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KIDNAPPED!

New Series No. 2.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

March 4th, 1933.

Thrills—Mystery—Fun—Adventure! All In This Topping Tale—

KIDNAPPED!



With the sinister Fu Chang Tong seeking vengeance on Nelson Lee, the famous detective and Nipper "disappear" for their own safety. They go under assumed names to St. Frank's, Nelson Lee as a Housemaster, Nipper as a junior schoolboy. In this splendid story, which is prepared for publication by EDWY SEARLES BROOKS, Nipper tells of the advent of a new boy, and the thrilling adventures that follow his amazing kidnapping.

CHAPTER I.

A New Boy Due.

THE Remove Common-room in the Ancient House at St. Frank's was crowded. Quite a number of fellows were there, and they all seemed to be interested. They were listening to a

speech. It was a jolly good speech, too.

Handforth and Church and McClure, of Study D, were to the forefront, and Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West were just near. The fellow who was jawing to the crowd was Dick Bennett, of Study C. Dick Bennett is an alternative way of spelling Nipper—and I'm Nipper.



In short, it was little me who was doing the spouting.

"The Fossils have got to wake up!" I shouted. "Look at the cricket! Look at everything! We're miles behind the College House in sports, and I don't know what else. It's not going to be stood! The Ancient House must assert itself and show St. Frank's that it's the cock-house of the school—so far as the juniors are concerned, at least!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Go it, Bennett!"

"No harm in talking, anyhow!"

"Talking!" I roared. "What's the good of talking? We don't want to talk—we want to act!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothing to laugh at," I went on warmly. "I tell you, we're got to make a big alteration, and we'll start with the cricket. We're going to get up an eleven of our own, and then whack the College House lot!"

"Yes—if we can!" said Handforth sarcastically.

"If!" I retorted. "There's no 'if' about it, you burbling ass!"

Handforth glared.

"Did you call me a burbling ass?" he demanded.

"I did. And I'll call anyone else a burbling ass if he is one!" I said. "Dry up, for goodness' sake. This isn't a time to row. We're here for business. This meeting is a serious thing. The Fossils need prodding up!"

"Hear, hear!" said Tregellis-West lazily. "Dear fellow, you're making us realise what fearful slackers we are in this House. You're a whirlwind. You're just full of live wires. I'm left standing still and gaping!"

"This afternoon is a half-holiday," I went on. "We're not going to watch the Monks play the Fifth. We're going to get busy on our own account. I'm leader of the Fossils, and I'm going to keep you all hard at it. After morning lessons you'll find a notice on the board. There'll be a list of names on it. Every one of the fellows named has got to turn up on Little Side at half-past two. If anybody has made other arrangements, the other arrangements will have to go by the board. That's final. And always remember that we've got to have the honour of the House at heart. The Ancient House has been a back number in the past. In the future it's going to leave the College House miles behind."

"Hear, hear!"

"Good for you, Bennett!"

I stepped down from the form on which I had been standing. Most of the chaps regarded my speech as so much gas; but they were impressed, nevertheless. The Ancient House had been in the background for so long that the fellows had never thought of making any alteration.

At St. Frank's the juniors of the Ancient House were known as Fossils, and the denizens of the College House as Monks. And the Monks were far and away ahead of their rivals. Bob Christine & Co., of the Remove, were the recognised leaders of the Monks, and they were very decent fellows. They resided in Study Q, in the College House. I had been at St. Frank's for nearly a week, and I had already made the Fossils sit up. In fact, a day or two before, I had been enthusiastically elected leader of the Remove in the Ancient House. This was because I whacked the then leader in a fair fight. Fullwood had ruled the Fossils until I came on the scene, and now he was feeling sore. He was feeling sore, physically and mentally.

Tommy Watson and Sir Montgomery Tregellis-West, my study-mates, were two fine chaps, and I liked them immensely. Sir Monty was a bit of a novelty, but he was true blue. A dandy to his finger-tips, he was nevertheless one of the cleverest cricketers in the Remove.

It was before morning lessons, and I had jawed to the fellows to prepare them for what was coming later on. They had elected me leader of the Remove in the Ancient House, and I was going to lead.

In addition to Handforth & Co., there were lots of other Removeites—Owen major and Canham, Hubbard and Short and Griffith, and others. Merrill and Noyes were grinning sneeringly to themselves; they were two of Fullwood's pals, and so they didn't count. Fullwood & Co. were the knuts of the Ancient House, and, since my arrival, they hadn't had their own sweet way so much.

"We've got several decent men to start with," I said. "I'm a good hand with the bat, I believe, and Tregellis-West's a top-holer all round."

"Thanks, old boy," said Sir Montie lamely.

"Watson's good, and so is Hubbard." I went on. "We'll scrape a team together, and then we'll practise night and day until we're in terrific form. Now lemme see." I looked round the Common-room. "There's Handforth. He's not much good, I'm afraid. But Church and McClure—"

Handforth turned round wrathfully.

"Who's not much good?" he demanded. "Did you mean me, you cheeky ass?"

"Talking about cricket," I said coolly. "I saw you at practice yesterday, Handforth. You held the bat as though it were a leg of mutton, and when you bowled you did your best to brain the batsman."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly fathead!" roared Handforth. "You don't know what cricket is—nobody does here. It's jealousy. Just because I'm the best cricketer in the Form—better than Christine, even—you're jealous of me. Why, the other day when I offered Christine my services, he kicked me out of his study! Kicked me right out into the Triangle, and York and Talmadge helped him!"

Edward Oswald Handforth looked round for sympathy. But the Removeites were strangely unsympathetic. Anyhow, they were grinning broadly. Handforth snorted. He always snorted, and he always bawled. He couldn't speak without bawling.

"Hard cheese, old man," I said. "But I expect you asked for all you got. That's the worst of going about looking for trouble. You generally find it."

Handforth glared.

"Look here—" he bawled.

"All right. I'm very brave," I said.

"You're brave! What do you mean, you ass?"

"A chap has to be brave to look at you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This is what comes of jealousy," said Handforth bitterly. "I'm the best batsman in the Remove—I know that!"

"Lucky somebody knows it," grinned Tommy Watson.

"I don't want any rot from you, Thomas Watson!" shouted Handforth, rolling up his sleeves.

"Oh, dry up!" chuckled Watson. "No need to show us your wrists; they're dirty enough, anyhow?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth seemed about to explode, but fortunately—for himself—the Common-room door opened, and Long of the Remove thumped in. Long always thumped. He was fat and heavy, and just the opposite to what one would expect from his name. To add to the absurdity, he was generally known as Lanky.

And Lanky Long was a little sneak; a spying, contemptible worm. Everybody in the Remove detested him. Even the knuts couldn't quite stand Long's habits. Yet, curiously enough, although the Remove's opinion of Long could scarcely be put into

words, Long himself had an idea that he was a very important person. He believed, in fact, that he was one of the most prominent members of the Remove. There was only one chap who could keep Lanky in order, and that chap was Hubbard. Hubbard digged in Study B with Long and another junior. Personally, I hadn't much to do with Long, but I'd had occasion to pull his nose once or twice.

"Heard the latest, you chaps?" he asked importantly as he came in.

"Been spyin' again, Long, dear boy?" asked Tregellis-West urbanely. "Spyin' is a fine art with you, I believe? You are a worm, of course, but even worms manage to live, somehow. How is it you've lived so long? By gad! That sounds like a pun!" added Sir Montie, in alarm. "I loathe puns. They make me bad. I am deeply sorry. I feel that an apology is necessary."

"Oh, ring off, Montie!" said Long. "I've heard—"

"You won't be offended, I'm sure!" interrupted Sir Montie mildly. "But I find it necessary to reiterate, Long, dear fellow. My name is Tregellis-West. If you call me Montie again I shall pull your nose. I shall, really!"

"Oh, don't be an ass, Montie—I—I mean West!" exclaimed Long, with a grin. "I've heard—"

"Go and tell what you've heard to the door-post," I said sharply. "We don't want to hear your rotten tales, you young spy!"

"I've heard—" Long paused impressively.

"You've fibbed what!" bawled Handforth.

"Oh, don't deafen a chap!" protested Long. "I've heard that there's a new fellow coming this afternoon, by the four o'clock train. An American bouncer, I believe. We ought to bar Americans from St. Frank's, you know. They ain't any good."

"Begad! I didn't know you were American!" said Sir Montie, in surprise.

"Who said I was American?" asked Long, staring.

"You said that Americans aren't any good—and you're no good, are you?" asked Tregellis-West mildly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't be an ass, you know!" said Long, with a weak grin. "I ain't American. If I was I wouldn't own it."

"Shut up!" I said curtly. "What's wrong with Americans, anyhow? They're first-class in the main. We could do with a few of them to liven up the Ancient House. They don't jaw about doing things—they do 'em. If there's an American fellow coming to St. Frank's, good luck to him."

"His name's Farman," went on Long. "Justin B. Farman, or something. Fat-headed name, ain't it? His people live in California, or—or Patagonia. One of the United States, anyhow."

"Patagonia's not in the States, you thumping idiot!" roared Handforth.

"I—I meant Tasmania!" stammered Long

fatuously. "That's in the United States, anyhow! I—I looked it up on the map!"

"Tasmania's off the south of Australia, you ignorant fathead!" grinned Tommy Watson. "Well, what about Farman? He's coming up this afternoon, you say? Let him come. I shan't hurt him."

I was thoughtful for a moment.

Justin B. Farman! I knew that name well, for Nelson Lee had told me about the new American fellow a day or two previously. Nelson Lee was at St. Frank's, of course. He went under the name of Mr. Alvington, and he was the Housemaster of the Ancient House. The Fossils liked him immensely already. The seniors, I knew, had voted the new Housemaster to be the right sort. The gov'nor's predecessor, Mr. Thorne, had been decidedly the wrong sort. Not a wrong 'un in the criminal sense, of course—just a toadying, ill-tempered rotter who was soft-scapy with the knuts and severe with the decent fellows.

Well, Mr. Thorne had disappeared a week or so before, and Nelson Lee had succeeded in finding him in one of the caves at Calistowe Bay, three miles from the school. The poor chap had been quite unconscious, and he had been kept a prisoner, without food or water, for days. The doctor said that he wouldn't recover until months had passed; his brain was affected.

And the reason for Mr. Thorne's abduction remained a mystery. The only possible clue was something which the unfortunate man muttered in his delirium. He had simply babbled out the name Justin Farman again and again. Later on I learned that a junior named Justin B. Farman was due to arrive from California within a few days!

What was the connection between the injured Housemaster and his kidnapers and the American fellow? Farman was certainly concerned in the affair somehow or other. But how? Nelson Lee and I had had a chat on the subject, but we couldn't arrive at any satisfactory explanation.

And now the boy from California was due to arrive.

CHAPTER 2

The Boy from America.

R ALPH LESLIE FULLWOOD swaggered into the Common-room followed by Albert Gulliver and George Bell, his inseparable pals. Fullwood nearly always swaggered. He fancied he was a person of importance. But he wasn't.

It was the entrance of Fullwood & Co. that roused me from my brief reverie. The knuts were very knutty, as usual. Fullwood himself was a thing of glory. He was dressed much more expensively than Tregellis-West, even—but he wasn't half so well dressed. He looked gaudy and vulgar. His fancy waistcoat wasn't merely loud; it shrieked. Gulliver and Bell were in ordinary Etons.

Mervell and Noys strolled over to their dear friends.

"Heard about the new fellow, Fullwood?" asked Noys, with a grin.

Fullwood scowled.

"What foolery has he been up to now?" he asked, directing a venomous glance at me.

"I wasn't talking about Bennett," grinned Noys. "I mean the American chap, Farman, or Barnum, or Farman, or something. He's coming this afternoon. Hasn't Lanky told you yet. Queer that he should have overlooked anybody. When Lanky has an item of news to impart, it's generally all over the House within five minutes."

"Oh, don't be an ass, you know, Noys!" said Long smugly.

Fullwood yawned.

"Farman's not a new fellow—yet," he said. "Of course, I've heard of him. He's some beastly Wild West bouncer from California. A chap like that oughtn't to be allowed at St. Frank's."

"What's wrong with him?" asked Watson.

"Why, he's no class," said Fullwood. "How can you expect him to be when he comes from California? His paler lives in a log hut, I suppose, and he'll come here with the manners of a pig. He'll talk like a cowboy, and will eat with his fingers. Disgraceful, I call it; St. Frank's seems to be declining. They're letting any scum into the school now."

And Fullwood looked across at me. His meaning was quite clear. But I could afford to ignore Fullwood's insults. I'd licked him once already, and I didn't want to soil my hands by licking him again.

"They've been letting scum into the school for some time, dear fellow," murmured Sir Montie. "They let you in, didn't they?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"An' Gulliver, an' Bell, an' Noys—"

"You silly ass!" roared Gulliver. "Are you calling us scum?"

"Fullwood did that, old boy," drawled Tregellis-West. "I was just puttin' a fellow right. Fullwood seems to think that it's a new idea to admit scum into St. Frank's. But how can it be a new idea when Fullwood's been here for over a year?"

The Removites chuckled, and Fullwood glared angrily. He jammed an eyeglass into his eye with an air of dignity which made me grin.

"This Farman rotter oughtn't to be allowed in the school," he said. "That's what I say, anyhow. He'll be a disgrace to St. Frank's. A rottenly dressed, poverty-stricken cad. I expect, I shan't have anything to do with him!"

"That'll be rather fortunate," I remarked—"for Farman!"

Fullwood sneered.

"Oh, you'll stick up for him," he went on. "You'll be birds of a feather."

"I ain't sure that Fullwood's not right," said Handforth, looking round. "He's a cad, of course, but even cads—"

"Are you calling me a cad?" shouted Fullwood.

