

GRIPPING NEW DETECTIVE & SCHOOL THRILLER

By E. S. BROOKS—Inside!

THE NELSON LEE

LIBRARY

2



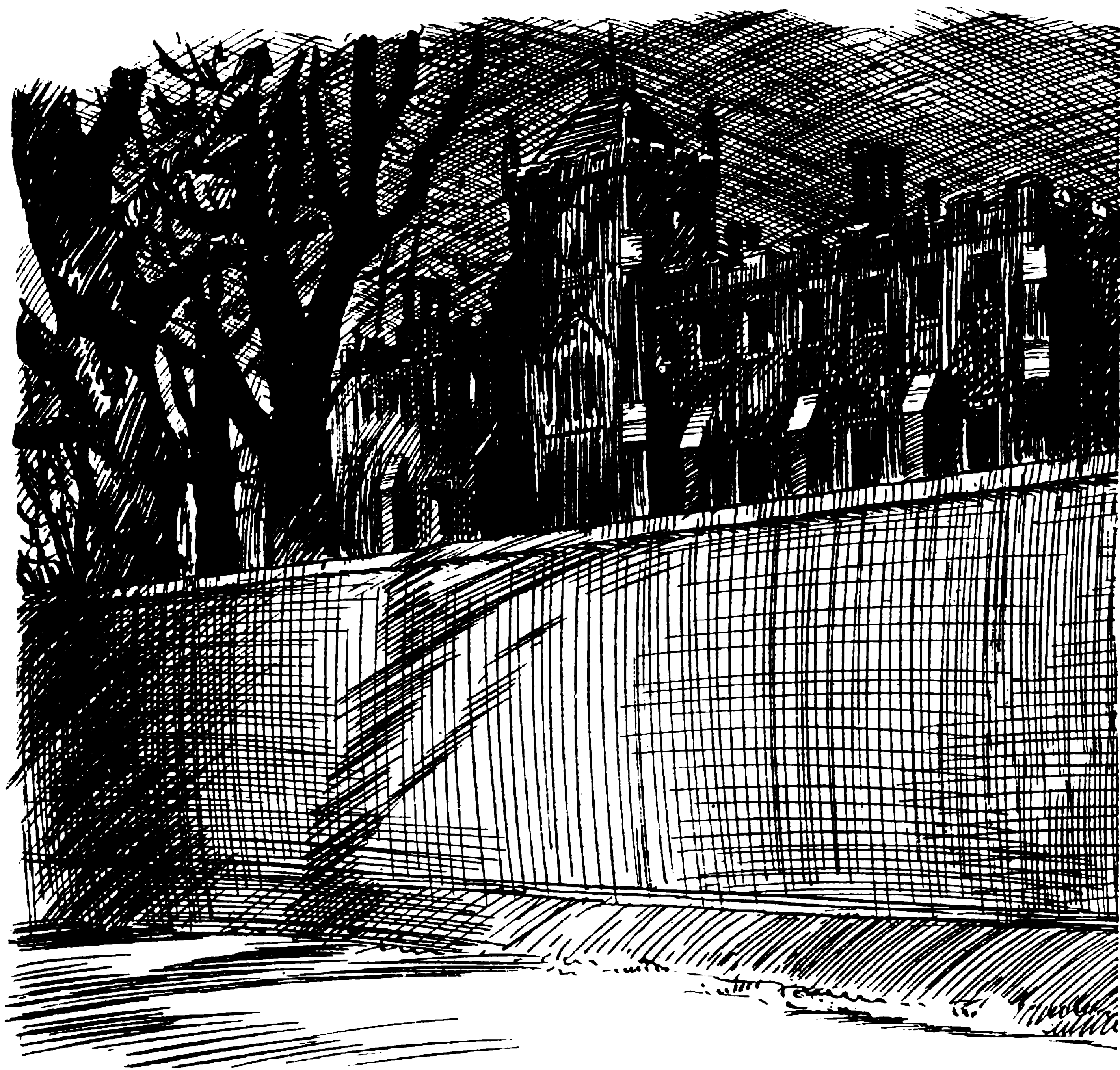
ST. FRANK'S IN PERIL!

New Series No. 153.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

January 28th, 1933.

ST. FRANK'S



The shadow of peril hangs over St. Frank's. The dreaded Fellowship of Fear have sent forth their ultimatum to the Head of St. Frank's—an ultimatum which, if accepted, will bring disaster upon the famous old school. But in Fighting Jim Kingswood, the headmaster, and Nelson Lee, the detective, the "Fellowship" have met their equals in determination!

CHAPTER 1.

The Secret.

"**D**ISGUSTING!" said Handforth bitterly.

"Horrible!" agreed Church.

"Filthy!" added McClure.

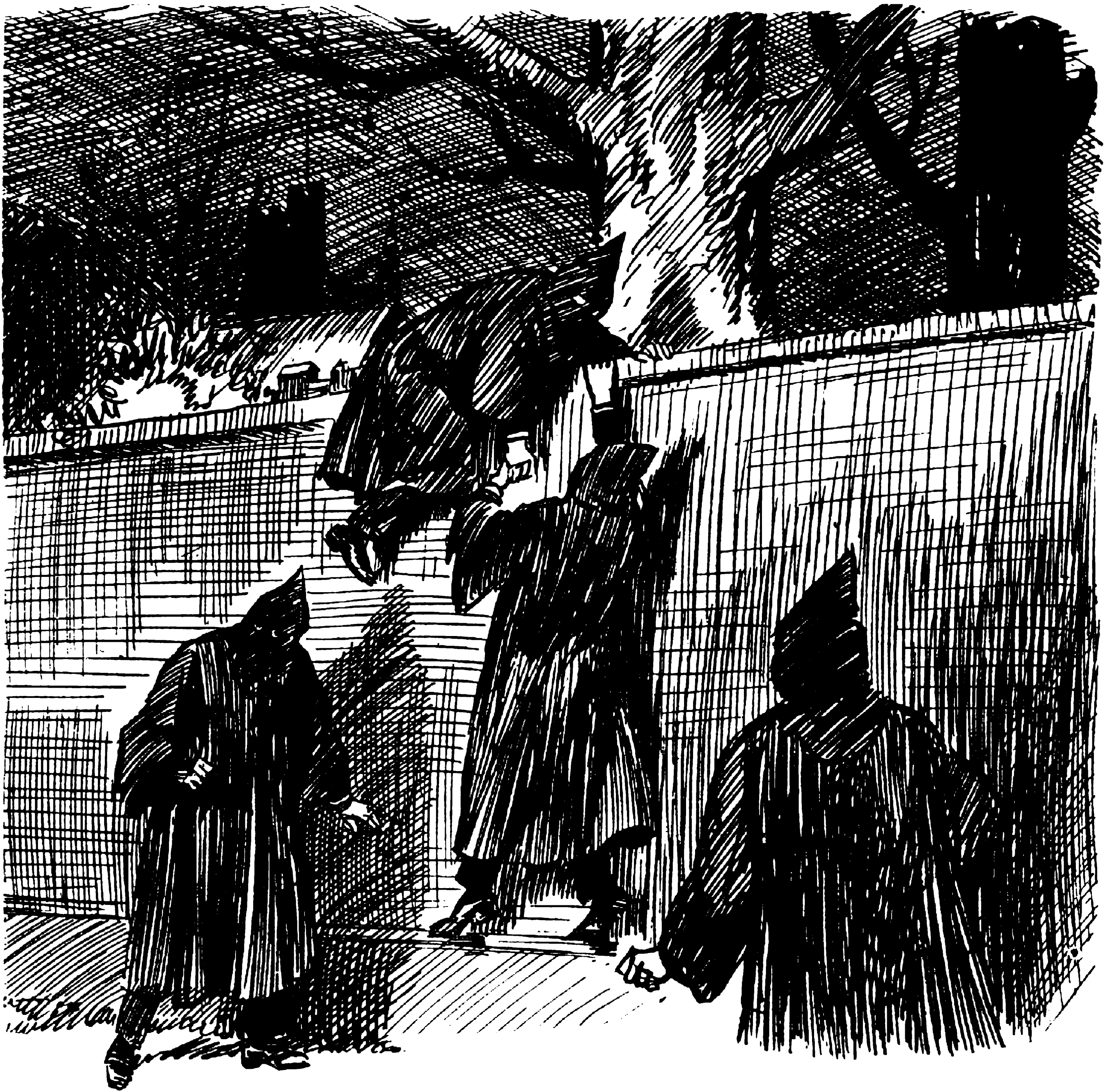
Having expressed themselves thus, in the

plainest of plain language, the famous chums of Study D continued to stare out of the open doorway of the Ancient House at St. Frank's. It was a bleak January afternoon, and the rain was pouring down in steady torrents. Handforth & Co. had not exaggerated, for the weather was undoubtedly disgusting, horrible, and filthy. Consider-

And NELSON LEE The Famous Detective—By Edwy Searles Brooks.

IN PERIL

By
E. S. Brooks



ing that the day was a Wednesday, and a half-holiday, the juniors were all the more justified in expressing their views.

Nipper, the cheery Remove captain, strolled across the lobby with his own chums of Study C—Tommy Watson and Sir Montie Tregellis-West. They joined the mourners at the door, and for some moments they stared out in silent dejection, the only sounds being the beating of the rain on the gravel, and the monotonous drip-drip-drip from the leafless chestnuts.

"No sign of clearing," said Tommy Watson after a bit.

"Clearing?" repeated Handforth dismally. "It won't clear for a week! Look at that

leaden sky! We haven't had such rain since that ghastly week in November, when Little Side was turned into a mud pudding!"

"The only consolation is that it started raining early this morning," said Nipper, who had a happy knack of looking on the bright side.

"Where do you find the consolation?" asked Handforth, staring.

"Well, we were able to ring up the Helmford chaps and scratch the footer match," replied Nipper. "It saved them a journey, anyway."

"That's a fat lot of comfort to us!" said Handforth disdainfully. "Think of it! One of the most important matches of the giddy

season, and we have to scratch it! I don't see why we couldn't have played," he went on argumentatively. "Rain won't hurt us, will it? All the big League fixtures are played, rain or no rain."

He directed an accusing gaze on Nipper.

"You haven't been back at St. Frank's for long, and I can't say that you've covered yourself with glory!" he continued. "What kind of a junior skipper do you call yourself? Now if I were in your shoes I should have told the Helmford chaps to come over —"

"Don't be a bigger ass than you can help, Handy," put in Church.

"Eh?"

"You know jolly well that the scratching of the match was nothing to do with Nipper," continued Church. "We're not allowed to play in a downpour of rain. It ruins the turf, for one thing, and the beaks are afraid that we might catch cold."

Handforth's only reply was a snort; but Nipper grinned.

"Cheer up!" he said heartily. "What's the good of crying over spilt milk? Grumbling at the weather, Handy, is the world's worst waste of time."

"Old boy, you're absolutely right—you are, really," said Sir Montie. "And as it's frightfully depressin' to stay here lookin' at the bally rain, why not go along to the study and toast our toes in front of the fire?"

Left by themselves again, Handforth & Co. took a final look at the dismal prospect, and then Church and McClure voted that Sir Montie's plan was a good one. They went to their own study, leaving Handforth railing uselessly at the rain.

But he arrived in Study D soon after his chums; and they noted at once that there was a change in him. A gleam of excitement had come into his eyes, his movements were mysterious. Not only did he close the door and lock it, but he went over to the window and partially pulled the curtains.

"What's the matter with you?" asked Church. "Don't you think it's gloomy enough in here already?"

"We don't want any light," replied Handforth in a low, intense voice. "Listen, you chaps, I've got an idea."

He came to the fireplace with exaggerated caution. Then he sat down and made Church and McClure bend their heads towards him.

"If we talk in low whispers we shall be safe," he breathed. "And as it's such a rotten afternoon, we might as well discuss the great secret."

His chums looked startled.

"Better not!" said Church earnestly. "You've been marvellous during this past week, Handy. You haven't made one slip. And Mac and I are still a bit dazed."

"What do you mean—a bit dazed?"

"Well, you're generally so careless with your secrets," said Church frankly. "No good getting offended. You know I'm speaking the truth."

"I know nothing of the sort!" retorted Handforth. "When a secret is as important

as this one, I can hold my giddy tongue. Why, Mr. Lee's life might depend upon our —"

"Shush!" warned Mac. "Better not even mention his name."

"Whose name? Mr. Lee's?"

"Crumbs! He's starting!" groaned Church. "He's been perfect for a week—but I knew it was too good to last."

Handforth looked at them coldly.

"I'm not going to get wild, because, when a chap gets wild, he unconsciously raises his voice," he said in a whisper. "There are only six chaps in the whole of St. Frank's who know that Mr. Lee is here. We three and the three fellows next door. Now my idea is to put them to the test."

"But it isn't necessary, you fathead," said McClure. "Do you think Nipper would give his own guv'nor away?"

"I don't mean Nipper—he's safe enough," said Handforth. "But what about Watson and Tregellis-West? My wheeze is to casually walk into Study C, and then we'll start talking about the secret. If they pull us up, all well and good—it will show that they are cautious. I want to trap them if I can."

"You'll never do it," said McClure. "It's far more likely that they'll jump on you for being so rash."

"Well, let's go and try," said Handforth, moving towards the door. "This secret of ours is so vital that we can't be too careful."

When they got into Study C they found Tommy Watson and Sir Montie Tregellis-West duly toasting their toes over the fire. They looked very comfortable. They were reading and chewing caramels.

"Where's Nipper?" asked Handforth, looking round as though he expected Nipper to pop out from under the table or from the cupboard.

"Gone to the Common-room," said Watson, laying his book down resignedly. "Looking for Travers, I think. Dash it, Handy, what's the idea? You chaps are not going to stop here, are you? I was just having a nice read—"

"Bother your read," said Handforth.

His eyes contained a new gleam. It was all the better that Nipper should be away. Nipper was safe with the secret, anyhow. These other chaps were the real danger. And Handforth carefully closed the door, looked round to see if the window was tightly fastened, and then he moved across to the fireplace.

"Stand by that door, Churchy," he ordered. "If anybody comes, give me the tip."

Watson and Tregellis-West were staring in wonder.

"What's the mystery about?" asked Watson.

"Better humour him, old boy," murmured Montie sagely.

Tommy Watson understood and nodded. It was always a risky thing to argue with Handforth, for there was never any telling when the argument would be over. Far

better to give him his head, and then he would quickly dry up.

Handforth sprang his first trap.

"Either of you chaps seen Mr. Lee to-day?" he asked suddenly in a low, mysterious voice.

"Begad! No!" said Montie. "Is Mr. Lee at St. Frank's, then?"

Handforth was disappointed.

"Good! Distinctly good!" he said with grudging approval. "I thought I was going to catch you, but it didn't work."

"Perish the thought!" said Watson solemnly.

"What do you think of Carson, the Head's chauffeur?" asked Handforth.

"He seems all right," replied Watson.

"What about him?"

"Keeps it up well, doesn't he?"

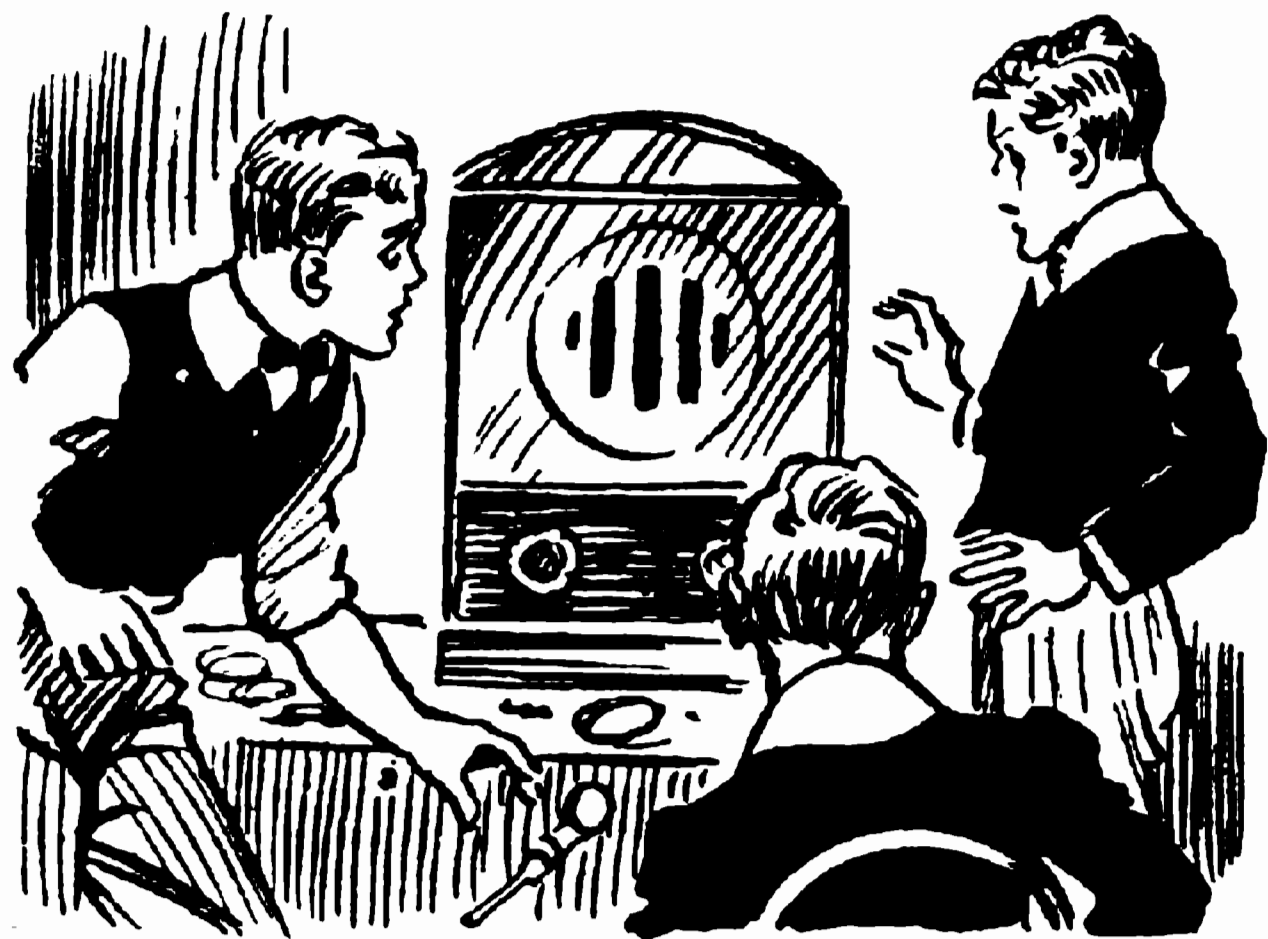
"Eh?"

"I say he keeps it up well."

"Keeps what up?"

"Keeps up the game, of course."

Again Handforth was disappointed, for Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West looked at him blankly, and then they looked at one



another. Tommy, in fact, touched a finger to his forehead, which was a significant gesture.

"He can't help it, poor chap," he said sadly. "It's been coming on for months!"

"Well, I must say that you chaps are keeping it up well," said Handforth admiringly. "I can see it's no good trying to trap you like that."

"Mad as a hatter!" murmured Montie.

Handforth was serenely indifferent to these insulting remarks—which he distinctly heard. He tried another method of attack. He would see if he could persuade the pair to discuss the great secret; and then, when they were doing so, he would drop on them like a ton of bricks for succumbing to his inducements.

"You've come through with flying colours," he said in a whisper. "I can see that you're not going to let yourselves be caught out. But we're all alone here—and we're all in the know. No reason why we shouldn't have a little chat about the thing."

"No reason at all," said Tommy. "If you'll tell us what the thing is we might be able to conjure up some enthusiasm."

"Good man!" said Handforth. "Now practically a week has gone by since we

twigged that Mr. Lee was at St. Frank's, posing as Carson, the Head's chauffeur——"

"What!"

"Cheese it! No need to keep up the pretence any longer."

"But what the dickens are you drivelling about?" demanded Watson in exasperation. "Carson, the Head's chauffeur, is Mr. Lee in disguise! You're off your rocker!"

"Crazy as a coon!" agreed Montie in wonder.

"Rats! Don't keep it up any longer," said Handforth impatiently. "Then there's the secret society, too——"

"Begad! The what?"

"The secret society which is after Mr. Kingswood's blood."

"Crumbs!" said Watson, edging away. "He's getting worse!"

"There's no sense in keeping up this dotty air of innocence," said Handforth. "You know as well as I do that Carson is really Mr. Lee."

"Oh crumbs!"

"You know that he's here to protect Mr. Kingswood."

"Begad!"

"And you know that the agents of the secret society might act at any hour."

"The poor chap's raving!" said Watson in alarm. "I say, Churchy, you'd better fetch a doctor!"

Handforth gave it up.

"You're too jolly smart for me!" he growled in disgust. "I keep on trying to trap you, but you won't be trapped. Of course, I've got to give you credit——"

"What do you mean—trap us?" roared Watson. "You're talking absolute drivel! What's all this tommy-rot about a secret?"

"Shut up!" gasped Handforth in alarm. "Don't yell like that!"

"I'm going to yell if I want to—in my own study!" shouted Tommy Watson. "What else should I do when a raving lunatic comes in and starts telling me that Mr. Lee is at St. Frank's disguised as the Head's chauffeur? I've never heard such——"

"Be quiet!" shrieked Handforth frantically.

A thump sounded on the door—a heavy, resounding thump. Somebody had tried the handle, and was now shaking it again.

"Who—who's that?" called Church.

"Let me in!" came Nipper's grim voice.

Church turned the key, and Nipper strode in. He was looking not only alarmed, but angry.

"I heard what you were saying!" he exclaimed, his eyes blazing. "What do you think you're doing, Handy? Have you taken leave of your senses?"

Handforth was flabbergasted.

"I was only putting these chaps to the test," he said feebly. "I didn't tell them to start shouting——"

"Well, it's a jolly good thing that nobody else was in the passage," said Nipper hotly.

Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West were looking at him in stupefaction.

"I give it up!" said Montie with a hopeless shrug. "They're all dotty!"

"Nobody's dotty—but somebody is a blithering chump!" said Nipper fiercely. "You're the blithering chump, Handy!"

"Now look here——"

"What do you mean by coming into this study and discussing something which you promised, on your word of honour, to keep secret?"

"But it doesn't matter, does it?" asked Handforth. "We're all in the know."

"We are now—but Watson and Tregellis-West weren't until you blabbed."

Handforth sat down with a thud.

