enough nothing!" retorted Bertelli. "This is your kid, ain't he? What's he squawking about?"

"Gyp's right," said Dan Mason, coming nearer. "Listen, kid! You've had a nasty jar, and I'm sorry for you. But you'd best understand that we're in a tight corner—and that means your father. Get me? We're broke, and we're hiding from the cops. Without your help we're wiped out. That'll mean arrest, and ten years in prison for us all. But if we get the emeralds we'll be sitting pretty."

Tony listened like a boy in a dream.

"Your old man has done a whole heap for you," went on Dan cunningly. "Gosh! You don't know what he's done, kid! All these years he's kept the truth from you; he's given you every comfort and luxury.

"Then—then I'll help!" said Tony, his eyes shining.

He heard the men breathe long sighs. But he wasn't thinking of them. He was telling himself that he was justified in agreeing to help. If he didn't, his father would continue his life of crime—would go to prison, perhaps. But if his father got those emeralds he had promised to go straight. That was what Tony seized upon. Go straight! Wonderful thought! And so, for his father's sake, the boy had agreed, refusing to consider all that it meant.

"It's up to you, Tony," Kress was saying. "Maybe you can suggest something? Think!"

Tony pulled himself up with a jerk.

"I—I don't know what you mean, dad," he said. "What can I do?"

"First of all, tell us just how much you know of the rajah," replied Red.

Tony did so, and the crooks were intensely gratified.

"This is the goods!" said Red exultingly. "Didn't I tell you all along, boys, that this kid of mine was made of the right stuff? He saved the rajah's life. He ought to do anything for you, Tony! I guess, if you ask him nicely, he'd take out those emeralds and show them to you, eh?"

"I—I think he might," replied Tony.

"It's going to be easy!" gloated Red Kress. "Boys, those emeralds are as good as ours!"

CHAPTER 13.

The Plan of Action!

ALL four crooks were excited—Dan Mason in particular. For it had been his idea to drag Tony Cresswell into the plot.

Earlier in the evening the men had been in despair. The coup, which they had planned for so many months, seemed finally to be "off." Now there were greater hopes than ever, and Tony had become the key to the situation.

"What you've got to do, Tony, is to think," said Red impressively. "Now, we must handle this thing coolly. What about these kids who helped you to save the rajah's life? Do you know their families—do they live near here?"

"No, dad. I've only been to one chap's home. That—that was just after you escaped from that house, in Bannington. Oh, dad, why did you fire——"

"Forget it!" said Kress sharply. "What's that you were saying about going to some chap's house?"

"Glenthorne Manor," said Tony, pained by his father's brusqueness. "That's where Archie Glenthorne's people live. They're tremendously rich—one of the oldest families in the county. Colonel Glenthorne, you know."

"This sounds hot!" said Dan Mason quickly. "A real aristocratic family—eh, and living right near! And you know the son of the family?"

"Yes; but I don't see——"

"Easy son," said Red quickly. "Try to think. I guess you boys had a whole heap to say about your visit to the rajah during that tea-party—eh?"

"Why, yes; we told Archie's mother and father all about it."

"Was there any talk of the emeralds?"

"A lot," replied Tony, hardly realising how he was being drawn—how he was being pumped. "Mrs. Glenthorne said that she would give anything to have just one sight of the famous emeralds."

Red slapped his knee.

"We've got it, you guys!" he said exultingly. "Tony has been to this boy's home once—so he can easily go again. Tony knows the rajah, and—— Let me think!"

"I'm already thinking," said Dan Mason. "What's more, I'm through with thinking. It's all set, Red."

"Spill it!" said Red tersely.

"Why, Tony talks to this kid tomorrow, and works the conversation round to the tea-party," explained Dan. "He tells the swell kid that it might be a good idea to please his mother. See? They know the rajah, and they can persuade the rajah to take his emeralds to this swell house——"

"Nothing doing," interrupted Red. "The rajah wouldn't fall for that. He'd think there was something phoney about it. How do you reckon these boys could give the invite?"

Tony was listening in a kind of daze. He was irresistibly reminded of a crook play, or a talking picture. He had heard this sort of thing so many times. But this was real—his own father was one of the crooks—and he was becoming a crook himself!

"Listen!" said Red. "Tony must speak to this kid, Archie, and Archie must tell his people that everything is jake between him and the rajah. Get me? Then he'll have to suggest that his mother invites the rajah to a big dinner. The invitation, coming from the swell dame, will be O.K., and his nibs will fall for it. He won't have any suspicion. What sort of a house is this?" he went on abruptly. "This Glenthorne Manor?"

"Oh, a big old country house, just outside Bannington," said Tony.

"Standing in its own grounds?"

"Yes."

"We can be there," said Red, nodding. "And at the right moment we can make our jump, grab the emeralds, and it'll be all over. Don't you see, kid? And you won't be mixed up in it at all."

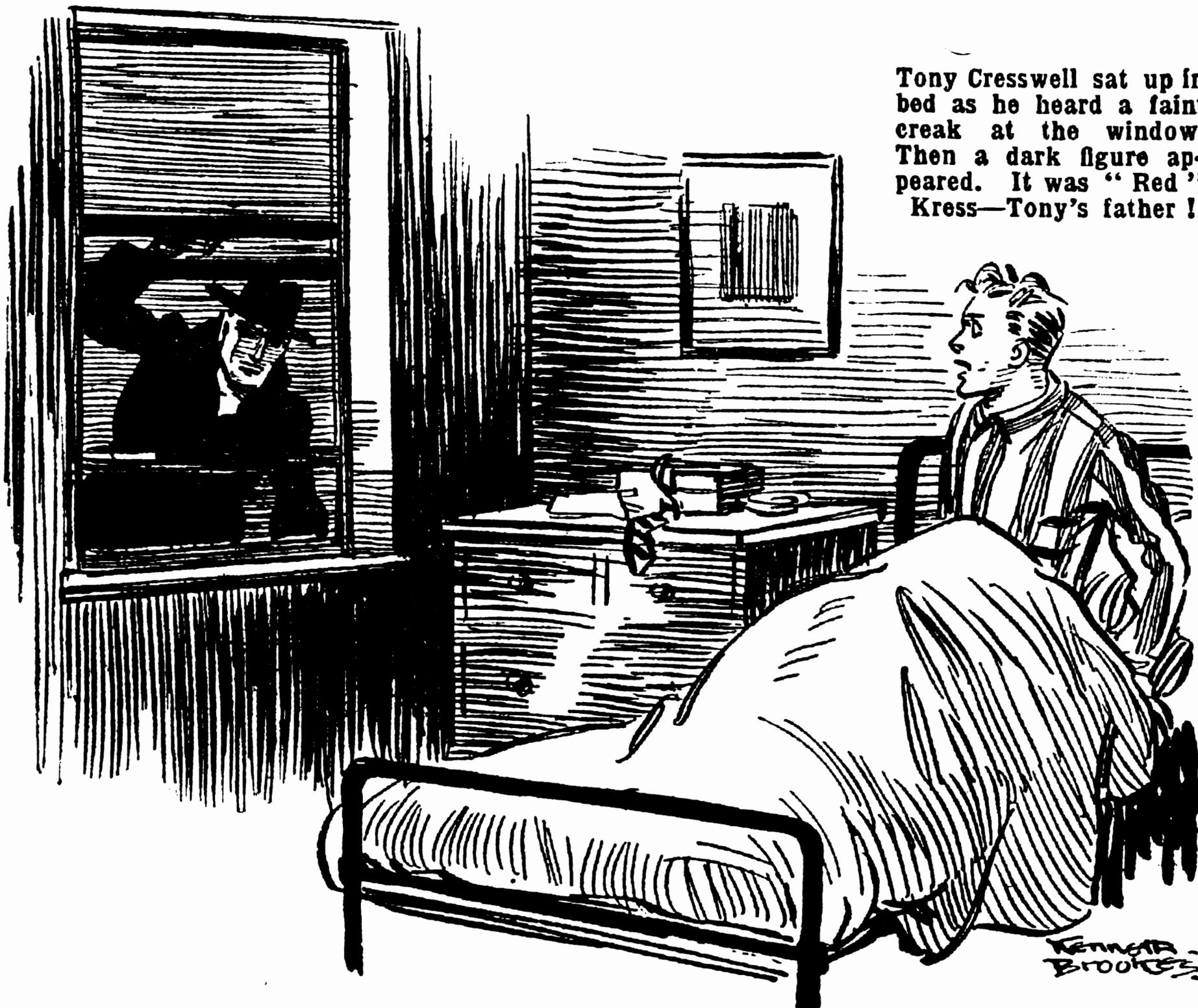
Tony did not reply.

Not mixed up in it indeed, when without his help the coup could never be brought off!

TONY CRESSWELL felt suddenly sickened.

These men were delighted at the infamous plan they had evolved. They had attempted to pull wool over his eyes—and his father had been as guilty as the others. But Tony could see with crystal clarity, wool or no wool.

He, being a St. Frank's boy, was "respectable"; even the known fact that his father was a crook did not make any difference to



Tony Cresswell sat up in bed as he heard a faint creak at the window. Then a dark figure appeared. It was "Red" Kress—Tony's father!

Nipper and Handforth and Travers and all the other decent chaps. They had faith in him.

Archie was friendly, too—and these men wanted him to act with base and villainous treachery towards Archie and his people! With a sudden sense of horror, Tony realised how extremely easy it would be to "wangle" the genial, unsuspecting Archie.