"Of course. That's only one of your names," said Handforth calmly. "You ain't so high and mighty as you used to be, Fullwood. Bennett's knocked some of the swank out of you, thank goodness. I'll knock some more if you like. Just say the word. I'm always ready to oblige."

Ralph Leslie Fullwood gave Handforth a black look, then he turned on his heel and went out of the Common-room. A general chuckle followed. His fellow knuts snorted and followed him. Fullwood & Co. no longer overawed the Remove. I had already made the fellows realise that Fullwood, as a leader, was impossible.

"All the same," remarked Handforth, "there's something in what Fullwood said."

"Something idiotic!" snapped Hubbard.

"I don't see it," Handforth went on obstinately. "Who's this Wild West fellow, anyhow? He's coming from California, ain't he? That's next door to Arizona and Montana."

"First time I knew California and Montana were near one another," I grinned.

"Well, Nevada, then," said Handforth.

"I'm not supposed to remember the names of all the silly States, am I?"

Handforth was red; he remembered how he had corrected Long.

"Supposing the new fellow does come from Nevada or Arizona?" I asked.

"Why, he'll be like the chaps you see in the pictures," said Handforth. "Tousled hair, and all that. He'll chew tobacco. There's some sense in what Fullwood said, after all."

"Rats!"

"Did you say 'Rats' to me, Hubbard?" bawled Handforth. "I don't allow anybody to say 'Rats' to me."

"Don't you!" asked Hubbard. "Rats!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rats!" grinned Tommy Watson.

"Rats!" roared a dozen fellows together.

Handforth snorted, and then the bell rang for morning lessons. Edward Oswald was rather glad of that, and he strode out of the Common-room with his nose in the air. The other fellows chuckled and followed him.

Mr. Crowell, the Remove master, was good-tempered that morning. Just as third lesson was beginning the Form-room door opened, and Mr. Alvington appeared. He spoke for a moment or two with Mr. Crowell. And I noticed that Nelson Lee's left-hand went up to his ear.

I turned to Watson, who sat next to me.

"About the cricket—" I began.

"Shurrup, ass!" muttered Tommy.

The Housemaster turned to the class with a frown.

"Somebody was talking," he said severely.

"Who was it?"

I stood up, looking meek.

"Oh, it was you, Bennett," said the gov'nor. "You will write me twenty-five

lines. Bring them to me before dinner-time."

"Yes, sir."

I sat down, and Watson glared at me. As soon as Mr. Alvington had gone Watson turned to me again.

"Silly ass!" he murmured. "Jawing while old Alvy was here! You've done it before, Bennett. You're always getting lines for jawing while Alvy's in the room!"

I didn't explain things to Watson. But Nelson Lee and I had come to a little arrangement. He was the Housemaster and I was a Removise; I couldn't go into his study just when I liked. Nobody at St. Frank's—except the Head himself—know our real identities, and we were just master and pupil.

Now and again the gov'nor wanted to speak to me privately, and it was necessary for me to have a good reason for going to his study. So, when Lee came into the Form-room, I was on the look-out for the sign—taking hold

"That just shows what you know!" I exclaimed. "We're not at Gray's Inn Road now, gov'nor. When I finish school work I'm busier than ever. I'm going to take a crowd of chaps down to Little Side this afternoon. Cricket's been going to the dogs in the Ancient House, sir, and I'm going to wake the fellows up. They're getting a bit lively already."

Lee nodded approvingly.

"That's the way, young 'un," he said. "But, seriously, I want you to run down to the station this afternoon—at four o'clock. You can do that, can't you?"

I considered.

"Four o'clock," I repeated. "Well, that's not so bad as I first thought. I dare say I can slip away then. Of course, you want me to meet the American fellow with the mile-long name!"

"Master Justin Bartholomew Farman," nodded the gov'nor. "As you know, Nipper,

PASS THE WORD ROUND!

Nelson Lee and Nipper are back at St. Frank's!

of his ear for a moment. At that sign I started talking, and owned up to it.

I had twenty-five lines to do, of course; but that would only take me five minutes. And I was provided with a perfectly adequate reason for going to the Housemaster's study.

After lessons I wrote the lines, and took them to Mr. Alvington. I write down "Mr. Alvington" unconsciously, you know. At St. Frank's the gov'nor was so obviously a staid, middle-aged Housemaster that I almost forgot, sometimes, that he was really Nelson Lee.

When I entered his study he was sitting at his desk, writing.

"I've brought the lines, sir," I said, shutting the door. "I've done 'em hurriedly, but you don't mind that, do you?"

Nelson Lee smiled, leaned back, and lit a cigarette.

"I just want a word with you, Nipper," he said quietly. "You'd better not stop for more than a couple of minutes. We can't do as we like at St. Frank's, you know. You're getting on all right, I suppose?"

"Right as rain, gov'nor," I grinned. "Is that all you want to say?"

"No. I want you to run down to the station this afternoon—"

"Can't be did, sir?" I interrupted.

"Can't be did! That's not the way to talk to a Housemaster, you young rascal," said the gov'nor severely. "And why can't it be did—I mean done? To-day is a half-holiday, and you'll have all the afternoon on your hands."

I looked at Nelson Lee pityingly.

the unfortunate Mr. Thorne murmured Farman's name during his delirium. I am convinced that this new boy is in some way connected with my predecessor's abduction. I don't suppose for a moment that Farman or his people know anything of Mr. Thorne. But there is a connection of some sort. And so I want you to meet the boy; he may drop a hint or two—quite unconsciously—which will prove enlightening."

"All right, sir; I'll go."

"Good. You'd better not stay any longer, my boy."

"Those lines all right?" I grinned.

"Clear out, you young rascal," chuckled the gov'nor.

"That's not the way for a Housemaster to talk to a junior!" I said severely as I edged towards the door. Nelson Lee laughed, and poked up a book with the apparent intention of shying it at me. But I escaped from the study and went down the passage grinning.

I found Watson and Sir Montie in Study C.

"Now, about that list," I said briskly. "My idea is to form a cricket eleven of our own. Bung down these names, Tommy, old son, Mine, yours, Montie's—that's three. Now, lemme see. Who else?"

"Why, Hubbard and Church and McClure—thnt's three more," said Watson. "That makes six."

"You don't say so, dear fellow?" drawled Tregellis-West in astonishment. "You didn't do it in your head, did you?"

"Oh, shut up, Montie—don't rot now," I protested. "We've got six. Doyle and

Griffith and Armstrong, of Study J, are decent fellows. Not much good as cricketers, but we'll soon knock them into shape. Then this new kid may be of some use. Oh, and what about Owen major and Canham? And Lincoln and Skelton? Why, we'll soon have a team capable of whacking the first eleven!"

We made out the list at last, then I carried it downstairs and pinned it on the notice-board. Most of the fellows, I knew, were anxious to see the list. I had succeeded in putting a spark of enthusiasm into the Fossils, and they were all anxious to be in the new eleven. My word was law. I was Remove skipper in the Ancient House, and the chaps were willing to abide by my decision.

"Hallo! I'm down!" said Griffith, a long, lanky youth. "I ain't much good, but I dare say I shall improve with practice. And I'm willing to practise my giddy head off. Cricket's been dead in the Ancient House for too long!"

And Griffith's view was shared by most of the other fellows. One or two grumbled, and declared that they wouldn't turn up for practice. But I took them aside and I jowed to them like a father. In fact, I promised them trouble unless they toed the line. And they suddenly realised that cricket was quite a splendid game, after all.

"And look here," I went on, turning to the crowd in general. "When I took those lines to old Alvy, he asked me, as skipper of the Form, to go down and meet this new American chap."

"Oh, rot!" said Handforth at once. "Is he a kid in arms? Can't he look after himself?"

"Well, I couldn't very well refuse, could I?" I asked. "Besides, when you come to think of it, it is up to me to meet the chap and make him welcome. I'm captain of the Remove, and, for all that I know, Farman may be a ripping cricketer."

"Yes, and he may be going into the College House!" remarked Watson.

"He ain't!" put in Long. "I heard old Alvy telling Morrow, the prefect, that Farman's going into the Remove in the Ancient House. And I heard—"

"You're always hearing things!" growled Handforth. "That's no reason why we should hear your beastly voice, is it? Dry up, worm!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"What!" roared Handforth.

"I—I said you were a sensible chap, Handy!" stammered Long.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But if you go down to meet this new fellow, how are you going to cricket practice?"

"My dear Tommy, you can keep the fellows busy, can't you?" I asked. "I don't need any practice, anyhow—not this afternoon. And I shan't start away before half-past three. That gives me a good hour to get things going. And I'll probably bring

Farman on the field just to see what he can do."

And so it was arranged.

But it was about a quarter to four before I started out from Little Side. I was in white flannels, wore a blazer and shoes. The afternoon was simply perfect, the hot sun shining down from a cloudless sky. The Sussex countryside looked beautiful, and as I hurried down to the village I couldn't help thinking how far removed this life was from my usual strenuous existence as Nelson Lee's detective assistant.

I should be sorry when this stay at St. Frank's had come to an end. To tell the truth, I was enjoying the life tremendously. And so was the guv'nor. It was a complete change, and it was doing us both a world of good. I almost felt grateful to the Fu Chang Tong for having declared war against us.

When I got to Bellton I heard the train just coming along, and I arrived at the Little station in time to see the slow local draw up. I eyed the people who alighted with interest.

There were two farmers, a man who looked a cross between a bookmaker and a grocer, and two women. Then, at the end of the train, I spotted a neat figure in Etons.

"That's my man!" I murmured to myself.

I walked up the platform briskly, and was certainly surprised by the appearance of the boy, who was standing amidst a pile of luggage. He was dressed very neatly, and his bronzed, handsome face was very good-natured and sunny. He certainly did not look like a wild and woolly Westerner.

"Are you for St. Frank's?" I asked abruptly.

"Yes," he replied easily. "Why?"

"You're Justin B. Farman, I suppose?"

He nodded.

"That's my name, I guess," he replied.

"This place looks pretty decent, doesn't it? One of the best spots in England, I should say. Are you from St. Frank's? Because, if so, I'm glad to meet you."

He held out his hand, and I took it at once.

"I'm Bennett," I said. "Skipper of the Remove—in the Ancient House, at least. You're coming into the Remove, I believe?"

Farman looked puzzled.

"Remove?" he repeated. "What's that? I understood that I should be placed in the Fourth Form."

"Same thing," I grinned. "It is the Fourth, really, but we call it the Remove at St. Frank's. You're from California, aren't you?"

"Yes, although I spent half my time in Arizona," he replied. "My father's place is just on the border, you see—on the Colorado River."

I couldn't help being surprised. There was a certain twang about his speech which was rather pleasant to listen to, but it was refined to the last degree. He spoke the most correct English.

"The carrier will bring up your boxes later on," I said. "That's what happened to mine, anyhow. I've only been at St. Frank's a week."

"I thought you said you were the captain of the Fourth?"

"So I am."

"And you've only been there a week?"

I laughed.

"That's right," I replied. "You see, a fellow named Fullwood was captain of the

towing-path to the school. It was a little shorter, and certainly more pleasant.

Farman was just a little nervous, but that was only natural. And I could see that he was quickly becoming easier in his manner.

"Ever been in England before?" I asked as we strolled along.

"No. It's bully. Your country is fine," he replied enthusiastically. "We've got splendid scenery out there in California. But this beats it," he added, with an admiring



Half-sitting up in bed, I saw Fullwood & Co., carrying their shoes in their hands, creep to the dormitory door and pass out. The haunts were making a midnight excursion to the village inn!

Ancient House Remove before I came. He's a cad, and I whacked him in a fight. I'm skipper now."

"The best man wins sort of thing, eh?" smiled Farman. "Well, Bennett—you said your name was Bennett, didn't you?—I've only known you a minute, but you're the right sort, I guess. I'm glad you've come to meet me. It was decent of you."

Just then the old porter came along the platform, and I arranged with him for the new fellow's luggage. Farman surprised the porter—and me—by handing him five shillings as a tip. St. Frank's juniors didn't usually throw money about like that. Even the wealthy Fullwood wouldn't give a porter five bob.

Having settled about the luggage, we walked out of the station, and took the

look at the sunny landscape. And London's just gorgeous. I never thought it was such a fine city."

"You've lived in New York, of course?"

"Never. I passed through on my way to Europe, though."

"Well, hang it all, you talk English as though you had been born here," I said candidly. "The fellows at St. Frank's are expecting you to talk like a—a Western cowboy."

Justin B. Farman sighed with relief.

"Waal, say, that's jest bully!" he cried. "I'll allow English is a heap fine language. Guess it's waze the best language ever. But if I was to stay around this all-fired school an' trot up refined English, I guess I'd choke. Yep, sure. I'm glad, Bennett. You've relieved me some!"

I stared.

"My hat!" I ejaculated. "That's a difference, anyhow!"

"A difference?" he laughed. "Say, have you ever sat around with a pile o' grand folk, an' been afraid to yap any lest you made a blame mistake o' speech? Guess you'll understand my feelin's, then. I've been that nervous I ain't slep' a wink. I sure guessed you'd expect me to talk real English at this doggone college. I'm that glad I could dance around."

"But—but you were talking fine just now!" I exclaimed.

"Sure. It was jest misery. I guess I ken talk high-falutin' English when I have to—but it's hard," he replied frankly. "Guess that's sure the truth, stranger. I ain't a feller to put on airs. I'm jest plain. My pop's been real mad with me because of my talk. But he can't hand out piles o' hot air while I'm around this country, can he? I guess I'm feelin' good."

I laughed loudly.

"Well, you're the limit," I grinned. "The chaps will roar when you start jawing in that way. It's easier, I suppose?"

"Easier?" he said. "Waal, I'd smile!"

"You'll get chipped, you know," I added seriously.

"Chipped?"