"Oh, my only sainted aunt!" he ejaculated in a hoarse whisper. "I—I thought that you'd told them days ago! You said you were going to. No wonder they acted so queerly!"

Tommy Watson and Sir Montie were looking at Nipper for enlightenment.

"If there's a secret on the go, old boy, I think you might have told us," said Sir Montie reproachfully. "Begad! I feel frightfully hurt—I do, really."

"I'm sorry," said Nipper. "There was no need to tell you chaps anything yet—and, naturally, I never dreamed that Handforth would come and let it out. As a matter of fact, I wanted you to come into contact with Carson once or twice more; and then I was going to tell you the whole yarn. Nothing has happened, so it doesn't matter."

"Before we go quite loopy, do you mind explaining just what you mean?" asked Watson helplessly.

"In the cirs, Handy, I don't blame you so much," went on Nipper. "You naturally thought Tommy and Montie knew, didn't you? Well, it can't be helped. No good crying over spilt milk—as I said once before this afternoon." He went nearer to his own chums and lowered his voice. "It's a fact," he went on. "Mr. Lee is at St. Frank's—disguised as Carson, the chauffeur. I've known it all along, of course, but about a week ago Handforth discovered it by accident, and it's a standing marvel how he has kept mum until now."

"Is this really true—honest injun?" asked Montie.

"Honest injun."

"Begad! I can't believe it—I can't, really!" said the elegant schoolboy baronet. "How frightfully excitin'! I mean, I've met this laddie Carson lots of times, an' I would never have dreamed——"

"I can't believe it even now," said Watson in amazement. "Mr. Lee at St. Frank's—disguised! But what for? Handy was saying something about a secret society. It sounded awful rot——"

"But it happens to be true," said Nipper quietly. "Mr. Kingswood is in danger—from a secret society, too. And my guv'nor is here to protect him. There you have the whole situation in a nutshell. But you've got to keep it absolutely under your hats. My guv'nor's life may depend upon your discretion. I was going to tell you anyway

so it's just as well that the secret should be out. Things might begin to happen soon. And, with any luck, we shall be able to do our bit."

Tommy and Montie, having recovered from their amazement, were now thoroughly excited. Handforth was inclined to be indignant. All his carefully laid traps had been wasted.

"Why aren't the police on the job?" asked Watson. "If these crooks——"

"That's just the point; they're not ordinary crooks," interrupted Nipper softly. "And, remember, you chaps, we must never discuss this subject unless we're alone. Even then we must be careful. I'll tell you this much. The secret society is known as 'The Fellowship of the Free.' Even you didn't know that, Handy, but you might as well know now."

Watson's eyes had opened wider.

"Why, I've seen something about that in the newspapers," he declared. "A lot of people think that it's bluff, don't they?"

"Bluff or not, Scotland Yard knows this society as 'The Fellowship of Fear,' my son," replied Nipper grimly. "Nobody quite knows how big the organisation is; but its headquarters are believed to be somewhere on the Continent. There are branches in every important European country, including England."

"But what are they—thieves or swindlers, or what?"

"Nothing like that," said Nipper. "They're terrorists. They are fanatics, and their aim is to precipitate a world revolution."

"My only hat!"

"It's not a political organisation at all," proceeded Nipper. "You can call them Anarchists, if you like; but they're really something worse. And one of their methods of attack is to force schoolmasters to adopt their aims and maxims—not only in England, but in lots of other countries. It's a wholesale 'strafe.' The headmasters of great schools and colleges are being terrorised, by threats of murder, into insidiously adopting this new way of teaching. Well, when our own Head received the first warning from the fellowship, the school governors called Mr. Lee in. That's the real reason I'm back at St. Frank's. The guv'nor is here, too—but the school only knows him as Carson, the chauffeur. A week ago Mr. Kingswood received the second warning, and he was given seven days in which to adopt the fellowship's rulings."

"Great Scott! He's not going to knuckle under, is he?" asked Sir Montie.

"No fear!" said Nipper. "That's the whole idea of the guv'nor's plan. Mr. Kingswood is defying the fellowship. Something drastic is just about due. That's when we shall step in. You see, my guv'nor's idea is to get on the track of these devils by stealth."

"I say, it's an ugly business," said Watson, awed.

"Uglier than any of us realise, perhaps," said Nipper. "Scotland Yard is baffled. The British Secret Service is utilising its best brains. Yet nobody has yet discovered where the English headquarters of the fellowship is situated; nobody has ever been able to nab a single member of the clan. There's another side—uglier still."

He instinctively lowered his voice.

"Just to show you that Mr. Kingswood's danger is not imaginary, I'll tell you this much," he said. "A number of headmasters of great schools—including such a famous Head as Dr. Westlake, of Hyde College—have vanished. Nobody knows how they disappeared, nobody knows whether they are alive or dead. They have never been traced."

"Phew!" whistled Montie. "How frightful!"

"Nothing of this has been allowed to appear in the newspapers," said Nipper. "The authorities are afraid that publicity would scare people into taking their sons away from big schools. And that would be silly, for the boys aren't in any danger. But you know what parents are."

"Rather!" said Handforth. "My mater would have me away like a shot if she thought there was a secret society buzzing about St. Frank's!"

"Every one of these headmasters refused to obey the fellowship," said Nipper. "Mr. Kingswood has refused. Something is certain to happen to him. But both he and my guv'nor are prepared. Lots of the smaller schools may be teaching the fellowship's rotten maxims at this very minute. The authorities believe that lots of under-masters have been terrorised, and are obeying the orders. This dangerous society must be crushed. And my guv'nor has sworn to do everything in his power to crush it."

CHAPTER 2.

The Mysterious Voice.

THUMP—thump—thump!

Morgan Evans and Solomon Levi were standing in the Remove passage, in the West House, banging on the door of Study S. They were banging hard. It was their own study, and they were locked out. And on a wet, miserable afternoon such a thing was not to be tolerated.

"Look you, Goodwin!" shouted Evans. "We want to get in!"

"Go away!" came the voice of Dick Goodwin, from within the study.

"Rats! It's our study as much as yours!"

"I'm busy!" roared Goodwin.

"My life! He's busy, and we've got to stand out here in the cold!" said Levi, in exasperation. "Anybody might think he paid rent for the place!"

"And all he does, whatever, is to litter up the place with his silly inventions!" said the Welsh junior. "When we sit on a chair

we have to be careful, in case we impale ourselves on his tools and gadgets."

Thump—thump—thump!

"Come in, then, you noisy fatheads!" said Dick Goodwin, unlocking the door and glaring at his study mates. "I thought you said you were going to the Common-room for the rest of the afternoon? Can't you give me a minute's peace?"

The pair entered their rightful domain.

"Litter—litter—nothing but litter!" said Levi, looking round.

"If you don't like it, you can jolly well lump it!" said Dick. "I've just finished my new radio, and I haven't had time to clear up yet. Why the dickens can't you chaps leave me alone? This is the most ticklish bit of the whole job—connecting up. It's taken me two months to design this set and build it."

Dick was in his shirt-sleeves, his hands were grubby, his hair untidy, and there was a gleam of satisfaction in his eyes. Solomon Levi looked at him almost sadly.

"Two months wasted!" he exclaimed. "And with your inventive genius you could make all sorts of things that you could sell for real money! I'd find the customers——"

"Rats!" said Dick Goodwin. "I'm not after profits."

"If you made yourself into a business, with me as your manager, I could pull money in like magic," said Levi. "What a pity! I wouldn't charge you much commission, either——"

"Will you be good enough to go and eat coke?" interrupted Goodwin politely.

He was always having this trouble with his business-like study-mate. Goodwin was, indeed, an inventive genius; some of the contraptions he produced were remarkable for their originality and efficiency of operation. But he would never consent to Levi's pleadings; he would not have his inventions patented or marketed. For many weeks Levi had been disgusted because Goodwin was spending all his spare time on a short-wave radio set.

"Two months on a radio!" he said, in despair. "You'll never get your money back on it!"

"I don't want to get my money back on it!" roared Goodwin. "It's an experiment, anyhow. It might be an absolute failure."

"A failure!" gasped the Jewish junior. "By my life! You spend two months on a radio that might turn out to be a failure! You spend good money on it, too."

"Quids!" said Dick, with satisfaction. "Every penny of my spare cash for two months, including a whacking big tip I had for Christmas. You ought to see the marvellous valves I've got in this set." His eyes glowed. "Two of those valves are of my own design, and it cost me a whole lot of money to have them specially made. This circuit is different from anything else that's ever been designed. It's revolutionary."

His enthusiasm was genuine. Evans and Levi looked at the severely plain wooden

cabinet which housed Goodwin's latest invention. It certainly wasn't much to look at; a very ordinary pedestal wireless set, with a built-in speaker. A long side table was used by Goodwin as his work bench, and it was littered with pliers, pieces of wire, rheostats, condensers, and all manner of other radio apparatus.

"You've got a few parts left over," said Levi. "Maybe you can sell them, and get a bit of your money back."

"I don't want any of my money back!" roared Goodwin. "All I want is to be left in peace. Look here, be sports, you two!" he went on earnestly. "I've just got her all connected up. Everything's ready, and I'm going to test her. I wanted to be alone, but as you're here, the least you can do is to be quiet."

"Can you get London Regional?" asked Evans. "How many valves? It's all electric, I suppose?"

Goodwin looked at him pityingly.

"Of course it's all electric," he replied. "By gum! How many more times have I got to tell you that this isn't a normal circuit? It won't receive London Regional, or London National, or Daventry, or Radio Paris, or any of those stations."

"Then what's the good of it?" asked Levi, in wonder. "You spent all that money on a radio, and it won't receive——"

"Will you dry up about money?" asked Goodwin, breathing hard.

"If there was an open drain right at your feet, and you threw the money down it, you couldn't waste it worse!" said Levi, in despair.

"This is a short-wave set—and different from any other short-wave set which has ever been designed," explained Goodwin, with exaggerated slowness. "It might not work at all."

"My life!" moaned Levi.

"On the other hand, I'm hoping to pick up radio signals from the other side of the world," continued Goodwin, his eyes glowing again. "Such remote stations as Honolulu, Tokyo, Melbourne. If my calculations are right I shall have achieved a triumph."

"You call it a triumph to pick up Honolulu and Tokyo?" asked Levi amazedly. "You spend good money to listen to Tokyo? Even if you get it, you can't understand Japanese!"

Goodwin refused to answer. He turned back to his beloved set, and busied himself with it. He connected up a wire here and a wire there. He saw that the earth and the aerial switches were in their right places. He made one or two final adjustments.

"You came in at the right time," he said tensely. "Now! Listen! And, for goodness' sake, don't interrupt!"

His study mates were not impressed. Goodwin, they knew, would be perfectly willing to sit in front of that preposterous set and listen in for hours. His patience was a thing to marvel on. If, by supper time, he heard a confusion of atmospherics, intermingled with a queer foreign voice, he would

be satisfied. But they weren't prepared to listen in for ten minutes. They had other ideas of recreation.

Goodwin turned a knob; then another knob. The radio came to life, for it hummed quietly; and then, the valves warming up, the hum nearly vanished. But as Goodwin gently and delicately turned the controls, a few faint cracklings and buzzings sounded from the loud speaker.

"Willy Handforth can do better than that on the set he made for ten bob!" said Levi critically.

"Do be quiet!" said Goodwin.

"Now, ten bob isn't much to spend," continued Levi. "Young Willy could sell that set for fifteen, and make five shillings profit."

"This set has cost Goodwin quids, and he couldn't sell it for fourpence!" grinned Evans.

He seemed to regard it as a joke, but Solomon Levi positively winced. He was about to make some caustic remark when Dick Goodwin held up a warning hand. A curious soft rushing noise had come from the speaker.

"Here's something!" said Dick eagerly. "I've got a wavelength of some kind, and I'm dead on it."

He set the controls even more delicately, and waited. The other two juniors looked at one another and shook their heads.

"Headquarters calling!" said a clear, deep voice.

The three juniors jumped.

"What—what was that?" gasped Evans.

"Headquarters calling!" repeated the voice.

It was uncanny. So absolutely natural were the words that they seemed to be uttered by a living man in that very room. Solomon Levi became suddenly intensely interested. He had heard all kinds of wireless sets in his time; but never had he heard such perfection of reproduction as this. It was positively eerie. Even as the juniors listened they could distinctly hear the breathing of a man in the loud speaker.

"Are you ready!" came the deep voice again. "Number one calling number thirty. Number one calling number thirty. Instruction for to-night. Number thirty is to be at the appointed place at eleven o'clock to-night. Number thirty is to be at the appointed place at eleven o'clock to-night."

Silence again.

"Great Scott!" muttered Goodwin, his eyes blazing. "Did you ever hear anything like it, you chaps? Where did that voice come from? There's no transmitting station in England which would send out such a message! What the dickens can it mean?"

"You're asking me!" said Levi. "It was English, wasn't it? That station must be in the next study! There's nobody playing a trick upon you, I suppose?"

"Impossible," said Goodwin. "The set is connected up to the ordinary aerial. Listen! He's starting again!"

"Number one calling number twenty-five," came the voice. "Number one calling number twenty-five. Are you ready? Number twenty-five is to meet number thirty at the appointed place at eleven o'clock to-night. Number twenty-five is to meet number thirty at the appointed place at eleven o'clock to-night."

Again came the complete silence; again the startled juniors stared at one another.

After another pause the voice again sounded. This time it instructed number twenty-two to be at the "appointed place" at eleven p.m. After an interval the order was repeated. There followed another interval, longer this time, during which the juniors listened with evergrowing wonder.

"Headquarters now switching off," came the voice. "Listen in again at seven o'clock this evening. Any additional instructions



The cyclist dismounted and propped his bicycle against the rustic fence—but he was unaware of a vague, black figure, lurking in the upper branches of a tree opposite, watching his every movement.

Levi happened to glance at his watch, and he saw that the time was a minute after three o'clock.

"I wonder if the time has anything to do with it?" he asked. "You haven't picked up an ordinary English station, by any chance? There might be a play on, or something like that. Where's to-day's wireless programme? Look up what's on at three o'clock, Evans."

"That's impossible," said Dick Goodwin impatiently. "This is no ordinary English station. It must be some experimental set. But why all this mystery?"

will be given then. Listen in again at seven o'clock this evening."

A sort of click sounded, and the speaker became "dead."

"He's gone," said Goodwin. "The transmission is cut right off! By gum! What could it have been? Where did it come from?"

"It must have been somewhere near," said Evans.

"That doesn't follow," replied Goodwin, shaking his head. "We don't know the power of this set yet. That voice might have been in America for all we know."

"Rats! You couldn't pick up America," said Evans sceptically.

But he changed his mind soon afterwards; for the delighted Dick Goodwin, by careful experimenting, succeeded in tuning in short-wave stations in far-flung corners of the world. Curiously enough, not one of them was a recognised station. They were experimenters. The voice of a man in far-off California came with bewildering clearness; another voice, speaking a language which the juniors could not identify, came faintly, but with crystal clarity.

"It's an unusual circuit, and I'm picking up all sorts of wavelengths which no recognised set can receive," said Goodwin. "I can understand these foreign and American experimenters coming in, but what was that first voice? That's what puzzles me."

It puzzled his chums, too. And, very naturally, they talked about it. When they went to the Common-room they repeated the story.

It was inevitable that Nipper should hear of it in due course. He thought nothing at first. It was tea-time now, and the gossip about Goodwin's "latest" was more or less humorous. But from the various joking remarks which were made Nipper picked up the gist of what had happened. He suddenly became intensely interested; for, like a flash, he had read something significant in those mysterious signals. In fact, he became intensely excited.

A mystery voice, giving instructions to mystery subordinates! And to-night it was likely that the Fellowship of Fear would take some action with regard to Fighting Jim Kingswood, the Headmaster of St. Frank's!

Nipper was so struck by the story that he went along to the West House, and he had a chat with Dick Goodwin—who told him everything. Nipper, naturally, appeared to be just casually interested, like most of the other fellows.

But, instead of returning to the Ancient House, he slipped out into the private road which surrounded the school property, and hurried along to the headmaster's garage. It was quite dark, and there was little or no fear of Nipper's movements being observed. In any case, it did not matter much at this hour of the evening.

Arriving at the garage, he rang the bell of a side door. It was quite a picturesque little building, this, for, over the garage there were the living quarters for the chauffeur. The door was soon opened, and a biggish man, with a mahogany-coloured face stood there.

"Can I have a word with you, Carson?" asked Nipper. "I'm in a bit of a trouble with my motor-bike. Something to do with the exhaust valve. You're a mechanic, and I thought you might be able to give me a tip."

"Come in, young gent," said the chauffeur respectfully.

Nipper entered. They both went up some

stairs, and soon they were in the chauffeur's sitting-room.

"This is rash of you, Nipper," said "Carson" softly. "I've warned you not to come to me unless you have something of vital urgency to tell me."

"Well, I have, guv'nor," said Nipper tensely.

It was difficult to imagine that this man, so typically a chauffeur, was really Nelson Lee, the great detective. He was absolutely in the "skin" of his part. He acted it during every minute of the day, and never once did he make a slip. He was Carson all the time.

Breathlessly Nipper told the news; and he was gratified to see the eager sparkle which came into Nelson Lee's eyes.

"I couldn't help coming, guv'nor," concluded Nipper. "It may be nothing, of course. But don't forget that this radio of Goodwin's is something unique. It's his own invention—and the circuit is completely new. He tells me that the voice came in with uncanny loudness and clearness. The man who was speaking said that he was Number One, and he was giving instructions——"

"Yes, yes, I know," said Lee. "It is certainly very significant, young 'un. Upon my word! How amazing that a mere school-boy, with an amateur set, should pick up the secret and unknown wavelength of the Fellowship of the Free! I haven't a doubt that that is just what Goodwin did. And one of these mystery men—either Number Twenty-two, Number Twenty-five, or Number Thirty—is the landscape painter, Bentley, of Pine Cottage, near Edgemore. That gives me an idea."

For some moments Lee was silent. A week ago he had discovered, by means of an infra-red ray photograph, that Bentley, the supposed landscape painter, was one of the fellowship agents. It had been an important discovery; but since then Lee had been unable to take any action.

"You'd better not stay, Nipper," said Lee. "Go back to your House, and do all you can to spread the suggestion that the mysterious signals were in the nature of a practical joke. We don't want the boys to get talking too much."

"And what are you going to do, guv'nor?" asked Nipper.

"I'm going to ring up Mr. Kingswood on the secret 'phone—the special wire which connects the garage with the Head's study," replied Lee. "Mr. Kingswood is going to be very interested in Goodwin's radio—so interested, in fact, that he is going to offer to buy it."

"I get you, sir," said Nipper shrewdly. "By Jove, that's a great wheeze!"

"We've got to have that set!" said Lee, compressing his lips. "We can't allow it to remain in Goodwin's hands—and it may be of incalculable use to us in our fight against the fellowship."

"It's almost too good to be true, sir," said Nipper.

"But that's how things happen more often than not—unexpectedly," continued the detective. "In a case like this, where we are working so much in the dark, we must gladly accept what the gods offer. You had better get back now, Nipper; and don't forget what I told you."

"Any chance of a job for me, guv'nor?"

"There's nothing in sight yet, but I may be able to use you at any hour," said Nelson Lee. "Hold yourself ready."

He gave a nod of dismissal, and Nipper, without another word, took his departure.

Standing on a side table in the "chauffeur's" sitting-room there was a very ordinary-looking wireless set of the table-grand type. Soft music had been coming from it just before Nipper's entry, for the set was a good one. But it possessed other qualities.

Opening the back, Nelson Lee removed the metal casing of one of the parts, and he withdrew a tiny telephone receiver. Then he pressed a hidden button.

Anybody searching the room—even with the definite object of locating a hidden telephone—would scarcely have looked for it here. It was one of Nelson Lee's own ingenious ideas. In the headmaster's study there was a similar radio. Mr. Kingswood, in fact, was displaying a very keen interest in wireless of late. He even had a set in his bed-room. But only he and Nelson Lee knew that both sets contained secret 'phones. When Lee pressed that button, Mr. Kingswood's radio, in his study, commenced an unmistakable oscillation.

It would be easy enough for the headmaster to display an interest in Dick Goodwin's latest invention, for he had allowed it to be generally known that he was now a confirmed radio "fan."

A tiny voice sounded in Lee's receiver.

"Yes?" it said softly.

"Listen; something important." Nelson Lee was only whispering, and his mouth was close to the camouflaged transmitter. "I want you to do something—and to do it at once."

And the chauffeur gave careful instructions to the headmaster.

CHAPTER 3.

Special Orders For No. 30.

IT was still raining hard, soon after six, when Mr. Kingswood splashed up the steps of the West House. He lowered his umbrella, shook it, and stood it in the big rack. A tall, skinny junior was wandering aimlessly in the lobby, and he doffed his cap with respect as he recognised the newcomer.

"Wretched evening, sir," he remarked politely.

"Wretched or not, Trotwood, I had to come over and have a look at Goodwin's wireless," said the Head, smiling. "The fame of it has even penetrated my isolated seclusion."

"Yes, sir," said Trotwood, beaming.

"I hear it's quite a success."

"Rather, sir; the Triangle's in an awful mess."

"What?"

"I wouldn't call it hot, sir——"

"Wait a minute!" said Mr. Kingswood hurriedly. "I think I've made a mistake."

He knew that there were two Trotwoods in the Remove, and they were so exactly alike that they were always getting mixed up. This one was evidently Cornelius, who was afflicted with deafness. He was also a very simple-minded youth. Nicodemus, his twin brother, on the other hand, was very much "all there."

"I'm not surprised to hear it, sir," remarked Cornelius, nodding.

"Not surprised to hear what?" shouted the Head.

"Didn't you say the Triangle is like a lake, sir?"

"No, I didn't! But it doesn't matter!"

"Oh, really, sir!" protested Corny in an injured voice.

"What's wrong now?" roared Mr. Kingswood.

"You said I was as mad as a hatter, sir——"

"I said it didn't matter!" bellowed the Head in desperation. "Look here, my lad, this conversation is getting difficult. Tell me the way to Goodwin's study, and I'll be satisfied."

"You needn't shout, sir; I can hear you," Cornelius mildly. "If there is anything I can do——"

"Yes, you can take me to Goodwin's study."

"If Goodwin's muddy, it's his own fault, sir," said Cornelius, shaking his head. "He shouldn't go out on such an evening——"

"His study—study!" bellowed Mr. Kingswood helplessly. "Take me to Goodwin's study!"