"No, no!" muttered Tony hoarsely.

"What's that, kid?" asked his father.

Tony did not reply. His brain felt like bursting. He was thinking of that scene in the Common-room; the rotters, headed by Bernard Forrest, jeering at him, taunting him, calling him a crook. He could see Nipper and Handforth and the others defending him—hotly shouting that the cads knew nothing against Tony himself. They trusted him.

And if he lent himself to this scoundrelly plot he would betray that trust basely, hideously. He would be unworthy of their friendship.

A sudden wave of defiance came over him. Not even for the sake of his father would he do what they suggested.

"I won't—I won't!" panted Tony suddenly.

"Say, son——" began his father.

"Don't touch me!" cried Tony, backing away, and breathing hard. "I'm not going to

betray Archie Glenthorne like that! I won't do it, I tell you!"

The outburst took the men completely by surprise.

"Say, what the heck——" began Dan Mason, making a threatening move forward.

"Leave the kid alone!" snapped Red.

He drew Tony aside. Rapidly, almost feverishly, Red whispered into the startled boy's ear.

"But, dad——" began Tony, wide-eyed.

"Say, what's going on over there?" snarled Gyp Bertelli suspiciously.

"I mean it, son!" Red was hissing into Tony's ear—and the other men heard the words. "Can't you see—can't you understand? If you fall down on me here, these guys will kill you! Maybe they'll kill me, too—they're desperate."

"I—I didn't think it was as serious as that, dad," panted Tony.

"Say, you must be a mind-reader, Red!" exclaimed Gyp, flashing a torch on, and striding across to where father and son were standing. "Listen here, kid!"

He suddenly jerked Tony away, and Dan Mason seized Tony, too. Ambrose Bliss, bulky and dangerous, held Red back.

"We heard what your old man was saying to you, kid!" exclaimed Bertelli, glaring into Tony's face. "He was sure right! Get me? You fix this thing up, and everything

will be jake. Fail us—and it's you for the bump! Yeah, and your old man, too! What's it to be, kid?"

Tony looked at the merciless faces of the crooks, lit up so clearly in the light from the electric torch. He saw murder in their eyes, and Bertelli's fingers were at his throat.

"I'll do it!" he muttered huskily.

CHAPTER 14.

The Man Who Interrupted!

THE tension was over. Gyp Bertelli and Dan Mason allowed Tony to go, and the boy went to his father's side. Red Kress was looking sullen. He had done his best to keep his son out of this sordid business, but the force of circumstances had been too strong for him. His evil companions had prevailed.

"Keep a stiff upper lip, kid," he muttered. "Maybe it's for the best. If we can get hold of those sparklers, we're made. Just this one job, and I'm through with the game for ever."

"I've promised you—your friends—that I'll help," said Tony quietly. "I'll do everything I can, dad."

"Attaboy!" said Bertelli, in a new tone. "Say, snap out of that 'sorry for yourself' mood! You'll get over it, kid."

"Tell me again exactly what you want me to do," said Tony listlessly.

They told him; they talked long and earnestly, and there was no possibility of Tony forgetting his instructions.

"Well, we're all set," said Red Kress, at last. "Son, you'd best get back to bed."

"Couldn't the kid fetch us out some blankets or rugs?" suggested Bliss. "This place is like a refrigerator, Red! And what about some food? We haven't eaten since midday."

"I can get some food," said Tony. "I know where there are plenty of biscuits and cakes and pastries. The fellows will miss them from their study cupboards—but they won't suspect anything. Cupboards are always being raided. And I can get a pile of blankets, too; I know where the store-cupboard is."

"It's locked, I guess?" asked his father.

"Yes, but I can open the door," replied Tony. "I'll lock it again, too—and the blankets may not be missed for days."

"We'll come up with you," said Dan. "You can hand the stuff out—there's not a chance of anybody being awake now."

They all went up the slippery, broken stone steps, and Tony felt that he could breathe better in the cool air of the night. It was very dark and very still. But there was little risk. It was between one and two now, and the whole of St. Frank's slumbered.

Tony's feelings were bitter as he walked with the crooks through the shrubbery. By day he associated with the best of good chaps, and they helped him, encouraged him, stood

by him staunchly; by night he mixed with crooks!

They emerged from the shrubbery and were about to move across towards West Arch, when Red Kress suddenly hissed a warning. And then the others saw a dim, ghostly figure coming forward out of the gloom.

So unexpected was it that the men had no time to get back into the cover of the trees. The figure came up quickly, and they heard the soft crunch of gravel.

"Who's that?" demanded a sharp, authoritative voice.

A cry arose in Tony Cresswell's throat, but he managed to choke it down. For he had recognised the voice. Nelson Lee—the headmaster of St. Frank's! Nelson Lee—the detective!

"It's all right, sir—we're police officers just having a look round," said Red Kress gruffly, as he moved forward. "Keep back there, you men."

His companions admired Red's coolness, but they were by no means reassured—particularly when the light of an electric torch flashed out and played momentarily upon them.

"Police officers, eh?" said Nelson Lee curtly. "You'll have to think of something better—"

This time a gasping cry escaped the horrified Tony; for Red Kress had suddenly leapt forward with the ferocity of a panther. His arm whirled, and a short bludgeon descended upon the unprepared detective's head.

Thud!

Quick and alert as Nelson Lee was, he had not been prepared for that attack. Without a sound he crumpled, his knees sagged, and he fell to the ground in a limp heap.

"Dad!" panted Tony, running up.

"Keep back, you young fool!" snarled Red harshly. "And you'd best keep your trap shut about this!"

"But—but, dad, you've killed—"

"Killed nothing!" snapped Red. "He's only stunned. He'll come round soon—and meanwhile we can make a get-away. He'll think he was hit by a tramp. You get indoors—quick!"

"But—but the food and the blankets—"

"Forget them!" snapped Red, keen and alert in this emergency. "Darn the interfering fool! One of the masters, eh? What's he doing about at this time of night? Well, he got what was coming to him!"

"What'll we do, Red?" asked Bliss nervously.

"Do? Quit, of course," replied Red. "We can't stay in that vault now—too dangerous. We'll make for the moor, I guess. We can hide in the quarries."

"But how shall I be able to get in touch with you?" asked Tony, his eyes irresistibly turned towards the motionless figure on the ground. "Oh, dad, you needn't have done this—"

"Aw, you're squeamish," interrupted his father. "He'd have raised the alarm in another minute. The fellow who wins is the

fellow who acts quickest—that's a golden rule I've always followed."

Tony shuddered. He remembered that his father had acted quickly at that boarding-house, and a young constable had escaped death by a miracle.

"Get going, boys," said Red sharply. "A starvation diet for twenty-four hours won't hurt us. Now, listen, Tony! You get busy with that plan, and see if you can't fix the whole thing."

"But—but how shall I let you know, dad?"

"I'll 'phone you at exactly four-thirty tomorrow afternoon. Be hanging around the telephone, so that you'll be ready."

"All right, dad."

"Do you know the number?"

"Yes—Bannington 75," replied Tony. "That's the telephone in our Junior Common-room. We've got a booth of our own."

"Good enough," said Red. "I'll remember. Be ready at four-thirty—and I'm warning you, kid, that you'd better have some hot news for me."

"I'll—I'll do all I can," promised Tony.

"Aw, that's no good," put in Bertelli. "You fix that thing up, or there'll be plenty of trouble!"

"Get indoors, son—and look lively!" said Red, giving Tony a push. "You've nothing to fear—this guy I knocked out didn't see you."

Tony hurried away, sickened by the horror of it all.

CHAPTER 15.

The Dupe!

HALF-WAY up the wall of the Ancient House, clinging to the ivy, Tony Cresswell halted.

So far, he had acted mechanically; his father had told him to go back to his bed-room, and he had gone. His mind was in a tumult.

He was thinking of Nelson Lee—he was thinking of that foul blow which Red Kress had struck. The utter ruthlessness of it, and the man's attitude afterwards, filled Tony with agony.

He had always thought that he knew his father; he had regarded his father as a kindly man. It was impossible to reconcile the father he had always known with this callous ruffian who had so cruelly knocked Nelson Lee on the head.

Just before that incident had happened, Tony had begun to feel more kindly towards his father; he had gathered that Red was in some fear of his three confederates, and that his hand had been forced. But that bludgeon—

Dimly Tony remembered having read a famous story called "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," in which a man had two personalities. At times he was a kindly soul, and at others a human demon. Irresistibly he was

reminded of that story now. His father, apparently, had two personalities! And tonight, for the first time, Tony had been allowed to see that other self!

The abrupt change in the plan, occasioned by the unexpected intervention of Lee, bewildered him, too.

He had been thinking that his father had found a safe refuge; but what would happen now? Perhaps, before four-thirty tomorrow, his father and those other men would be arrested. For half a moment Tony hoped that this would happen. Then that plot against the rajah would come to nothing. But no! He couldn't really hope for anything like that. He shook himself. He was thinking wildly.

His mind went back to that still, crumpled figure on the ground. And, almost mechanically, he descended to the ground again. How could he go to bed—knowing that Nelson Lee, perhaps seriously injured, was lying there?

Risk or no risk, he must go back.