"The fellows will laugh at you and jeer you."

Farman looked somewhat alarmed.

"I figgered the fellers was expectin' me to talk kind o' rough!" he asked.

"That's right—they are."

"Then it would be a real pity to disappoint 'em," said Farman calmly. "Guess I'll give 'em what they want. English! Say, I've been dreamin' of English! It's the best language under the sun, I guess, but to talk proper you need practice. Guess I ain't practiced much. I'll get that in the class-rooms, sure."

We walked on to St. Frank's, and I wondered how the Removites would receive this novel new fellow. He was interesting, at all events, and he was brimming with good nature.

But I gained no clue whatever to Farman's connection with the mystery of Mr. Thorne. The new American boy struck me as being easy-going, sunny-tempered and genial. He would be popular at St. Frank's.

CHAPTER 3.

Farman is Too Free!

THE fellows were strolling in from the playing-fields as Farman and I arrived. It was nearly tea-time—and tea at St. Frank's was one of the most important meals of the day.

This was because all the boys, except the Forms below the Remove, partook of tea in their own studies. It was a free-and-easy meal. The fellows had just what they fancied,

or what their pockets would allow. Some juniors, of course, went in to Hall to tea, but that was only when cash was at a low ebb.

Quite a number of Removites were lounging about the Triangle—Fossils and Monks. But the College House fellows usually kept to their own side. They didn't understand yet that the Ancient House was going to lurge ahead of them. They chose to regard the Fossils as inferior beings. Bob Christine & Co., however, were really good chaps in every way.

"Hallo! Here's the new chap!"

It was Lanky Long, of the Remove, who uttered that shout. His tubby form—just the opposite to what one would expect from his name—was toddling towards us. Teddy Long could be trusted to spot us first. He was the busybody of St. Frank's. His nose was always where it shouldn't be.

A number of other juniors turned towards us, and we were soon surrounded.

"Farman, eh!" said Handforth. "You look all right, anyhow. You'd better understand at once, you new kid, that I'm Handforth. I never stand any nonsense."

"You only hand forth nonsense—what!" drawled Tregellis-West lazily.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth turned red.

"We don't want any rotten puns!" he bawled. "It's pretty beastly, too, to make a pun with a fellow's name. Haven't you got anything to say, you grinning new kid?" he added, scowling at Farman.

"Waal, I guess I'd say a heap—if you was worth speakin' to," said Farman. "Say, your throat sounds kind o' husky. Ther' was a foghorn on the ship I came over the Atlantic in; I figger your voice is jest as sweet."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cheeky cowboy!" roared Handforth furiously.

"Say, you're lettin' loose a pile o' hot air, anyways!" smiled Farman.

"Wha-a-d-d!" gasped Tommy Watson.

"It's all right," I grinned. "Farman's got to get used to English, you know. He talks the wild and woolly language of Arizona. Hot air means anything that's silly. Hallo! Look out, here's Alvy!"

Mr. Alvington—in other words, Nelson Lee—was approaching the spot from the Ancient House. I expect the gov'nor had seen me arrive with Farman, and had now come out to have a word with the new fellow.

The juniors parted respectfully, and made way for the Housemaster.

"Ah, my boy, you managed to get here all right, then!" smiled Lee kindly, in his schoolmasterly way. "You are Farman, of course?"

"Yes, sir," said Farman, in correct English.

"We are very pleased to have you at this school, my boy," went on the gov'nor. "You will board in the Ancient House, and will share a study with two other juniors—Study H, in the Remove passage."

"Thank you, sir," replied the new boy.

"I guess I shall like St. Frank's a heap—I

mean, I shall like it immensely. It's a bully school."

"I am glad you think that, Farman," smiled Mr. Alvington. "Come to my study after tea, and we will have a little chat. Any time this evening will do. I will leave you to settle down among your schoolfellows in your own way."

And Nelson Lee walked away, his gown rustling in the breeze.

"You giddy speofo!" grinned Tommy Watson. "You can talk all right."

"Say, it was sure a trial!" groaned Farman. "I'll allow I ken choke up an all-fired flow of ripe language when I have to, but it's a heap easier to do the free-and-easy stant. Say, you all seem kinder dazed."

"Did you hear what the rotter said?" asked Teddy Long shrilly, from behind Handforth. "Called St. Frank's a bully school! There ain't any bullies here."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fathead!" roared Handforth, turning to Long. "He meant bully—fine—splendid! Don't you understand? That's what you meant, wasn't it, Farman?"

"Sure." Farman nodded, and looked past Handforth. "Say, who's this guy, anyway? Who's this walkin' rainbow factory? Gee! I guess I'm sure dazed! We don't get galoots like that feller over in California. Say, we bary 'em—real quick. We don't allow them to be around five minutes!"

I looked round and grinned delightedly.

Fullwood & Co. were approaching to see what the excitement was about. And Farman's quaint remarks were evidently directed against Ralph Leslie Fullwood himself. I wasn't surprised. Fullwood's fancy waistcoat was very akin to a rainbow, and his necktie was gorgeous. To add to the effect, Fullwood's eyeglass was jammed into his eye, and he was wearing a topper.

Evidently Fullwood meant to impress the new fellow with an idea of his great importance—Fullwood's importance, I mean. Nobody else but Fullwood thought that he was important, but that was only a detail.

"Oh, so you're come?" said Gulliver, staring with elaborate interest.

"Yep!"

"What?" gasped Gulliver.

"Say, ain't your ears big enough?" asked Farman pleasantly.

As it happened, Albert Gulliver's ears were rather too big; they stood out on each side of his face like fans. Gulliver was rather sore about his ears. But I don't think Farman meant to be deliberately rude. It was just his way.

"You cheeky beast!" growled Gulliver, pushing forward angrily.

"Gulliver, dear fellow," drawled Sir Morris, intervening, "travel! You do travel, don't you. I've heard something about 'Gulliver's Travels'—I suppose it meant you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You potty idiot!" yelled Gulliver.

"Exactly. You've told me that before—beaps of times," smiled Treggill-West

urbanely. "But don't interfere with Farman. He's a good man—he is, really. I can see it in his eye. He is true blue. Therefore, dear boy, he mustn't become acquainted with such a smoky bouncer as you—or Fullwood, or Bell, or Merrill, or Noys—"

"Finished yet?" asked Fullwood politely. "You needn't worry about this cad, West. I can see what sort of a worm Farman is. I wouldn't touch him with gloves on! A dirty cowboy! Ye gods! What's St. Frank's coming to?"

Justin B. Farman looked at me; then he coughed.

"Guess I'll need to adjust my focus some," he said quietly. "I figgered on meetin' high-born gentlemen at a swell layout like St. Francis' College. I'll allow most of the fellers seem good an' fine; but, say, who's this insultin' boob, anyway?"

"Are you talking about me?" asked Fullwood bodily.

"I guess you called me a dirty cowboy," said Farman. "You need fixin' right, I reckon. I ain't a cowboy; I ain't dirty. Say, it ain't my way to quarrel—I'm a quiet feller, sure. But there'll be a hull pile o' trouble flyin' around this quarter if you don't take back them insults. I'm American, and I'm proud of it."

"Hear, hear!" said Watson.

"Good for you, Farman," put in Handforth. "Stick up for your country. Don't take any notice of Fullwood. He's a worm, anyhow. But I shouldn't advise you to scrap in the Triangle. Too many prefts about."

"I wouldn't fight the poverty-stricken cad," said Fullwood contemptuously.

Farman smiled, but his eyes glittered.

"I didn't figger to throw my money around. But this feller has called me poverty-stricken! Say, my pop's a millionaire."

"Your whatever?" asked Hubbard.

"My pop—my father," explained Farman. "He's one of the richest men in the States—and, say, to set things right at the beginnin', let me add right hyar that my dad ain't a blame profiteer, or a Wall Street gambler. I guess he's the president of a big railroad out West, and he's worth millions. He don't guess I'm to go short. Say, does anybody need some cash?"

Farman produced a pocket-book which was simply stuffed with banknotes. Most of the fellows stared as though fascinated. I was surprised myself. Even Fullwood, for all his wealth, never possessed a quarter so much money as Farman carried on him.

"I can do with a pound, old chap!" said Long eagerly. "I'll—I'll pay you back when I get a remittance. My hat, thanks! You're a brick!"

Farman had handed Long a pound-note, and the sneak of the Remove could scarcely believe his eyes. Fullwood was taken aback, and he hardly knew what to say. But I saw the knats exchanging quick, significant glances.

"I don't reckon to play this stunt," said Farman quietly. "Money ain't much, anyway. It's the feller himself that counts. But I was called poverty-stricken, and that don't seem right to me."

Fullwood extended his hand with a frank movement.

"I'm sorry, Farman!" he said cordially. "I—I spoke to you rottenly. I beg your pardon. I hope you won't mind?"

"Say, that's fine of you!" cried Farman gladly. "Will I shake? Gee! I'd just hate myself to death if I refused!"

"How much do you want to borrow, Fullwood, dear fellow?" asked Tregollis-West lazily. "Or steel, perhaps? You're an expert at stealin', I believe? Stealin' is a fine art with you. A quiet game of banker, or nap—everything in order, of course—but when the merry little party breaks up you're generally a few pounds richer. Eh? Is that the little game, my cheerful blade?"

Ralph Leslie Fullwood scowled.

"Shut up, you fanatic!" he exclaimed savagely.

"Hather shockin' for Farman's gentle ears—what?" drawled Sir Montie. "Bennett, dear boy, suppose we think of tea? I am tired—I need refreshment to stir my wainin' energies. Tea is callin' to us."

I grinned, and nodded.

"Right you are, Montie," I said. "Tea it shall be."

I paused for a moment. I realised, of course, that Fullwood's sudden change of front was due to one cause, and one cause alone. The sight of Farman's well-stuffed pocket-book had excited his innate cupidity.

He had set Farman down as a fellow with very little money to bless himself with. And, quite suddenly, he had discovered that Farman was a millionaire's son, and that he was possessed of tremendous quantities of ready cash.

Thus the sudden change of policy. Fullwood was ready to be friendly with anybody who had plenty of money. Justin B. Farman wasn't to be despised, after all! And Fullwood saw no reason why the American junior's spare cash shouldn't be transferred—via a game or two of cards—to Fullwood's own pocket.

And I didn't leave Farman immediately, because it was more than likely that Fullwood & Co. would invite him to tea in their study, and I knew what that would lead to. Farman was easy-going, and he might be afraid to state his real feelings, for I was sure he was a straight chap. And the expected happened.

"Talkin' about tea," said Fullwood cordially. "suppose you have tea with me, Farman? We'll have a little party—"

"Suppose Farman does nothing of the sort," I put in sharply. "Look here, Farman, it's not my way to preach, but let me give you a word of advice. Don't go to tea with Fullwood. He doesn't care twopence for you, really. But he cares for the money you showed us."

"You confounded busybody!" roared Fullwood furiously. "Why don't you mind your own business?"

"This is my business," I said. "I'm the leader of the Remove, and it's my business to see that a new chap doesn't get into bad

"Smilers"

Jokes from readers wanted for this feature. If you know a good rib-tickler, send it along to "Smilers," Nelson Lee Library, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4. Splendid pocket wallets, penknives, and grand prizes are awarded for all efforts published.

SEZ HE!

Actor (on the stage): "A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!"

Voice (from gallery): "Will a donkey do?"

Actor (earnily): "Yes; come down at once!"

A pocket wallet has been awarded to J. Sykes, 123, Scar Lane, Milnbridge.

A LONG PURSUIT.

Magistrate: "What is your occupation?"

Prisoner: "It isn't an occupation; it's a pursuit. I'm a bill collector!"

A penknife has been awarded to D. Taylor, 67, Eighth Avenue, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

AND HOW!

Editor: "And now, sir, what in your opinion are the best things you have seen in my paper?"

Candid Critic: "Fish and chips!"

A pocket wallet has been awarded to R. McDermott, 24, Queen Street, Fallowthorpe, Lincs.

OH, YEAH!

Teacher: "Who said, 'We have come to bury Caesar, not to praise him'?"

Bright Pupil: "The undertaker, sir!"

A penknife has been awarded to J. Ireland, 11, Ophir Road, Bournemouth.

RAISES ITSELF.

Customer: "Ninety-pence for that bag of flour? It's gone up, hasn't it?"

Greocer: "Yes, mum; it's self-raising!"

A pocket wallet has been awarded to

company. Understand that! Bad company, I said."

"Say, I'm sure uneasy," confessed Farman, with obvious pain. "I don't kinder freeze on to this game. I guess I'm causin' trouble—"

"What's this I hear?" demanded a voice suddenly. "The new fellow shoved into my study? Cheek, I call it!"

It was Owen major, and he was indignant. Canham was with him, but Canham didn't say anything. He was a quiet, refined junior, with very little to say to anybody. And Owen was a good sort, too.

"Cheek!" I repeated. "Rats! Farman is a study-mate to be proud of, Owen major. Take him away to tea with you."

"He's got piles of 'im!" shouted Long.

"Oh, has he?" said Owen major. "That's not bad, anyhow. Canham and I haven't got a brass farthing between us! We were wondering how we should get any tea. Farman, odd fellow, you're as welcome as the flowers in May."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Owen major's tone was jocular; there was no false cordiality about it. And Farman detected the difference at once—at least, I believe he did. He smiled as he looked round.

"I guess it's up to me," he remarked. "Say, I'm feelin' good. But I can't just go to tea in every study, can I? I reckon I'm surely bound to accept the hospitality of my new study-pards. I don't want to go into any feller's study if I ain't wanted. Guess I'll do without a study."

"That's all right—only a figure of speech," grinned Owen major. "Come on, old scout. I'll lead the way to the tuckshop, and you can buy the whole of Mrs. Hake's stock if you like! But we generally go shares in Study H. We'll pay our whack when we get a remittance. Canham and I always whack out alike."