"Oh, I see, sir! You want me to show you to Goodwin's study?" asked Cornelius brightly. "Nothing easier, sir."

"Then take me along at once."

"I'm sorry you should think that, sir," said Cornelius, looking hurt. "But if you speak to Mr. Crowell, he'll tell you that I'm not a dunce. My position in the Form is quite a good one——"

"Anything I can do, sir?" asked another voice.

Nicodemus Trotwood, attracted by the shouting, had come along with Fatty Little. They were Corny's study-mates, and they could easily guess what had been happening.

"Yes, Trotwood, you can take this brother of yours and paint his initials on his forehead, so people can know which of you is which," said Mr. Kingswood. "He's a public danger! And will you be good enough to take me to Goodwin's study? I know he boards in this House, but there my knowledge ends."

"Study S, sir," said Nicodemus promptly. "This way, sir."

"You haven't come to look at his wireless, have you, sir?" asked Fatty Little with a grin. "I think somebody must have been playing a trick on him. Serves him jolly well right, too, for spending all his money on the silly contraption. When I think of all the grub he could have bought——"

Mr. Kingswood did not wait to hear Fatty's lament. He was glad enough to follow Necodemus Trotwood and to arrive at length at Study S. Goodwin and Levi and Evans were at home, and there was a general scuffle as the juniors leapt to attention. It was not often that the headmaster honoured a junior study by a personal visit.

"It's all right, boys—don't disturb yourselves," said Fighting Jim in his easy way. "This is purely an informal visit, and I want you to treat me as one of yourselves. I've been hearing things about this radio of yours, Goodwin."

Dick Goodwin flushed with pleasure.

"I think it's a bit of a novelty, sir," he admitted modestly.

"May I have a look at it?" asked the Head. "I'm rather interested in short-wave sets."

Goodwin was only too eager to oblige. He was very gratified, in fact. And Mr. Kingswood sat down before the set, and he was allowed to finger the controls. He appeared to be delighted when he tuned in one or two distant experimental stations.

"If you could wait until seven o'clock, sir, you might hear something really interesting," said Goodwin eagerly. "There's a mysterious station somewhere in England. We got it fine this afternoon."

"Yes, I heard about it," said the Head.



"What's the dial reading of that station?"

"445, sir—exactly on the mark," replied Dick. "Do you think you could stay?"

"I doubt it," replied Mr. Kingswood, looking at his watch. "I must be back in my own House by seven o'clock. H'm! This seems a most remarkable set, Goodwin. Let me offer you my congratulations. I wonder if you could do me one just the same?"

Mr. Kingswood, at Nelson Lee's suggestion, was diplomatic; and Dick Goodwin jumped at the bait.

"Why, I'd be delighted to, sir," he said eagerly. "It would be an honour—— You

can have this set if you like, sir," he added impulsively. "I can build another one for myself."

"Oh, I wouldn't rob you——"

"Just say the word, sir, and I'll bring it along to your own study, and connect it up," said Goodwin. "It's awfully nice of you, sir, to take such an interest."

He had studiously ignored a number of frantic signs which Solomon Levi had been making behind the Head's back.

"Well, Goodwin, it is most generous of you, and I appreciate it," said Mr. Kingswood. "If it will give you any pleasure to let me have this set at once, and build another for yourself, all well and good. I must say that I would prefer to have it at once. It might take you some little time to build another, eh?"

"Two or three weeks, sir."

"That's too bad! I don't like to accept your offer," said the Head. "You must let me pay you——"

"Rather not, sir! I shall be honoured if you'll take the set as a gift," said the Lancashire boy.

Solomon Levi groaned almost audibly.

"It cost him an awful lot of money, sir," he said. "His Christmas tip, and his pocket money for weeks——"

"Will you dry up?" said Goodwin fiercely.

"No, don't adopt that tone, young 'un," chuckled the Head. "Levi is quite right. This set cost you real money, and I shall only accept it on the condition that you'll allow me to pay a fair and reasonable price. Would twenty pounds, cash down, cover your outlay?"

"Now you're talking, sir," said Levi briskly, as he sprang forward. "Dick, old man, let me attend to this. If it's going to be a business deal, I'm the fellow for the job. Twenty pounds is a good offer, but it'll only just about cover the expenditure on materials. What about all the labour, sir? Goodwin's been working on this piece of junk—— I mean, he's been working on this wonderful wireless set for three or four weeks, and——"

"I want to be fair," said the Head, smiling. "If the set is worth thirty I will pay thirty—or even more."

"Say thirty-five, sir, and it's yours," replied Levi promptly.

Dick Goodwin breathed hard.

"Are you going to dry up, Levi, or shall I chuck you out of the study?" he demanded thickly. "Don't take any notice of him, sir. The materials for this set didn't cost me any more than fifteen or sixteen pounds, and I wouldn't dream of taking any money for my labour. I made one or two mistakes, too, and spent money where I needn't. I can make another, just the same, for about twelve quid. So if you'd like to take it for that, sir, you're more than welcome. I shall be awfully offended if you offer me more."

And as Mr. Kingswood had no desire to offend the Lancashire junior he whacked out twelve pounds—and added another three in

case Goodwin should get some other brilliant ideas, and find a little extra cash necessary. Dick unconnected the set, and he and Mr. Kingswood went off in the best of good humours.

"My life!" groaned Solomon Levi, who was looking positively haggard. "He had a chance to get thirty-five quid—twenty-three pounds clear profit—and he chucked it away! He ought to be in an asylum! Such madness!"

The unhappy Levi brooded over the tragedy for weeks.

But Dick Goodwin was not only highly satisfied, but supremely honoured. That the headmaster himself should desire his amateur set was reward enough for all his labours. He took it across to the Head's house, and it was only a five minutes' task for him to connect it up.

"Would you like me to give you the details of the circuit, sir?" he asked. "I'll stay a bit, if you like, and show you the dial readings of the stations I have turned in."

"Go ahead," said Mr. Kingswood, smiling. "You know, Goodwin, I'm a bit uncomfortable about this. I feel quite mean. After all your work, and before you have had time to experiment with the set, I come along and bag it. I'm beginning to think that Levi was right. You ought to have some compensation."

"I've got it, sir," replied Dick promptly. "The knowledge that my set is here, in your study, is all the compensation I need."

It was very necessary for the Head to be diplomatic. Under no circumstances must the juniors think that his interest in Goodwin's radio was other than that of a mere hobby. He was quite uncomfortable about the whole business, too. Dick was so thoroughly generous and unsuspecting. He hadn't the faintest idea of Mr. Kingswood's real reason for acquiring the radio.

"If you'll let me stop until seven o'clock, sir, I'll tune in that 'mystery' station," said Dick. "You'd like to hear it, wouldn't you?"

The Head smiled indulgently.

"If you're very particular, yes," he said, with a chuckle. "But I must confess that I am far more interested in the distant stations—those experimental stations in the far-flung corners of the world. This set of yours, Goodwin, is quite remarkable. Stay, by all means."

It was impossible to refuse him—without, perhaps, arousing his suspicions. It would not matter, anyhow, since several of the juniors had heard the previous mystery broadcast. There was no danger in Goodwin hearing a second message. Such a message might convey a grim meaning to Mr. Kingswood, but it would mean nothing to the junior.

At five minutes to seven, while Dick and

the Head were trying to identify some very feeble signals, a tap sounded on the door, and the butler announced the arrival of Carson, the chauffeur.

"Bother the man," said Mr. Kingswood, with some irritation. "What on earth does he want at this hour of the evening?"

"He didn't say, sir."

"You'd better show him in, then," said the Head.

And Nelson Lee, respectful and business-like, was ushered in.

"If I'm in the way, sir——" began Dick.

"Not at all," said Mr. Kingswood. "What is it, Carson?"

"I've been going over the car as you told me, sir, and we need new inlet valves," replied Lee. "Shall I order them myself, sir, or will you attend to it?"

"Order them yourself, of course," replied the Head. "I've already told you, Carson, that you needn't bother me with such trifles. Anything the car requires, attend to it."

"Very good, sir."

It all sounded very natural, and Dick Goodwin, in fact, did not even listen. He scarcely gave the chauffeur a glance. Lee, who had been looking curiously at the set, now turned back towards the door.

"Just a minute, Carson," said the Head. "You're a bit of a wireless expert, aren't you?"

"I'm very interested, sir."

"Would you care to have a look at this set?" went on Mr. Kingswood pleasantly. "It was constructed by Master Goodwin, here. In many ways it is unique."

Dick, of course, was further gratified. And when Lee came over and gravely inspected his precious set, he flushed with even greater pleasure; for Lee expressed both wonder and eagerness.

"Never saw anything like it, sir!" exclaimed Lee. "There's no set on the market with valves like these. May I ask where you bought them, Master Goodwin?"

"I had them made," exclaimed Goodwin.

"Gosh! You mean that you designed them yourself?" asked Lee, with a new respect in his voice.

"Why, yes," said Goodwin modestly. "By the way, sir," he added, turning to Mr. Kingswood, "it's just upon seven, and there's that 'mystery' station I was telling you about."

"I don't think we'll bother about it," said the Head. "I'm far more interested—Well, perhaps we will. Carson, possibly you'll be able to make something of it," he added, with a chuckle. "Do you know any thing of an experimenter in the South of England? Goodwin tells me that he has been getting some very strong signals."

Goodwin tuned the dial until it read 445, and he at once flushed. For he could again hear that faint rushing which indicated that the wave-length was "alive."

"This is it, sir," he exclaimed tensely. "Listen! That voice will be talking almost at once."

And, sure enough, it came:

"Headquarters calling!" said the voice, clear and human. "Headquarters calling! Stand by for instructions."

"Extraordinary!" ejaculated the Head, with a quick glance at Lee.

They were both hampered by Dick Goodwin's presence, but it could not be helped.

"Sounds as if the fellow might be in the room with us, sir," whispered Lee. "That station can't be far away."

"These instructions are for Number Thirty only," said the voice. "Number Thirty, attention! Your previous orders stand just as they are. But here are further orders. At ten-thirty to-night Number One Hundred will call at your cottage, bringing special equipment. Is that clear? At ten-thirty to-night Number One Hundred will call at your cottage, bringing special equipment. As he is unknown to you, he will use the password, Zitlin. Get that right. The password, Zitlin. Z-i-t-l-i-n. Zitlin. Your answer will be Rathoff. Your answer will be Rathoff. R-a-t-h-o-f-f. Rathoff. These are instructions from Number One to Number Thirty. Headquarters now switching off."

A dead silence followed, even the "rushing" dying away.

"Just the same as it was this afternoon, sir," exclaimed Dick, looking eagerly at the Head. "Rummy, isn't it? Can you make anything of it, sir?"

"Somebody playing a silly joke, I imagine," said the Head. "May be two experimenters."

He looked at Dick Goodwin with sudden suspicion.

"You haven't, by any chance, built a transmitting set in your spare time, and sold it to another boy?" he asked.

"Great Scott, no, sir!" said Dick. "Besides, if this were a practical joke on me there would have been something personal in this rummy broadcast. But it just means nothing."

"Well, I'm sure I'm not going to bother my head about it," said Mr. Kingswood. "It's obviously of no importance. What do you think of the set, Carson?"

"Why, I think that Master Goodwin is mighty clever, sir," replied the supposed chauffeur. "I thought I knew something about wireless, but I certainly give this young gentleman best."

The Head paid Dick Goodwin some additional compliments, and when the junior left, a minute or two later, he was feeling very gratified.

"Well?" asked Mr. Kingswood softly, as he heard the distant thud of the front door.

"No doubt about it—it's the Fellowship," murmured Lee, his eyes gleaming. "We're in luck, Jim—bigger luck, perhaps, than you realise."

CHAPTER 4.

Lee Takes a Chance.

THE athletic young Head looked at Nelson Lee keenly.

"Think they're after my blood?" he asked.

"Not a doubt of it," replied Lee, a grim note creeping into his voice. "And we have a great advantage, Jim. This remarkable wireless set of Goodwin's is a godsend. Let me look at it more closely."

He examined the set with intense interest, and with an expert eye.

"That boy is clever," he said at length. "There are many features in this radio which are unique. Yet there's no doubt that he hit upon this secret circuit by sheer chance."

"What's your theory?"

"It isn't a theory—it's an obvious fact," replied the detective. "These infernal fellowship people are using a secret wireless which transmits on an unknown wave-length. That is to say, their transmissions cannot be picked up by any known receiver. They think they are safe. They think they can broadcast with impunity. The various agents of the Fellowship, no doubt distributed here and there over the district, possess specially made receiving sets—with fixed tuning, no doubt, so that they can only receive the radiations of this one definite wave-length. Goodwin, quite by accident, so constructed his set so that it was capable of receiving the mystery broadcasts. We're lucky to get hold of it, Jim."

"Even so, we've learned nothing definite—nothing that we can act upon," said the Head.

"The Fellowship of Fear is careful—and even in these private wireless messages they give nothing away," answered Nelson Lee. "Why should they? It isn't necessary. They are known to one another, obviously, by numbers. That's a commonplace method in secret societies—and a sensible one. I'm satisfied that my original theory is correct. Somewhere in this district, not many miles away, there is a branch headquarters."

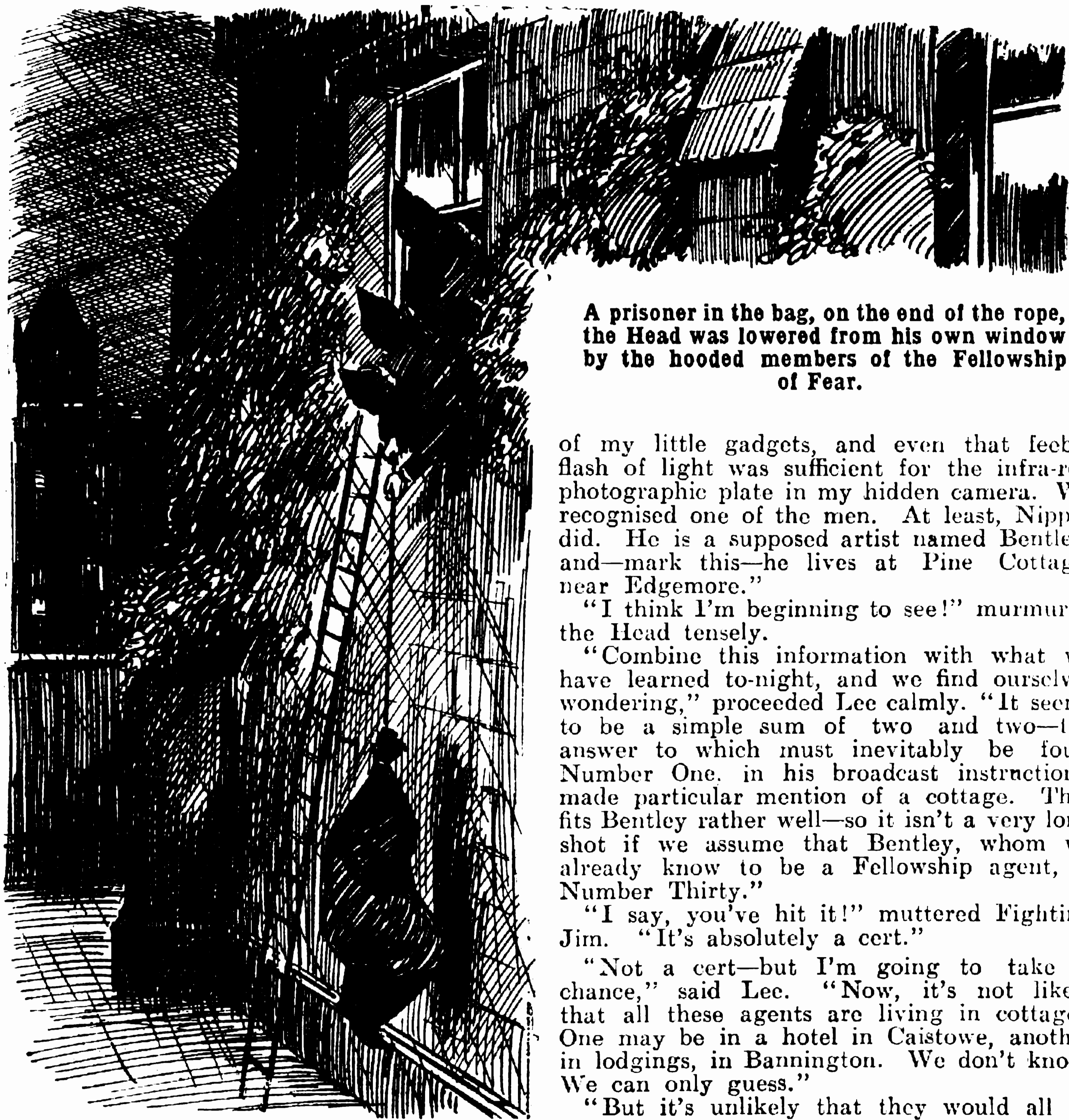
"Established for my benefit, eh?"

"Possibly; but you may be only one," said Lee. "Remember, there are several big schools in this district. St. Frank's, the River House School, Bannington Grammar School, Helmford College, and one or two others. It's a good central district for these terrorists. To-night's activity may concern you, or, on the other hand, it may not." The detective's eyes were gleaming. "If we do a bit of very simple reasoning, Jim, we'll arrive at an interesting conclusion."

"Don't say 'we'; I'm completely baffled."

"But you shouldn't be," said Nelson Lee. "Think of the instructions we have just heard. Number Thirty is to be at the appointed place at eleven o'clock to-night. Prior to that, however, Number One Hundred will call upon him—to be precise, at ten-thirty."

"But how does that help us?" asked Mr. Kingswood. "We don't know who Number



A prisoner in the bag, on the end of the rope, the Head was lowered from his own window by the hooded members of the Fellowship of Fear.

Thirty is, or who Number One Hundred is; we don't know where they live. We don't know the situation of the appointed place. We're just footling about in the dark. It's all double-Dutch."

"It would be—but for one thing," said Lee promptly. "We have another interesting piece of information in our possession. We obtained it by stealth, and without the knowledge of the Fellowship agents. That ought to help us."

"By Jove! You mean, that trick photograph!"

"Not such a trick photograph, either," said Lee. "A week ago, when the agents of the Fellowship came to St. Frank's, and gave you a warning, they believed themselves to be safe. It was a foggy night; but as they were stealing out through Big Arch, one of them trod upon something which he supposed to be a match-head. But that was one

of my little gadgets, and even that feeble flash of light was sufficient for the infra-red photographic plate in my hidden camera. We recognised one of the men. At least, Nipper did. He is a supposed artist named Bentley, and—mark this—he lives at Pine Cottage, near Edgemoor."

"I think I'm beginning to see!" murmured the Head tensely.

"Combine this information with what we have learned to-night, and we find ourselves wondering," proceeded Lee calmly. "It seems to be a simple sum of two and two—the answer to which must inevitably be four. Number One, in his broadcast instructions, made particular mention of a cottage. That fits Bentley rather well—so it isn't a very long shot if we assume that Bentley, whom we already know to be a Fellowship agent, is Number Thirty."

"I say, you've hit it!" muttered Fighting Jim. "It's absolutely a cert."

"Not a cert—but I'm going to take a chance," said Lee. "Now, it's not likely that all these agents are living in cottages. One may be in a hotel in Caistowe, another in lodgings, in Bannington. We don't know. We can only guess."

"But it's unlikely that they would all be living in cottages," said the Head. "That narrows it down to Bentley, in Pine Cottage, doesn't it? But what do you propose to do, Mr. Lee?"

"My object is to get as much information as possible—without disclosing my own identity, or allowing the fellowship to know that anybody at all is on its track," said the detective. "I want to discover the whereabouts of the 'local headquarters.' I cannot hope to make much headway in this fight until I have obtained that vital information. I'm out to get it to-night."

"At the risk of your life," said the Head earnestly. "Look here, Mr. Lee, let me help. I'm game——"

"Of course you're game," broke in Lee. "But it wouldn't do, Jim."

"Why not?"

"Because you're supposed to be a pig-headed schoolmaster—a man, confident of himself, who refuses to take any notice of the cheapjack terrorism of the Fellowship,"

explained Nelson Lee. "Your job is to remain at St. Frank's—openly. You mustn't alter your habits in any degree. You must go to bed as usual."

"And if these murderous dogs come?"

"If they come their object will be, I fancy, to kidnap you," said Lee grimly. "They dare not murder you. And remember, although I may not be in evidence, I shall be close at hand. Trust me, Jim, and I'll promise you——"

"I don't want to hear any of your promises, Mr. Lee," growled the Head. "Of course I trust you. But I wanted to be in the fun, that's all. Still, you know best. I'll take my orders from you, and obey them."

"Now, it's high time I was off," murmured Lee. "I've been here too long already—but Goodwin's wireless, fortunately, provides me with a plausible excuse. Now, don't forget, Jim, my only instructions to you now are these: go to bed as usual and take no special precautions. If the Fellowship agents come, let them think that you are contemptuous of them. Leave the rest to me."

RAIN was still descending pitilessly, and the night was as black as ink, when a solitary cyclist rode through the hamlet of Edgemore, and turned into the little lane which ran past Pine Cottage. The cyclist was a road scout belonging to one of the motor associations. At least, so it appeared from his bright red overalls and sou'wester which were the regulation garb of this particular association. Such a scout, cycling along the roads, would occasion no comment at any hour of the day or night. For he was as much a part of the highway as a fingerpost or a white road-line.

When he reached Pine Cottage he saw that a light was gleaming behind the dark curtains of the front window. The man dismounted, and propped his bicycle against the rustic fence. It was impossible for him to see a vague black shadow which lurked in the upper branches of a tree opposite. That shadow might have been a man, or it might have been a mere formation of the tree-trunk.

The road scout rapped with his gloved hand upon the cottage door; and after a moment or two the door was opened, and a flood of soft, yellowish light streamed out into the wet night, falling upon the glistening oilskins of the visitor.

Bentley, the artist, was a gentlemanly-looking man; somewhat eccentric in garb, perhaps, but, being an artist, that meant nothing. He found himself looking at a figure which was almost completely masked; even the face, beneath the sou'wester, was half-hidden by the heavy goggles, and by the waterproof collar which came well up over the chin and mouth.

"What's the trouble?" asked Bentley, with some impatience. "I'm sorry, but this isn't a hotel, you know. There's an inn in the village——"

"Zitlin!" said the road scout, in a soft, but deliberate voice.

Bentley started, and a look of relief came into his face.