As he ran across the Square, his brain was active. Perhaps he could invent some story. If Nelson Lee was badly hurt, he could call for help; he could say that he had heard a cry, and had come down and had found Lee— But he shrank from this. It would be a lie, and it would lead to endless other lies. No, he couldn't call for help. But at least he could look at Nelson Lee and satisfy himself—

He was just emerging from West Arch, and now he halted, breathing hard. Intense, untold relief swept over him.

For he had arrived just in time to see a figure getting up from the ground. It was Nelson Lee! And Lee, having reached his feet, was tenderly rubbing the back of his head. His injury, then, was not serious.

Mingled with Tony's relief was a sudden sense of alarm. If Lee heard him, or saw him, he would be in a bad fix. And he daren't move now, for Lee was very near at hand. Tony was thankful for the blackness of the archway.

Nelson Lee's torch was flashing again, and the boy shrank farther back. But Lee was only examining the ground. He picked up his hat and placed it on his head. Then, with his torch still directed groundwards, he moved away into the denseness of the shrubbery. Seeing this, Tony realised the wisdom of his father. Ten to one Lee would follow the tracks down into the old vault!

Not that he would find anything. Red Kress and his companions were well away by now—and in the darkness of the night they would find a safe hiding-place. There was nothing for them to do; they merely had to wait until the afternoon, until Tony could give his report. Bitterly the boy realised that everything depended upon him.

The coast was clear now; he was free to get back to his bed-room—and Nelson Lee would never know. With soft footsteps he went back across the Square, climbed the ivy,

and hauled himself into the little dormitory. One glance at Travers and Potts satisfied him. They were sleeping soundly and healthily—as was to be expected at this hour of the night. Slipping out of his trousers, Tony got back into his own bed.

As he lay there, all that had happened during the past hour or two seemed like some awful nightmare. But that was the worst of it; it was not a nightmare. And on the morrow he would be irretrievably engulfed in the plot.

Tony Cresswell slept little that night.

CHAPTER 16.

Success!

"I'VE been thinking about your mother, Archie," said Tony Cresswell awkwardly.

"Oh, rather!" said Archie Glen-thorne. "A bright soul, what? Go ahead, old lad! Think about the mater as much as you dashed well like! Jolly good!"

"I've been thinking about your father, too——"

"Not so good!" said Archie, wincing.

"Well, you see——"

"I shouldn't advise you to think about the pater too much," said Archie, as he made himself more comfortable on the lounge. "A priceless old boy, in many ways.

I mean to say, a dashing soldier, and so forth. But the dear old pater is apt to make a chap go woggly at the knees if he is taken in too large doses."

Tony was finding the conversation difficult. He had strolled casually into Archie's study after breakfast—knowing full well that he would find that languid junior reposing on the lounge.

Archie was geniality itself; not by a word or a sign did he indicate that he felt any differently towards Tony Cresswell. And, in fact, he didn't. He liked the chap. He was a priceless old bean. Frightfully rough about his pater, of course, but there you are!

Tony had noticed a marked difference that morning. There was no uproar against him, as he had half expected—as he had feared. Such fellows as Nipper, Handforth, Travers and Potts treated him in exactly the same way as usual; they were neither more effusive nor more distant. In a word, they made him feel comfortable.

Bernard Forrest and his cronies, naturally—being what they were—ignored him pointedly. If he happened to approach them they hurried away with exaggerated precipitancy. Most of the other fellows who had demonstrated against Tony overnight now left him alone. They were neither friendly nor otherwise; and they were feeling just a bit ashamed of themselves, as Nipper had



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.

A DANGEROUS PRACTICE.

"Were you pleased with the new school, little boy?" enquired an interested lady.

"No!" said Johnny. "They made me wash my face, and when I went home the dog bit me because he didn't know me."

(G. Smith, 100, Mile End Lane, Stockport, has been awarded a handsome watch.)

NOT THAT KIND OF DOCTOR.

Landlady (to lodger): "Beg pardon, sir, but I understand you are a doctor of music."

Lodger: "I am, madam, Why?"

Landlady: "Well, sir, my Billy has just broken his tin whistle. Will you mend it for him?"

(A. Preston, 105, Calais Road, Burton-on-Trent, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

AND NOT LIKELY TO.

Mother: "Jimmy, have you given the goldfish some fresh water?"

Jimmy: "No. They haven't drunk the other yet."

(S. Blount, 13, Market Street, Polesworth, has been awarded a penknife.)

WHOLESALE.

Burglar (to belated assistant): "You're late. I told you half-past one."

Burglar's assistant: "I forgot the number of this house. I've had to break into every house in the street before I found you here."

(W. Cook, 48, Percy Road, Shepherd's Bush, London, W.12, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

A LONG TIME.

Club bore: "Could anyone tell me how long I've been talking? My watch has stopped."

Audience (in chorus): "There's a calendar behind you!"

(G. Speight, 31, Corbar Road, Stockport, has been awarded a penknife.)

STRANGE.

Traveller: "Which is the nearest way to Slopton?"

Yokel: "Go straight up the crooked lane, round the square, up the downs, turn to the left, and you'll be right!"

predicted. After all, not a soul in the school had anything against Tony himself.

Gradually Tony had recovered some of his normal balance. Life at St. Frank's, he found, was not to be so intolerable. Yet there was this hateful business to be gone through to-day, and the more he thought of it, the more he loathed it.

But he did not forget the threats of those crooks. He knew, moreover, that they had not been idle threats. Even if they were unable to turn upon him, they would certainly vent their wrath upon his father.

"I've been thinking about the rajah, too," said Tony.

Archie, who had been falling asleep, started.

"Oh, rajah! I mean, oh, rather!" he said.

"A lad if ever there was one!"

"Your mother was saying how much she would love to see the Ghar emeralds," continued Tony. "It's a half-holiday to-day, Archie, and I thought perhaps you could run home."

"Good gad! Run?" asked Archie, aghast. "My dear old pippin, it's over three miles!"

"You could come on the pillion of my motor-bike."

"Well, of course, that's different," said Archie, relieved. "Not that pillion-riding appeals greatly to me. There's always a frightful risk of being bumped off."

Tony jumped so violently that Archie opened his eyes wider.

"This is what I was thinking," said the

new boy hastily. "We know what a ripping chap the rajah is, and I'm pretty sure that if your father invited him to dinner, at Glenthorne Manor, he would come—and he would bring those emeralds of his, too. Then your mother would get her wish."

Archie dropped his monocle in his admiration.

"Odds brainwaves and wheezes!" he exclaimed. "That's frightfully bright, laddie! The mater would be dashed pleased, what! And, now I come to think of it, we owe the rajah an invitation, don't we? I mean to say, we went aboard his yacht for a priceless dinner, so it's up to us to invite him ashore for a ditto. And where better than the old homestead?"

So interested was Archie that he rose from the lounge and paced up and down.

"We can make a bright occasion of it," he continued. "I mean to say, we'll have the lads on hand—Nipper and Handy and Travers and you and a few other choice specimens. So we shall be inviting the rajah as much as my people, if you gather the good old trend. He's bound to leap at it, and not only shall I be in the good books of the mater, but the pater will go round the house beaming, too. I've been thinking of biting his ear for an extra tenner or two to get a couple of new suits, and this ought to get him in the correct humour."

Tony was rather frightened at the ease with which Archie Glenthorne had "fallen" for



(A. Beard, 17, Boyer Street, Derby, has been awarded a penknife.)

BANG!

Tom (ending argument with rival): "Yes, and if your brains were dynamite, and they doubled themselves every day for a million years, and then exploded, they wouldn't blow your hat off on a windy day!"

(H. Gudger, 107, Burgess Road, Leicester, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

A JOB FOR LIFE.

Perspiring golfer: "I'm going to stay till I hit this ball."

Fed-up caddie: "Well, you'll have to get another caddie, because I'm going on holiday next week."

(S. Castleton, Gas Works, Workford Halse, Nr. Rugby, has been awarded a penknife.)

CANNY SANDY.

Sandy: "Well, and how do you like the house?"

Friend: "Fine! But why have you nalled the wallpaper to the walls?"

Sandy: "Well, I mightn't live here for ever."

(D. Boorman, No. 64, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Bristol, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

NEARLY CORRECT.

Teacher: "Now who remem-

bers the name of the animal we were talking about yesterday?"

Tommy: "Please sir, the warmer."

Teacher: "The warmer? What nonsense! There's no such animal."

Johnny: "Please, sir, he means otter."

(J. Aitken, Cadlys Villa, Alan Road, Llandilo, has been awarded a penknife.)

A SOUND SCHEME.

"Johnnie," said mother, "why don't you let your little friend have your sleigh part of the time?"

"I do," replied Johnnie. "I have it going down the hill, and he has it coming up."

(G. Norman, A 5, Council Houses, Herston, Swanage, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

PRIVATE.

Gamekeeper: "Didn't you see that notice at the entrance of these woods?"

Small boy (looking very innocent): "Yes, but it was marked 'Private' at the top, and I didn't like to read any more."

(R. Rudge, 20, Cotterells Road, Hemel Hempstead, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)



the suggestion. During the afternoon Archie was more enthusiastic than ever, and by now he had deluded himself into believing that the whole idea was his own. Tony did not undeceive him—for this was all to the good. It was far better that Tony himself should appear as a disinterested party.

They found Colonel Glenthorne in an irritable mood; one of the gardeners had annoyed him over something. Mrs. Glenthorne was surprised, but pleased, to see her youngest son again so soon.