And Farman went off with Canham and Owen, and the crowd dispersed. Fullwood and his fellow knuts were discomfited, but I could see by the look in Fullwood's eye that he meant mischief. Farman, with all his wealth, was easy prey, and Fullwood meant to avail himself of the opportunity.

I strolled away with Tregellis-West and Watson, and we were soon busy in Study C getting our own tea. If Owen and Canham had made any objections I should have had Farman to tea myself, but it was better for him to feed with his study-mates. That was the best way to get pally with them. And Farman, for all his curious way of talking—or perhaps because of it—was popular already.

We didn't take so very long over tea. The evening was delightful, and I was anxious to see how Farman would shape on the cricket field. In all probability he wouldn't be any good at all, but it would be wise to find out as soon as possible.

Tea in Study C was generally a somewhat lengthy business. Frying sausages on a spirit stove wants some doing, and it's no easier to boil a kettle of water with some odd exercise books when spirit runs short. We mostly had a visitor or two—fellows who

A. Morrison, Mill Lane Lodge, Stanley Park, Liverpool.

WHERE IT WENT.

The master had written 4356 on the blackboard, and to show the effect of multiplying by one hundred, he rubbed out the decimal point.

"None, Williams, where is the decimal point?" he asked.

"On the duster, sir!"

A penknife has been awarded to M. Robertson, 12, The Dene, Wembley.

LIKE A LAMB.

Clerk: "What was the manager like when you asked for that rise?"

Office Boy: "Like a lamb."

Clerk: "What did he say?"

Office Boy: "Bah!"

A pocket wallet has been awarded to R. Smith, 2, Downs Avenue, Eastbourne.

DAD, THE DUNCE.

Dad: "And did you tell your teacher that I helped you with your homework?"

Son: "Yes; and she said she wouldn't punish me for your ignorance!"

A penknife has been awarded to E. Barge, 10, Park Crescent, Abingdon.

LAZY LAD!

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

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

A pocket wallet has been awarded to G. Moore, 58, Bastwick Street, London, E.C.1.

THE THREE "OURS."

Long: "Do you know that Sydney is three hours ahead of Adelaide?"

Short: "No; is it?"

Long: "Yes; our harbour, our bridge, and our Bradman!"

A grand prize has been awarded to K. M. Lowe, 25, Railway Terrace, Adelaide, South Australia.

**HAVE YOU SENT IN YOUR JOKE YET?
Don't delay—post it to-day.**

had run short of "the ready"—but this evening it was a hasty meal.

Sir Montie and Watson and I—we were usually known as Dick Bennett & Co.—sailed out into the passage en route for the playing fields. I had my bat tucked under my arm, and my chums were ready for business.

"Hold on," I said as we were passing into the entrance lobby. "We'll pop back to Study H and tell the new fellow to run down to Little Ede as soon as he's finished his grabbing."

"Any old thing, dear Benny," murmured Tregellis-West. "I follow your lead in all things, you know. I'm passive. But will Farman be there? I seem to think he won't."

"What do you mean, ass?"

"Watson, old thing, my ears tell me much," said Sir Montie lazily. "Methinks I heard a voice from Study A; a voice that said something about a galoot."

"Study A—Fullwood's study?" I said sharply. "Great guns!"

I hurried down the passage, tapped at the door of Study H and entered. One glance told me that Justin B. Farman wasn't there. Owen major and Canham were finishing their tea leisurely, reading at the same time.

Owen major looked up.

"Hallo!" he said. "What the lime-juice do you want?"

"Where's Farman?"

"He went out ten minutes ago."

"By himself?"

"No. Fullwood came for him," said Owen. "What's this? An inquisition? Do I have to answer any more ques—?"

"Fullwood came for him!" I said angrily. "You ass! What did you let him go for?"

"My dear Bennett, I'm not the new kid's keeper, I suppose?" asked Owen. "Clear out, for goodness' sake. I'm just reading about Sexton Blake—"

"Blow Sexton Blake!" I interjected. "Did Farman go willingly or was he persuaded?"

"Oh, rats!"

"He didn't want to go, Bennett," said Canham mildly. "Fullwood came here with Bell and Gulliver and Merrell. They said they wanted Farman in their study. Farman was inclined to jib, but they practically carried him off."

I went out to Sir Montie and Tommy Watson. We looked at one another in the passage, and I breathed hard.

"The rotters!" I said hotly. "They've got him, after all!"

"What is it, dear man," yawned Tregellis-West—"slaughter? Do we invade the den of iniquity known to fame as Study A? Do we gather the clans an' go on a raidin' expedition? It's a frightful bore, but I'm ready. I only await orders."

"They've collared Farman—to skin him!" I said savagely.

"Rather painful—what?" murmured Sir Montie. "Shockin', in fact. Fancy being skinned!"

"Fullwood's got hold of Farman to skin him of his cash!" I exclaimed. "But we're going to skin Fullwood—in a different way. We can't let a thing like this go on. And, as we can't sneak, we'll take the law into our own hands. Farman's a weak-willed chap—easy-going and good-natured. He'll be led into all sorts of blackguardism if he pals with Fullwood and that crowd. I'm going to put my foot down—now!"

"Begad! Be careful, dear fellow!" gasped Sir Montie.

In my anger I had put my foot down literally, and I nearly stamped on to one of the elegant Removite's white shoes. But I meant what I said. I was the chosen leader of the Ancient House Removite, and I was certainly not going to stand by while Ralph Lesbe Fullwood deliberately led the new American junior into his own shady habits.

It was time for action.

CHAPTER 4.

Trouble in the Knuts Camp!

SIR LANCELOT MONTGOMERY TREGELLIS-WEST sighed.

"Life is composed of troubles," he said philosophically. "As soon as one trouble is disposed of, another looms in the distance. This particular trouble's been boomin' a few minutes only, but it's going to be a respectable trouble. Quite worth while, I think—I do, really! An' I'm ready for business."

Sir Montie deliberately fixed his gold-rimmed pince-nez on tightly and then proceeded lazily to roll up his cuffs.

"Let's hope it'll be short," he went on. "It's a fearful fog punchin' a fellow's nose. But sometimes it's necessary. It's necessary now. And Fullwood's nose is the one I'm anxious to punch."

"Good man!" I said. "You're game, Tommy?"

"Game for anything," said Watson promptly.

"Come on, then."

We marched to Study A. The passage was deserted, but several heads came out of the various doors as I proceeded to kick Fullwood's door with more vigour than was actually necessary. But the door was locked—as I had expected—and an ordinary gentle knock was no good to Fullwood & Co.

"Who's that!" roared the leader of the knuts angrily. "Do you want all the masters here, you silly idiot? You'll have Morrow or Starke or one of the other prefects—"

"I don't mind," I retorted. "It's you who'll mind! Open this door!"

"It's Bennett," I heard Gulliver say. "Tell him to eat coke!"

"Clear off, you interfering prig!" shouted Fullwood.

"You're going to open this door!"

"Your mistake. I'm not."

"All right," I said grimly. "If you want me to shout through the keyhole what I've

got to say, I'll do it. You've got Farman in there, and you're smoking and gambling and—"

"Shut up, you ass!" hissed Fullwood in alarm.

"I warned you. You're smoking—"

The door opened suddenly, and Fullwood glared out at me with a face that was red with fury. I pushed past him and entered. Sir Montie followed me, and Watson remained at the door so that it couldn't be closed on us.

Ten had been cleared away and the table was strewn with cards. The air was rather blue with cigarette-smoke, and Justin B. Farman was sitting between Merrell and Bell, looking a trifle uncomfortable.

"Say, I'm real sorry—" he began.

"What did you come here for?" I asked tartly.

"These fellows were surely anxious," said Farman. "They guessed they needed me a

I knew very well that he was upset. He was torn between Fullwood & Co. and me. He hadn't got the hang of things yet. And Fullwood had attempted to win him over to the knuts. In that study, surrounded by the knuts, the new fellow had been almost forced to do as they wished, and he was painfully anxious not to quarrel with anybody. That policy was all very well, but Farman would have to quarrel with somebody before long—with Fullwood or with me. He couldn't be friendly with the pair of us.

"I'm really sorry," he said quietly. "I didn't figger on makin' trouble."

And he left the study. His easy-going nature didn't allow him to take up any definite stand. Fullwood watched him go with a gloowering brow. Fullwood had made up his mind to make the new fellow one of the select circle of knuts—not because Farman was knutish, but because of his unlimited supply of cash.

OLD READERS—PLEASE NOTE

Nelson Lee and Nipper are back at St. Frank's!

heap. I'm showin' 'em how to play draw, I guess."

"Draw poker?" I gasped.

"Yep!"

"And you're teaching Fullwood & Co. how to play it?"

"Sure. It's a good game, although I've never played it for money until now," said Farman rather uneasily. "Say, Bennett, I couldn't very well refuse, could I? I'm figgerin' that I need to please the hall crowd. I'm a stranger, an' it's up to me to please everybody. Do you get me?"

"You're not pleasing everybody by doing this sort of thing," I said curtly. "You're only pleasing Fullwood and these other rotters. You'll please them still more when you lose some of your money. You're a weak ass, Farman, but I don't blame you. There's going to be trouble here, and you'd better clear out while you're safe!"

"I guess—"

"Don't you go, Farman!" roared Fullwood furiously. "If you do I'll smash you!"

"Geel! That's kinder straight!" said the American junior. "I'll need to adjust my focus a hull heap. Howsum, I guess I'll clear. I ain't hankerin' after cousin' trouble."

"Funk!" said Noys contemptuously. "Stay with us."

"You'd better go, Farman," I said. "You're neutral in this act. Afterwards, perhaps, you'll do a bit of scrapping on your own account. But you can't start fighting on your first day at St. Frank's. It's bad form."

Justin B. Farman hardly knew what to do.

"Why don't you smash this interfering worm!" demanded Gulliver hotly, glaring at Fullwood, but making no attempt to smash me himself.

Fullwood jammed his eyeglass into his eye and surveyed me coolly.

"I'm not losing my temper," he said. "Bennett's come here on his own initiative; he'll have to take the consequences. This is my study, and I don't allow beastly worms to come into it."

"Begad!" murmured Montie. "We're beastly worms, Benny, dear boy. Still, we've come in, haven't we? Fullwood says he doesn't allow it, and yet we're in. That's queer, what?"

I pointed to the table.

"You've been gambling—with the new fellow," I said quietly, looking at Fullwood. "You can gamble as much as you like among yourselves. That's not my business. I'm not your guardian."

"Awfully glad of that," said Fullwood calmly.

"And you can go to the dogs in your own way," I went on. "You'll get the sack before long if this sort of thing continues. Mr. Alvington isn't so lax as old Thorne was, and the chopper will come down sooner than you expect. But, as I said, that's not my business."

"Is that any drawback?" asked Fullwood sarcastically. "I understood that you were attending to our business—and not your own."

"It's my business to see that a gang of blackguardly, smoky, sneaking rotters don't pollute a new fellow," I said quietly. "It's

my business to protect Farman from your rotten influence, and I tell you candidly, Fullwood, that unless you leave Farman strictly alone in future, you'll have to reckon with me."

"I'm shiverin' with fear!" sneered Fullwood.

"No, you're not—but you will do if you don't heed my warning," I retorted. "You can do as you choose—the whole crowd of you. You're past hope. But you're not going to drag a new chap into your sordid blackguardism."

"Finished?" asked Fullwood, yawning.

"Yes. I've said all I mean to say," I replied.

"Then I'll start!" snarled Fullwood furiously.

He was active in a second, and he yanked Tommy Watson forcibly into the study and slammed the door. There was a click as the key turned in the lock. Fullwood grinned maliciously.

"Now you're goin' to pay for this. You're going to bear a few things from me, my interloper friend. After that, you're goin' to be ragged—the three of you. You're outnumbered, so you'd better give in quietly."

"By gad! What a frightful bore," drawled Sir Montie. "Six of you in here and three of us. We're not outnumbered, Fullwood, dear boy. We're equal!"

"How can we be equal when we're two to one against you?"

"I wish old Crowell asked us questions as simple as that," sighed Tregellis-West. "The answer's easy, dear fellow. We're equal because I'm capable of takin' on any two knuts who ever knuted! Benny's equal to three if necessary, but that wouldn't be fair to Tommy; he'll want a couple for himself. Personally, I choose Gulliver an' Bell. They're just my mark."

"You idiot!" roared Gulliver. "I'll smash you with one fist!"

"By Jove! Smash away, dear boy!"

I looked round. The knuts were on their feet, grinning. The door was locked, and they were determined to wipe us up. And I was equally as determined not to be wiped up. And, as Sir Montie had said, we were evenly matched. We were quite capable of taking on two men each.

What was more, we attacked at once. This took Fullwood & Co. quite by surprise; they had imagined themselves to be top dogs, and for us to attack them deliberately was a bit of a surprise.

In spite of Sir Montie's cheery words, we had a tough task before us; but help could not come to us from outside—at least, not until a considerable row had been made. And we were certainly not going to yell for help.

"Pile in!" I rapped out.

"I'm already pilin', dear fellow!" panted Tregellis-West.

The elegant junior had removed his pincener and was attacking Gulliver and Bell with terrific vigour. I look on Fullwood and Noys,

and Tommy Watson was left to deal with Merrell and Marriott, of Study G.

"You're mad!" gasped Fullwood, his bluster vanishing. "You can't—"

Just then my fist happened to come in severe contact with his mouth, and he couldn't speak any further. He howled instead. And Noys was living well up to his name; the noise he created awoke the echoes.