"Rathoff," he replied, in a whisper.

"O.K.!" said the other. "Shall I come in? I'll bring my bicycle, too, if you don't mind."

He fetched it, wheeled it in, and there seemed to be a slight movement in that tree, across the lane, as the cottage door closed.

"Well, number one hundred, it was a good idea of yours to come in that get-up," said Bentley. "I had the word that you were coming, of course, and I was on the lookout for you."

"And I was told, number thirty, that you would be expecting me," said No. 100, as he wrestled with the buttons of his overalls.

"I didn't think you'd be here yet, though," said Bentley, looking at the clock on the mantelpiece of the comfortably furnished room. "It's barely ten-twenty, and I was told to expect you at ten-thirty."

"Did you think I would cycle up and down in this rain?" asked the other. "Phew! It's a rotten night. Pity they couldn't choose better weather for the job. Going to be something big, I understand."

"Then you know more than I do," said Bentley. "I've been told nothing—except to be at the meeting-place at eleven o'clock. What have you brought? There was some talk of special equipment."

"Yes, I've got it here, under my cloak," said the other. "Where do we meet the rest? At the junction between this lane and the Bannington road?"

"No; it's the usual place—the Moor road, directly opposite the old ruined mill," said Bentley. "Aren't they your instructions?"

"I was told to go with you," replied the other, as he bent double, wrestling with the zip fastening of his overall trousers. "Confound this thing! Can you give me a hand?"

Bentley bent down; and, quite coolly and deliberately No. 100 struck a hard, direct blow at Bentley's lowered head with an object which looked like a short, weighted length of rubber tubing. No. 30 sagged to his knees and sank to the floor without a groan.

"I'm sorry, my friend," said No. 100 in a changed voice. "I haven't really hurt you—and it had to be done."

He whipped off his overall like lightning, glanced at the clock, and saw that it was just twenty-two minutes past ten. He would have to work fast. From an inner pocket he drew a small hypodermic syringe. It was in its little velvet case, and it was fully charged. The needle was sterilised, in readiness. Calmly, the needle was pressed home into Bentley's arm.

"If you wake up within eight hours, my dear Mr. Bentley, you will be lucky," murmured the visitor. "And I will give you my personal guarantee that you will feel no unpleasant after-effects. You'll have a good

night's sleep to-night, instead of going out into this rain."

The intruder, to tell the truth, was none other than Nelson Lee!

The detective was taking a big chance to-night. By giving the correct password he had been admitted without a suspicion by Bentley. Lee's object, now, was to conceal the unconscious Bentley, and thus, when the real No. 100 came, Lee, posing as No. 30, would be ready to receive him. It was a simple enough plan—but it was fraught with peril for the daring detective. Yet he would be safe with No. 100—for No. 1 had said, over the broadcast, that the two men were unknown to one another. The danger would come later.

Lee was satisfied with things so far. The "appointed place," he had learned, was on the moor road, opposite the old mill. That was an important point.

He had half expected trouble because he had arrived early; but he had got over that little difficulty quite easily. He had only a few minutes, now, in which to work. Swiftly, he carried Bentley up the stairs of the cottage, and he placed the man on the bed, and he covered him with the bedclothes and a down quilt.

Then he went downstairs again, took the bicycle into the tiny kitchen, closed the door, and then slipped off the rest of his overalls. He hid these in a cupboard. Then he donned some glasses, turned down the lamp until it was showing only a mere glimmer, and put some ashes on the fire until the flames died away, leaving nothing but a reddish glow. The room was now sufficiently shadowy.

Scarcely had he finished these simple preparations than a tap sounded on the front door—which opened straight into the living-room of the cottage.

He opened the door at once, and there, on the step, stood a tall man in a heavy overcoat and a soft hat, with the brim pulled well down over his face. He looked a gentleman. In the same glimpse, Lee saw a baby saloon car standing in the lane, with its side lights gleaming. The engine could be heard as it ticked gently over. Lee appreciated the cunning of the Fellowship. Even if some of the Edgemore cottagers were awake—which was doubtful—they would think nothing unusual of such an incident as this. Bentley, the painter, was receiving a late visitor.

"What's wrong?" asked Lee easily. "Lost your way in these rural wilds?"

"I'm afraid I have," said the other. "Sorry to disturb you at this hour. I want to get to a place called Zitlin. Ever heard of it?"

"Why, yes," replied Lee. "Can't easily forget a name like that. But in order to reach Zitlin you must pass through Rathoff."

"Good enough," said the other shortly, and he immediately entered.

Lee closed the door, taking care to stand so that his face remained in shadow. There was not much risk, for, according to the voice over the secret wireless, this visitor—

No. 100—was not personally acquainted with No. 30.

"You look quite comfortable here," said No. 100. "But you're stingy with your light, aren't you?"

"I thought it better to be careful."

"Being mysterious is the reverse," retorted the other. "Haven't you learned that lesson yet, Bentley? We're all safe as long as we act openly and naturally. Well, it doesn't matter. You have a garage here, I understand?"

"Yes," replied Lee.

"You'd better open it; I'm going to leave my car here for an hour or so—while we do the job," said No. 100. "There is some stuff in it, too, and we shall divide it between us. That's why I called upon you first."

Nelson Lee had already taken the precaution to search Bentley's pockets, and to take possession of the man's keys. Lee had seen the little lean-to garage which adjoined the cottage.

They both went out into the rain, and, with unerring skill, Lee selected the right key for the garage lock, and turned it. No. 100 drove the baby saloon in. From the rear he produced a well-packed ruck-sack, and then another.

"One each," he said briefly.

They returned to the cottage, and No. 100 lit a cigarette.

"Any idea what the job is?" he asked casually.

"I only know that we have to meet some others on the moor road opposite the old mill," replied Lee. "I've had no instructions as to the actual job."

"I didn't think you would have," said the other. "I'll give you the dope when we meet the other two. Number Twenty and Number Twenty-five are assisting us."

"What's the special equipment?" asked Lee, indicating the two ruck-sacks.

"You'll find out later," replied No. 100. "Are you all ready? We'd better be moving."

Lee donned a heavy waterproof coat which he had seen hanging on the back of the door. It fitted him well. The two men fastened their ruck-sacks, and Lee extinguished the light. So far, everything had gone well. No. 100 had no suspicion. Inwardly, the detective was thrilled. Owing to that secret information he had been enabled to put this daring plan into operation. He was actually one of the fellowship agents who were "out" to kidnap the headmaster of St. Frank's! And Lee would be ready, at any second, to intervene in case Mr. Kingswood's life was threatened. Hidden about his person he not only had an automatic pistol, but other interesting objects.

They left the cottage, and Lee locked the door.

"Filthy night," he commented, as the key clicked.

"All the better for us," said No. 100. "If we leave any footprints they will be quickly washed away. But we'd better not talk. If we meet anybody on the road we shall bid

them a civil 'good night.' Remember that, Bentley. We're a couple of crazy hikers."

"I get you," said Lee softly.

They trudged down the lane, and No. 100 evidently knew his way just as well as Lee. They were silent as they walked through the beating, relentless rain. At length, by cutting through a side lane, they emerged upon the moorland road. It was exactly eleven o'clock when they arrived at the lonely, wind-swept spot opposite the ruined mill—which could be faintly seen outlined against the night sky.

Two figures in heavy raincoats stood there.

"Rotten night," said No. 100 as he paused. "Could you gentlemen oblige me with a match?"

"I've got a lighter," said one of the others.

A tiny flame sprang up, shielded from the wind. No. 100 caught a glimpse of the wet faces. Lee wondered if that talk of a match and a lighter served as a sign and a counter-sign. At all events, No. 100 was satisfied. And the other two men—who probably knew Bentley—were not allowed to see Lee's face, for he kept it well averted. There was no danger otherwise, for the night was inky.

"Are we going to act at once?" asked one of the others.

"At once, Number Twenty-five," said No. 100. "Any slight sound at the school at this hour will pass unnoticed. Kingswood will have retired. I think we shall get him easily. Now listen to me."

No. 100 was obviously the "boss" of this quartette. Lee was glad of this, for it relieved him of all responsibilities. As long as he obeyed instructions he would arouse no suspicion amongst his companions.

"When we reach the school we shall climb the wall, and each man will have his gas gun ready," continued No. 100. "We shall not break in in the ordinary way, but go straight to Kingswood's bed-room window. We shall not don our robes until the last moment. They'll get wet enough even then. Be ready for instant action in case of interruption; do not hesitate to use your gas guns at an instant's notice. As for the rest, leave it to me. If everything goes well, I will attend to Kingswood. I will do all the talking. Is that clear?"

"Yes," muttered a chorus.

"Then come on."

Silently they melted into the night.

CHAPTER 5.

The Night Raiders!

ST. FRANK'S was dark and quiet as the half-hour chimed from the clock-tower. Not a light showed from any window, for at eleven-thirty the school was generally asleep. Even the masters refrained from burning the midnight oil, for early rising was the rule at St. Frank's—as at every other great school.

The night was as wild as ever, and the rain drummed insistently, and it dripped dis-

mally from faulty gutters and from the trees. It was essentially a night when people clung to the firesides, or snuggled into their beds. The very night, in fact, for such a raid as the Fellowship of Fear had in project. It was the very kind of night when Mr. Kingswood would consider himself safe; and, for that reason alone, it was ideal for his enemies.

The four black figures which climbed the school wall had no fear of being heard, for the beating rain masked everything. Even their footprints were almost immediately obliterated by the rain water. Personal discomfort meant nothing. These desperate men had work to do, and they were doing it. Nelson Lee, daringly masquerading as one of them, was grimly mindful of the brilliance and cleverness behind the organisation. More than ever he realised that this secret society was a world menace. Lee had a double object to-night—firstly, to protect Mr. Kingswood, and, secondly, to discover, if possible, the location of the "district headquarters."

Unerringly, No. 100 led the way across the dark, rain-swept Inner Court to the picturesque wall of the headmaster's house. Just as unerringly he halted beneath the window of Mr. Kingswood's window. The fellowship agents were familiar with every inch of the St. Frank's geography.

Not a word was spoken.

It was sheltered beneath this wall, for the wind was driving in the other direction. No. 100 quickly unfastened his ruck-sack, and from this he produced the four costumes which the men were to wear—long robes with mask-like cowls and great conical hats. It was evident to Lee that the ordinary agents such as Bentley were not permitted to possess the robes. No. 100 had brought them, and, after they had been used, no doubt No. 100 would carry them away. In case of suspicion falling upon any agent, the police would discover no evidence.

"How do we get to the window?" whispered No. 25.

"Wait!" said the leader.

The other ruck-sack—the one Lee had carried—was unfastened. From it No. 100 took a curious-looking metal object. It was dull black, and appeared to be of no earthly use for the job in hand. But when a secret catch was pressed, the thing telescoped out amazingly, and resolved itself into a rigid metal ladder, with ingenious prongs at the top. These prongs were hooked over the bed-room window-sill, and without a word No. 100 mounted.

The window itself was closed, but with uncanny skill No. 100 soon had it open. He slid silently into the room. Lee was the next to mount—he made sure of that. Then came No. 20 and No. 25. Like shadows they stood within the headmaster's bed-room.

It was fortunate that Lee himself was a trained man—for he knew that these others were trained, too. They moved about like cats. They had forced an entry into the headmaster's bed-room in such silence, and

with such efficiency, that Mr. Kingswood, although on the alert, still slept soundly. Lee was quite sure that Fighting Jim was not pretending. He had gone off into his first sleep, in obedience to Lee's orders, and was absolutely ignorant of what was taking place.

Lee was glad; for it indicated to him, plainly enough, that Mr. Kingswood trusted him. No. 100 took something from an inner pocket. Like the strange ladder, it telescoped out. Lee felt something pushed into his hand, and at the same moment a soft click sounded. Overhead glowed a greenish, mysterious light.

Lee understood. On a previous occasion when the Fellowship agents had visited Mr. Kingswood, the latter had spoken of a mysterious green light overhead. The explanation was simple enough.

No. 100 leaned forward and he shook Mr. Kingswood by the shoulder. In a moment, the Head was awake. He sat up with a smothered exclamation.

"Do not raise any outcry!" said the leader. "Once again, James Kingswood, the Fellowship of the Free takes action."

The Head saw the four greenish cowed and gowned figures. The sight was certainly impressive. They were ranged round his bed, still and silent. And in that moment, Mr. Kingswood wondered. Where was Nelson Lee's promised help? Where was Lee at this moment? Had the Fellowship agents tricked him? Worse still, had they dealt with him in their own grim and drastic way?

"This is getting tiresome," said Mr. Kingswood, striving to speak calmly. "One such raid was a novelty; but true artists do not repeat themselves."

"Whilst admiring your courage, Mr. Kingswood, we must deprecate your folly," said No. 100 sternly. "Another week has passed, and you have not obeyed the orders of the fellowship. What have you to say?"

"Just what I said before—you can all go to the devil!" retorted Mr. Kingswood. "I take no orders from your infernal terrorist gang."

"You are reckless as well as foolhardy."

"Call it what you like; but I shall remain firm."

"This is your last chance," said No. 100. "We know that you are a gentleman, Mr. Kingswood, and we know that if you give us your word, you will keep to it. And we suggest that you change your mind. We suggest that you put into immediate practice the doctrines of the fellowship. Do this, and you may continue to live peacefully. Give us your word of honour that you will obey, and you will not only be left in peace by the fellowship, but a mark of appreciation will be set against your name in our records. And when the Great Day comes, you will be a man with power. You will be selected for responsible office. You have learned, by this time, that we are determined. We have shown you that there is no escape from us.

Think well, Mr. Kingswood, before you give me your answer."

"Such a matter requires no thought," replied Mr. Kingswood curtly. "You already have my answer."

"Did you think that our threats are without substance?"

"To tell you the honest truth, I have not given the matter any serious consideration," replied the Head contemptuously. "I defy you to do your worst. Once and for all, I refuse to take my orders from you. By Heaven!" he added, with sudden anger. "I'll show you how much I fear——"

He was in the act of springing up, and at the same moment No. 100 pulled the trigger of his gas gun. A puff of vapour burst into Mr. Kingswood's face; he choked, gulped, and then sank back upon the pillow.

"Stand clear!" said No. 100 briefly.

The vapour puff was confined to the victim. One gulp of that stuff had been sufficient to render him insensible. Lee had already detected a chemical odour within his mask, and he guessed that his headgear was impregnated with some chemical which nullified the effects of the gas. Even so, it was wiser to stand clear.

"It was useless," said No. 100 in a low, impatient voice. "The man is determined. He would never have given his word. Therefore, we must take him with us. He shall be taught that the fellowship does not utter idle threats."

Nelson Lee was tempted, then and there, to go into action—to whip out his gun and



unmask these rascals. In that way he could have captured them, and he could have saved Mr. Kingswood on the spot. But some instinct told Lee that such a step would have been a mistake. Far better to wait. As yet, he had made no important discovery. Capturing three agents of the fellowship would not help much; and it would show the fellowship, moreover, that Mr. Kingswood had helpers; it would show the fellowship, too, that Bentley had been trapped by those helpers. From every standpoint, it was better to wait.

"How are we going to get him out?" whispered Lee. "We can't take him just as he is—in this rain."

"We can take him just as he is," said No. 100.

Lee almost reversed his decision. Robust as Mr. Kingswood undoubtedly was, he would inevitably catch a deadly chill if he were carried out into the bitter night, with its driving rain, clad only in pyjamas.

"But he must have clothes!" protested Lee.

"He needs no clothes," insisted No. 100. "What is wrong with you, number thirty? Have you lost your nerve?"

Lee subsided. He did not want his companions to become suspicious of him. A moment later he understood just what the game was. For, in that greenish light he saw that the leader had produced something from beneath the folds of his robe.

Unfolded, it turned out to be a kind of sack, made of stout waterproof canvas. The top of it was fitted with a patent device which enabled it to be drawn up in a moment, and secured by means of a metal clamp.

Whilst the leader held this waterproof bag, No. 20 and No. 25 lifted the limp Mr. Kingswood and edged him, feet foremost, into the bag. As soon as his head had disappeared, the neck was drawn tight, and the metal clamp made fast. Lee saw that there were tiny ventilation holes near the top. He saw, too, a curious kind of valve projecting from the top.

"We come prepared, my friend," murmured No. 100, turning to Lee. "He will be quite dry within that bag—and warm, too. He will be provided with fresh clothes where he is going."

"Jove!" muttered Lee. "It's a wonderful plan."

"We do things thoroughly," said No. 100. "Mr. Kingswood will have vanished as though into thin air. He will have disappeared without leaving a trace. Without his bed-room being disturbed, attired only in his night clothes, he will have gone—on one of the wettest nights of the winter."

There was a heavy metal ring fitted to the top of the bag. A rope was slipped through this, and in complete silence the men lifted their prisoner to the window, and lowered him to the wet ground. Then they followed by means of the ladder.

And, as No. 100 had said, they left no trace.

CHAPTER 6.

The Remove Takes a Hand.

NIPPER was uncomfortable, but he did not care.

He was crouching in the fork of a tree, almost immediately opposite Pine Cottage. He knew of Nelson Lee's plans, and he had been allowed to assist. So he was indifferent to personal discomfort.

He was not wet, for he was wearing weather-proof motor-cycling overalls. But he was certainly cold. He had been perched in this tree for over an hour, and

any kind of exercise was out of the question. Yet his blood ran warmly through his veins as he reviewed the recent happenings.

He had seen Nelson Lee ride up in the guise of the road scout; he had seen Lee admitted into the cottage. Then he had watched the coming of the little baby saloon. And, after that, he had seen Lee and the mysterious No. 100 take their departure. This meant, without doubt, that Nelson Lee's plans had succeeded. It meant that Bentley, the fellowship agent, was lying unconscious in the bed-room of the cottage. And Nipper had his orders.

For a full thirty minutes Nipper had waited—he had watched the cottage carefully, closely. Not a soul had come near it. And he was satisfied that there were no other fellowship agents in the vicinity. There was no reason why there should be any—but Lee had warned Nipper to be well on his guard, and to take no chances.

When he slipped down from the tree, he did not venture into the lane, but dropped into the adjoining meadow, with its sodden turf. Then he plodded across, reached another meadow, and crossed this, too. Finally, he came out in a muddy, rutty side lane—really nothing more than a farm track. Proceeding along this for about two hundred yards he beheld the black bulk of an isolated old barn. It stood quite near the road—in fact, flush with the road, separated only by a short grassy border. There were double doors to the barn, and the rain was lashing against the tarred woodwork. Nipper gave three slow, deliberate knocks.

And almost at once a gap appeared, and one of the doors creaked open.

"O.K.—only me," whispered Nipper. "Phew! What a night!"

"Blow the night!" growled an impatient voice. "Where the dickens have you been? We expected you ages ago!"

"Can't help that—I'm dead on time," said Nipper. "Everything all right here? Come on, we've got to get moving. It's time for action."

He felt, rather than saw, a number of figures around him. They were Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West, his own chums; and Handforth, Church and McClure. The Remove, in fact, was ready to do its bit!

"Everything seems to have gone off well," said Nipper in a low voice. "The gov'nor arrived at the cottage, just as he planned; the fellowship agent came, too, and soon afterwards both of them left. The coast is clear for us."

"By George! Let's hope we have a scrap with some of those rotters," said Handforth eagerly.

"Rats! I'm hoping nothing of the sort," said Nipper. "You don't seem to realise, Handy, that Mr. Lee has entrusted us with a vital job. Do you think these fellowship people would engage in a scrap—of your kind? They'd pull out their guns if they took us by surprise, and there'd be precious little scrapping."

"How frightfully exciting," murmured Sir Montie.

"But you needn't think that anything like that will happen," went on Nipper. "My guv'nor wouldn't have allowed us to do this job if he had had any fear that we should encounter the enemy. All the same, the work has got to be done, and it's highly important. Detective work isn't always exciting, Handy; most of it is just plain hard work without any thrills. That was one of the first things I learned. Are you ready?"

"Of course we're ready," said Handforth. "All the same, if we don't have a scrap with the fellowship rotters, I shall be disappointed.

As he spoke he switched on the side lights of his little Morris Minor—that faithful car was taking a hand in the night's adventure.

They all piled in somehow. Even a baby saloon car can accommodate, at a pinch, six junior schoolboys. The car drove out into the muddy road, and Handforth then hopped out to close the barn doors. After that they purred quietly along until, by taking devious turns, they at length reached Pine Cottage. It was as dark and deserted as ever.

"It won't hurt if we keep a sharp lookout," said Nipper warningly. "Come on, you chaps. Everything should be ready, as the guv'nor planned."

He was the first to reach the front door. He felt a little thrill as he found the key in the lock. Nelson Lee had arranged to leave it there. When Lee and No. 100 had departed, Lee had locked the door rather noisily—but in the darkness No. 100 had not guessed that Lee had left the key.

They entered the cottage, and Nipper and Handforth, who were armed with powerful electric torches, flashed them on. All the juniors were in a condition of breathless excitement.

"Anybody here?" called Nipper.
Silence.

"If the guv'nor's plans went as he expected, we'll find Bentley upstairs—on his bed!" said Nipper. "We'd better make sure of that first. Who's coming with me?"

They all offered; but Nipper thought it wiser for two of them to remain on guard below. So Tommy Watson and Church remained downstairs. The others crept up to the bed-room.

And there, sure enough, stretched on the bed, was the unfortunate Bentley. He was apparently in a deep sleep, for he was breathing regularly. Yet, when Nipper shook him, there was no result.

"Drugged!" muttered Nipper, his eyes gleaming. "By jingo! Then the guv'nor worked it beautifully—just as he arranged."

"What did he do—chloroform him?" murmured Handforth, in awe. "I say, this is exciting, after all! I mean, coming to deserted cottages, and finding drugged crooks lying in their beds!"

"Only one cottage, Handy—and one crook," said Nipper dryly. "No; the guv'nor didn't use chloroform. Nothing so commonplace as

that. I fancy he employed a hypodermic needle. Well, come on; lend a hand."

Nelson Lee had realised that all six juniors would be required, and he was right. Carrying an unconscious man is no easy task, and Watson and Church were obliged to come along in the task of getting Bentley downstairs.

Nipper went out to make sure that the coast was quite clear. Then, with a quick rush, the juniors carried their burden down the short path and out into the road. Bentley was securely dumped into the rear of the Morris Minor. And there he was left, covered by a travelling rug.

"Well, that's that," panted Nipper, when they were once again in the cottage. "Be careful not to disturb anything, you chaps. Don't leave any footprints, either."