Tony did not know whether they knew about his father; he had been half afraid. But they greeted him warmly, and gave no sign. The fact that he was Archie's friend gave him the freedom of Glenthorne Manor.

"Well, what's it all about?" demanded the colonel gruffly. "What are you doing here, Archie? You don't suppose I wanted to see you, do you?"

"Well, the fact is, pater——"

"Get it out, boy!"

"Dash it, give a chappie a chance!" protested Archie. "The fact is, I've had a most frightfully brilliant idea."

"Good heavens! Have you come all the way from the school to tell us one of your ideas?" asked his father, in exasperation. "We know your ideas, Archibald."

However, as Archie proceeded, even Colonel Glenthorne sat up and took notice.

"Well, that's the wheezo in a nutshell," concluded Archie. "The good old rajah had us over on his yacht, so it's rather up to us to return the compliment, what? We can't very well ask him to the school, but if you invite him here, he'll probably trickle along like a bird. What's more, he'll bring his dashed emeralds with him. I mean to say, it'll be a most frightful honour, mater—and you'll have your heart's desire."

"It certainly seems to be a very good suggestion, Archie," said Mrs. Glenthorne, glancing at her husband. "I would dearly like to have the rajah here, for I have heard that he is a charming man. And as for those emeralds——"

"Huh! Didn't think the boy had it in him," grunted the colonel. "Just an informal affair, eh? The family and one or two of the St. Frank's schoolboys. Don't want to make a show of it, do we?"

Tony listened, and again he felt frightened. A sensation of appalling guilt came over him, too. He had worked this!

He had worked it well, too—for Colonel Glenthorne was so delighted with the plan that he promised to go over to the yacht in person with the invitation.

On the top of this, he invited Archie and Tony to go with him.

His Highness was most charming, and he accepted the invitation gracefully: but he regretted that he could not come in a couple of days' time, as Colonel Glenthorne suggested. Important business took him to London early on the morrow.

But he would be overjoyed to come to dinner that same evening, and nothing would

please him more than to bring the Ghar emeralds with him, for his hostess' inspection.

And so it was fixed—and Tony Cresswell went back to St. Frank's appalled by his success. For, although he had not been mentioned once, it was he who had sown the seed.

At four-thirty exactly a telephone call came for Tony—and when he went to the instrument his father was waiting.

"Don't ask where I am, son—but I can tell you that I'm safe," said Red briefly. "Well? No need to go into details. Yes or no?"

"Yes, dad," said Tony breathlessly.

"When?"

"To-night."

"Gosh! That's quick," came Red's surprised voice. "All the better for us, of course, but I hardly hoped—— What time?"

"Eight o'clock, dad—and quite a few of us St. Frank's chaps are to be there, too."

"You'll see something, son," came Red's grim voice. "Well done! The game's ours!"

CHAPTER 17.

The Rajah's Bodyguard!

IT was an unexpected treat for Nipper & Co. and Handforth and Travers and the other juniors who were invited to Glenthorne Manor.

It came out of a blue sky, and Archie was the fellow of the hour. It was generally believed that Tony had known nothing of the invitation, and Tony himself saw no reason to correct this view.

It was a big shock for Forrest. Forrest wasn't invited—and yet this son of a crook was! He went about the school complaining bitterly. And Tony himself gained prestige; for if Colonel Glenthorne considered him worthy enough to be included amongst Archie's friends, then there wasn't much wrong with him.

Surprisingly enough—to the rotters—the school authorities hadn't taken any action, either. Forrest & Co. had been prophesying that Tony Cresswell would be pitched neck and crop out of the school.

The boys arrived at Glenthorne Manor just before eight, and they found the whole place blazing with light. Colonel Glenthorne and Mrs. Glenthorne were in the best of humours, and they scarcely had time to greet the boys before the guest of honour arrived.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Handforth. "Look at all this!"

No less than six magnificent limousines were coming up the drive, and in every one there were gorgeously attired Indian servants. It was more like a State visit than an informal one.

The first limousine was occupied by Prince Gartama Asoka, Rajah of Ghar Kohat; immediately behind came another car, containing four enormous Indian servants, with two other men in the driving-seats, and two standing on either running-board. Astoundingly enough, each of these men carried a rifle.

Behind came other cars, and these, too, were filled with Indians in native dress, and



Cresswell senior swung his bludgeon, and Nelson Lee slumped to the ground—unconscious.
 “Dad, dad!” cried Tony, as he ran forward, horrified by his father’s action.

similarly armed. It was a formidable escort—armed to the teeth.

The rajah, having paid his respects, smiled somewhat apologetically.

“I am sure you will forgive this little—display,” he said. “The Ghar emeralds are of immense value—not only intrinsically, but historically. I must take precautions.”

“I quite understand, your Highness,” said Mrs. Glenthorne, smiling.

“We know that there are criminals in the neighbourhood,” continued the rajah—and Tony winced. “I thought it just as well to have the jewels closely guarded during the journey. But for the fact that I’ve brought them, I should not have indulged in this display—which, I am afraid, smacks very much of ostentation.”

“I feel very guilty,” said Mrs. Glenthorne, in real distress. “I had no idea that I should put you to so much trouble. If I had dreamed—”

“Dear lady, it is the greatest of all pleasures,” said the rajah gracefully.

The St. Frank’s fellows were impressed as the armed guards came into the house like a troop of soldiers; they carried a great ornate metal casket, fitted with powerful locks, and they deposited this casket in the dining-room.

After that, all the guards, with the exception of two, were dismissed. His High-

ness instructed them to return at ten-thirty. The two remaining men were placed on either side of the casket, their rifles ready. Clearly, Prince Gartama was taking no chances!

OUTSIDE, in the dark grounds, four unauthorised visitors were gloating. They had just seen the departure of the escort, and, lurking behind dense laurel bushes, they noted that they had a clear field.

“Boys, it’s almost too good to be true,” said Dan Mason feverishly. “And don’t forget that this was my idea.”

“You won’t let us forget it!” muttered Red.

“I reckon I ought to have half the loot, and you fellers can split the other half three ways—”

“Aw, wait until we’ve got the stuff!” snapped Red impatiently. “What would have been the good of your idea without my kid to put it into practice?”

“Is this a time to argue?” whispered Ambrose Bliss mildly.

“You said something!” retorted Red Kress. “Now, see here, boys. Stick around here, behind these bushes. I’m going closer.”

Dan Mason insisted upon going with him, and together they crept across the lawn and approached the great windows of the dining-room. No blinds were drawn, and the party within could be clearly seen. Yet those lurking figures outside were invisible—owing to the ordinary lace curtains which covered the windows.

The eyes of the crooks gleamed as they saw the wonderful casket, with its two guardians standing like sentinels on either side.

"... far better I think, my dear, to inspect the wonderful emeralds in the drawing-room, after dinner," Colonel Glenthorne was saying. "Quite an important occasion, by gad! Worthy of a special session."

He laughed, and the rajah made some polite remark.

"How many centuries old did you say these emeralds are, your Highness?" asked one of the guests.

Red Kress drew his companion away. There was no sense in taking unnecessary risks.

"We've got to get busy!" muttered Red, his eyes burning. "You heard what the old boy said? Gosh! The folly of these people!"

"What do you mean?" whispered Dan.

"Why, the rajah brings a crowd of men, and he sends them all away," said Red contemptuously. "If he had had any sense, he would have posted them round the grounds. But he figures that those fancy guards of his inside are good enough."

"Poor sap!" whispered Dan Mason disrespectfully.

CHAPTER 18.

The Hold Up!

TONY CRESSWELL was on edge throughout that never-to-be-forgotten meal.

The other guests were thoroughly enjoying themselves. It was a great treat for the St. Frank's fellows, and Colonel Glenthorne and Mrs. Glenthorne were greatly charmed by the rajah's personality. The very informality of the occasion was delightful.

Prince Gartama was a young man, and, as Colonel Glenthorne knew, he was one of Britain's staunchest friends; his influence in India was immense. He did not possess a trace of "side," and it was characteristic of him to revel in this unexpected dinner-party.

Tony was on tenterhooks. The tension was well nigh unbearable. Yet he was obliged to remain outwardly calm. At any moment he was expecting his father and those other crooks to act. The meal continued leisurely, however, and nothing happened.

If Tony could have seen into the drawing-room, he would have understood why.

That apartment, naturally enough, was empty. A beautiful fire burned, and one

softly shaded light had been left switched on. It was a superb room, this, spacious and noble. There were French windows leading into a great domed conservatory. Both these French windows, and the outer conservatory door, were locked.

Red Kress made short work of them. Before the dinner was half over, the four daring thieves were within the darkened drawing-room.

"It's soft, boys," murmured Dan Mason exultingly. "You've left these doors unfastened, haven't you, Red?"

"Yes—so that we can make a quick getaway."

COMING NEXT WEDNESDAY!



"What now?" asked Bertelli, his hand on his gun.

"You know the plan," whispered Red. "I'll do the hold-up, and you guys grab the loot. Clear out as soon as you've got it—get into one of the rajah's cars, and wait for me."

"If any of those blamed Indians try to stop us, we'll drop them!" muttered Dan.

"There won't be any Indians," replied Red. "I've had a look at the cars—they're out in the drive empty. Now then, Dan, you get behind that big screen. You go with him, Gyp."

He indicated a fine Oriental screen which stood in one corner. There was space behind it for half a dozen men if necessary.