He was sitting on the hearth-rug doing his utmost to flain it red. His nose had managed to get into direct line with my fist, with sad consequences to the nose. It was bleeding profusely, and Noys decided that the hearth-rug was a fairly comfortable spot; he didn't see any reason why he should get up to assist his redoubtable leader. Matthew Noys was a fink of the first water.

Fullwood, however, had plenty of pluck; he was of a different calibre from his knutish pals. And he stood up with all the fury he was capable of. We were soon going hammer and tongs.

Behind me, Sir Montie was going strong, and Gulliver and Bell were casting anxious glances towards the door. Tregellis-West, for all his languid manners, was one of the best fighting men of the Remove. And, when his spirit was aroused, he displayed astounding energy. He displayed it now. Gulliver and Bell were under no delusions on that point.

And Tommy Watson had a fairly easy task with Merrell and Marriott. For about two minutes there was an appalling "mill" in Study A. The table was sent spinning, and the cards were scattered over the floor. Ornaments from the mantelpiece were swept off without ceremony. Pictures were brought down, and chairs were overturned. It was a glorious tussle.

But, from the first, Fullwood & Co. were on the defensive; we never once gave them a chance to attack. The dust rose in clouds, and thumps on the door told that other fellows were wondering what could be happening.

Fullwood went down at last—and kept down. And his dear pals, seeing that their leader had fallen, slunk back.

"That's enough," gasped Gulliver. "Chuck it, West!"

"Begad, I haven't finished yet!" panted Sir Montie in surprise. "I was just getting interested. I must punch Bell's nose; I've been tryin' to reach it for a whole minute—"

"I've had enough!" snapped Bell savagely.

Ralph Leslie Fullwood rose to his feet a trifle unsteadily. He put the key in the lock and turned it.

"Clear out!" he muttered thickly. "By George! You'll pay for this, Bennets! And so will Farman, too! Clear out, while you're safe!"

"While we're safe, eh!" I grinned. "We're quite ready to stay another half-hour if you wish. But I reckon you've had a pretty stiff lesson, Fullwood, and you'll be wise to heed



"Upon my soul!" exclaimed the gov'nor in surprise, meeting us in the lane. "You are St. Frank's boys—juniors! What are you doing out of your dormitory at this time of night?"

it. Don't forget what I told you about Farman."

I opened the door and passed out, Tregellis-West and Watson following me. We felt that a necessary duty had been performed. Fullwood & Co. hadn't said much, but their thoughts must have been terrific.

And somehow I felt sure that Fullwood was more determined than ever to lead Justin B. Farman into paths that were crooked. Well, it was up to me to keep my eyes open.

CHAPTER 5.

A Demon Bowler!

JUSTIN B. FARMAN was waiting in the passage with a crowd of other fellows. Montie and Watson and I were rather untidy, but quite cheerful. The fellows had evidently expected us to be hurried forth in pieces.

Handforth stared at us blankly.

"Ain't—ain't there any more of you?" he asked.

"No. Only the three of us," I replied calmly. "We've just been giving Fullwood some advice. The crooks and ornaments have got smashed a bit in the process, but that was Fullwood's fault."

"I heard Merrell's voice," put in Hubs hard. "Those rotters of Study G ain't with Fullwood, are they? You don't mean to say you've whacked the six of them? It couldn't be done!"

"Dear fellow, it has been done!" said Tregellis-West lazily. "It was a bore—a terrific nuisance, in fact. But life is strenuous. These little things will happen, you know. Troubles come, and they are surmounted. Fullwood's a trouble."

"Great Scott!" said Handforth. "You had the cheek to take on two fellows each! Of all the nerve!"

"My hat!"

"Things are coming to a pass!"

The fellows were almost incredulous. Farman stood looking on without saying anything for the first minute. Then he stepped forward.

"Guess I'm the cause of this all-fired shindy. Say, I'm a hull heap sorry. That's dead true, pard. I didn't want to cause merry blazes around this layout."

"You didn't want to what?" gasped Handforth.

"He means he didn't want to make any trouble at St. Frank's," I grinned. "But that's all right, Farman, don't you worry. You don't know the ropes yet, and you musn't think that you've caused trouble—"

or merry blazes, as you call it. You haven't. Fullwood & Co. are a necessary evil. They're in the Ancient House, and we can't get rid of them. So the only thing is to keep 'em in order."

"Guess I'm just ready to do 'most anything' you need," said the American junior seriously. "I'm surely in your hands, Bennett. I'm plumb crazed to make myself agreeable to the hull darned crowd. Guess there's no offence meant. Mebbe I'll feel my feet after I've been around this ranch for a day or two."

"Hanch!" grinned Hubbard. "That's a new name, anyhow. I've heard the Monks refer to the Ancient House as a barn, or a wash-house, or a lunatic asylum. But a ranch! We're learning things."

"Say, I'm new to this life—guess I'm a tenderfoot," smiled Farman. "I allowed that Fullwood was a real good man. But he don't seem popular. In about a week I'll have shook down into my right place—so, until then, I guess I'll be real obliged if I ain't interfered with."

"That means you want to pal up with Fullwood?" asked Watson bluntly.

"I guess it don't mean—anythin'."

"Of course it doesn't," I struck in. "Farman's all right, Tommy. He's hardly been at St. Frank's five minutes, and he doesn't know that playing cards and smoking is absolutely against the rules of the school."

"Say, is that so?" asked the new boy in surprise.

"Did you think it was allowed, then?" bawled Handforth.

"I guess that Fullwood let on that way. Mebbe it was hot air."

"If you were found smoking and gambling, Farman, you'd be flogged before the whole school," I said calmly. "That's the simple truth. Fullwood's a liar of the first water, and he doesn't care a snap of his fingers for you. All he wants is your money. That's just a word of advice."

"I ain't hankerin' after breakin' school rules," said Farman. "Guess I'll have to be plumb careful. Say, I'm just scared to death of doin' things I oughtn't to. But Fullwood fetched me from my shack, and I guess I didn't like to be rude. I just had to go."

"Your shack!" asked Church.

"He means study," I grinned, straightening my tie. "But look here, the daylight's going, and we're wasting time. Do you know anything about cricket, Farman?"

The American junior's eyes gleamed.

"Say, that's just a dandy game!" he exclaimed. "We played it at my school out West. Guess cricket's sure fine. But I'll allow we didn't play the game as you play it right here. Y'see, we didn't have swell notions around that school. It was just a game."

"Oh, he doesn't know anything about it," said Handforth, with a snuff. "How can you expect him to? It's not his fault, anyhow. Still, it wouldn't be a bad idea to give him a trial. I'll bowl to him—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Anything funny in that?" roared Handforth, glaring.

"Not to you, perhaps," I grinned. "But it's jolly funny—to us. My dear, innocent old Handforth, you couldn't hit a barn, let alone a wicket. You weren't born that way, you know."

And I walked away before Handforth could reply. But I heard his foghorn-like voice floating down the passage as I strolled across the lobby. As all the juniors had followed me out, it seemed apparent that Handforth was talking to himself. Nobody thought it necessary to stay behind and listen to him. Edward Oswald Handforth was never taken seriously.

We found quite a number of Removites on the junior playing fields. Bob Christine & Co. were there in force. The College House juniors were at present the leaders of junior cricket at St. Frank's. The Ancient House never had a look in—except when one of Christine's men got crooked. On such an occasion Tommy Watson or Trogellie-West would be used. As a rule, however, the Removo Eleven was composed entirely of Monks.

This, of course, was totally wrong. The Ancient House had as much right to share in the school games as the College House. And I had made up my mind that a big alteration should take place. Before the end of the cricket season I meant to whack the College House Eleven with a team of my own.

Bob Christine, a sunny, genial youth, grinned as we all crowded on to the field.

"Hallo! Come to look on?" he asked.

"No; we've come to show you fellows how cricket should be played," I replied calmly. "We'll use that pitch over there. This is Farman, a new fellow in our House. Farman, you're speaking to Bob Christine, the skipper of the College House Removs, and the captain of the St. Frank's Junior Cricket Eleven."

Farman extended his hand instantly.

"Howdy?" he said cordially.

"Pleased to meet you," said Christine, giving Farman a curious look. "Are you a keen cricketer?"

"Waal, I guess I ain't a dandy at the game—yet," replied Farman. "Say, when I get goin' I'll sure raise blazes. Cricket kinder hits me good'n proper—I'll allow I'm a heap keen to finger a ball. I notion I'll surprise you fellows. I'm hot stuff at bowlin'. Gee! I'll find the wicket of any galoot on this field—an' find it within five minutes, I guess!"

Christine stared still more. And his lip curled a trifle; he didn't like a braggart. But I knew that Farman wasn't bragging. He honestly thought he was capable of bowling any fellow on the ground. In all probability he would find himself sadly mistaken.

"Perhaps you could bowl me?" asked Christine tartly.

"Sure."

"Right-ho!" said the junior skipper.

"Try!"

There was a buzz at once. The College House chaps who were nearby were grinning hugely. They were grinning at Farman's extraordinary accent, and they were grinning in anticipation of what was to come.

For Bob Christine was the finest batsman in the Junior School. Even Talmadge, the star bowler of the Remove Eleven, had his work cut out to find Christine's wicket.

Harry Oldfield was at the wicket, and he moved aside as Christine strolled down the pitch, swinging his bat. I tossed Farman a ball, and his eyes gleamed as his fingers closed round it. But it left his hands immediately and soared skywards to a tremendous height. And when it came down Farman caught it with superb neatness.

"He's a dark horse," I declared delightedly.

"Farman is going to astonish the natives, dear boy," murmured Montie. "I can see it in his eye. He's hot stuff. In fact, I'm trembling—I simply daren't let him bowl me. Thank goodness he's on our side!"

"He'll be no good," growled Hubbard.

And, certainly, Farman did not seem to shape very well at first. He walked clumsily, and took hardly any run at all. Everybody was expecting to see a slow, easy ball go down, which Christine would be able to send off to the boundary without the slightest difficulty.

Farman's hand went up, and then his arm gave a curious jerk. Something shot down the pitch. It went so swiftly that it could scarcely be seen. Then there was a crash, and a gasp.

I rubbed my eyes.

Christine's wicket was down!

"Great Scott!" I heard him exclaim dazedly.

"Say, I guess you were dead slow," grinned Farman. "That was one of my easy ones. Maybe you figured that I was boasting? Well, a fellow who boasts ain't up to snuff, I reckon."

There was a roar from the whole field. Christine's wicket was down—the new American junior had clean bowled him with the first ball! Bob Christine grinned good-naturedly.

"I'm sorry I doubted you," he said. "You're certainly hot stuff, Farman. I'd like to see you do some more. I'll be on my guard next time."

Christine was on his guard, but he had all his work cut out to stop the balls which Justin B. Farman sent down. It was one of the finest exhibitions of bowling I had ever witnessed. The new fellow was an absolute demon. In less than five minutes Christine's wicket fell three times, and he never once got a chance of a fair swipe.

And, curiously enough, Farman bowled in a most leisurely fashion. It seemed no effort to him whatever, and every ball he sent down had a different twist on it. Considering that he had been out of practice for several weeks, his exhibition was little short of extraordinary.

I was simply glowing. Farman was a man to be proud of, and I knew that he'd be a monument of strength for the new Ancient House Eleven.

At batting, however, he made a very poor show. It was rather too much to expect that he'd be equally good at both bowling and batting; and, before going to the wicket, he frankly admitted that he would be dismissed within a minute.

As a matter of fact, he stood up to Talmadge's bowling for ten minutes, but confined himself to stone-walling tactics all the time.

"I guess I'm small potatoes at batting," he said smilingly. "I don't just cotton on to it any. But I'll improve, I expect. Guess I'll try, anyway."

It was getting dusk now, but I went to the wicket and showed the Monks how to bat. Watson declared that I was better than Christine himself, but I won't say anything on the subject myself. I'll only add that I managed to get several fine swipes from Farman's bowling. But he was a terror. His bowling was simply terrific. I didn't feel safe for a second while I was facing him.

The College House fellows, I know, were greatly impressed. Christine, in fact, frankly invited Farman and me to take our places in the next big match, and we both gladly agreed. The feelings of the Fossils must have been rather sore. Both Farman and I were new fellows, and we had been chosen by Christine!

Tregollis-West and Watson were first-class players, but they were out of practice. The other fellows were showing fairly decent form, too—Hubbard and Canham, Church and McClure and Doyle, and lots of others. In a week or two, I knew, I should have a team which would be quite capable of giving a good show, and then I should challenge Christine & Co. to a House match—the first House match at St. Frank's for ages. I'm talking about junior cricket, of course. The senior elevens were constantly playing inter-House matches.

I went indoors for prep, feeling highly pleased. Before going to Study C with Sir Montie and Watson, we strolled into the Common-room. There was a good deal of talk going on—on the subject of cricket, of course.

Fullwood & Co. were in the Common-room, talking. They scowled as I entered, but I only grinned cheerfully. The knits were looking the worse for wear. And they at once went out. I could tell by their expressions that they had been holding a secret discussion.

Something was "on." But what?

Fullwood & Co. couldn't very well be planning a jape against Farman, for the new boy wouldn't sleep in the Remove dormitory that night. It was a custom at St. Frank's for a new fellow to sleep alone, in a little bedroom, on his first night at the school.

All the same, I was a wee bit uneasy.

CHAPTER 6.

After Lights Out!

"HURRY up, fatty! I can't wait all night!"

That remark was cheerfully uttered by Morrow, the head prefect of the Ancient House. It was bed-time, and we were all in our little cots—all except Teddy Long. The sneak of the Remove, being naturally lazy, had taken his time undressing. And Morrow had found him still out of bed.

"Oh, don't hurry a chap, Morrow!" protested Long. "I shan't be more than five minutes."

The prefect grinned.

"You won't be one minute!" he said. "I give you ten seconds!"