Nelson Lee's bicycle was soon located, and a quick search revealed, too, the red overalls. Nipper took possession of the latter, and he gave the bicycle into Tommy Watson's care, instructing him to take it straight to the old barn and leave it there.

"But what's the idea of all this?" asked Handforth.

"Bentley is going to disappear—that's all," replied Nipper grimly. "Just as the fellowship have caused schoolmasters to vanish into thin air, so the guv'nor is going to make Bentley vanish. The fellowship will never know what has become of him, and that, my sons, will put the wind up them more than anything. They'll suddenly realise that they have a secret enemy working against them; they won't know who he is, or when he is going to strike next. In a word, the guv'nor is giving the fellowship some of its own medicine."

After the other juniors had left the cottage, Nipper went round alone, making sure that he had left no trace of the visit. The bed was left tidy. Everything in the living-room was set in order. Nipper carefully removed all traces of mud and footprints from the floor. Then, leaving the cottage, he locked the door, and this time he withdrew the key and pocketed it. The cottage was now just as No. 100 had supposed it to be when he himself left with the alleged Bentley. Without the aid of the boys, Lee could not have achieved this satisfactory effect. For he himself was far too busy to give any immediate attention to his victim.

But here was a job for the boys who were "in the know"—and a safe job, too. Lee had not hesitated to commission them.

Handforth got into the driving seat of the Morris, and Nipper sat with the prisoner, behind. Tommy Watson, Tregellis-West, Church and McClure stood outside, in the rain.

"Bit of a frost for you chaps, I'm afraid," said Nipper. "But you've done your bit, and that's the main thing. I want you 'o take that bike to the barn, leave it there, and then get straight back to the school. Be careful how you get in."

"And what about you?" asked Tommy Watson anxiously.

"Handy and I are as safe as houses," replied Nipper. "We've got to complete this work, and then we shall come straight along and join you. We'll be in bed half an hour after you chaps."

"And Mr. Lee?" asked Sir Montie.

Nipper looked grave.

"The guv'nor is on a dangerous mission—and we can't tell what will happen and when we shall see him," he replied. "But I'm not worrying. I trust the guv'nor too much for that."

A moment later the little car was off, leaving the four dark figures in the roadway to trudge away.

"You know the programme, Handy," said Nipper. "Get to the appointed spot as quickly as you can—but don't take any chances."

"I'm disappointed," said Handforth gruffly. "The whole giddy thing was tame. No fight, no anything!"

"You silly ass! If there had been a fight, it would have meant that we should have failed," said Nipper. "As it is, we've succeeded. So what the dickens are you growling about?"

"They rode on. Handforth took the road from Edgemoor to Bannington; and presently the side lane was left behind, and the wider main road was reached. The little car bowled through Bannington in the pouring rain, and the streets were deserted. They continued onwards, leaving the last lights of the town behind.

Two miles farther on, where there were some cross-roads, the side lights of a stationary car came into view.

"Here we are," said Nipper tensely. "Pull up, Handy. This is the place."

The Morris Minor slowed down, and, as it did so, a sturdily-built man in a gleaming macintosh strode across into the little car's path, plainly revealed in the glare from the headlamps. Nipper leapt out.

"Hallo, young 'un!" said a familiar voice. "Everything all right?"

The big man was no less a person than Chief Detective-inspector Lennard, of Scotland Yard—and he and Nipper were old friends.

"Everything's gone according to plan, Mr. Lennard," said Nipper. "I don't know what happened to the guv'nor, of course—but I expect he's all right."

"Let's hope so, anyway," said the inspector. "But these fellowship devils are as tricky as they are murderous. You've got our man all right, I suppose?"

"Sleeping like a baby in the back of Handy's car," replied Nipper with a smile.

The inspector raised a hand, and two other Yard detectives joined him. And there, on that lonely main road, Bentley was lifted out of the little Morris Minor, carried across, and dumped into the big police limousine.

"Well, done, you boys!" said the inspector approvingly. "This is where our mutual friend goes into a long retirement."

"What are you going to charge him with?" asked Nipper.

"Nothing."

"Aren't you going to charge him at all?"

"Not on your life," said Lennard. "Mr. Bentley has vanished. It may be against all regulations to hold a man in custody without charging him; but we have been granted special powers. Why, if we brought this man before a magistrate and charged him, the fellowship would know just what had happened to him. And that would put a nasty kink into Mr. Lee's plans. No,



In a moment Nelson Lee had opened the door and whispered to the Head of St. Frank's inside came a breath

young un'. Bentley travels with us to London, and he will be detained in custody until we're ready to come out into the open. We've got a nice, comfortable cell already for him—hidden away where his precious friends won't find him. Neither will he be able to communicate with a lawyer, or do any of the other things that an ordinary prisoner can do."

They shook hands, Lennard got back into the big car and it drove off,—Londonwards.

"Well, that's that," said Nipper, taking a deep breath. "Simple, wasn't it?"

"Too jolly simple," grumbled Handforth.

They were soon driving back towards St. Frank's.

"You see, Handy, the guv'nor is playing a deep game," explained Nipper. "The fellowship believes that Bentley is taking a part in

the attack on Mr. Kingswood. But he isn't—Mr. Lee is doing that. The fellowship must be made to think that Bentley disappeared after the raid on St. Frank's, and not before. That's a highly important point. For in that way the fellowship leaders will never know that Mr. Lee played a trick. The whole of their suspicions will be turned upon Bentley. They'll either think he turned traitor, or they'll assume that he met with an accident of some kind. They'll know nothing for certain—and that's when they'll get windy."



bag. "Not a sound, Kingswood," he
"It is I—Lee." "Thank heaven!"
ess whisper.

"Yes, I see," admitted Handforth.

"Besides, there's another thing to look at," went on Nipper. "My guv'nor might be able to use that cottage—with Bentley out of the way. He might be able to use Bentley's identity. I don't care how you look at it, it was a master-stroke—and we ought to be jolly pleased that Mr. Lee allowed us to take a hand in the game."

CHAPTER 7.

The Head Released.

IN the shelter of the wall, beneath Mr. Kingswood's bed-room window, the agents of the Fellowship of Fear removed their robes. These were re-packed into the ruck-sack. The men worked

quietly, deliberately, taking no notice of the rain. Nelson Lee kept his mouth shut. He was awaiting orders. And with the unconscious headmaster in that waterproof bag, he wondered what the next move in this extraordinary game could be.

But one thing was now certain. Mr. Kingswood had been kidnapped, and he was being taken to the local headquarters. Here was a chance not to be missed.

"Carry him!" ordered No. 100 in a low voice.

The canvas bag was seized, lifted, and like shadows the figures left the school property. They hoisted their burden over the wall, and presently they were all out in the lane.

No. 100 now produced another queer little gadget—and he produced it from the ruck-sack which had contained the collapsible ladder. It was a similar contrivance. That is to say, it was a mechanical thing of metal, ingeniously constructed. For when the man pressed a catch, two small rubber-tyred wheels sprang out into position, and a light steel framework telescoped out, including a kind of handle. In general design, it was not unlike a lawn mower. The sack containing Mr. Kingswood was lifted aboard—and then Lee realised the utility of that strange little machine. For one man could wheel it along the road with ease, and in perfect silence.

"Your work is done," said No. 100 softly. "From this point I continue alone—with the prisoner."

"Sure you won't need any help?" asked Lee casually.

"Number Thirty, you will walk through Bellton, take the Bannington road, and make a detour to the bridge which stands half a mile this side of Edgemore," continued No. 100. "Is that clear?"

"Yes."

"Number Twenty-five, you will take the moor road, in the opposite direction, detour round, and also halt on the Edgemore bridge."

"Very good," said No. 25.

"Number Twenty, you will climb over the stile in the Bellton Wood, take the footpath, reach the Edgemore Lane, and join the other two on the bridge," continued No. 100. "You must all be there within fifteen minutes. Number Ten will be waiting, and you will report to him. Having reported, you may quietly go back to your quarters. That's all. Good-night."

And without another word. No. 100 walked away, pushing his quaint little truck with its human burden. Nelson Lee turned, too, and walked down the lane. He understood the clever strategy.

He and his fellow-agents had assisted in the kidnapping of Mr. Kingswood, but they were not allowed to know what happened to the headmaster. The task of getting the victim away was entrusted to No. 100. He, alone, would know. That was the object of the collapsible truck. The fellowship leaders did not even trust their own agents. Once

again Lee was impressed by the ramifications of the organisation.

It was even impossible for any of No. 100's late companions to follow him out of sheer curiosity—for they were obliged to report to No. 10. If they failed to report they would be in serious trouble. They only had just sufficient time to reach the Edgemore bridge at the appointed minute.

But Lee gloated, for he held the advantage.

He was not "No. 30," and there was no need for him to report himself. Bentley had vanished, anyway! The time had arrived for Bentley to do his disappearing act in earnest. Lee resolved, then and there, to follow No. 100. It was the one way of helping Mr. Kingswood, and of discovering what became of him.

No. 100 had walked up the lane in the direction of the Moor View School for Girls. He passed the dark buildings of the school, went on, and presently reached the lonely road which meandered across the bleak expanse of Bannington Moor.

And some distance behind, as silent as a shadow, came Nelson Lee. More than once No. 100 halted—either to take a rest or to look back, to make certain that he was not being followed. But he saw nothing. Lee knew this game inside out. He was as clever as an Indian tracker. Never for an instant did No. 100 know that he was being kept under constant observation.

On he went through the night, the rain beating against him, and the wind moaning and whistling across the deserted moor. It was a wild night, indeed—a suitable night for such grim happenings.

Lee knew that he was not a great way from the old empty convict prison, and, vaguely, he began to wonder. He had never associated the old moor prison with the Fellowship of Fear. Even now he was only beginning to suspect. And it seemed, indeed, that his suspicions were wrong.

For presently No. 100 left the road, and now he trundled his burden across the sodden grassland. It was much harder going here, particularly as he was obliged to worm his way in and out of great clumps of gorse.

Lee could see, standing starkly against the sky, a towering pillar of girderwork, through which the wind whistled eerily. He knew what it was.

A derelict wireless mast, rusty, forlorn. It was a relic of the far-off war-time days. Once there had been a pair of these masts, raising their lofty summits to the sky and on the moor, midway between them had stood a little building. It had been an important naval wireless station.

But, a year after the war, it had been dismantled. The building itself had gone, and during the course of years one of the wireless masts had collapsed during a great gale. The other still stood, lonely, stark, rising upwards for five hundred feet. Years back, some of the St. Frank's boys had revelled in climbing the mast, for there was an iron ladder leading to the very top. Thus, owing to the risks of such escapades, the old mast

had been put strictly out of bounds; and the boys had practically forgotten it.

Lee was intensely curious now.

For it was obvious that No. 100 was taking his prisoner straight to the base of the derelict mast. For what reason?

Engrossed as Lee was in this chase, he still had time to ponder over the bizarre nature of the night's adventures. There were elements of the extraordinary in this kidnapping. Here was Mr. Kingswood, tied up in a waterproof sack, being trundled along like a bag of mails on a railway porter's barrow. A one-man job.

The kidnappers had not made use of a motor-car—and for an obvious reason. Motor-cars, even on the darkest and loneliest of nights, are seen, and can be traced. But there was not one chance in ten thousand that the movements of No. 100 would be observed. That is, by the rural police, or by local inhabitants. Nelson Lee was observing because he had deliberately set out, by methods of masterly astuteness, to get on the direct track.

The clumps of gorse helped him now. He was able, by crouching low, to approach very much nearer. He saw that the fellowship agent had taken his burden right between the girders of the mast.

At close quarters the great structure was very much bigger than it appeared to be from a distance. It was square in section, and the girder-work rose up in a towering mass of crazy-looking cross-pieces. The inside was hollow, and, fixed immovably to the girders, a strong iron ladder led from the base to the very summit. A large number of steel stays spread outwards in all directions, and they hummed and droned a dreary melody. A lonelier spot could not have been imagined.

Lee was suddenly aware of voices, and he crouched lower, and wormed his way nearer. There were two voices, indicating that another man had been awaiting No. 100's arrival. Lee began wondering if there was some secret tunnel here, leading, perhaps, to an underground stronghold.

"Had no trouble at all," came the voice of No. 100. "But we had to bring him. He was obstinate. Everything ready here?"

"Waiting for you," said another voice. "Is he still 'out'?"

"I fancy so—but it doesn't matter," replied No. 100. "He won't be particularly interested in the proceedings."

And then Nelson Lee made an astounding discovery

No. 100 was alone!

Lee was at such close quarters, hiding behind a nearby clump of gorse, that he could see right into the girder-work of the tower. His eyes were so thoroughly accustomed to the intense gloom that he would distinguish No. 100's figure. He could even see the shapeless bulk which stood for the waterproof bag containing Mr. Kingswood. But there was nobody else.

Only for a moment was Lee bewildered. Then he jumped to the truth. No. 100, like a ventriloquist, was asking himself questions, and answering them—using two distinct voices. And that could mean only one thing. The object was to deceive the prisoner. And as the prisoner was to be deceived, it proved that he was in possession of his senses again. No. 100, in fact, was speaking entirely for Mr. Kingswood's benefit—although he was implying, by his words, that the prisoner was still unconscious. Mr. Kingswood was being fooled into thinking that he was hearing something which was not intended for his ears.

What could it mean?

Lee was vastly intrigued. He even ventured to worm his way nearer—in order to establish, beyond doubt, that his explanation was correct.

"Better swing him up on the tackle," said the second voice. "It's going to be a tough job, you know. It's a rotten night for flying."

"You've flown in worse weather than this," replied No. 100, in his own voice. "Once you're off the ground, it'll be easy enough. The wind is singing through the wing stays, though!"

Nelson Lee smiled grimly to himself. He was beginning to understand why Mr. Kingswood had been brought to the wireless tower. To the unfortunate prisoner, helpless in that bag, the sound of the wind humming through the mast stays would sound exactly like the wind in the wire stays of a big aeroplane. And as it was impossible for any 'plane to be at this spot, it was more than evident that the words were being spoken for Mr. Kingswood's edification.

And now Nelson Lee saw that No. 100 had fastened a great hook into the ring at the top of the waterproof bag. This hook was at the end of a thin steel cable, which dangled down through the hollow mast. So the prisoner was to be hoisted to the very top! The whole affair was becoming more and more interesting.

Having seen that the hook was secure, No. 100 made some remark about having a look at the engine, and then he deliberately commenced climbing upwards. Lee watched him as he went up the iron ladder, until, at length, he was lost among the spiderly girder-work far above.

The detective thrilled with sudden determination. Here was an opportunity which was far too good to be missed! Mr. Kingswood was alone—and he was conscious! No. 100, far up the mast, could see nothing of the ground, and his ears would be filled with the blustering of the wind.

Nelson Lee was a man who made up his mind quickly. He made it up now, within the space of five seconds. Gun in hand, he left his cover and penetrated right into the girder-work of the great mast. As he had first suspected, no living thing was there except Mr. Kingswood. Staring up, Lee could faintly see the shadowy figure of No. 100

far above—and that figure was still climbing.

In a moment, Lee turned his attention to the waterproof bag. He disconnected the hook, unhitched the patent catch of the fastening, and opened the bag's top.

"Not a sound, Kingswood!" he whispered, peering in. "It is I—Lee."

"Thank Heaven!" came a breathless and dazed whisper.

The top of the bag fell about Mr. Kingswood's shoulders, and as the rain splashed upon his heated face—for he had been half-suffocated in that confined space—he revived rapidly.

"In the name of mystery, where are we?" he asked. "What does it mean, Lee? I heard somebody talking about a 'plane——"

"Hush! There is no time to explain now—but it was a trick," murmured Lee. "Get out of this—and look lively! I'm going to take your place!"

"What!"

"Don't argue—it's the only way."

"But if there's any danger——"

"Man alive, who is better fitted to meet danger—you or I?" asked Lee grimly. "You're still half-doped—you're wearing nothing but pyjamas. You've got to get back to the school as quickly as you know how. You are on the moor."

"Right! I'll do anything you say," said Fighting Jim, as he struggled completely out. "I don't seem to remember—Those fantastic figures were in my bed-room——"

"Yes, you were gassed, and they brought you here," whispered Lee. "But hurry! Every second is of value. You've got to take this greatcoat of mine and put it on. That'll keep you warm enough—especially if you keep moving. And you'd better take my thick shoes, too. I shan't need either in this bag."

Mr. Kingswood had far too much sense to argue or protest. He donned Lee's overcoat at once, and then got into Lee's shoes.

"I think you'll be safe—there's not a chance in a thousand that any of the fellowship men are on the watch," whispered Lee, as he clasped the other's hand. "Listen to me—I fancy I can deal with it efficiently. Get straight back—don't waste a moment. But before you go, refasten the neck of this bag about me; you'll find a metal clasp which is easily manipulated. Having done that, fix this hook through the metal ring. Then go."

"They're going to hoist you up, eh?" asked Mr. Kingswood. "Yes, I understand. I don't like leaving you in this way——"

"But you've got to," insisted Lee. "You promised——"

"I surrender," said Fighting Jim. "You're giving the orders."

Deftly, he fastened the bag after Nelson Lee had ducked. Then he placed the hook within the iron ring, and everything was apparently exactly as it had been.

Mr. Kingswood, with a last look, crept out of the girderwork, and stole away into the rainy night.

CHAPTER 8.

Lee's Luck.

FIGHTING JIM KINGSWOOD hated going. As a man of action himself, he wanted to remain here—to be near at hand, in case Lee ran into trouble.

But he had given his promise; and, resolutely, he struck off across the moor with the wind and rain at his back, for St. Frank's. He reflected as he did so, that he would have been of very little use, in any case. He was only half dressed, hatless, his brain was still dulled from the effects of the gas, and he was unarmed. Nelson Lee had been right. He would be more of a hindrance than a help. Far better for him to get back to the school.

And up at the very summit of the great wireless mast, No. 100 was unaware of the change. As he believed, he had left Mr. Kingswood helpless in that bag, and now he was anxious to complete his work.

Bad as the conditions had been on the ground, they were far worse up here, five hundred feet aloft.

The wind was shouting and hooting, driving the bitterly cold rain into the man's face. The great stays of the mast drummed and droned, and the whole mast swayed in the most alarming manner. It fairly rocked to the gusts of the wind.

And No. 100, although uncomfortable, was not frightened. He had been assured that the mast was safe. The swaying was normal; it had swayed just like this when brand new. All the same, he would be highly pleased when the job was done, so that he could return to the solid ground.

There was a platform at the top, here. It was square, with a metal floor, and guarded all round by girders. In the centre of the floor there was a great square hole; and, practically overlapping this hole, a hand-driven winch.

The fellowship agents had found this winch rusty and stiff; but it had been recently oiled, and now it worked smoothly, noiselessly. No. 100 toiled at the winch, and the bag containing the captive came up and up.

Nelson Lee, within the bag, knew just what was happening. But he doubted if Mr. Kingswood would have known. For the latter, without the slightest idea of his surroundings, partially suffocated, would have been unable to identify his sensations. He would have known, of course, that he was suspended in some way; but he would never have guessed that he was being hoisted up to a great height. Even Lee was conscious of no sense of movement. He merely felt that he dangled.

At last the bag was at the top, and No. 100 who was sweating in spite of the cold night, pulled it aside, and dumped it down on the cold wet metal floor.

"Better bundle him straight into the cabin," he said, holding his face close to the canvas bag. "You're ~~practically~~ ready to take off, aren't you?"

"Just getting the engines ready now," he said, in a totally different tone.

Lee appreciated the comedy. Yet even he was startled, a moment later, when he heard the unmistakable sound of an aero-engine starting up and ticking over with a deliberate rhythmic beat.

"The old ship is swaying a bit," said No. 100. "Hope you'll get off all right."

"The wind will help," he answered himself. "Shan't need much run, and once I'm up the rest will be easy. I shall take the direct route across the Channel, and then cut straight over Belgium. Ought to be there by dawn, with this wind behind me."

"Well, I wish you luck," said No. 100, in his own voice.

He was holding a small clockwork device—and this contrivance was giving forth its admirable imitation of a ticking aeroplane engine. Nelson Lee knew that he would have been completely fooled. The whole thing was done cleverly. It was only because of Lee's previous knowledge that he was enabled to obtain the correct perspective.

It had seemed a pointless thing to hoist the prisoner right to the top of this old wireless mast; but the labour was well spent. For, what with the drumming of the wind through the stays, the swaying of the mast itself, and the ticking of the "engine," Lee received the positive impression that he was in the cabin of a big aeroplane, which was swaying in the wind, waiting to take off. For some reason, the fellowship was anxious to delude its victim. Mr. Kingswood was to be fooled into believing that he was about to be carried right away from England—to some unknown destination on the Continent. But what would come next? Lee wondered. Obviously, No. 100 had no intention of killing his victim, or he would not have indulged in all this by-play. Helpless as Nelson Lee appeared to be, he was really ready for instant action.

During the "ride" up the mast, he had placed a clasp knife, ready opened, at hand. With one stroke he would be able to slit through the bag, and escape. His gun was ready, too. And he had—something else.

His acute suspicions were aroused when he felt his captor fumbling with the bag; his acute ears heard a tiny metallic click. With one movement, Lee pulled out a small, but effective, gas-mask. He always carried it these days—knowing, as he did, that the fellowship agents went about armed with gas guns.

"You scoundrels!" he panted, in an exact imitation of Mr. Kingswood's voice. "Let me out of here! Let me out, I say! I'm suffocating! Let me out!"

"You're going on a little trip, Mr. Kingswood," came No. 100's voice. "Don't get into a panic. Your quarters may be confined, but there is ample ventilation, and you are in no danger of suffocation."

"What are you doing with me?" panted the voice of Mr. Kingswood. "Why have

you put me aboard this 'plane? By Heaven! You shall suffer for this outrage——"

Outside, in the night, No. 100 smiled grimly. There was every evidence that his work had been successful. He pulled the trigger of his gas-gun—and the muzzle of that gun had been fastened to the valve-like protuberance, which projected from the upper part of the waterproof bag.

Hissssssss!

Nelson Lee, once again, had foiled the enemy. He had remembered that valve, and he had guessed its purport. When the harmless, but stupefying, gas surged into the bag, Lee was already wearing his gas-mask. He went limp very effectively, and after beating against the inner sides of the bag, he subsided. And even the mask, effective as it was, did not entirely protect him. He was aware of a dizziness, and he felt that he was floating. He was tempted to slit the bag, so that he could release that gas. But he felt that it would be wiser not to do so—yet. He wanted to find out just what was to happen to him.