"Bliss and I will keep here, behind these heavy curtains," added Red. "And don't forget—not a sound, not a movement, until I give the word."

They crept to their appointed places, and an absolute silence descended upon the drawing-room. The presence of those four men could never be suspected.

They were waiting now, tense and expectant. Each man had donned a heavy mask; each man carried a vicious automatic. Red Kress, indeed, possessed two.

It seemed an age before distant voices sounded; a laugh now and again; footsteps. Then, as the door was opened, lights flooded

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on. The guests came in, the rajah side by side with his hostess, chatting amiably. Behind came Colonel Glenthorne, Archie, Tony Cresswell, Travers, Handforth, Nipper, and the rest of the young guests.

There was now an impressive little ceremony. The two natives, in their gorgeous robes, came slowly into the drawing-room, carrying the beautiful metal casket between them. The guests stood round, vastly interested.

Red Kress, through a tiny hole in the curtain, saw everything. But not a sound did he make—not a sign.

The rajah spoke to his servants in their own tongue, and, bowing, the men took their departure.

"I felt, dear lady, that we should be more comfortable without the—er—guards," smiled the rajah. "I have instructed them to go to the servants' hall, where I have no doubt they will make their requirements understood."

The hidden crooks glowed with satisfaction. The only armed men had been sent away!

"This casket, in itself, is of great antiquity," continued the rajah. "It was fashioned a hundred years ago— But you are more interested in the emeralds, I think," he added, with quiet amusement. "Forgive me, Mrs. Glenthorne."

The casket was standing on a little table near the French windows—behind the curtains of which lurked Kress and Bliss. Now the rajah opened the heavy lid with something of the air of a conjurer.

"Oh!" went up a long gasp from all those who were collected round.

Mrs. Glenthorne herself was speechless. For there, within the casket, gleaming and glittering, were the wonderful emeralds of Ghar. They were, indeed, truly marvellous. Inside the casket, too, were other jewels—rubies and diamonds that scintillated in the electric light.

"Gad!" ejaculated the colonel, adjusting his glasses. "Never saw anything like it in all my life. Amazing! Marvellous!"

Then at that moment, with a sudden quick movement, the curtains over the French windows were thrust violently aside.

"Hands up, everybody!" said a hard, steely voice.

THERE was one person in that room who felt his heart nearly stop beating. Tony Cresswell had recognised that voice. It was the voice of his father.

The others were confused, startled. Colonel Glenthorne swung round, his face going purple with indignation and fury. Mrs. Glenthorne, with commendable poise, merely took hold of the rajah's arm. The rajah himself gave a low cry of consternation as he took a step nearer to the precious casket.

As though by magic four men had appeared, right there in the room itself. And each man was holding an automatic pistol. The St. Frank's fellow, dumbfounded, stood stock-still, and it was just as well for them that they did so.

"I urge you, good people, to keep calm!" said Red Kress. "Any person who makes an outcry will be dealt with drastically."

"Those crooks!" gasped Handforth. "Here, you chaps, let's—"

"Silence, you!" snarled Red, his voice so threatening that Handforth started back. "Up with your hands! Lively, now!"

Handforth raised his hands with great promptitude. Everybody else had obeyed, too.

"Get busy!" rapped out Red. "There it is, boys; take it. I'll look after this crowd."

With swift footsteps Dan Mason, Ambrose Bliss and Gyp Bertelli made for the casket. Their eyes were glittering with triumph behind the masks. Mason slammed the lid of the casket down and picked it up; he and his two companions raced for the French windows, burst them open, and instantly Red Kress stood with his back to the conservatory. In each hand he held an automatic.

"Now, folks, you'll keep quite still, and remain silent!" he ordered. "I'm giving my friends time to get clear."

"You—you infernal ruffian!" fumed the colonel. "Your Highness, what can be done? Your emeralds—"

"Valuable as my emeralds are, they are not so valuable as human life," said the rajah quietly. "I beg of you all to obey this man's order. It would be madness to resist."

Tony swayed. He felt almost that he was going to faint. During the day he had had a vague hope that something unexpected would crop up to prevent this audacious raid. But it hadn't. Here was his father keeping everybody at bay, and the other crooks were making off with the priceless casket and its fabulous contents. And it was he, Tony, who was responsible. It was he who had made the whole thing possible.

Vaguely he heard Handforth speaking near him.

"We've got to do something, you chaps," the burly junior was saying in a low, hoarse whisper. "We can't let these crooks get away!"

"You're mad, Handy," hissed Church. "This man's desperate. He'll shoot us if we try to rush him."

"He wouldn't shoot Cresswell!" said Handforth significantly.

"You—you mean—"

"You've heard his voice!" panted Handforth. "He's Cresswell's father. He wouldn't shoot his own son."

Tony groaned, and Nipper, who had heard Handforth's words, knew that they were perfectly true. He, too, had recognised the voice of the masked man.

"Cresswell! You've got to do something!" murmured Nipper, turning upon Tony. "This man is your father. He won't shoot you, and if you distract his—"

Tony scarcely heard; he glanced across at his father, and behind the mask he saw eyes that twinkled mockingly. Red Kress had heard all, and he was amused. And Tony thought he knew why.

"It's no good now!" he muttered wretchedly. "Those other men have gone, and they've got the emeralds."

Mercifully he was saved from further anguish, for at that moment the door was flung wide open and in walked Nelson Lee and Inspector Jameson, and between them, firmly handcuffed, were the three crooks who had so recently escaped!

CHAPTER 19.

A Remarkable Revelation!

"GUV'NOR!" yelled Nipper joyfully. Curiously enough, neither colonel nor Mrs. Glenthorne showed much emotion, except perhaps a relief that the tension was over. As for the rajah, he laughed amusedly.

"We were beginning to get anxious," he said dryly.

Tony was looking at his father, and his heart was thudding like a sledgehammer. Why didn't his father escape?

"Hi!" yelled Handforth. "Mr. Lee! Quick! There's another crook for you here. You'd better look out, too, because he's armed—"

Handforth broke off, for it is somewhat difficult to speak when one's jaw is dropping. And Handforth's jaw dropped considerably. For when he glanced round at Red Kress he received a shock, as indeed did all the other St. Frank's boys.

For Red Kress had calmly pocketed his two automatics, and now, taking the mask from his face, he produced a big handkerchief. He wiped his face carefully, changing the expression upon it as though by magic.

Tony tried to speak, but failed. The man he saw now was the man he had always known—his father. Those features were clear-cut and strong, but they were kindly, too.

"Sorry, Tony, old man," said Red. "Hope I haven't given you too much of a shock."

"But—but you're a crook!" babbled Handforth.

It was Prince Gartama who laughed.

"I'm afraid you boys have been labouring under a misapprehension," he said smoothly. "I've got a little secret for you. Allow me to introduce Major Cresswell, V.C., of the Foreign Office Intelligence Department."

"Wha-a-a-at!" yelled the staggered boys.

"Dad!" almost sobbed Tony.

"The hardest part of the job, son, was fooling you," said Major Cresswell quietly. "And I couldn't even do that right to the bitter end. I gave you a hint last night in the vault—don't you remember I told you to obey orders and that everything would be all right?"

"Yes, dad, and I've been puzzling over it ever since," panted Tony. "But your subsequent actions made me think that you were one of this gang after all, and—"

He was interrupted by the violent shouting of Dan Mason and the other two crooks. They were almost foaming at the mouth with rage.

"You double-crossing hound!" snarled Bertelli. "We'll get you for this, Red!"

"I'm afraid you'll be too busy for the next ten years to bother about me," said Major Cresswell calmly. "I didn't double-

cross you. I've been after you for months, my friends; I've been trying to trap you. Well, at last I have succeeded. Take them away, inspector. You have plenty of men here, I presume? They're tricky customers."

"A dozen outside, sir," said the inspector, saluting. "Mr. Lee helped us to nab these beauties. Ticklish work it was, too; they were ready to fire on us."

"It wouldn't have mattered much," said Tony's father gently. "I took the precaution to load their automatics with blanks. You see, I knew the boys would be here, and I didn't want any accidents."

The crooks raged afresh. Struggling desperately, they were dragged out of the room to be taken to the police-station. And now the two Indian servants reappeared with the great casket containing the Ghar emeralds.

"These stones of mine were never in any danger, of course," said the rajah. "Major Cresswell gave me his assurance that they would come to no harm."

"But, dad, please explain!" pleaded Tony. "Oh, I knew you couldn't be a crook. And yet—well, everything seemed to point—"

"I can soon explain," said his father quietly. "And I think you other boys would like to hear that explanation, too."

"I should think we would, sir," said Nipper promptly.

"By George, yes!" said Handforth. "I'm terribly bucked to know that you're not a wrong 'un."

"I would like to congratulate you, Mrs. Glenthorne, upon your admirable acting," said Major Cresswell. "And yours, sir," he added, turning to the colonel.

"Acting?" asked Archie, bewildered. "Good gad! I never knew—"

"Your father and mother were well aware of my real identity, my boy," said the major. "I could not, of course, go through with this affair without giving them full warning. Mr. Lee arranged it all."

He turned to Tony.