I chuckled as Long scrambled out of the rest of his clothes and then tumbled into bed. Long was one of the biggest funks in the school, and he was even afraid of a good-natured cuff.

Morrow put his key into the switch and turned the light off. Then he went out, with a cheery "good-night," which was answered by most of the fellows. Fullwood & Co. occupied six beds, all together, near the door. This wasn't just by chance. They had occupied those beds by arrangement since the beginning of the term.

There was electric light all over St. Frank's. It was made on the premises, and in the dormitories there were special switches provided. The "beaks" didn't think it necessary to have the ordinary switches, which could be turned on in second; so they were of a patent variety, which required a key. Some of the fellows had used an old pocket-knife with success when occasion demanded, but it wasn't safe to switch the dormitory lights on after the prefect had gone his rounds.

There was a certain amount of talk for about ten minutes, and then the chaps fell off one by one. Nine-thirty was the time for lights out, and by ten the whole dormitory was asleep. All except myself. I lay awake.

Ten o'clock was a ridiculously early hour for me. I had been accustomed to getting into bed at all times of the night. Often enough, when engaged on urgent detective work, I hadn't gone to bed at all.

And to-night I lay awake, thinking.

I had a lot to think about.

My life at St. Frank's was novel and interesting. I was certainly enjoying myself. And the gov'nor was glad of the long rest, too.

Nelson Lee was looking healthy and happy. In fact, the enforced idleness—or change of work—was just exactly what he had required. Previous to this episode the great criminologist had been working altogether too hard, and had gone a bit stale.

Now, however, he was as fit as a fiddle again. When the danger from the Fu-Chang Tong had passed, we should start real work again with terrific gusto. Indeed, I should be thundering sorry to leave St. Frank's.

But there was no question of that yet. We hadn't been at the school much longer than a week, and there were months ahead of us.

I had seen the gov'nor for a minute or two just before coming up to bed, and I had reported to him that I had discovered nothing regarding Farman's connection with the mystery of Mr. Thorne. Was there a connection? We didn't know; we only suspected.

I heard the school clock chime the quarter-past ten. I was a bit drowsy then, but I didn't sleep. The dormitory was very still. When the half-past sounded, I heard it as though from afar, and I snuggled down into the pillow, intending to doze off in earnest.

Then suddenly I heard a whisper. It came from the far end of the long dormitory. I was alert in an instant. Nelson Lee had trained me to awaken with my full wits about me.

"You fellows awake?" came a soft murmur.

It was Fullwood's voice, and I compressed my lips. Faintly, in the dimness, I could see him out of his bed. He was dressing himself.

"Hallo!" mumbled a sleepy voice.

"Wasser matter? 'Tain't time—"

"Half-past ten, ass!" murmured Fullwood.

"Rouse up!"

Gulliver and Bell left their beds and started dressing, too. I saw one of them go to another bed and shake the occupant.

"You comin' with us, Merrell?" I heard Fullwood ask.

"Eh? Oh, it's you!" said Merrell. "No; rate to you! We ain't comin' to-night, Fully. Marriot and Noys won't go without me, and I ain't goin'. You fellows go alone this time."

"Just as you like," said Fullwood. "Ready, you chaps!"

I smiled grimly to myself. I knew the explanation of that whispered conference in the Common-room now. Fullwood and his two particular pals—his study-mates—were going out "on the tiles." In other words, they were going to break bounds. Their destination, probably, was the White Harp, the shady inn on the outskirts of Belton village.

"Come with us, Merry!" urged Gulliver. "Old Bradmore's goin' to be at the Harp to-night, an' we'll skin him at billiards—"

"He'll skin you, you mean!" said Merrell.

"No, we're not goin' with you. Study G ain't on in this act!"

"Oh, all right!"

Half-sitting up in bed, I saw Fullwood & Co., carrying their shoes in their hands, creep to the dormitory door and pass out. And Merrell & Co. went to sleep again. Sometimes I include Merrell and Marriot and Noys in "Fullwood & Co.," but they were really a separate "Co." on their own. But they were all knuts.

It didn't worry me—this night "blagging" of Fullwood's. It wasn't any business of mine. If they chose to risk expulsion for the

(Continued on page 22.)

Take Your Seats For—



Letters to the Editor should be addressed to **NELSON LEE LIBRARY, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.**

CHEERIO, CHUMS!—Here we are again for our weekly "talk" in this, the second splendid number of our new story programme. We are going ahead now in fine style, and I am confident that all NELSON LEE readers are perfectly satisfied with my latest choice of stories. My post-bag has trebled itself, and each letter contains congratulations of the new programme. I am delighted, for it is my constant aim, as you know, to give readers every week the best story value obtainable, in quality as well as quantity, for twopenny.

Don't forget, chums, to drop me a line about the new programme, if you have not done so already. I like to know what every reader's opinion is, whether it is written in terms of praise or criticism.

Now, I think a few words about next week's topping number will not be out of place.

The first story on the bill is the long complete St. Frank's story, which is entitled:

"TRIED BY HIS FORM"

This is a stirring narrative told by Nipper of his trial by the Form-fellows. Nipper is accused of a brutal assault on Justin B. Farman, the new boy from America, whose advent is recorded in this week's yarn. Nipper, of course, protests his innocence, but his enemies, Fullwood & Co., insist on a trial—and Nipper is found guilty! You will enjoy this dramatic story from first line to last.

"THE ISLAND INVADERS!"

is the title of the next nerve-ringing yarn of the menace of the Mongolians in the year 1945, and for sheer thrills you won't beat this story.

There will, of course, be more rousing chapters of "Open Throat!" Bud's a bright lad, isn't he? Don't miss his further adventures as chauffeur-valet to a millionaire sportsman. "Smilers," which are jokes contributed by readers, and for which grand prizes are awarded, and another talk with yours truly will complete the next splendid number.

You will do your pals—and your Editor—a good turn if you spread the news around about the new NELSON LEE. Don't forget, chums. Cheerio!

Result of the "Ranger" Painting Competition

THE FIRST PRIZE OF 1/- A WEEK FOR A YEAR for the best coloured picture sent in has been awarded to:

William Wareing,
8, Lonsdale Avenue,
Swinton,
Manchester.

THE SECOND PRIZE OF 6s. A WEEK FOR A YEAR has been awarded to:

Trevor Bacon, 60, King Street, St. Yarnmouth, Norfolk.

THE 20 OTHER PRIZES have been awarded to the following:

James Ashton, 44, Holland Street, Pendleton, Salford; Michael F. Avery, 8, Clarence Road, Teddington, Middlesex; William Aye, 14, Church Terrace, Woolley Terrace, Crook; K. G. Barratt, 109, Kington Drive, Leicester; Dennis W. Berry, 69, Melbourne Grove, East Dulwich, S.E.22; N. Birkleton, 12a, Constitution Hill, Ipswich; Roy E. Bolton, 47, Vyner Road, East Acton Lane, Acton, W.3; Donald Houston, 12, Elms Road, Ecdinister, Bristol; M. Brown, 14, Lady Somerset Road, Tutnell Park, N.W.3; William Brown, 64, Three Tuns Road, Eastwood, Notts; James Charles, 6, The Crescent, Taunton, Somerset; Arthur Craven, 52, Deunwood Avenue, Layton, Blackpool; Leonard Davies, 5, Carlton Street, Canning Town, E.15; Stanley Dels, 9, Doxset Road, Coventry; John I. Dix, 60, Chilton West View, North Shields; C. Ferguson, Bridge End, The Avenue, Wilton, Salisbury; Brian Foster, 10, Anne Street, Chestham Hill, Manchester; J. Godwin, 3, Donnington Mansions, Willesden, N.W.10; H. Green, 63, St. Albans Road, Blackpool; Frank Howard, 8, Bedford Street, Wistich, Cambs; Julia Howarth, 27, St. Walburgas Road, Layton, Blackpool; Frank L. Howling, 83, Rostington Road, of Sainston Dale, Nottingham; Ronald Humphreys, 76, Harbury Road, Cannon Hill, Birmingham; Herbert W. Hunt, 278, Rolls Road, Braconbury, S.R.1; A. Jostling, 1a, Station Road, Beoles, Suffolk; Clifford Kilsby, 82, Rookwood Road, Osmondthorpe, Leeds; Donald Lake, 24, Fickhurst Rise, West Wickham, Kent; Colin R. Lear, 44, Woodville Road, Golders Green, N.W.11; C. G. Long, 15, Strada St. Anna, Floriana, Malta; E. Males, 30, Cobham Road, Wood Green, N.22; John E. Marshall, 33, Sunnyside Gardens, Bury Street, Edmonstone, N.9; Trevor Moss, 63, Empire Road, Tooting; Patrick Newark, 259, Lechlade Lane, London, N.17; Bernard North, 22, Blagden Road, New Malden, Surrey; Miss I. Randall, The Post Office House, Sandwich, Kent; J. S. Richards, 64, St. Brannocks Park, Ilfracombe; Harry E. Richards, 18, Fawcetts Avenue, Darlington, S. Staffs; John H. Richardson, "White Lodge," Church Road, Whitchurch, Glam.; Kenneth Robinson, 144, Joffcock Road, Wolverhampton; Harold C. Speed, "Walkden," South Road, Beccles, Suffolk; Haydn J. Smith, 42, St. James Street, Northampton; B. Stewart, 72, Roads, Kirriemuir, Angus; J. Therpe, 14, Linton Street, Rushmore, Manchester; Robert Todd, 5, Becklow Street, North Sholing-in-Chester; Peter Toddham, "Shanklin," Rosebery Road, Felixstowe; Barrie H. Turner, "Claremont," Station Road, Cotleigh; Jack Turner, 144, Bardowie Street, Poulpark, Glasgow; Harold West, 17, Rigmans Crescent, Mearl, Swanton; Eric Wray, 10, Meade Road, West Derby, Liverpool; Bernard Wright, 79, Belle Vue Road, Leeds.

KIDNAPPED!

(Continued from page 20.)

sake of a little forbidden pleasure, that was their concern. I very much doubted whether they derived any pleasure out of their night jaunts. But it was "dogfish," and Fullwood & Co. considered themselves to be "goers" of the first order.

Jonas Furlock, the innkeeper, was always pleased to see Fullwood & Co. They spent much of their cash at the White Harp. There were other St. Frank's fellows who were suspected of visiting the inn, too. Starke and Kenmore, of the Sixth, both of them Ancient House prefects, were generally credited with playing billiards and cards at the White Harp.

I could have told the gov'nor all about these goings on, of course; but I didn't. As a Housemaster, he would have been bound to take action, and I loathed an informer. The gov'nor would have to find out things for himself. I shouldn't even give him a hint. It wouldn't have been playing the game.

But I grinned a little to myself as I lay in bed. Nelson Lee had told me that he was going for a walk after ten o'clock that night. He had said that it would have been O.K. if I could have gone with him. "Mr. Alvington," therefore, was out and about. It would be all up with Fullwood and Bell and Gulliver if they happened to run into the gov'nor!

Still, it was their funeral if they were bowled out. They deserved the sack, anyhow. St. Frank's would be better without them. Daring Mr. Thorne's reign the knuts had done pretty much as they liked. Mr. Thorne had winked at a lot of shady actions on Fullwood's part.

Fullwood didn't realize yet that the new Housemaster was a man of different calibre.

"Oh, rats to them!" I told myself sleepily. "Let the cats rip! They haven't got Farman with 'em, anyhow! He's a decent chap, I believe, but he's thundering weak. Too good-natured altogether. Doesn't know how to say 'no' to a fellow—"

Quite suddenly I sat up.

An alarming thought had entered my brain-box.

Had Fullwood routed Farman out of bed? The new junior was sleeping in the little bedroom, just along the dormitory passage. By this time Farman could have been smuggled out of the school! What an ass I'd been not to think of it before!

But I was wrong, of course. Fullwood wasn't such an idiot as to take a new fellow down to the White Harp on his very first night at St. Frank's! All the same, I meant to make sure.

I slipped out of bed, padded softly to the door in my bare feet, and went out into the passage. The school was quiet. The masters were still up, of course, but there were no masters' studies or bed-rooms in this quarter of the House.

I reached Farman's bed-room and softly opened the door. The little apartment was silent and dark. I crept across to the bed and bent down. At such close quarters I could see distinctly.

The bed was empty!

The sheets and blankets were thrown back, and it was obvious that Justin B. Farman



In a moment Nelson Lee and the kidnapper were fighting the Chinaman with great energy. But he was like a

had left it only a short time before. He'd gone! Fullwood & Co. had taken him off with them!

The idiot—the fat-headed ass!

I simply glared at the empty bed. I didn't blame Farman so much. He was new to school life—in England, at all events. Fullwood had probably told him that it was the usual thing for juniors to get up after lights out and visit shady public-houses. And

Farman, being weak-willed and easy-going, had accompanied the knuts.

For about twenty seconds I stood still, thinking. In emergencies I had been taught by the gun'or to act with decision. Fullwood & Co. hadn't been gone more than five minutes—perhaps less, for they had had to wait for Farman to dress.



er furiously. Handforth, my chums, and I attacked a bunch of live wires as he wriggled and squirmed!

And I came to a swift decision.

If possible, I meant to defeat the knuts and rescue Farman before the White Harp was reached. Then I'd give the American junior a thorough jawing. He might resent it, and I might be called a preacher. But I should risk that. Farman needed a jawing, anyhow—breaking bounds on his first night at St. Frank's!

In less than five seconds I was back in the

Remove dormitory. I shook Tregellis-Wheat and Watson, and then roused Handforth. I decided that Handforth, for all his bluster and talk, was a handy fellow. He possessed the strength of a bull, and at heart Handforth was true blue.

"Hallo! Who's that?" mumbled Handforth sleepily. "What the dickens—"

"Get up, old scout!" I whispered. "You're wanted."