He believed that he would be lowered to the ground again. He looked at it from the point of view of No. 100. The latter was certain that he had Mr. Kingswood in the bag; he was equally certain that Mr. Kingswood had been fooled about the aeroplane, and was now unconscious. That was the whole object of this piece of trickery.

Nelson Lee had no doubt that if Mr. Kingswood had really gone through the experience, he would have awakened, hours later, to find himself in some prison. He would then think that he had been unconscious for many hours, and that he was now on the Continent. Thus, he, like many other prisoners, would lose hope. He would believe that he was beyond reach of any possible rescue.

It was a cunning plan.

Nelson Lee knew that the prison was really somewhere in the St. Frank's district—— He started. A prison! And here was this great derelict mast, not more than a quarter of a mile from the equally derelict moor prison! The Fellowship of Fear had taken possession of the old convict settlement——

But Lee's thoughts were interrupted. Other things were happening, and he needed to be on the alert. The momentary dizziness was passing. The bag was being hoisted up, and he felt himself swaying on a metal ledge. Then he heard a click, and he knew that the waterproof bag was once again suspended. Yes, he was being lowered.

But Lee, for once, was wrong.

The bag had been hooked up again, but not to the cable. Projecting upwards, at the very top of the mast, there was a solitary girder, and from its summit stretched a steel wire. There was a heavy double pulley attached to this wire, with a hook beneath. The bag containing the captive had been attached to this hook.

For the first time for many hours a rift appeared in the clouds—in fact, a number of

rifts. The clouds, now ragged and angry-looking, were scudding across the sky. Occasionally a feeble moon would peep out. No. 100, glancing up, was anxious. He would have preferred to complete his work in total darkness. He gave the heavy double pulley a gentle push, and immediately the pulley and the dangling bag moved outwards into the night. It took a slight downwards course, for the steel wire, stretching invisibly into the darkness, sagged downwards. But the pulleys did not race; they were fitted, apparently, with an automatic brake, which prevented them from getting up too much speed. Nelson Lee was carried quietly out. For immediately over his head came the soft whirring of the pulley wheels on the wire. He was five hundred feet above the ground, swaying and turning, his new journey as mysterious as anything that had happened on this strange night.

Knowing that something extraordinary was happening—but being baffled by the confines of his prison, Lee determined to take action. He slashed a small slit in the stout waterproof canvas, just opposite his face. At the same moment he removed his gas-mask and put his face to the slit.

The rush of cold air refreshed him; the rain beat upon his face, and after a moment or two he was able to see. As it happened, the watery moon was sailing in a clear rift, and after the blackness of the bag's interior, the light seemed quite bright. Nelson Lee was enabled in a moment to gain a true impression of what was taking place.

"By James!" he ejaculated, aghast.

His first glimpse was of the great wireless mast. It was now some distance away, and he could see the reflected moonlight on the wet, glinting girderwork. He knew what was happening to him. He was being sent across a wire cable, slung from pulleys, but whither was he bound?

It was impossible to see in the other direction, for the bag would not swing round. Lee twisted, slashed again—but he slashed cautiously. For he realised that if he made too great a gap the canvas might tear and pitch him headlong to the ground to certain death.

He caught his breath in sharply as he obtained this second view. For he found himself looking straight down upon the gloomy, gaunt buildings of the old Moor Prison!

Then he had been right! The Moor Prison was the local headquarters of the Fellowship of the Free! Rather than take their victims to the prison in the ordinary way, the victims were sent across this steel cable! But Lee knew that the main object of the wireless mast was to create a false impression in the minds of the captives. If everything had gone well to-night, Mr. Kingswood's last conscious impression would have been of an aeroplane. Lee was now supposed to be unconscious; he was to be delivered to the prison, and then, no doubt, placed in a cell. It was all very simple.

No doubt the other end of the stretched cable was attached to the prison's lofty tower. It was difficult to see in the darkness, even in the faint moonlight. Lee only knew that he was travelling unerringly in that direction. He was taking a downward course, too, for the great wire sagged considerably towards its centre. This meant that at one point of the journey Lee would be comparatively near the ground. Not near enough for him to risk a drop, for that would be more or less akin to suicide. There was a guide-rope attached to the pulley, and Lee knew that once he got to the bottom of the "sag," he would be drawn up the incline, and thus to the prison tower.

And what then?

Discovery would be inevitable. For he would be taken from the bag, and, once in the hands of the fellowship, he would be as good as dead. True, he had his gun, and he might be able to fight his way out. But he believed that the prison was a veritable warren of crooks.

Moreover, even if he escaped, the fellowship would know that he had discovered their secret—which was just what Lee wished to avoid.

But if the prisoner escaped from the bag en route between the mast and the prison, nothing definite could be known—except the one fact that Mr. Kingswood had escaped. The fellowship would know nothing of Nelson Lee's own activities. He had discovered what he had set out to discover, and he was satisfied for one night. Lee was no hog.

He thought rapidly, and a solution quickly came to him. He almost chuckled as he realised the simplicity of it. And he congratulated himself upon coming out on this night's adventures fully equipped.

He was not yet at the lowest section of the sagging wire; the pulley cradle was still travelling gently and evenly. And now, to Lee's satisfaction, a fresh bank of dense clouds had swept over the sky, hiding the moon



***A Book-length Yarn
for 4d. ONLY!***

HIS MAJESTY KING BUNTER!

King of a fierce Congo cannibal tribe—that's the latest rôle filled by Billy Bunter, the fattest, funniest, and funkiest fellow of Greyfriars School! But how does he do it? Popular Frank Richards tells you, in his fascinating way, in this thrilling book-length yarn of the amazing adventures of Harry Wharton & Co. on a treasure hunt in wildest Africa. Don't miss this grand story—it's one long thrill!

Ask for No. 187 of

SCHOOLBOYS' OWN Library

Now on Sale

4d.

completely and bringing with it a renewal of the intense darkness.

From what he had already seen, he calculated roughly that the wire sagged for two or three hundred feet. At the lowest point, therefore, he would still be over two hundred feet from the ground. He dared not chance such a drop as that.

He worked rapidly within the bag—and he was irresistibly reminded of the once-famous Houdini, who had made a business of escaping from mailbags and barrels and similar prisons. Houdini had owed his success to two things—uncanny cleverness with his hands, and keeping a level head.

Never had Nelson Lee been more cool than he was now. Confined as he was, he felt the bottom of his strange prison, and he was satisfied that the double seam, at the base of the bag, was of great strength. He cut a long slit in one side, getting his feet tightly against the seam so that he would not accidentally slip through the hole he had just made. And from beneath his coat he produced a long length of thin cord. It was very silky, hardly thicker than string, but it was of tremendous strength. He quickly paid the line out, so that it dropped directly towards the ground. There was a considerable length of it, but at last Lee exhausted the supply. He looped the last bit round his body.

He was then ready.

He cut another slit on the opposite side of the bag bottom, taking care to hold securely to the thick central seam. With his free hand he groped through the hole, grasped the other part of the line, and then he widened the gap. This allowed him to slip completely through. Thus he was dangling—beneath the bag itself, which was like a miniature deflated balloon.

The cord round Lee's body held him securely. The cord then passed over the stout seam of the bag, and Lee was holding it. He was enabled, by this means, to drop fairly rapidly, paying out the rope hand over hand.

Down he went, invisible in the darkness—which was now further confused by another intense squall. The wind howled and the rain beat down with tremendous fury.

Lower and lower—and then, at last, Lee was grasping the very end of the rope. The pulleys had just reached the lowest sag of the wire cable; and Nelson Lee, by reason of his astute move, was now a great deal nearer to the ground. He knew that it would not be a comfortable drop. He was taking a big risk.

Yet there were many chances in his favour.

Below him lay the moor, and it was rain-sodden; and there were many thick clumps of gorse. If, by luck, he struck one of these, his fall would be broken.

It was no time to hesitate.

He released his grip and fell like a stone. The rope, of course, shot through the holes in the bag and freed itself completely—so that the fellowship agents would be further mystified.

Splash!

Lee experienced a shock as he plunged into a morass of water and mud. He floundered. The mud enveloped him, but, after a dreadful moment, he found his head above the surface. And he was astonished and gratified by the fact that he was aware of no pain. He had come to no injury.

And a moment later he knew why.

By a lucky chance he had fallen into one of the many boggy patches which were to be found over the moor. Such bogs, of course, are commonplace on all moors. And this particular patch, after the intense rain—which had fallen continuously for many hours—was more than a bog. It was a miniature lake. Feet first, Lee had plunged into it, and as he floundered about he knew that he stood a chance of being sucked down.

But for the long rain, in fact, this tragedy might well have happened.

But the bog was so soft and watery that he was able to half swim, half crawl. Vaguely, just in front of him, he could see some untidy clumps of gorse. And, by determined effort, by using every ounce of his great strength, he dragged himself free from that morass. He clutched at the coarse grass, and many times the turf came right away in his hands. Then he secured a hold on the gorse bushes, and thus he pulled himself completely clear.

Rising to his feet, with mud streaming from him, he stared upwards. He could faintly see, dim against the sky, the flapping, swaying shape of the empty bag. It was quite stationary—for, relieved of Lee's weight, the mechanism had stuck.

An idea came to Lee.

He remembered that Mr. Kingswood had been bare-footed. Lee himself was shoeless; but now he pulled off his socks. He walked away from the bog, his feet sinking deeply, and at every step he left a muddy track. He walked drunkenly, swaying from side to side. The trail he left was erratic, and at random. More than once he deliberately trod upon an earthy patch, leaving a deep impression of a naked foot.

And so, presently, he reached the lonely moor road—which, fortunately, was tarred. It was washed clean by the incessant rain, and even if Lee made any footprints, they were quickly obliterated. He now doubled back, making for the prison itself. It was a daring plan. He had seen some great boulders rising up on a little tor, or hillock. Reaching these boulders he found a deep crevice, into which he crept. Here, he was not only sheltered from the wind and the rain, but he was in a position where he could view both the prison and the spot where he had fallen.

Before Nelson Lee returned to St. Frank's, he wanted to make sure of things! He wanted to see what would happen next.

In spite of his discomforts he was happy. He possessed a constitution of iron, and he was confident that he would come to no harm. Not only had he freed Mr. Kingswood from

the clutches of the Fellowship of Fear, but he had escaped himself—and he had made the Great Discovery.

CHAPTER 9.

The Secret Enemy.

NO. 1 sat at his desk in the office of the Southern Headquarters of the Fellowship of Fear.

The office was comfortably furnished, and a light glowed warmly upon the desk. A powerful oil-stove gave forth a reddish glow, too, and it emitted a grateful warmth. This office, in fact, in the old days, had been the private sanctum of the prison governor.

It was unchanged except for one important fact. Across the window there was a great framework, and its purpose was to confine every ray of light within the room itself. Moor Prison was supposedly empty. There was not even a caretaker. The whole place had been abandoned, for it was useless as a factory, being so isolated, and it had been left quite derelict.

The man at the desk was lean-featured; his eyes were deeply sunken, and his forehead was high and intelligent. A man of about fifty, he was well-dressed, and he looked like a University professor. But the dreamy light in his coal-black eyes definitely labelled him a fanatic.

He was writing. There was, in the air of this man and the office, a suggestion of dignity, of power. He was the Master of the Southern Section of the Fellowship of Fear. To every fellowship agent in the section he was "No. 1." Nobody knew his name or his real identity. But he, himself, was answerable to the chiefs higher up. He was but a link in the great organisation.

A buzzer sounded quietly, unobtrusively.

No. 1 lifted the receiver of an internal telephone.

"Well?"

"Prisoner just coming in, sir," came a voice.

"Is he on the cable now?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very good. I'll come," said No. 1, hanging up the receiver.

He sat back in his chair, relinquishing the pen. He was frowning. This meant that Mr. James Kingswood, headmaster of St. Frank's, had again refused to obey the fellowship's commands. So he had been taken prisoner, and had been brought in.

"Fools—fools!" muttered No. 1, his eyes burning. "Cannot they realise their mad folly? But we shall win in the end. Soon, the terror will spread, and then these rabbit-brained schoolmasters will surrender to our demands."

He left the office, and, striding down a long, gloomy corridor, he reached the central tower of the prison. A man stood on guard at the bottom of the long staircase which wound its way upwards to the summit.

"Give instructions that a cell is to be prepared," said No. 1, pausing. "A new prisoner is coming in immediately."

"Yes, sir," said the man.

No. 1 passed up the stairs. It was a long, tedious climb, and by the time he had reached the top he was considerably puffed.

There was a turret up here, and it was in pitchy darkness. A window stood wide open through which the rain was beating. Two shadowy figures stood there, sheltering as best they could. They were staring out into the night.

"Well?" asked No. 1 softly.

"There's something wrong, sir," came a voice. "The pulley-cradle seems to have stuck half-way. On other occasions it has come much further before we've had to use the hauling-rope."

"Well, why don't you use the rope now?" asked No. 1 curtly. "Don't you realise that this job must be done as quickly as possible?"

"No danger in this rain, sir," said one of the men.

"You should take nothing for granted, my friend," retorted No. 1. "We choose foggy nights and wet nights; but there is always the possibility of a mischance. The man who takes an unnecessary risk is a fool."

The two men made no reply. They were, in fact, already hauling upon the rope. And the pulley cradle was being hauled up the long incline of the steel cable.

"Funny!" muttered one of the men, after a while. "She's coming easily, isn't she?"

"Too easily," said the other.

No. 1 moved nearer.

"What are you muttering about?" he asked sharply.

"There's something queer about this, sir," replied one of the men. "There's no weight on the rope. This fellow must be a skinny one!"

"Let me come," said No. 1, his voice more sharp than ever.

For he knew that Mr. James Kingswood was a "difficult" prisoner; he was a man they had hesitated to attack, for he was a six-footer, and broad and brawny in proportion to his height. By rights, these two men should have been struggling hard to pull in Mr. Kingswood's thirteen stone.

"By all the gods! I do not like this!" said the Master. "Quickly—quickly! Pull, you fools!"

They increased their efforts, and soon they could see the cradle and its burden come into view. It was hauled right in, and all three men exclaimed at the same moment.

For the waterproof bag was empty.

"But how can this be?" asked No. 1, in a grating voice. "What carelessness is this? How can the prisoner have escaped?"

"Whether he escaped or not, sir, he's dead by now," said one of the others. "It's pretty nearly a two-hundred-foot drop—even at the lowest part of the wire."

"Quickly! Come with me!" snapped No. 1. "We must look into this. The prisoner must be brought in—alive or dead!"

He was furious. The sky was clearing again, and the moon was now becoming brighter. The conditions were unfavourable. The fellowship only worked in fog or intense darkness.

No. 1, with the two other men at his heels, went racing down the stairs. A general alarm was given out. And, presently, men appeared as though by magic. A dozen of them—even more. They collected in the great central hall of the prison, and, in short, sharp sentences, No. 1 explained the situation.

"We must go out at once—the search should not be a long one," he said. "The prisoner escaped from the bag about half-way across the cable-line. There he dropped, and there he must be lying. Come!"

NELSON LEE, crouching in his hiding-place, became aware of stealthy movements all about him. A moment earlier he had seen nothing; and even now he had not heard a sound, owing to the whistling and drumming of the wind. No



light had shown itself at the prison. He had watched the gates, but they had not opened. Yet now, as the moon came out once more, Lee saw vague, shadowy figures flitting about like veritable will-o'-the-wisps. As he had expected, the fellowship members were out-looking for Mr. Kingswood's maimed body. The detective permitted himself a low, soft chuckle. In this night's adventure he was the winner all along the line. Single-handed, he had bested the enemy by his brilliant strategy.

Suddenly a figure passed within six feet of his place of concealment; and dramatically a voice sounded from a different direction.

"Hands up!" it said.

The figure, which was almost opposite Lee, flung up its hands.

"Don't shoot!" it whispered. "I am Number One Hundred."

The man who came up was No. 1 himself, heavily muffled.

A tiny beam of light flashed for a second into No. 100's face.

"What does this mean?" demanded No. 1 harshly.

"I do not understand, sir," stammered the agent. "I was just coming in—from the mast. I have done my work——"

"You fool! You mean you have botched your work!" snarled No. 1. "Ever since we have made our headquarters here, we have never once ventured forth in this mad fashion. But it is necessary. Your prisoner has escaped."

"But that is impossible, sir," gasped No. 100 in fear and bewilderment.

Lee listened gloatingly. So the Moor Prison was the fellowship's local headquarters!

"When the bag was drawn in to the tower it was empty," said No. 1. "You blunderer! Did you not search your prisoner as I ordered? Did you not gas him?"

"I—I cannot understand, sir," said No. 100, in such distress that Lee almost felt sorry for him. "I carried out orders to the letter. The prisoner was dressed only in his pyjamas. He had nothing on him but his night attire. He was gassed before being sent across the wire. I tell you, sir, it is impossible that he could have escaped from the bag unaided."

"Yet he has escaped—and he must be lying somewhere down here on the moor," said the Master. "Come! We must find him without delay. The night is getting too bright."

A soft call sounded from the gloom beyond, and No. 1 uttered a sharp exclamation. He and his companion went hurrying off. Lee knew what it meant. Some of the others had discovered the footprints.

He was right.

"Bare feet!" said No. 1, as he inspected the tracks. "This proves, then, that Kingswood was dressed only in his pyjamas. But how is it that he escaped death by the fall?"

"Look, sir!" said one of the other men. "He fell into the bog."

"Ah! That explains it," said the Master. "But it does not explain why he was conscious, or how he cut his way out of the bag. There has been grave blundering, and the culprits shall suffer."

"When he left the mast he was unconscious," panted No. 100. "I made no blunder, sir."

"Silence!" commanded No. 1. "I will deal with you later. At present there is not a second to be lost."

No. 100 shivered. He knew what happened to men who failed the fellowship. But he knew, too, that he had not failed. He was baffled—and afraid.

"The trail leads to the road," said No. 1 tensely. "The very appearance of the trail proves that Kingswood was still under the influence of the drug, for he walked drunkenly. But he reached the road. That is the important point. Oh, fools—fools! That man, clad only in pyjamas, is wandering somewhere in the night. He knows of the wireless mast, and if he meets anybody and starts talking we are finished."

"Maybe he went back to the school, sir?" suggested one of the other men. "That's what he would do, isn't it? And it's likely

he met nobody. Or we may find him somewhere on the road——”

“We must act at once,” said No. 1 grimly.

BUT Nelson Lee, once again, was acting first.

He knew, with scarcely giving the matter a thought, that the hounds of the Fellowship of Fear would go on Mr. Kingswood's trail. Failing to find him anywhere on the road, they would even penetrate the school. They dared not let him remain free, unless——

Taking advantage of a spell of darkness, when clouds obscured the moon, Lee cut across the wet, spongy grassland and reached the road. There was very little risk in making these movements, for the fellowship men had made a quick return to the prison—there, no doubt, to prepare an emergency expedition. This time there could be no careful preparations, as on all other occasions. And the unparalleled success of the fellowship had been due, thus far, to careful, studied preparation.

Once on the road, Lee ran like a hare. He was smothered with mud, wet through, chilled, but his stamina was as good as ever. And this exercise, too, was just what he required. It restored the circulation of his blood, it set his pulses throbbing, and he was successfully fighting the chill.

He only paused to put on his socks, but these afforded his feet little or no protection. Fortunately, the tarred road was smooth, and Lee's feet, too, were tough. Except for one or two minor cuts—and quite a few blisters on the morrow—he came to no harm.

By this hard running he reached the school in excellent time. He reckoned that he would have at least fifteen or twenty minutes before anything was likely to happen. He had got to Big Arch, having crossed the Triangle quickly, when a shadowy figure appeared in the very archway. Lee was ready. He leapt like a panther, his gun in his hand.

“Hands up!” he whispered tensely.

“Guv'nor!” panted a voice.

“You silly young idiot!” muttered Nelson Lee, relieved, nevertheless. “What in the name of mystery are you doing here? It's a lucky thing I didn't drill you!”

“Oh, guv'nor, I'm jolly glad you're safe!” breathed Nipper.

“Don't you think I can take care of myself?” retorted Lee. “Have you seen anything of Mr. Kingswood?”

“Yes, sir—he came in about twenty minutes ago—or it may have been half an hour,” said Nipper eagerly. “He told me something of what had happened, and I was terribly afraid for you——”

“We can't talk here—we can't talk to-night at all,” broke in Lee. “See me to-morrow, Nipper. Don't worry, I think everything will be all right. I'm very satisfied with the night's work. Did you do your part all right?”

“Everything went off like a dream, sir,” replied Nipper. “The other chaps are in bed—asleep long ago. But I couldn't turn

in until I knew something more definite about you. We got Bentley out easily enough, and handed him over to Mr. Lennard beyond Bannington.”

“You left the cottage locked, with everything in apple-pie order?”

“Yes, sir; just as you said.”

“Splendid! Thanks for your help, Nipper,” said Lee. “By James! The disappearance of Bentley will mystify the fellowship a good deal, I can assure you. Now get straight into bed—it's very important that you should not be hanging about here to-night. Some of our genial friends may be getting busy again—but if they do, I shall be ready to deal with them.”

“I'll bet you will, guv'nor,” said Nipper smilingly.

He went off almost at once—relieved and gratified. Nelson Lee was pleased, too—for he had been wondering how things had gone with the boys. He reached the headmaster's house, and he went straight to the front door and inserted the key and turned it. A minute later he was upstairs, quietly entering the headmaster's bed-room.

“Who's that?” came a tense voice.

“Only me,” replied Lee. “Back sooner than you expected, eh?”

“Thank Heaven!” said Mr. Kingswood, as he switched on the light. “I was beginning to worry—— Great Scott! What on earth—— What's happened to you? You're in a terrible mess!”

Lee looked down at himself. He was indeed in a shocking condition.

“Get out of that bed, Jim!” he ordered. “The night's adventures are not over yet. I think our friends are coming back.”

“What!”

“We've got about ten minutes for our preparations.”

“Look here, Mr. Lee, I'm not going to stand any more of it,” said Mr. Kingswood grimly. “If there's going to be a fight, I'm going to be in it! I'm hanged if I'll knuckle under——”

“No need for it, old man,” broke in Lee. “They won't take you this time—if we are cunning enough. And we've got to work fast, and we've got to do a little rehearsing.”

Fighting Jim was bewildered—particularly when he observed Nelson Lee's next action. For the detective deliberately rolled himself upon Mr. Kingswood's snowy-white bed, making havoc of the sheets.