"You see, lad, I've been after those crooks for months; I trailed them half across the world," he continued. "I knew that they were after the Ghar emeralds, and I came to the conclusion that my best course was to join them. No need to go into the details now; but I can tell you that in the character of 'Red Kress,' I got in touch with them at Marseilles. My little effort was a great success, and indeed, after a week or two I found myself so thoroughly in the character of 'Red' that I almost lost my own personality. I could not even take the police into my confidence. My object was to capture the criminals red-handed. I nearly did so aboard the yacht, but you boys, being so full of energy, rather spoilt things."

"By Jove!" ejaculated Nipper. "So—so that's why you were annoyed with us, sir?" he added, turning to the rajah.

"I was very annoyed indeed," said his Highness. "But, of course, I could not explain."

"So I was compelled to stick with the gang until another opportunity arose," continued the major. "I made that opportunity myself, as you know, Tony. Meanwhile, the police were on our track, and harassing us badly."

"Yes, dad," said Tony. "That policeman you shot—"

"I only fired a blank, and I am afraid I scared the poor fellow badly," said the major.

"But—but you bludgeoned Mr. Lee."

"I need hardly tell you that I had already had a conference with Mr. Lee, and he knew who I was," said the major. "When he appeared so unexpectedly I was compelled to take action or my 'confederates' would have smelt a rat. Mr. Lee obligingly became senseless when I gave him a little tap on the head."

"You did it very effectively," said Nelson Lee, rubbing his head. "There's still a bump."

"Well I'm jiggered!" said Handforth. "I can hardly believe it, even now. But why didn't you let Inspector Jameson arrest those men that afternoon in Bannington?"

"Because the charge against them would have been trivial," replied Major Cresswell. "I wanted to catch them in the act of stealing the jewels. Those crooks are three of the worst ruffians I have ever encountered, and it will be far better for the world if they are put away for ten or fifteen years."

Tony was so joyful that he could hardly say anything. But he was furious with himself for ever having doubted his father even for an instant.

"I'm afraid I've been rather secretive with you, son; but you're old enough now, and I'll never fool you again," said the major. "I have been attached to the Foreign Office Secret Service for many

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More news about next week's great treat for 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.

LAST week I promised readers full particulars of a great treat I have in store for you. In next Wednesday's issue of the Old Paper that treat materialises—in the form of a super-thrilling series of extra-long stories relating the latest adventures of Nelson Lee, the famous detective.

For a few weeks Lee will relinquish his duties as headmaster of St. Frank's, and devote his energies to the tracking down of a notorious character who is known as Professor Rymer.

Lee's latest "case" is perhaps one of the most difficult—and certainly one of the most perilous—the great detective has ever tackled, and his remarkable exploits will hold readers breathless.

As already announced, these stories are extra long—being many thousands of words longer than the present St. Frank's yarns. A novel-length detective story for twopence—that is what the NELSON LEE presents to its readers next week. Look out for this thrilling treat—and tell all your pals. And as there will be a bigger demand than ever for the Old Paper, I advise you all to make sure of obtaining your copy by ordering in advance.

Many thanks for your welcome letter, Edward Chamberlain (Braintree). Let's hope that you will continue to revel in the Old Paper now that you have become a regular reader. Yes, Mr. Brooks is well acquainted with your part of the country.

Sorry, Ed. Inglis Hodgson (East Fremantle, West Australia), to hear that you were disappointed because the St. Frank's fellows did not stay long in West Australia, when the boys visited your country in the School Ship. But, you see, the tour had to be carefully mapped out, and a long stay in West Australia was impossible.

Answers to last week's three questions con-

cerning the St. Frank's stories. 1. Four. Violet Watson, Ethel Church, Winnie Pitt and Ena Handforth. 2. November 11th. 3. Tubbs, Rodgers, Spratt and Jelks.

You have a very good record, H. Joslin. A reader for eight years, and, in your opinion, the Old Paper gets better every week! That's what I like to hear. You can take my word for it that it will continue to get better—as witness the smashing new programme of stories that begins in next week's issue. Thanks for the idea you suggest.

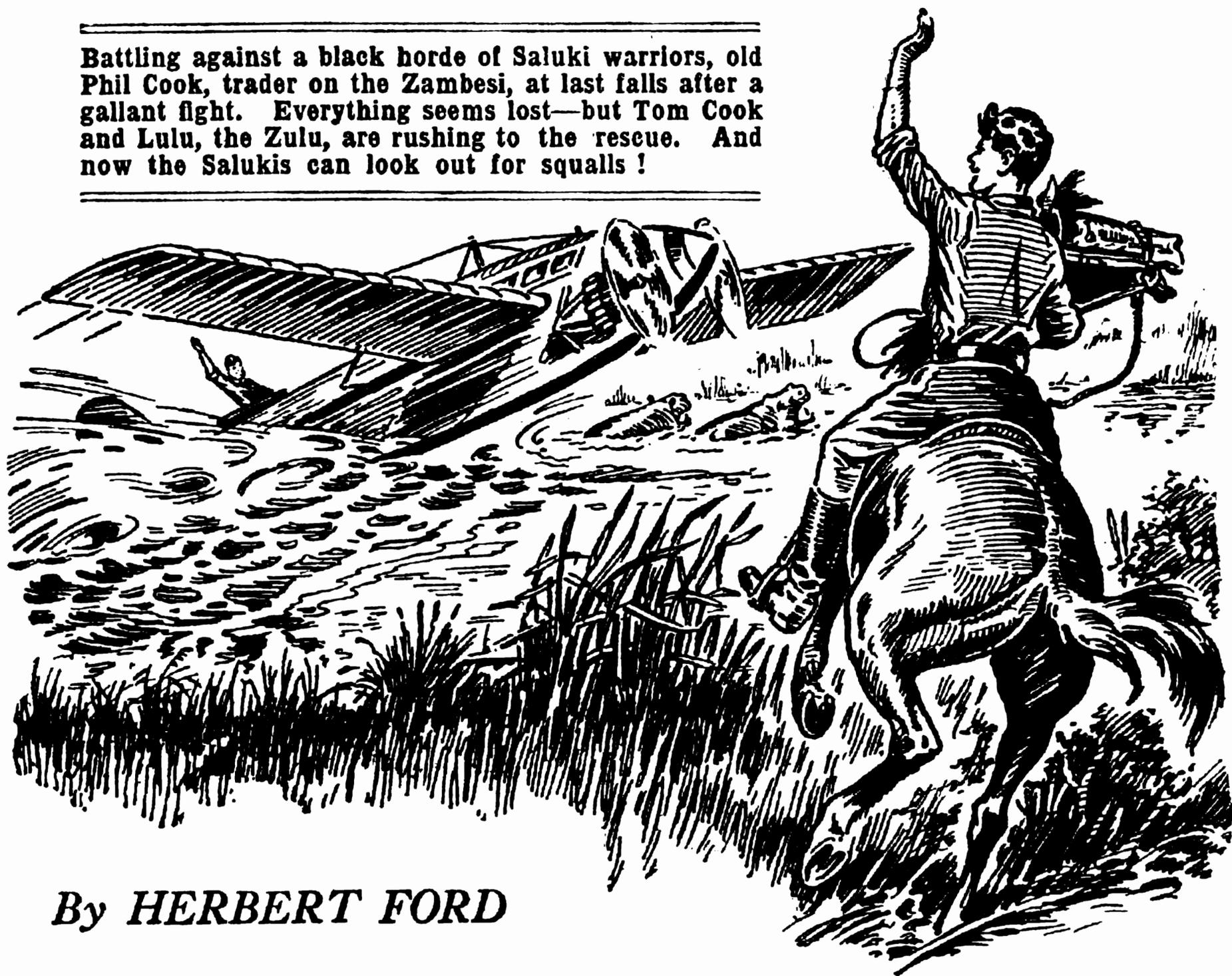
Pen-sketches of three more St. Frank's Removites. **STUDY H. VIVIAN TRAVERS.** An easy-going, cool-headed fellow is Travers, with a supreme disregard for what "other people think." He goes his own way with a sang-froid which baffles all criticism. He constantly hovers on the brink of shadiness, but never quite goes over. Takes life very easily, and is a born practical joker. **SIR JAMES POTTS, BART.** A sturdy, reliable pal. A fellow who has known the meaning of hard work, for, before his mother's fortunes were restored, he had been compelled to earn his own living. Jimmy Potts is popular with all. **ANTHONY CRESSWELL.** Quite a newcomer, and a welcome addition to Study H. Further particulars regarding Tony are to be found in this week's story. Prior to his arrival, "Skeets" Bellton shared Study H with Travers and Potts; but Skeets is a day boy, and has no actual standing where studies and dormitories are concerned.

Always glad to hear from you, Irene Randall (Sandwich), as I know that I have no stauncher reader in the whole wide world. In answer to your questions, Tom Burton has only swum the Channel once. Mrs. Wilkes is a very charming lady. She is almost as popular with the Ancient House boys as Old Wilkey himself.

"The Flying Fish"—a wonder craft that travels through sea and air!

The CITY of GOLD!

Battling against a black horde of Saluki warriors, old Phil Cook, trader on the Zambesi, at last falls after a gallant fight. Everything seems lost—but Tom Cook and Lulu, the Zulu, are rushing to the rescue. And now the Salukis can look out for squalls!



By HERBERT FORD

A Fighting Fury!

"DAD, dad, stick it—we're coming!" Tom yelled the words as he saw the desperate plight of his father, who was being dragged into a canoe by the Saluki warriors.