"I'm wanted!" said Handforth, sitting up. "What for? That's you, Bennett, ain't it? What's the matter? House on fire, or what? My hat, you ain't going to break bounds, are you? Do you expect me to come, you cad!"

"Oh, don't be a bigger ass than you can help, Handforth!" I protested. "You awake, Watson?"

"Yes. What's up?"

"I was dreamin'," murmured Sir Montie. "I was dreamin' of a demon cowboy who played cricket on horseback, by gad! He was just about to score a goal—"

"About time you were awakened, I reckon!" I interjected. "Scoring goals in cricket is something new. Now, look here, you chaps! We've got to get up and go out. Fullwood & Co. have broken bounds, and we're going after 'em!"

"Did you wake me up for that, you fat-head?" demanded Handforth wrathfully. "Fullwood's broken bounds scores of times."

"I know. But he's taken Farman with him this time," I said. "We're going to rescue the ass. Can't allow him to go in the dog's with Fullwood, can we?"

"Hang Fullwood, and hang Farman, too!" grunted Handforth. "If he's fool enough to go out with the knuts, let him! I don't see why we should look after him. He's old enough to know his own mind, I suppose!"

"That's just it," I said. "He's new to St. Frank's. He's new to England altogether. Fullwood's persuaded him to break bounds. Perhaps he doesn't know it's an offence that'll get him the sack if he's found out. He doesn't know the ropes, and it's up to us to look after him until he shakes down. After that, if he's fool enough to go out blagging, we'll let him go his own way. He's a good chap in the main."

Watson looked at me doubtfully.

"Something in what you say," he admitted. "Farman's a fathead, all the same! What the dickens did he want to take any notice of Fullwood for? Are you sure he's gone out with the knuts?"

"Positive. Slip your things on, and don't jaw so much."

"That's all very well," said Watson. "Suppose we're spotted?"

"Oh, rats! We'll chance that!" I said impatiently.

"I'm ready for anything you like, Benny boy," murmured Sir Montie. "Count on me. You're leader, an' it's not our place to question you. Breakin' bounds isn't in my line, but it's all for the good cause. I'm resigned."

And Tregollis-West commenced dressing quickly. The other two, after a second's hesitation, followed his example.

"Not a second to lose," I said. "Fullwood's been gone nearly ten minutes. But he and his chums will take the road, I expect. It's a bit longer, but it offers more cover in the case of a surprise. The towing-path is as bare as a plain. We'll go that way, and run all the way."

My idea was to surprise the knuts before they entered the inn. Then we would rush them, and carry Farman away by force. Once back at the school, I'd tell him a few home truths.

But the whole scheme was useless if we didn't start off immediately. The others were soon ready, and we left the dormitory.

I led the way downstairs. The big hall was dark and deserted. We reached Study C without difficulty and closed the door. Then we breathed freely. It was easy enough to get out of the window into the Triangle, and from there into the playing fields. Once through the hedge we should be on the towing-path within a minute.

Happily the night was dark.

We scudded across the open space of the Triangle, and reached the playing fields.

We didn't speak as we ran along the path, with the river on one side of us and bare meadows on the other. We were running hard, for it was absolutely necessary to reach the White Harp before Fullwood & Co.

At last the inn loomed in sight. It stood by itself, and the road was quite near. The road passed in front of the inn, and the towing-path at the back. When we were nearly there I led the way across the strip of grass to the hedge.

A gap was negotiated, and then we stood on the dusty lane.

"We've done it!" I panted. "They haven't come yet!"

"What's the programme?" asked Watson.

"I suppose we'll string out—"

"Hallo! What's that?" said Handforth sharply.

Clearly on the night air a definite sound had come to us; it came from just round the first bend of the lane. It was a cry for help! And the voice, I knew, was that of Ralph Leslie Fullwood!

CHAPTER 7.

Farman is Kidnapped!

WHAT had happened?

Even as we held our breath, we heard the cry repeated.

"Help!" came Fullwood's shout, and the voices of Gulliver and Bell were added to his. Evidently something bad had taken place.

"Great corks!" gasped Handforth.

"What's wrong? Some tramp or other—"

"Come on!" I said between my teeth.

I led the way up the lane, running for all I was worth. The others, good runners as they

were, were left behind. I turned the corner, and saw three dim figures. They turned towards me as I approached.

"You're too late!" exclaimed Fullwood huskily.

I came to a stop and looked at the knuts. Justin B. Farman was not with them! Fullwood & Co. saw, at the same moment, who I was.

"Bennett!" gasped Fullwood. "And some other chaps, too! What the dickens are you doing? But we want the police—"

"Where's Farman?" I asked sharply.

"He's gone!"

"Gone!" yelled Handforth, coming up.

"Some rotters attacked us and carried Farman off!" blurted out Bell, shivering with fear. "Oh, it was awful! We were taken by surprise! They've collared Farman, and he's gone!"

"By god!" said Sir Montie mildly. "By god!"

"Look here, Fullwood, tell me what happened a minute ago!" I said. "We were

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waiting for you down the lane. I found out that you'd taken Farman with you, and these fellows and I came out to muck up your rotten game. It seems that something else has happened."

"Oh! So you were interfering!—"

"Don't rot now!" I snapped. "What's happened to the new kid?"

"You heard what Bell said, didn't you?" growled Fullwood, recovering himself somewhat. "It wasn't our fault, I suppose?"

"What wasn't your fault?" roared Handforth.

"Farman's been kidnapped!" gasped Gulliver shakily.

"Kidnapped?"

"Oh, stars!" muttered Tommy Watson.

"We were coming down the lane, talking"—began Fullwood.

"Who was talking?" I asked abruptly.

"We all were, of course."

"Did Farman speak fairly loudly?"

"That's funny," put in Gulliver. "Farman was talking rather loudly, as it happened. How the dickens did you know? We had to warn the ass not to raise his voice so much. He was talking when we were attacked."

"Well, go on," I said impatiently.

"Two men sprang out of the hedge," said Fullwood. "They were on us before we could do a thing. I yelled for help, but Gulliver was bowled over, and Bell was too jolly frightened to do anything."

"Didn't you do anything, dear fellow?" asked Montie.

"How could I?" growled Fullwood. "The beasts were collarng Farman. They got him down an' tied his feet an' hands. Then they carried him through the hedge and into the wood. I tried to stop them, but one of the rotters was carrying a great cudgel. I didn't fancy getting my head cracked!"

"Funks!" said Handforth contemptuously. "Three of you—and the two men had their hands full up with Farman! Funks! Couldn't you have driven 'em off?"

"Oh, hang you!" snarled Fullwood.

He could see that he and his chums had cut very poor figures in the affair. Their companion had been taken from them, and they hadn't even put up a fight. It was not surprising, though. The knuts were not renowned for their pluck and stamina.

But I was startled.

What did this mean? What could it mean—except one thing?

Mr. Thorne had been kidnapped, and he had been taken to a cave on the coast, three miles away. On being rescued he had muttered Farman's name. That's all we knew. And now, on Farman's first night at St. Frank's, he had been kidnapped, too! It was too obvious to be missed.

The men who had attacked Mr. Thorne were the men who had attacked Farman. But what had they done with the American fellow? They thought, of course, that Fullwood & Co. would rush off in terror; and, before assistance could come, they would have their victim safely away—or killed! For

it struck me that the object of all this plotting was murder!

And Farman had been taken away right in front of the knuts' eyes!

"You say the strangers went through the hedge?" I asked keenly, forgetting for the moment that I was a schoolboy and not a detective. But, of course, at heart I was a detective, and now that something mysterious—something criminal—had happened, I was in my element.

"Yes, through that gap," replied Gulliver. He pointed, and I saw a low gap through the bottom of the hedge. Beyond it was the dark bulk of Bellton Wood. This stretch of woodland went right back, I knew, to Bannington Moor, a couple of miles distant.

By night the wood was black and grim; it would have been possible for a hundred men to hide in it. I almost felt in a panic as I gazed at the dark trees. For I knew that it would be impossible to track the ruffians. With a light— But I hadn't got a light.

"We shall have to make a search," I began, but Fullwood interrupted.

"Somebody coming!" he ejaculated in alarm.

We listened.

Quite clearly the sound of leisurely footsteps came to us. Somebody was walking along the lane, and he was coming from the village. I recognised the tread in an instant. The newcomer was Nelson Lee!

And I went hot with excitement and pleasure.

The gov'nor! He was the very man for the job! Of course, he had been for his long walk, and he was now on his way back to St. Frank's. It was early yet—for him. Eleven o'clock hadn't struck.

"Cave!" muttered Bell with chattering teeth. "It's a master!"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Handforth.

He and Sir Montie and Tommy Watson gazed at one another in dire consternation. And Fullwood & Co. made a dive on to the grass. Then they pelted away towards the school at full speed.

"Come on!" whispered Handforth hurriedly. "We'd better run for it, too!"

But it was too late!

"Who's that?" demanded the gov'nor's voice sharply.

"We're in for it, Benny," murmured Tregellis-West. "It's Alvy! It's our respected Housemaster. Better not budge, Handforth. Face the music like a man, you know. It's the fate of the good samaritan to be misunderstood. We came out on an errand of mercy—and we shall get the sack!"

"Rats!" I said. "We're safe enough!"

Nelson Lee came up to us, and flight was impossible. I, of course, had never thought of flight. But the others had naturally been alarmed, and their instincts had told them to make themselves scarce.

"Upon my soul!" exclaimed the gov'nor in surprise. "You are St. Frank's boys—juniors! What does this mean, you young rascals! What are you doing out of your dormitory at this hour of the night?"

"It's all right, sir," I said coolly.

"Nip—Bennett!" said Mr. Alvington, correcting himself before the others heard anything. "So you are breaking boards—and you have brought other boys out with you. Tell me your names at once!"

"Tregellis-West, sir," said Montie calmly. The others gave theirs in awe-struck voices, and there was a momentary silence. The gov'nor, I knew, was wondering what the night expedition meant. In the circumstances he couldn't ask me point-blank. He guessed, of course, that I had a good reason for being out; but he was compelled to be stern.

"You will come with me to the school—" he began.

"Hold on, sir," I said quickly.

"I refuse to hold any conversation with you here, Bennett!" said the Housemaster sternly, piling it on beautifully. "Unless you can give a very satisfactory explanation for this gross breach of the school rules—"

"Farman, the new junior, has been kidnapped, sir," I said quickly.

The gov'nor caught me by the shoulder in the darkness, unseen by the others.

"Farman has been kidnapped?" he asked. "Dear me! That makes a big alteration, my boy! Let me hear your story. Be brief—and lose no time."

I coughed.

"We didn't mean to say a word about it to anybody, sir," I began. "But, as you've come along, we shall have to speak. And now that Farman's been carried off it makes a big difference. We should have had to get help in any case."

"Well? Go on—go on, young 'un!"

Lee was keen, and he pressed my shoulder reassuringly.

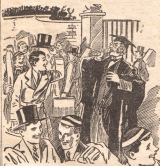
"Farman's a new chap, as you know, sir," I said. "He—he doesn't know the school ropes. You see, I don't want to get him into a row—if he's found."

"Farman will not be punished, whatever you say, Bennett."

"That's all right, then!" I exclaimed. "I couldn't sneak about him, sir. But he was

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breaking bonds, and I found it out. Farman doesn't know the ropes yet, and he may have thought that getting out at night wasn't such a serious offense as it is. Anyhow, he left his bed-room, and we—Tregellis-West and Handforth and Watson and I—came after him, to lug him back."

"I quite understand," said Nelson Lee, nodding. "In the circumstances, you will not be punished severely—ines will meet the case, I can see. You came out from a good motive, and that alters the affair. It is possible that I shall overlook the offense altogether."

I heard my companions sigh with relief. "What a brick!" I heard Handforth whisper. "What a stunner!"

"Alvy's a gentleman—he is, really!" murmured Sir Montie languidly.

I had purposely refrained from mentioning Fullwood & Co. They had escaped, and although they were absolutely to blame for the whole incident, I couldn't inform against them.

"When we were nearly up with Farman," I went on, "we heard a cry for help. Two men had got hold of him, sir, and they carried him through a gap in the hedge, bound hand and foot. At least, I believe so. But it's possible that his feet were free. He couldn't walk with bound feet, could he? And I expect he is being forced through the wood at this very minute. There is probably a motor-car waiting on the other side, against the moor."

"How do you know that, dear Bennett?" asked Montie.

"I don't know—it's what I think!" I replied. "We couldn't follow the ratters, sir." I went on, turning to the gov'nor again. "We hadn't a light of any sort—and then you came along."

Nelson Lee clicked his teeth sharply.

"I quite understand, my boy," he said. "Well, we must follow these men, and do our utmost to rescue the unfortunate boy. This affair is obviously connected with—." He paused. "But come; we have no time to waste."

"All of us, sir?" asked Watson incredulously.

"Yes, all of you!" said the detective. "You may be wanted."

"By Jove! He's the kind of House-master!" murmured Tregellis-West admiringly. "Now, old Stockdale, of the College House, would have had ten fits in a situation like this. Alvy's rippin'. He's great. He ought to have been a detective!"

Montie was right on the mark there—but he didn't know it!

Nelson Lee had taken in the situation at once; and, what was more, he meant to get on the track without a second's delay. The fact that Tregellis-West and Watson and Handforth were with us was really splendid. Our party would just be a schoolmaster and a crowd of boys. If the gov'nor and I had been alone it would have been somewhat risky. The Fu Changs were as sharp as

needles; and, in reading of this affair—or hearing of it—they might have connected things. As it was, there was no danger of any sort.

Mr. Alvington—to use the gov'nor's school name—brought out his electric torch, and walked quickly to the gap in the hedge. For some moments he examined the ground in silence. Then he looked at us.