“Have you gone mad?” asked the Head, staring.

“I was never more sane in my life,” said Lee crisply. “Off with those pyjamas, Jim. Let me have the other ones—the suit you wore earlier.”

“But the legs are smothered in mud, and they're wet——”

“All the better,” said Nelson Lee. “You're going to wear them again.”

When he got possession of them, he generously rubbed them with the ample mud from his own person, making them into such a dreadful state that Mr. Kingswood turned away in disgust.

"I'm not going to get into those filthy things!" he protested.

"You are—and you're going to suffer another discomfort, too," replied Lee.

Fighting Jim gave in. He donned the soiled pyjamas, and then, at Lee's orders, he laid himself upon the bed, and Lee smothered his feet and ankles with mud.

"That's better," said the detective, looking round keenly. "Yes, you can pull the bedclothes over you. Better put the light out now. Don't you understand, Jim, that the fellowship people believe that you freed yourself from that bag, and that you dropped into a bog? You staggered home in a dazed condition. Listen to me! Get this straight—memorise every word. We'll have a little rehearsal, too."

EXACTLY ten minutes later.

Mr. Kingswood, pretending to be sound asleep, and breathing heavily, heard the faint opening of the window. He was thrilled. He knew that Nelson Lee stood within the bed-room cupboard, not four feet away—and Lee was holding an automatic pistol in his hand. At the first sign of danger—for Mr. Kingswood—Lee would be ready.

As before, four figures merged into the gloom of the bed-room; as before, they were dressed in long robes and conical hats. They gathered round the bed, and the greenish light glowed overhead.

"He sleeps soundly," whispered one of the intruders.

With a quick movement the man pulled back the bedclothes. Sharp exclamations escaped the others. For the light of a torch was flashed upon the supposed sleeper. He was in a very muddy condition, even his feet being caked with half-dried mud.

"So he escaped without injury," said the leader, who, in fact, was No. 1 himself. "He managed to get back to the school without attracting attention. So far, so good. Awaken him."

One of the other men shook Mr. Kingswood, and for some moments the Head mumbled and tossed but did not open his eyes. Then, at last, he sat up.

"Again!" he panted, staring wildly. "I—I've had an awful dream— No, it wasn't a dream!" he went on, as he looked at his soiled pyjamas. "It really happened. But I don't understand—I don't remember."

"You had better remember," said No. 1 sternly. "We took you once before, my friend, and we will take you again."

"I—I can't remember, I tell you," muttered Mr. Kingswood, passing a hand over his brow. "It's all so vague—so nightmare-like. But wait! I remember being confined in a bag of some kind. You devils! If you treat me like that again—"

"Keep your voice down, my friend," said No. 1. "You know what will happen to you

"P.W." Broadcasting Map of the World FREE To-day!

This big shilling map, brightly printed in colours, shows all the important broadcasting stations of the world. It will be invaluable to the short-wave listener, just as it will to the man who uses medium or long broadcast wave-bands, and its size makes it ideal as a wall chart for immediate and handy reference. Make sure of it—it's FREE with this week's POPULAR WIRELESS. There will be another splendid Gift in each of the next TWO issues of "P.W."

POPULAR WIRELESS

Now on Sale - - - - - 3d.

if you disobey. You say that you were in a bag? Well? What then?"

"I was taken to an aeroplane—yes, I heard the engine," muttered Mr. Kingswood. "I felt the machine swaying— Then I heard nothing further. Something happened to the bag, I believe. I have an awful impression of struggling in a lot of mud and water, but I may have dreamed it. I only know that I found myself near the school, soaked and muddy, walking along in the rain. I don't know what it means."

He acted quite brilliantly. He repeated his story under pressure. But he satisfied No. 1 and the other fellowship agents that he had been dazed from the drug when he had fallen out of the bag. Even he could not explain how he had escaped—and it was useless questioning him. The one fact which emerged—the important fact—was that he remembered nothing. He knew nothing of the wireless mast, or of the cable. Apparently, he had walked along with his mind a blank for two or three miles.

"Let this night's happenings be a warning to you, Mr. Kingswood," said No. 1 impressively. "The next time you will not escape so lightly. Those who disobey the Fellowship of the Free either disappear or die."

Even as he was speaking he pulled the trigger of his gas-gun. A puff leapt out into Mr. Kingswood's face, and he coughed, choked, and fell back. Like shadows the fellowship agents crept to the window and passed out. They reached the ground, doffed their robes and crept away.

NELSON LEE found the Head a bit dizzy, but conscious.

"I took your tip, Mr. Lee," muttered Fighting Jim. "When they puffed that filthy stuff into my face, I held my breath—and pretended to cough and splutter. But it was done so quickly that I nearly got caught. What does it mean?

Why did they go? I thought they were going to grab me again."

"They were satisfied that you knew nothing of the night's happenings," replied Lee. "They think that they are still safe in the Moor Prison."

"But, even so, why didn't they take me with them?"

"Because it would have been far too risky," replied Nelson Lee. "The night is well advanced—and this time, they had had no time to make their usual elaborate preparations. All their kidnappings are conducted with infinite care—with brilliant organisation. This was a rush job—they had no time to organise anything. Look at the moon, too? The skies have cleared, and the moon is shining quite brightly. They dared not take you under such conditions."

"So I've been reprieved?" asked Mr. Kingswood dryly.

"They'll plan to get you some other night when the conditions are favourable," said Nelson Lee. "But before then, perhaps, I may be able to get my own blow in. Go to sleep now, Jim—we've done well."

"I like the 'we,'" said Mr. Kingswood. "It's a fat lot that I've done! But you've performed miracles."

"I've discovered the local headquarters—and that was all I wanted," replied Lee softly. "Now I can get down to real work."

AND back at the Moor Prison, No. 1 was filled with a great uneasiness because No. 30 had failed to report. No. 30, in fact, had completely vanished! Where was he? Had he any hand in the escape of Mr. Kingswood? Was he a traitor?

Undoubtedly, the Fellowship of Fear was shaken; but for the first time No. 1 had a vague, uncomfortable idea that there was a secret enemy working against the fellowship.

THE END.

NEXT WEEK:—

Another Brilliant Long Complete Story of Nelson Lee and the Fellowship of Fear, entitled:

"THE FIGHTING SIX!"

By E. S. BROOKS

also

Further chapters of our Powerful War Story

"THE GREEN BUTTON!"

Order Your Copy To-day!

The GREEN BUTTON!



In this powerful story of the Great War, Monty Merriman, star of the British Secret Service, has been sent into Germany to rescue Captain Seton, who lies a prisoner of war in a castle. In the disguise of a German sergeant, Monty gains access to the castle, but is unmasked. With typical grit and self-sacrifice, however, Monty continues his plan of rescue in spite of the fact that the garrison is out after him.

The Escape!

THE light streamed from the door of the generating station. His eyes were focused upon it. His nerves were getting frayed by this time. He wanted to run, yet he knew that would be fatal. The trouble was the waters of the moat had stopped his watch. He had no idea of the time. He had told Dick Seton he would return in about a quarter of an hour, and that seemed about six hours ago!

He steadied himself, however, as best he could, and held on his way. He was within

a foot of the door of the generating station when one of the engineers suddenly appeared, slap in his path, having come out for a breath of air.

They stared at one another. The engineer knew it meant treachery of some kind. He opened his mouth to give the alarm, but Monty's fist crashed full in his face and shot him back into the generating station from which he had come. Monty went in after him, and slammed the door behind him. He followed up his blows with another that sent the man slithering on his back along the iron floor to the foot of the gigantic generators.

But there were two engineers. The other saw Monty, and one glance at his sodden clothes, and the desperate look in his eyes, meant trouble. The sight of his mate on his back, having been struck down, did not call for argument, but action. He whipped out a revolver, but Monty wasn't arguing, either. He came with a rush, and grabbed the man's gun wrist. It was all he had time to do. The next instant they were locked in a deadly embrace, fighting and staggering this way and that, in a frenzied struggle for mastery.

Monty was mad. At the last minute he was beaten, so it seemed. He had wanted to sling his bomb and run for it. This fight to silence the engineers was not in accordance with his plans at all. They were not giving him a chance to throw his bomb with good effect. They were harrying him, holding him, and he dared not even break away and bolt for it, now.

The man he fought was big and strong, and it took Monty all his time to keep that gun pointing away from him. But the man on the floor took a hand in the game. He came to his feet, and ran to the far end of the engineer's platform. Peering over the squirming shoulder of his adversary, Monty saw a 'phone standing there on a pedestal. The other man meant to call for help.

Monty suddenly went mad. He released his opponent's gun hand, but only long enough to get in a vicious half-arm jab to the fellow's ear that sent him reeling sideways. The man's foot slithered in a spot of oil on the metal platform. He fell with a crash, his head struck an iron stanchion, and he sagged in a senseless heap.

Monty snatched up a huge wrench from the tool rack, and hurled it across the platform. The other fellow was just picking up the 'phone as the missile struck him on the side of the head. He flung up his arms and dropped where he was. Monty leapt forwards, seized the 'phone and tore it away from its pedestal, tugging at the wire until it snapped.

Then he advanced to the gleaming rail that separated the platform from the whirring generators. He took careful aim at the largest with the bomb he had taken from his pocket. He pulled out the pin, then flung it into the machinery.

The next instant he had bolted for it out into the night, slamming the door after him, and caring nothing for secrecy.

Monty pelted away towards the moat. He thought at first he must have got hold of a dud grenade after all. He seemed to be running miles and miles. Actually, he covered twenty yards in record time, when there came the dull roar of the explosion from the generating station.

With the boom of it still dinning in his ears, Monty dived into the moat, and the slimy waters closed over his head. When he came to the surface again everything was in utter darkness. The searchlights no longer played over the entanglements, the floodlights were black out, the castle itself was in

blackness, intensified by the gloom of a moonless night.

"Done it!" panted Monty, swimming furiously to the castle wall.

He swam till he came to Dick Seton's grating.

"You there, Dick? Ready?"

"Ready and waiting," answered Dick Seton. "I'm going to heave."

"I'll haul on the grating," said Monty, clambering up and getting a good hold. "Ready? Let her have it!"

He hung on the grating with all his weight. Inside the cell, Dick Seton had loosened the stones of the wall round the grating, and now he was leaning his shoulder against them and heaving with all his might.

At first nothing happened, then a few pieces of mortar fell out into the moat, with a few tinkling splashes.

"And again!" muttered Monty.

He jerked the grating. He felt it give. It came away with a dull rumbling, rending. Monty was enveloped in dust and rubble. He kicked himself away from the wall, and dropped into the water with a splash. He was only just in time. The big stones came like a young avalanche.

It was lucky that all was confusion and noise in the castle itself. Men were rushing hither and thither for lights, heavy boots clanged on the stone floors, bugles sounded, and drums beats to quarters. In the din that rumbling avalanche past unheard.

"You all right, Merriman?" called Dick, in a hoarse whisper, as he thrust his shoulders through the hole he had made.

"O.K.," replied Monty, treading water. "Come on!"

There was the sound of a scuffle as the prisoner forced his way through. The hole was none too big, but it proved to be just big enough. There was a splash, then Dick Seton came swimming over to join Monty. They gripped hands in the darkness, then struck out for the opposite bank. They gained it, clambered out, and sped away at right angles to it, away into the darkness.

"So long as the lights don't come on again," muttered Monty. Yet he was thinking more of the electrified wires than the lights just then. Supposing the generator that supplied them with current had not been damaged by that bomb?

"Let's hope not," panted Dick.

Owing to his confinement he was not so fit as Monty, and found the going hard, but he gritted his teeth and stuck to it gamely. They raced over the uneven ground and reached the first line of wire entanglements. It was Monty who reached out his hand, first. He felt a queer thrill as he touched the wire. If he had failed he was for it, in that moment. But he grasped the wire, and nothing happened. The juice was off! The bomb had done its work!

They crawled through, painfully, tearing their flesh and clothes on the barbs. Somehow they gained the other side and raced off on that hundred yards. There were troops

there, dashing about in utter confusion, yelling for torches. Here and there lights flickered, but they were just matches—anything to dispel the gloom. But such feeble lights could not harm the two fugitives so long as they kept away from them.

Once they crouched, once they fell flat on their faces, as a Bavarian infantryman went rushing past in the darkness. Then they were up and away again the next moment, pelted for dear life, until they reached the second and last line of wire entanglements.

Again that doubt assailed Monty. Supposing the juice here was still on? But he reached out boldly and grabbed the wire. The chill of it thrilled him, but there was no electric current. Their luck still held good.

They crawled under it, and on the far side paused long enough to grip hands.

"Done it!" panted Dick. "Do you know where we are?"

"Got it all worked out," whispered Monty. "There's a thick wood ahead of us. If we can reach it we shall win the first round. Come on!"

The going was bad, but they had to keep on, stumbling over roots and stones in the darkness, tearing their clothes to ribbons. The night was as black as they could wish—no moon, and no stars—clouds obscuring everything with a hint of rain to come.

Then the ground seemed to be rising. They struggled up a hillock that led to the wood. And then—they could almost hear the click of the switch!—the lights in the castle came on again. Only one generator had been damaged. Someone had started the spare dynamo.

Once more the flood-lights lit up that space between the wire entanglements. Once more the searchlights moved their revealing beams this way and that, lighting up the countryside.

And suddenly one great arm of light swept over the two fugitives and stayed still. All around them was flooded with the glare of it, and they felt like two flies on a naked wall—marked out for swift destruction.

From behind them came hoarse shouts.

"There they are! Shoot!"

Machine guns spattered, the bullets whined over their heads as they staggered on towards the wood. They were nearly exhausted. It seemed as though the game was up at last.

They were spotted!

Through the Lines.

IT seemed to Monty and Dick Seton that the glare of the searchlights made them easy targets for the guns. The slope up which they scrambled towards the wood seemed to change into a sheer precipice. The more they tried to hurry, the slower they seemed to go, and the obstacles, in the shape of thorn bushes and boulders, more difficult to negotiate.

But that was largely a matter of nerves. They had both endured much during the

past twenty-four hours, and those lights had come on five minutes too soon for them. The shock of that illuminating glare rattled them badly for a few seconds, but Monty controlled himself with an effort.

"Take it steady, old man!" he called. "They can't shoot for nuts, anyway!"

That was apparently correct. The garrison of Arnstein Castle was composed of troops who would not be of much use at the front. The light picked out the two struggling figures on the slope, the bullets spattered all round them, and yet did not hit them.

Distances are always deceptive at night, and a searchlight beam does not help inexperienced marksmen to fix the range. It was that, Monty reckoned, that saved them.

"Come on, Dick!" he called. "One more spurt and we've done it!"

He grabbed Dick Seton by the arm and half dragged him the last fifty yards to the shelter of the thickets. They tore their way through the undergrowth, clambered over an enormous rock, and slid down on the other side into a damp hollow.

Having come across the moat, the moisture scarcely mattered to them. The welcome thing was the shelter from the whining bullets afforded by that rock. They crouched there, panting, snatching a few moments' welcome rest and steadying their nerves.

"Saw us too soon!" said Dick Seton. "They'll have every man out scouring the countryside. They'll 'phone to Arnstein town, and the news will be everywhere—all roads guarded——"

"Yes—I've allowed for all that," replied Monty. "You listen to me, Dick. We've got the best part of a hundred miles to cover to get off German soil, but I'm in charge of this stunt, and I've got my plans. No sense you worrying over the dangers when you know nothing of the preparations that have been made. You just do as I tell you—that's all. Hear that gate clang? The guard is coming out to chase us. Got your second wind?"

They gripped hands in the darkness.

"I'm ready," said Dick. "Sorry I got cold feet for a minute——"

"We all get that way at times," replied Monty. "Forget it, old man. We've got to sprint for it, now. Come on!"

They were in the thick of the wood by this time, where the searchlight beams, playing amongst the clustered trees, helped them by casting dense shadows, and fooled their pursuers by dazzling them.

Monty held on his way in a straight line as far as he could. He seemed utterly tireless, and his cool nerve had returned to him. Dick just followed without questioning, while Monty cleared the way for him, tearing at the bushes and snapping off low branches.

Monty was in a more fit condition than Dick, who had been held in close confinement on an almost starvation diet. No one appreciated this more than Monty, who did what he could to help.

But already the pursuing troops were entering the wood. They made enough row to awaken the dead. They yelled and shrieked, they let fly with their rifles at every moving shadow, while the splitting and rending of branches and shrubs sounded too close to be really pleasant.

It was hard going through the undergrowth. Dick was badly blown, and every obstacle he encountered seemed more difficult to get over. Monty stuck by him, and half lifted him over several bad places.

"It's no use," panted Dick. "They starved me—to make me talk—and I'm weak. You go on, Monty—leave me——"

"Shut up!" snapped Monty. "Another hundred yards and we'll fool 'em."

"How can we? There's a road here, somewhere. They'll have the cavalry——"

"Save your breath, man! This way!"

Monty hustled him along. Dick's breath came in gasps, and he staggered at every step. His sodden clothes clung to his limbs, and the cold night air cut him like a knife. He was blue to the lips, his eyes bulging, his head beginning to sag sideways.

"Hang on!" pleaded Monty. "This way—by that tree! Here—hold up, Dick!"

They stopped by a thicket. Dick was leaning heavily on a tree-trunk gasping for breath. Monty was diving under a bush, clawing frantically at the foliage, grabbing something and hauling it out.

Dick had been amazed at all that Monty had done up to that time. He sensed that Monty was no ordinary fellow. But even then, he had not fully realised all that Monty could do, or had done, towards securing his escape.

He gaped at what Monty hauled out from under that bush. It was a motor-bike. It seemed dirty and rusty, but that was to avoid any polished metal work gleaming. In actual fact, the bike itself was in perfect condition, tuned up, the tanks full.

Monty thrust his way through one more clump of brambles, and there was a road, as Dick had told him, and which he had known all along.

"All you've got to do," said Monty tersely, "is to get on the pillion, and hang on to me. Quickly, man!"

The engine was already throbbing, and Monty stood with one foot on the road, waiting. Dick clambered to the pillion, glad enough to rest his weary limbs. He put his arms round Monty's waist, there was a vigorous heave, a violent wobble, and then they were off with a roar—and only just in time.

The advance guard of the Bavarian garrison came floundering towards the spot, having heard the motor-bike's engine. They shot out on to the road as the bike, with its fugitive riders, swerved round the bend. The rifles rattled and bullets whined in the air, but there was precious little danger. The light was almost negligible there, the searchlights could not reach them, and the shooting was bad.

Neither Monty nor Dick said anything. It was not easy to make conversation, in any case, careering through the black night on a motor-bike in this fashion. But the real reason was that Dick was in a half swoon of exhaustion. He clung grimly to Monty's waist, and allowed himself to relax.

It helped him to gain his breath, but the rush of the night air chilled him to the bone. His brain cleared, however, and after some time he began to take more interest in the proceedings.

Monty, on the other hand, was wide awake all the time. He had to be. Dick could not help his weakness. It was no fault of his own. The success of the whole thing rested on Monty's shoulders.

It seemed to Dick that, having reached the bike like this, they had got well away, and immediate danger was over. But Monty knew otherwise. He could not tell whether the telephones at Arnstein Castle were dependent upon the generators he had bombed or not. He could not tell how long it had taken the commandant to spread the news of the prisoner's escape to the surrounding towns and military camps.

It was plain that owing to the importance which the Germans attached to Dick Seton's invention they would do all they could to recapture him, and the obvious thing for them to do was to 'phone to all towns round about, turn out all available troops and form a military cordon around Arnstein.

That would be done immediately. Monty was well aware of that. What he did not know was just where that cordon would be, where he would strike it, or how soon the meeting would come.

It was some time before Dick ventured to speak, and by that time he was feeling infinitely more sanguine of success, whereas Monty was beginning to worry about the cordon he felt sure they were rapidly approaching.

"Suppose you'll whiz like this right away to the Dutch frontier," said Dick.

"Nothing of the sort," said Monty. "A hundred and fifty miles to the Dutch frontier. A motor-bike must keep to the roads, and it's conspicuous. We've got to shy this 'bus under a hedge before long. Hang on!"

He came to where their bye-road joined the main road. They slithered round the corner and shot off westward, with no lights showing, of course. But now the moon was coming out from behind a bank of clouds, and its silvery rays were not welcome at all.

Monty wanted darkness. The idea of that cordon worried him. He wanted to get through it. He wanted to be seen getting through it, but not so plainly as to give someone the chance of putting a bullet in either of them. The moon was giving rather too much light now.

Monty coaxed more speed out of the bike. They whirled at well over fifty along that main road, shot round a sharp bend, and came on trouble.

"The cordon!" gasped Monty.

Peering round Monty, Dick had a glimpse of a number of mounted men—Uhlans—blocking the road. They were cantering along at a steady trot. The officer came to the front, raising his hand and calling upon them to stop.

"Duck your tuppenny!" cried Monty. "We're going through 'em!"

The motor-bike roared, the horn blared defiantly. Monty steered for a slight gap in the ranks. There was no time to think or to plan, really. The next second with a rush and a whirlwind roar they were in amongst the horses.

Men shouted hoarsely, someone let loose with a revolver. There were thuds as men and horses came to the ground in a medley of limbs. A bullet zipped through Dick's sleeve and slightly scored his arm, and then they were through, shooting off up the road like a thunderbolt, leaving behind the remains of the Uhlan troop in disorder on the road—men in huddled heaps, horses lying about—and if there were any uninjured men they were too dazed to do anything.

"Luck!" gasped Monty.

"And nerve," added Dick grimly.

"Mainly luck, though," repeated Monty.

He had neither the time nor the inclination to discuss the matter then, in detail. But it had been largely luck. The horses had shied away from that motor-bike when it thundered straight at them, thereby making the narrow gap wider.

MONTY had banked on that possibility, and he had won. But if one horse, or one man, had fallen in his path, it would have been all up with the two fugitives.

"Through the cordon, anyway," said Dick. "We can go on like this for miles!"

"You're wrong," answered Monty. "They know, now, who was on the motor-bike. The news will travel. This bike will give us away after this, and we've got to get rid of it."

He slithered the machine round a corner into a lane, and sped along its winding route at a terrific speed until he came to where the trees of a coppice towered on either hand.

Here he throttled down and brought the bike to a standstill. Even then Dick did not understand what was happening.

"Petrol gone?" he queried.

"Gosh, no!" answered Monty, with a grin.

"We've got enough for hours yet. But the bike is dangerous. Can't you see that? They will be looking for two sodden men on a motor-bike, outside the cordon!"