In spite of the distance, Phil Cook must have heard the cry, for he made another superhuman effort and broke away from his captors. But in another second he was surrounded again, and Tom saw an upraised club descend upon his father's head.

With a cry of fury Tom bore down on to the seething black horde, yelling like a fiend and brandishing his rifle. An answering shout went up from the Salukis directly he was recognised. Here was a prisoner they had not hoped for—Oboona, their chief, would rejoice at the capture of "Sunshine Goldhead," as they called Tom in their own dialect.

As the boy galloped recklessly down on them, half a dozen ran to meet him. In a flash his pony was cruelly ham-strung, and

as it fell they expected to see Tom pitched forward on his head. But he was prepared, and landed on his feet instead—right in the midst of them! And then Tom became a fighting fury!

He made for the struggling, heaving mass near the water's edge, shooting down Salukis to right and left as he yelled to his father to fight on. The older man was almost done, but the sound of his son's voice seemed to give him new life, and with a mighty effort he threw his assailants aside and staggered towards Tom. The lad just had time to thrust an automatic into his father's hand when the mob descended upon them again.

Back to back they stood, fighting that yelling horde and keeping a ring around them which the savages dared not cross. The Salukis had never seen automatic pistols before, and these tiny things that spat out death without stopping to be reloaded was something they could not understand.

Then Tom heard an even louder yell from the river, and gave a groan of despair as

another fully loaded canoe dashed up with a fresh consignment of warriors.

"That's done it—we're whacked!" sighed Tom as he brought the butt of his now empty automatic down on a woolly crust before him. But there came a curious chattering sound from away up towards the burning station house, and a deep rumbling voice, uttering fierce war cries, which he recognised.

Lulu the Zulu had made a circuit when he saw Tom rushing towards his father. He had suddenly remembered that there was a small machine-gun which the older Cook had taken in trade some time before.

It had been left in the big tilted trading wagon which was standing near the burning house. The wagon was already blazing, but Lulu knew to an inch where the little machine-gun and its box of ammunition was stored. Without hesitation he hopped into the midst of the flames, and felt around until he found the box and the gun, stowed away together under some sacking which was smouldering.

"Now, may the good spirits aid us that we may make this scum repent this night's work!" he muttered. "The odds are heavy, but I have fought against worse!"

Lulu got out of the blazing wagon by the simple process of shoving his massive shoulder through the side of the flaming tilt and pushing, then stepped over the wheel and loaded up his gun.

With the weapon perched on his shoulder, he charged into the thick of the fight.

"Waw! Way, ye dogs!" he bellowed in the Saluki dialect. "Way for Lulukumbula, who is the running death! Way for me—whose bite is death! Waw! I am the elephant—the great one who bids ye run for your kraals lest I blot ye out! Waw! Way for the running death! Away with you—away!"

The Salukis had never seen a machine-gun before, and the rapid fire of the weapon which the giant Zulu carried so easily, and which was spitting out sudden death on every side into the packed horde struck terror into their hearts.

Lulu sprayed them with bullets and yet seemed immune from hurt himself, though spears flew thick and fast around him, and the old trade guns with which the savages were armed belched forth bits of iron, lead, or any other old thing that could be crammed into them. He fairly blazed a trail through the mob, and made a lane for Tom and his father to stagger up whilst the Zulu covered their retreat with the machine-gun.

Then came a guttural order from Oboona, the Saluki chief who had just landed, and again a concerted rush was made for the trader and his son. But at that very moment there came a loud cheer from behind them, and down on to the scene galloped Alva Vandeck, Ben Bold, and a motley crowd of bearers, beaters, and what remained of the station crew, reinforced and armed with up-to-date rifles.

This was too much for the Salukis, who

broke and made for the river, paddling off in hot haste.

Phil Cook surveyed the wrecked trading station with a rueful shake of his grizzled head. None but he knew how irreparable was his loss, that the proceeds of a hard life had all gone up in smoke, including a collection of ivory and uncut gems that represented a small fortune.

"Tom I reckon tradin's about done for us, old man. Thanks be I've never touched that little nest egg in the bank at Salisbury which I allus meant for you. You can take that and start out on your own, see? I'll have to go—elsewhere. There's a little proposition I've always meant to take a look into, and now's the time to do so—on my own!"

"Proposition—what sort?" asked Tom, with a keen look at his father's worn and haggard face.

The ruined trader shrugged his shoulders wearily.

"Oh, it's just something I've shelved for years, thinkin' it too much of a wild-cat scheme to handle. But I guess it's neck or nothin' now, and this proposition means—a big fortune—or death! And I don't know as I cares much which it is!"

"By hokey! Do you mean that old map I've seen you poring over—the yarn I heard you discussing with Lulu and that old hunter one night—the secret of your grandfather?" exclaimed Tom excitedly. "That map refers to a lost land of gold, doesn't it? Dad, you're not goin' to leave me out of this! If we find a fortune, we'll share it together. If it means death—we'll meet it together. But we're partners, you and I, for good or ill!"

But Fate ordained otherwise, for only one of them was to go on that adventure that was far, far stranger than either could anticipate. There was to be only one of them who would look death in the face, who would have experiences such as man had never before encountered, and meet a people parted from and forgotten by the outside world, shut into a world of their own!

The Land of Gold!

"FOR the love of peace—what's that row?"

Tom Cook pulled up his pony and listened in bewilderment.

There were strange sounds in plenty on the Zambesi, but this was a new one to him. It came again, and much nearer this time—so near, in fact, that his frightened Basuto pony whirled around and around in a vain attempt to buck the lad off, and, but for the firm hand upon the bridle, would have bolted.

From down the river there came a weird, wailing shriek. It awoke the echoes in the forest that bordered either bank of the two-mile-wide river, causing numberless water-fowl to rise, and even startling the sluggish crocodiles which floated like logs upon the surface.

Again the weird sound rang out, and now Tom's ears caught the regular, rhythmic beat of a propeller.

"What a chuckle-headed goat I am!" Tom murmured with a grin. "Of course, it's a motor-boat of sorts, though that 'buzz-buzz' sounds more like an aeroplane, from what I remember of 'em!"

Living "at the back o' beyond" as he did, Tom had seen but little of modern inventions, and an aeroplane was still a novel sight to him.

"Gosh, I bet this is Al's little surprise!" Tom muttered excitedly. "He was so dashed mysterious about his trip to Livingstone, taking Ben Bold with him after long and secret conferences with dad, I'm certain Al had something up his sleeve. Well, I'll soon know, for here comes the— Hallo—what on earth is it?"

Tom might well ask, for the craft that came hurtling up the Zambesi was as strange a looking "boat" as ever touched water. And "touched" is the right word, for she did very little more.

Twenty feet in length, she was shaped like a whale, with adjustable wings sticking out on either side. It seemed to be travelling almost entirely out of the water, standing up on its own "tail," so to speak. She was driven by two small propellers, like an aeroplane.

The entire length of the craft was covered with a whaleback deck, except for a small cockpit right at the stern, from which Tom could see Al's head just appearing as he steered the rapidly moving vessel.

So great was the speed that a wave was formed in its wake higher than the stern of the craft itself, causing a wash that swished the reeds on either side of the great river. It awoke many a hippo slumbering amongst them, as their snorts of disgust proved.

"Alva, ahoy!" yelled Tom through his hands. "Slow up, you old blighter, and let's have a look at that freak!"

His strong young voice carried across the water, and his cousin looked round with a grin, touched a switch, and the nose of the boat dipped down normally into the water as the power was shut off.

"Hallo, Tommy, old thing! How goes it?" drawled Al. "I can't stop just now. Toddle back to the landin'-stage and meet me there. These hippos are so dashed inquisitive; I've had to scrape the skin off the noses of one or two of 'em already!"

Even as he spoke the surface of the water was broken by a huge form, and the small, deep-set eyes and enormous snout of a "river pig" showed within a few feet of the boat. Al touched a switch, and immediately the demoniacal screech of a syren was heard. The hippo dived swiftly for safety.

A growling voice came from forward under the deck.

"Bawss, let's git a move on! I kin stand hipplepotmyasses at th' Zoo, but when it comes to havin' 'em bumpin' about under this hyar boat o' yours—it puts the wind up me, an' I'm tellin' yuh!"

"I'd better be movin', Tom; Ben's gettin' restive!" called Al, with a wink at his cousin.

"See you later, and I'll give you and your father a spin."

That night they all sat around the camp fire, chatting. Tom was delighted to find that his father had bucked up considerably since their heart-to-heart talk, and his decision to go in search of that "Land of Gold" to which Tom had referred.

"Now then, dad!" said the boy excitedly. "Let's hear the yarn about that old map of yours, and how your grandfather was concerned in it. Alva's dead keen on the idea, and he's wantin' to go into partnership with us. We can search for this lost land in his Flying Fish!"

"Well, it's a yarn I'd be mighty chary o' spinnin' to anyone else, for I reckon it may be more or less of a fairy story," said the old hunter-trader slowly. As he spoke he drew a battered and stained old parchment from his wallet and spread it out on his knee. "But, knowin' this 'Dark Continent' as I do, I realise there are stranger things happen here than are dreamt of by people who don't know its peculiarities. Right; I'll heave ahead!"

The faded map with its accompanying explanation, written in Italian and traced in blood, had been found in the skeleton hand of an old scientist explorer, Signor Giulio Torella.

"My grandfather was his guide and hunter," said Phil Cook quietly. "They were probably the first white men to have penetrated so far into these wilds. Besides this chart, Professor Torella had a skin bag containin' some magnificent diamonds in the rough. The parchment was given me by an old half-breed hunter who found the skeleton and disposed of the diamonds. Curiously enough, he never had a day's luck afterwards; that was why he never followed up th' clues that lead to the place where those diamonds came from."

The old trader paused and looked at Tom thoughtfully. Then he glanced at the faded writing on the back of the parchment.

"This is what the professor wrote," he continued, and began:

"None shall taste of this fortune or look upon the Golden City of the Golden God save he who be pure of heart or hand, but he who has been chosen by the Golden God may venture forth without fear, and his company with him. The city waits for its god, and when he comes he will be recognised and welcomed. But white must be his heart, and gold hi—' The rest has been wore off the parchment," concluded Phil Cook.

"H'm, there seems to be a lot o' 'gold' about the whole thing!" remarked Tom. "'White is his heart and gold—'"

He paused, for his father was looking at him with a slightly significant smile on his lips; looking at his son's bright golden curls and white skin, of which Tom was rather ashamed. The boy flushed as he remembered how he had told Al about the Salukis imaginin' he had some sort of powerful "witchcraft" about him because of his golden hair and fair skin.

'D-dad, you don't think there's anything in this, do you?' asked Tom, tapping the parchment. "I mean about the gold—and—white—and—er—all that, eh?"

"Africa's a curious land, my lad; and some of the native superstitions have a lot more truth in 'em than the whites, who laugh at 'em, imagine. Tom, this parchment says, 'White is his heart,' not 'skin,' mark you. Well, lad, I think you answer th' description mighty well for your heart's just as white as a feller's could be——"

"Here, chuck it, dad!" cried Tom, casting a look at Al, and reddening uncomfortably.

"Hear hear!" drawled the American. "Nothin' to get wild over, Tommy. Your dad's dead right. You're white clear through, and as straight as a die——"

"I'll tell th' cock-eyed world that's so!" chimed in Ben Bold, and they all laughed.

There followed a lengthy and eager discussion about the faded old map, which ended when Phil Cook announced that it was time for them all to turn in, and he set the example by being the first to roll up in a blanket. But he could not sleep, and after a while he sat by the camp fire, gazing into it and weaving dreams of a phantom fortune that might come to him late in life.

The trader was brought back to earth by a slight sound behind him. As he gave a startled glance over his shoulder, and sprang on his feet, he was borne to the ground again by a gigantic form that leapt on his back out of the darkness.

Then he was picked up, like a mouse by a cat, and with three long plunging leaps the lion bore him off into the bush!

Lulu Licks a Lion!

TOM awoke with the lion's roar ringing in his ears, and he also heard the shrill scream that was forced from Phil Cook's lips as he was carried off into the darkness.

Both Tom and his cousin, Alva Vandeck, had merely wrapped themselves in their blankets outside the temporary hut, for the night was hot.

In a second the trader's son had grasped his rifle, which was lying close handy, and as a huge form flashed past him he fired.

Augh-gh-gh!

There came a muffled coughing groan from the lion as the heavy bullet ploughed into his flank, but he still carried on and did not release his prey.

"Fire, Al!" Tom yelled, as he saw that his cousin had awakened and had his repeating rifle in his hand.

Al fired—and missed; the flickering firelight made the rapidly moving target more than difficult to hit.

It seemed that huge beast must escape into the bush with its human prey, but even as Tom dashed forward, Lulu's giant frame rose before the retreating lion.

The Zulu let out a shout like a war cry, and fairly flung himself on the great cat, his tremendously powerful hands digging into

the beast's windpipe, hanging on, endeavouring to squeeze the breath out of its throat and compel the lion to drop its prey.

Then, with Phil Cook's limp body dangling from its jaws, and the giant Zulu hanging on to its throat like grim death, the lion disappeared from Tom's sight.

"Come on, Al! Follow!" Tom shouted, and tore off in pursuit.

Ahead of them they could hear the sounds of the great beast threshing through the bushes with its double burden. Tom switched on a powerful little electric torch and followed the spoor, which was plain enough in all conscience with Lulu's dangling heels scrabbling up the soil beside the lion's deep footprints.

Then there came a shout from Tom. It was a shout of delight, for he had stumbled over his father's body, which the lion had dropped at last. To his joy, Phil Cook half-stumbled to his feet and managed to stammer out:

"Lulu—after—him!"

Then the trader collapsed in his son's arms.

"Yuh stay behind an' help Tom!" Ben Bold jerked out to Al, and grabbed his boss' repeating rifle unceremoniously. "I'm goin' arter that darkie. Say, he's a plucked 'un if ever a man was!"

In a second Ben had snatched Tom's torch and was away on the trail.

After a few moments Phil Cook's eyes opened, and he smiled feebly up at Tom. Blood was pouring from the great gash in his back made by the lion's teeth, and Tom was doing all he could to stanch it.

"Leg's broke, Tom!" the trader sighed. "But—I'm—all—right—save—Lulu!"

Meantime the lion plunged on through the bush. The throttling clutch upon his throat had compelled him to drop Phil's body, but he was desperate to get away from that camp where such uncanny things could happen.

He had looked upon the half-sleeping trader as an easy prey, but he had not bargained for this huge clinging thing which was hampering his movements with the strength of a gorilla and the clinging power of a horse leech.

The lion suddenly halted, and with a vicious snarl tried to shake the giant Zulu off. But Lulu, fighting for his life, with the memory of many a ring battle seething through his brain, threw a wire-muscle leg across the beast's back and swung himself out of reach.

Roaring and snarling, the lion suddenly threw his whole body to one side and rolled. But for Lulu's extraordinary quickness of foot, he would have been crushed under the massive form and at the lion's mercy. As it was, he gave a sideways swing himself, so that the lion finished on his back with the Zulu on top of him.

The lion's mighty claws became a whirlwind of action in a second, but the Zulu clung close to the animal's body, his legs locked round it, his face buried deep in the furry mane.

Inch by inch his fingers crawled up the massive neck until his right hand fastened on to the lower jaw. Then his left flashed up and closed over the snout, so that the animal was unable to breathe.

With a mighty effort Lulu then dragged the lower jaw down and down. Hideous sounds came from those distended jaws; groans and roars of pain and rage. The lion's body thrashed over and over in his wild endeavours to rid himself of his antagonist.

But Lulu clung so close that there was no getting at him. And at last there was a fearful and resounding howl from the lion, and the huge beast's jaws were out of action—broken clean apart!

But there were still the mighty claws to face, and Lulu knew that his only chance was to cling to the lion. Even as the thought occurred to him, he was flung violently to one side. The animal gave a convulsive spring into the air and then crashed on to the ground—dead! A slight figure stumbled out of the bush with his rifle still smoking.

"Hail, Tiny!" grinned Lulu, and collapsed in a dead faint.

Ben Bold stared at the lion, his rifle ready for another shot, but his first one had found its mark, and the mighty beast was stone dead. He knelt beside the still form of the Zulu, and took the black close-curved head on his knee.

"Nugget, for th' land's sake say something!" he whispered. "Let's know yuh're alive! Say, but yuh're a man an' a half, I'll tell th' cock-eyed—"

He tore his shirt to ribbons, and using these as bandages, sought to stanch the blood which flowed from the Zulu's many wounds.

Lulu was in a bad way. During his titanic struggle with the lion his body had

been terribly mauled and torn by the animal's threshing claws. When Tom and Alva appeared on the scene they gazed at the motionless form of the giant Zulu in horror.

"Lulu—Lulu!" cried Tom, and knelt down beside his black pal.

The Zulu's eyes flickered open.

"Do not worry, Bass Tom," he said faintly. "It is nothing. I, Lulukumbula, warrior and victor in a thousand battles, shall not be defeated by a cunning cat that seeks its prey in the darkness. Wau!"

And with that contemptuous snort the Zulu struggled to his feet.

There he swayed, and would have fallen again had not Tom and Alva sprang one on either side of him and supported him. Slowly they made their way back to the camp, half dragging Lulu as he stumbled along between them. They laid him beside Phil Cook who, seriously wounded by the lion, appeared to be only semi-conscious.

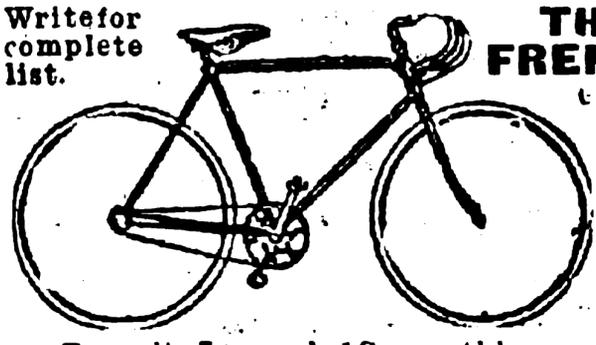
After bathing their wounds and attending to the two injured men as best they could, Tom, Alva and Ben Bold held a consultation.

"What's going to happen about our trip to the Land of Gold, old bean?" drawled Al worriedly.

"All depends," replied Tom. "Lulu will be all right—he's as strong as a giddy elephant. It's dad I'm worried about. He's in a bad way. But you can bet your last button that he won't drop out of this quest for the lost city without a struggle."

(In next week's stirring chapters the adventurers begin their search for the lost Land of Gold. Don't miss reading them, chums.)

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