Although he talked Monty was not idle. He was taking a bundle from the pillion. Dick had thought the pillion seemed rather high, but had had no idea of the reason.

"What are your plans, then?" he asked.

"To get back where they won't be looking for us," said Monty. "Inside the cordon!"

Dick stared at him in bewilderment.

"But—that's madness——"

"I'm in command!" retorted Monty sternly. "I know what I'm--doing. The game is planned out. From this moment all Germany is looking for us. Our danger is as great outside the cordon as in—but inside we'll be slightly safer to-night—that's all. Here—dry clothes, and disguise."

They were both glad enough of fresh clothes, and it did not take them long to change. Monty dumped the bike in the ditch, and left it there, not even troubling to render it unfit for further use.

"Keep close to me," he said.

They broke through the hedge and took to the fields.

"Where are we going, then?" asked Dick.

"To the town of Arnstein," said Monty.

"Save your breath, man. Before sunrise you will understand things better."

Dick said no more. It did seem to him that Monty was running into needless danger. He was not to know then of the secret organisation that lay behind everything, and how every move had been planned in advance.

Monty knew better than he how the Germans wanted to prevent the escape of Captain Dick Seton, and how the alarm had already been given. Even as they hurried along over the rough ground, keeping well in the shadows afforded by every hedgerow and coppice, the telephone wires were busy, every town and military camp had been ordered to watch all roads, and the frontiers were being patrolled by doubled guards.

For that night, at any rate, the danger lay outside the cordon, not inside. Safety lay in Arnstein, and nowhere else, and that was a doubtful kind of safety.

They came to a lane, and followed it for a time. Monty had ordered no talking. The garrison would be out hunting. Monty was beginning to feel in the need of rest, and Dick drew ahead slightly. And suddenly a Bavarian private stepped out from the shadow of a bush and barred their way. The moon glittered on his fixed bayonet.

"Halt, there, you!" he growled gutturally. "Who are you—where are you going?"

Dick stopped, rooted to the spot. He hardly knew what to say or do, but the next instant Monty had run forward, clutching at the Bavarian's arm.

"Thank Heaven we've found somebody," he gasped. "We saw two men—their clothes wet—hiding under the hedge—over there—across the field. We tried to stop them, but they ran and we lost them!"

The Bavarian's eyes flashed. Here was a chance to win promotion.

"Where?"

"Over there. They were almost exhausted. You're armed. If you run you ought to catch them. See that big tree—the one that waves in the wind."

"That one?" asked the Bavarian, pointing.

"Yes. We saw them there. They'd be too tired to get far!"

"Danke!" growled the Bavarian.

He burst through into the field and went plodding away towards the copse.

"Rotten sort of troops in these parts," said Monty, with a grin. "But let's beat it, Dick, old man. Can you run?"

"I'm fit, now," said Dick.

They left the road there and took to the cross country business, leaping ditches, clawing through thickets, and racing over ploughed fields until they were plastered with mud from head to foot.

Dick had ceased to argue. He followed Monty without question. They came to a hedge that bordered the main road, and followed it for a mile or two, until flickering lights ahead showed where a guard was stopping traffic on the road and searching the carts and lorries.

"Got to pass them," said Dick.

"Got to!" muttered Monty. "Down flat."

The ditch was evil smelling and muddy, but it didn't matter. They crawled along, flat on their stomachs, as noiselessly as they could. The lights of the guard's torches made dense shadows on their side of the hedge, and that helped.

They could see through the interlacing twigs, how the soldiers of the guard were poking about amongst the garden produce piled in an old horse-drawn cart. They were so busy that they paid no heed to anything else. Monty and Dick crawled past them and away along by the hedge, following the course of the road towards the town of Arnstein.

Half a mile from the guard on the road Monty called a halt. They crouched there listening and could hear the steady plod-plod of horse's hoofs. Apparently the cart had been passed on towards Arnstein as harmless.

Monty wriggled under the hedge to the road beyond, and Dick followed. They kept down in the shadows while the cart past them with the driver half asleep on the shafts.

Then, as silent as a cat Monty ran behind and hauled himself up in amongst the vegetables. Dick was close behind, and in a flash they were both snuggled down and resting. Progress was slow, but they needed rest, and the sides of the cart sheltered them from the cold air of night.

It was not yet midnight, although to Dick it seemed as though they had been a dozen hours or more chasing about the countryside. They were both tired, but although Dick slept, Monty lay awake, listening all the time. The success of this business meant everything to the British, and it was his job to win through, somehow. At times he wondered if he had not taken on more than he could chew. Time alone would tell.

The cart rumbled into Arnstein, and Monty nudged Dick in the ribs, waking him up.

"Time to go," he said.

He wriggled free of the sacks and vegetables, and dropped lightly into the road. The next moment Dick stood beside him.

They were in Arnstein town's main road. Monty glanced this way and that, got his bearings, and set off up the road. They

overtook the lumbering cart, passed it and continued towards the Market Square, but before they reached that centre they turned off down a side road.

Ahead of them lights shone out across the road. Dick was getting nervy again. He was in sore need of food, really.

"Only a few more minutes," said Monty. "Hold up, man!"

The lights came from a beer garden. The tables in the garden under the arc lights were thronged with soldiers and their lady friends. Monty thrust his hands in his pockets, sunk his head on his chest, and slunk along the road full in the glare of the lights.

Two minutes afterwards Dick went by and joined him in the shadows on the other side. Together they turned down the lane that ran by the side of the beer garden. The house of the proprietor abutted on that lane.

One quick glance told Monty they were not observed, and they dived in at the wicket-gate and went up to the door of the house, where Monty knocked four times.

Immediately, the bolts were drawn. Dick thought it was strange, seeing all the people there were in the gardens, that the house was locked up. But the door opened and a German stood there. He was apparently middle-aged. His eyes were blue and glittered hard in the light of the candle he held. His fair hair was close cropped and stood up all over his head like the bristles of a brush. Obviously, he was a German—a hundred per cent. German. But Monty did not budge.

"What do you want?" growled the man.

"Food and lodgings," said Monty, glancing round cautiously. "I think it will be a fine day, mein herr."

"Ja, it will be a fine day, if—if——"

Monty noticed the hesitation, and smiled grimly. He stretched out his hand, opened it, displayed a green button lying in the palm, and the supposed German nodded. His hesitation had gone.

He stood aside. Monty and Dick dived into the house, and the door closed.

In the Burrow!

"**Y**OU'RE pretty punctual," said the close-cropped individual, in excellent English.

Dick stared at him in amazement.

"As British as you are," laughed Monty. "But Nature made him look like a German. One of the smartest men in the Service."

"What service?" queried Dick, too dazed to reason properly.

"Secret Service," you chump," said Monty. "For a time we're safe here. We need rest and food before we take the next step."

The proprietor of the beer garden shook his head.

"Not so safe as I'd like you to be," he said. "It is not the commandant who is in charge of the hunt, now."



With a rush and a whirlwind roar the two escaping prisoners crashed straight into the troop of Uhlans, scattering them right and left.

Monty glanced up, quickly.

"Heinrich Kahn?" he queried sharply.

"Yes. You broke through the cordon—the news got back here an hour or more ago. Then you were supposed to have been seen by two labourers over by Shwarz Copse—and that was inside the cordon, after you had passed out. You understand me?"

"We were the two labourers," said Monty. "We blundered smack into a Bavarian patrolling the lane there, and sprung him a yarn. He swallowed it whole."

"It was neat the way you fooled him," agreed Dick.

"Yes, but it was a pity," said Monty. "Heinrich Kahn is no fool. We broke through the cordon. We were seen, as far as he knows, inside the cordon, after that. He will guess we have doubled on our tracks—either that or it could not have been us who charged the Uhlans. Kahn will take no risks. He will scour Arnstein from top to bottom. Isn't that so, Evans?"

The proprietor of the beer garden nodded gloomily.

"They are searching the houses, now. They are bound to come here—listen!"

There was confusion amongst the tables in the garden outside. The thud of feet and the jingles of accoutrements sounded on the

night air, coupled with hoarse commands, and a banging on the door.

"They're here," said Evans calmly, merely raising his eyebrows. "We must be quick! This way!"

He took them upstairs to the attic. Dick thought there was a hiding-place on the roof, but Evans stooped and levered up the floorboards, revealing a space below. The ceiling of the room beneath was concealed by boards. The space between that ceiling and the floor of the attic was remarkable for its width, which no one could have suspected. Therefore it made an ideal hiding-place.

"Get down!" whispered Evans. "I'll let you out as soon as it's safe—only lie still!"

They crawled into the hole, Evans replaced the floorboards, and banged them into position with his foot.

Even if the spaces between floor and ceiling was remarkably wide, it was not so wide but they found it cramping to lie there in the darkness, scarcely daring to breathe. The boards beneath them were hard, the beams above harder still. The air seemed filled with the dust from dry plaster that tickled the nostrils. Dick wanted to sneeze, and suffered agonies in trying to stop the explosion.

And there were rats there, too—skulking in

the crevices and crannies, scampering here and there, and shooting away again into the dim distances between the beams with pattering of feet and hissing snarls of rage at their intruders.

Meanwhile, the guard was still banging on the door. Evans ran down the stairs and hastily adopted that servile air with which all Germans at that time treated the military.

"Coming!" he called.

The bolts were withdrawn noisily. It was amazing how much noise Evans made admitting the guard.

"All locked up," said the non-commissioned officer in charge of the party. "Why should the house be locked up like this when your tables are thronged with people, mein herr?"

Evans rubbed his hands together nervously.

"There is trouble to-night in Arnstein. I hear rumours of escaped prisoners. Therefore, when I go in to count the takings, I lock all the doors," he explained glibly.

It was a feasible explanation, too.

"Well, we have got to search all houses. Lead the way."

They went down into the cellars first, and Evans did not forget to invite the soldiers to sample his lager. He was very free with his drinks, and he had those men all fuddled inside half an hour. They had not spent so much time in one room anywhere else.

"Best house we've struck yet," chuckled the sergeant. "Here's hoping we have to come again to look for escaped prisoners here. Your health, mein herr."

Evans bowed his acknowledgment, and eventually persuaded them to search the house. Despite the drink, they did the job fairly thoroughly, but their wits were not sharp enough by this time to hear the faint sounds of men breathing under the floorboards. Maybe they would not have heard it even if they had been sober, but filled with lager it was impossible.

They entered every room and dived into every cupboard. Right to the attics they went, banging the walls and stamping on the floor. They dislodged the dust under the boards, and Monty and Dick lay there with their faces buried in their grimy handkerchiefs. One sneeze would betray them, but, somehow, they stifled that sneeze.

The sergeant sent one man out through the attic window to the roof beyond to have a look round. The dizzy height unnerved the fellow, but he saw enough in the moonlight to reassure him.

"Not a soul here," he growled. "To my mind, it's folly to look. Besides, if they are anywhere in this house, they'd hide in the cellar with the lager—if they have any sense."

The sergeant chuckled at the joke.

"Perhaps we had better look there again," he suggested.

They went right down to the cellars once more, and Evans had to give them more lager before they finally took their leave. It was an hour and a half before Evans came to the attic, shuttered the window, and set a lighted candle on the table. Then he raised

the floorboards and released his uncomfortable guests.

"Safe enough now," he declared. "I've brought food and a bucket of water. A wash wouldn't hurt either of you."

"Good man!" cried Monty.

They washed, changed into cleaner clothes that Evans brought to them, then sat down to enjoy the food and drink.

"No news," said Evans. "Some say you broke through the cordon and got away, and that it couldn't have been you at the copse. Others reckon you never left Arnstein. If things remain as they are you will have to get clear of this place sooner than we arranged."

"Dick must have sleep," said Monty firmly. "Come to that, I'm fairly done up myself. I will not start off until we have slept. Is the danger immediate?"

"No," said Evans. "Not——"

His words were interrupted by a violent crash on the stairs, then a husky, guttural voice sounded.

"Teufils, the place is dark! Where is the man? Hey, there—is no one here?"

Evans made a dive for the floorboards, but there was no time to hide the fugitives. Already heavy footsteps sounded on the stairs. Monty and Dick moved noiselessly but rapidly over to the wall, where the door would hide them as it opened—if it opened at all.

Evans was frowning. If he dashed out to intercept whoever was mounting the stairs it would look more suspicious than if he stayed where he was.

The man came nearer the door, stumbling about and muttering to himself.

"Himmel, it's dark! I want the proprietor! Where is the man? Don't know where I'm going. It's dark—infernally dark!"

The stranger was drunk. That was certain. The attic door came open with a bang, as someone fell against it and a Prussian officer stumbled in, a mug half-full of lager held precariously in one hand.

"Lights!" he exclaimed foolishly, blinking at the candles on the table. "Someone had a meal here—hein? Two people!"

Evans stood between him and the table.

"Can I do anything, mein herr?" he asked politely. "You have no right up here in my house."

The officer managed to stand very erect for a moment.

"A Prussian officer has a right anywhere, you dog!" he blurted out. "I want the proprietor of this place."

"I am the proprietor," said Evans stiffly.

"You are, are you? Well, you dog, I say your lager is rotten! The stuff is poisoning me! You hear? I swore I would come and fling the stuff in your face like——"

He would have thrown the mug, but Evans grabbed his wrist and held it in a vice-like grip.

"I shall have to report any trouble to the commandant, mein herr," he said firmly. "You are drunk already. I left the door un-

MY DEAR CHUMS,—
Thank you for your good wishes for 1933. The letters I have received lately have been full of them, and full, too, of praise for the Old Paper. The writers say, without exception, that they intend to rally round and introduce new readers to the

NELSON LEE wherever and whenever possible. That's the spirit! Gather in the recruits, and we'll show the world what the Old Paper can do in 1933.

I have many pleasant surprises up my sleeve for you chaps in the coming months. But I won't mention them now. Just keep your eyes open, and you'll see the announcements concerning them from time to time.

Since the Christmas stories appeared, readers have been very lavish in their praise of the author responsible for them, while not a few have expressed admiration of the author of our Great War story. I will pass on these loyal supporters' best wishes to the two respective authors as requested. I certainly agree with the general opinion of "The Green Button!" War stories I have read by the dozens, as no doubt you have, but I don't think I have been so thoroughly thrilled as by this one which is now running in the Old Paper.

"The Fighting Six!"

This is the title of next week's grand, long, school and detective story, starring Nelson Lee, Nipper and the boys of St. Frank's. We reach a very dramatic and tense part of the series in "The Fighting Six!" Of course, the fighting six are Nipper and his two study-mates and Handforth & Co. These chaps are in the know about the Fellowship of Fear,



Letters to the Editor
should be addressed
to NELSON LEE LIBRARY, Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

and Nelson Lee being at St. Frank's in disguise. So far, they have managed to keep their secret. But in next week's story, one of their number gives the game away, quite by chance, and then the fellowship strikes again—at Nelson Lee. This story fairly seethes

with excitement and perilous situations, so be sure you do not miss it. In fact, make a point of ordering next week's issue to-day, then you won't be disappointed. Also let your pals know about it!

PEN PALS!

Harry A. T. Double, 81, Bury Street, Stowmarket, **Suffolk**, wants members for the Film Fans Club. No fee.

Ben Graham, 25, Blagdon Street, **Newcastle-on-Tyne**, wants correspondents in North and South America, Eastern Europe and Mediterranean countries.

Jack Foster, 84, Villiers Street, Rockdale, Sydney, New South Wales, **Australia**, wants to hear from stamp collectors.

Keith Job, 219, Pacific Highway, Hornsby, Sydney, N.S.W., **Australia**, wants a correspondent in England.

Bernard Thompson, 40, Gale Street, Princeville, Bradford, **Yorks**, wants correspondents anywhere.

Miss P. Marks, 13, New Road, Lewes, **Sussex**, wants girl correspondents.

bolted by mistake, or you would not have found me here. Come, mein herr, you may have your money back if you wish it, but make no trouble here."

The drunken officer blinked again at the candles.

"Ja, perhaps you are right, you dog! But why is there a meal laid for two in the attic?"

"Cannot I entertain a friend if I wish to? He has just gone. You can see that the meal is at an end. Come, mein herr. It is better that you should go."

He hustled the dazed man out and down the stairs, talking to him all the time at what trouble there would be if the commandant got to hear of one of his officers getting drunk and attacking the proprietor of a beer garden.

But out in the open air the officer's brain cleared again, and he stood there, swaying

slightly, his brows drawn down over his eye.

"The attic—a meal for two—water for washing—and two men running from our troops—two escaped Englishers— Karl, Franz—here, quickly! Seize that man!"

A number of soldiers who had been enjoying a few hours leave in the beer garden, came at the double. Evans found himself gripped by strong hands. The officer was still swaying unsteadily, but the fumes of alcohol had cleared somewhat from his brain.

"What have I done?" cried Evans, protesting furiously. "You are drunk, mein herr. You will regret this outrage!"

"I shall regret nothing, you dog!" snarled the officer. "I saw water for washing and a meal for two in your attic, and you were in such a hurry to get me out of the house. Come, now, what had been going on in your attic?"

"There's nothing there!" argued Evans. "The guard has been and searched the house from top to bottom. What more do you want?"

The officer leered at him suspiciously.

"Then you won't mind showing me up to that attic again?"

Evans made no answer. He was trying to think of a way out and found none. The officer beckoned to his men.

"We will go alone!" he said.

Two men held Evans in the passage on the ground floor while the officer and his men mounted the stairs. The miserable Evans was kicking himself for not having bolted that door before going to look after Monty and Dick. It had been a trifling oversight on his part. He had known how exhausted Dick and Monty were, and it had taken such a time to get rid of the search party, that in his anxiety to get refreshment to the fugitives he had forgotten the bolts on one of the doors: the officer had been drunk, had come to find the proprietor to pick a quarrel, and this was the result!

He listened to the officer and his men plodding up the stairs, heard the attic door open, and half expected to hear sounds of a struggle, or at least the triumphant cries that would mean that the attempt to rescue Dick Seton had ended in dismal failure.

But these sounds were not heard. Instead came cries of dismay, and the infuriated officer raging like a madman.

"Below there!" he yelled. "Bring that dog up here!"

Evans was thrust up the stairs brutally, helped on his way by kicks and blows. He had no idea what he expected to see. His brain seemed numb. He did his best to maintain his air of injured innocence, but it wasn't easy. Then, as he mounted the last flight of stairs he began to take heart of hope, for the light that flickered dimly from the attic door was not the light of candles but of matches held in the hands of the soldiers.

(Look out for further chapters of this Great Story of the World War in next week's fine issue.)

100,000 WONDERFUL MAGIC CARD TRICKS GIVEN AWAY

FREE

If you are interested in any of
**ERNEST SEWELL'S SERIES
OF CABINETS—**

**CONJURING
CARD TRICKS
PAPER TEARING
HAND SHADOWS
DUPLICATING SET
ACTOR'S MAKE-UP
LIVING MARIONETTES
YOUNG MAGICIAN'S TABLE**

which are on sale from 1/- to 42/- at most of the London and Provincial Stores and Toy Shops, you should send 1d. stamp for Illustrated Catalogue and Postage, and secure one of the 100,000 CARD TRICKS TO BE GIVEN AWAY.

THE LONDON MAGICAL CO.,

(Free Gift Dept. N),

Francis Terrace, Junction Road, London, N.19.

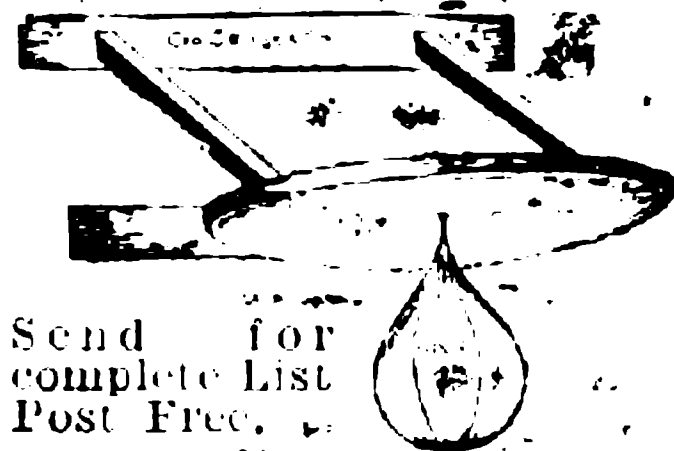
**FREE
CARD
TRICK
VOUCHER**

Cut out this coupon and attach to sheet with your name and address, plus 1d. stamp to paper for illustrated catalogue and postage, and a wonderful Magic Card Trick will be sent you FREE.

The London Magical Co.
(Free Gift Dept. N),
Francis Terrace, Junction Rd.,
London, N.19.

GROSE'S

8, New Bridge Street,
London, E.C.4.



**PUNCH BALL
AND DRUM**

**COMPLETE WITH
REAL LEATHER BALL 15/-**

Send for
complete List
Post Free.

EASILY FITTED TO ANY DOOR.
GEO. GROSE & CO., 8, New Bridge St. LONDON, E.C.4.

BE TALLER! Increased my own height to 6ft. 3ins. CLIENTS GAIN 2 to 6 INCHES! Fee £2.2s. STAMP brings FREE Particulars. **P. M. ROSS, Height Specialist, SCARBOROUGH.**

BLUSHING, Shyness, "Nerves," Self-consciousness, Wofry Habit, Unreasonable Fears, etc. cured or money back! Complete course 5/-. Details.—**L. A. Stebbing, 28, Dean Road, London, N.W.2.**

STOP STAMMERING! Cure yourself as I did. Particulars Free.—**FRANK B. HUGHES, 26, Hart St., LONDON, W.C.1.**

BE TALL. Your Height increased in 14 days. or Money Back. Complete Course. 5/-. Booklet free privately.—**STEBBING SYSTEM, 28, Dean Road, LONDON, N.W.2.**

BLUSHING, SHYNESS.—For FREE particulars simple home cure write **Mr. HUGHES, 26, Hart St., LONDON, W.C.1.**

BE STRONG I promise you Robust Health, Doubled Strength, Stamina, and Energy in 30 days or money back! My amazing 4-in-1 Course adds 10-25 ins. to your muscular development (with 2 ins. on Chest and 1 in. on Arms). Brings Iron Will, Self-control, Virile Manhood. Complete Course, 5/-. Details free, privately.—**STEBBING INSTITUTE (A), 28, Dean Road, LONDON, N.W.2.**

All applications for Advertisement Spaces in this publication should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, "The Nelson Lee Library," The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.