"I think the task of trailing the ruffians will be easy," he said. "The trail is very clearly marked, and our quarry must have, of necessity, progressed slowly. We shall make better speed."

"You're going into the wood, sir?" asked Handforth.

"Yes, and I am going to rescue Farman!" replied Nelson Lee grimly.

CHAPTER 2.

The Fight by the Mill!

NELSON LEE was in his element, now—as I was. This was a real detective adventure. We hadn't expected to get detective adventures at St. Frank's. And so we were both rather eager.

We knew, however, that the case was really serious. And we were puzzled as to the cause of the whole business. Why had Justin B. Farman been kidnapped? Who were these men who had captured him so dramatically?

They couldn't have been lying in wait for him—that was certain. Farman had come out that night unexpectedly. So it was clear that the men had been in the wood by chance, and, hearing Farman's unmistakable voice, had acted on the spur of the moment.

It was clear that the attack had been hastily decided. No kidnapers, however daring, would have taken their victim by force when he was accompanied by others. But Fullwood & Co. were only juniors, and the men had assumed that the boys would be too frightened to offer resistance. That assumption had been correct, for the knuts had been frightened out of their wits almost.

And now Nelson Lee was tracking the unknown soundrels with great skill. To Tregellis-West and Handforth and Watson it seemed almost miraculous. Unerringly the gov'nor led the way through the dense wood, picking his way deliberately, and with never a mistake.

He followed the trail of the strangers without a pause. Yet, to anybody not versed in woodcraft, the task would have been impossible. The tracks were clear enough to Lee, and I could follow them fairly easily. For we were both trained in woodcraft in all its branches. The gov'nor, especially, was a wonder. He could follow a trail as keenly as any bloodhound.

Only once did the detective go wrong, and then it was I who pointed out the mistake. And we were soon on the right track again. The wood was dense, and the falling leaves

had formed a soft carpet upon the ground. We made no noise as we progressed. I knew that we stood a good chance of rescuing Farman.

For there had been no waste of time. If Nelson Lee had not come up when he did there would have been a very great waste of time, and the kidnappers would have smuggled their victim away. Events had happened very luckily.

At last the trees thinned somewhat, and progress was faster.

"Gettin' near the moor now," murmured Tregellis-West in my ear. "Dear boy, isn't Alvy a peach? Isn't he a marvel? How does he do those things? He rescued Mr. Thorne from the care at Calstone Bay, didn't he? He seems to be a Sexton Blake and a Sherlock Holmes all rolled into one, by gad! I'm staggered, you know—I am, really!"

"This is a ripping adventure!" grinned Handforth. "And no punishment either! My only topper! Won't the fellows yell to-morrow when we tell 'em?"

"They will—if we rescue Farman," I said grimly. "If we don't—"

"Hush, boys!" murmured the gov'nor, from ahead.

And we hushed.

It was lucky we did, as it happened. For the trees suddenly came to an end, and we saw before us a wide, undulating stretch of moorland. The gloom of the night seemed almost bright after the blackness of the wood.

Quite near us, on a little rise, stood an old ruined building.

"By Jove! The old ruined mill!" whispered Sir Montie.

I could see it was a mill, now. But my attention was attracted by something else. A narrow road ran close to the mill, and there, against the building, stood—a closed motor-car!

There were no lights on it, and I only recognised it because I had been looking for something of the sort. The men, it was clear, had left the car there while they went through the wood. I suspected that they had intended raiding the school itself, but had been saved the trouble. Or they may only have been scouting. Anyhow, by a stroke of chance, they had captured their man.

Then I saw two dim figures against the mill—the two men and Farman! He was being forced towards the car! Truly, we had only arrived in the nick of time! Another five minutes, and the scoundrels would have completely vanished!

"This is lucky!" murmured Nelson Lee. "Very lucky!"

"What's to be done, gov'-sir?" I asked excitedly, nearly making a bloomer in my eagerness. The others were too excited to notice my slip. They would have been astonished if they had heard me address Mr. Alvington as "gov'nor"!

I saw Lee fetch out his automatic—even now, at St. Frank's, the gov'nor always carried his revolver.

"We must deliver a surprise attack," he said softly. "You boys had better remain in the rear—leave the work to me—"

"Oh, I say, sir!" protested Handforth.

"We want to have a hand in it!"

"Begad, I should say so!" said Tregellis-West. "We're dyin' for a scrap, sir. We ain't afraid. We'll do our bit."

"Very well—but be careful!" muttered Lee. "Now—come on!"

As he spoke he pelted across the intervening space. A surprise attack was the only course open to us. I and the other juniors followed hard on Nelson Lee's heels. We simply flew over the grass.

We got to within twenty yards before our presence was discovered. Then came a sudden, furious cry.

"Quick, Ling—somebody is coming!" came a husky voice. "Quick, man! I guess we'll need to hustle!"

But hustling was no good—then. We were upon the scoundrels.

Nelson Lee made straight for the taller of the two men. Justin B. Farman, with bound hands, was released. Something flashed in the bigger man's hand. It was a revolver!

But, in a second, the gov'nor's fist went up, and the weapon went flying harmlessly away. The next second Lee and the stranger were fighting furiously.

The smaller man found himself facing me. Then I caught a terrific shock; so great a shock, indeed, that I was incapable of action for a second.

The second man was—a Chinaman!

Instantly there flashed into my head the remembrance of the dreaded Fu Chang Tong—the fearful, murderous Chinese secret society which had sworn to kill Nelson Lee and me.

Was this man, this Chinese, a member of the Tong?

Had our secret been discovered?

I had no time to think further; my wits had returned, and I attacked with great energy. But the Chinaman was like a bunch of live wires. He wriggled and squirmed amazingly. Tregellis-West and Handforth piled on to him, but he escaped. Then we all attacked together.

Misfortune overtook us.

Handforth—quite accidentally—slipped, and went down. Sir Montie tripped over him, and Watson tripped over Sir Montie. Confusion reigned. I was down, too, for I had been rushing forward.

When I scrambled up, bellowing, the Chinaman was running like the wind towards the motor-car. He had already reached the road. The three Remotes were on the ground in a struggling heap.

I looked across at Nelson Lee.

He was still fighting furiously with the big stranger. And, as I looked, the man abruptly fled. He flew down towards the car; he had apparently seen his Chinese companion's sudden move. The engine of the automobile was raring, and it now raced. The Chinese was at the wheel.

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Nelson Lee was rushing after his man, and I started running, too. Tregellis-West and the others hadn't sorted themselves out. The whole affair was over in less than a minute.

The gov'nor would undoubtedly have spoilt the game but for an unforeseen circumstance. The facing man suddenly twisted round, picked something up, and threw it. Then Nelson Lee went down in a heap.

“Great Scott!” I gasped.

I swerved aside and pelted to the gov'nor. When I got to him he was sitting up. The man had thrown a large stone, and it had struck the detective on the right kneecap, sending him flying.

“Are you hurt, sir?” I asked anxiously.

“A bruise, Nipper!” murmured Lee under his breath. “Pun my soul! Look there! The bounds have got away—we can't stop them now!”

The motorcar was moving and gathering speed rapidly. In less than twenty seconds it had almost disappeared into the gloom.

“But we've got Farman, sir!” I said triumphantly.

“Yes—we have rescued the poor boy,” replied Lee. “And that is the main thing. How infernally unfortunate!”

Handforth and the others rushed up.

“Hurt, sir?” asked Tregellis-West concernedly.

“Not much, my boy,” smiled Mr. Abington painfully. “The rascal threw a stone at me. It struck my kneecap and bowled me over.”

“They've escaped!” bawled Handforth furiously.

“You're wonderful, sir!” said Sir Montie. “Bogad, I can't say what I think! I'm gropin' for words! Farman's here, sir! He's not touched! And you rescued him! Just think of it, dear fellows!”

Justin B. Farman was standing by our side. He had been bound previously, and had been unable to take any hand in the fight. But Tregellis-West and Watson had freed him. He seemed to be strangely subdued.

Nelson Lee got to his feet. The motorcar had vanished now, and nothing could be heard of it, either. The kidnappers had escaped, and I doubted if they would ever be traced. But their dastardly attempt had failed. And they had only escaped by a mere fluke.

Upon the whole, though, we had every reason to congratulate ourselves.

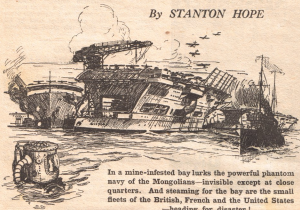
“I guess I'm real obliged to you, pardn'!” said Farman in a low voice. “Say, that was

(Continued on page 44.)

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The SQUADRON of DEATH!

By STANTON HOPE



In a mine-infested bay lurks the powerful phantom navy of the Mongolians—invisible except at close quarters. And steaming for the bay are the small fleets of the British, French and the United States—heading for disaster!

The Typhoon!

LEUTENANT VAL CRICHTON, late of the Royal Navy, leaned back in the open cockpit of his new seaplane which rolled lazily in the swells of the Yellow Sea. The myriad stars in the tropic sky appeared to be winking approval of his daring exploit in flying it from Fusan, the port of Korea, and so preventing his arch-enemy Mosaki, the treacherous Mongolian statesman, from making use of it.

The mystery seaplane rightly belonged to Val, who had flown it for the first time that night. His uncle, the late Professor Norvall Crichton, had left him a vast fortune in money and all his other property, including this weird machine of his own invention.

Val turned smilingly toward his crew—the strangely assorted pair, old Mike O'Hara, the Irishman, and Pompey, the negro boy, whom he regarded as his best chums.

"Mike, old shipmate," he chuckled, "we've got to give this queer kite a name, and your suggestion strikes me as a rattling good one—the Banshee."

The red-boarded Irishman took a discoloured clay pipe from his hat and inserted it, upside-down, between his teeth.

"Aye, skipper," he murmured modestly.

"'Tis meself will admit I hit the nail on the head wid the first shot at the target."

Val laughed, but Pompey, who never noticed Mike's quaintly mixed metaphors, inquired seriously:

"What am dis puzoon, Massa Mike?"

"A Banshee?" Mike said. "Ut isn't a puzoon at all. Sure, 'tis a spook, like pshaw you yourself were sp'aking about, me bhoy. And if this craft isn't a spook, may I never see the Ould Country again."

He exploded in a gale of laughter.

"Faith, I'd give me lucky four-leaved shamrock to see the face o' that Mongolian spalpeen, Mosaki, whin he finds out we've bagged the ould kite from his sentries!"

The Banshee, as they decided to call the machine, was built of a nearly invisible metal known as aldurion, and it was driven by vapour generated from pure alcohol and discharged from tubes. They knew already that it could fly at high speed, and wheels, fitted under the fuselage in addition to floats, permitted it to be landed on solid ground and used as an armoured car.

Seated at the controls, Val could hardly credit that this was a scientific device of 1943. It seemed almost that he and his chums

had been transported into the fantastic period of the "Arabian Nights."

While Mike enjoyed his brief smoke, Val recalled what his uncle's partner, the scientist, Bornsten, had told him at Fusan.

The yellow nations, over-populated and with no adequate colonies, were eager for conquest. Mosaki and others, while talking of disarmament, aimed to seize the British Empire in the Pacific and America's island possessions. Warships and air squadrons had been built secretly of aldurin in the Asiatic yards, ready to strike treacherously at the small British, French and American Fleets.

And Professor Crichton and two other Europeans had helped to make practicable the stupendous plot! Now, however, all these were dead—Bornsten and a Greek scientist, Fericopol, having been killed by the Mongolians.

After a short rest, Val and his two chums made a more detailed inspection of the Banshee. They found that the wings could be folded back, and when Val moved the lever that operated them, the seaplane rode the deep-sea swells more easily.

The interior compartments were lighted dimly but sufficiently by protected tubes containing a particle of radium mixed with phosphorescent zinc sulphide. The night compasses, the sights of the machine-guns—of silent 1943 pattern—were illuminated by the same scientific means.

Suddenly Pompey drew a deep breath.

"G-golly!" he gasped.

Mike spun round to face him.

"Phwat is it, libby?"

"Grab!" Pompey chuckled. "Take a peck in dis locker, Massa Mike. Tinned Japanese lobster! Tinned apricots! Tinned—"

"Grandmithers!" Mike grunted. "We need the grub, o' course; but 'tis ammunition and such-loike we want most, or else the guns are useless entirely."

A further search satisfied them that there was ample ammunition on board, and then Val made another discovery.

"Fish!" he exulted.

Mike rolled his eyes.

"Haddock or sardines?" he inquired casually.

"Torpedoes!" Val explained. "They call 'em 'fish' or 'mouldies' in the Navy, where I was trained. See 'em all on racks in this cabinet!"

Old Mike stared hard.

"Arrah!" he exclaimed. "I 'fought they were overgrown cigars."

The objects were bronze in colour—wonderfully constructed miniature torpedoes! And in the bow and stern of the Banshee were twin tubes with compressed-air cylinders for firing the deadly fish.

"Good bizney!" Val commented, after examining them. "The Banshee's going to prove a hard nut for Mosaki to crack. We've seen the acet of inventions my uncle and his pals have been turning out, so you can take it that these are no ordinary fish.

I'll bet each of 'em packs a punch sufficient to bounce a battleship out of the sea!"

"B-b-bress m-m-me!" stuttered Pompey. "Dey sartingly am mos' neat, bees. But I was s'inking—and I've not scared, n-no—jest s'posing one ob dese torpedo fellows got kind ob bottled up and went off in de rack. What den?"

"Phwat thin!" echoed Mike. "In that case, me libby, you'd get quick promotion from bottle-washer to a blackbird! Ho, ho, ho!"

The more that Val saw of the Banshee and thought of her in relation to Mosaki's plot, the more he enthused at the prospect of butting into whatever trouble lay ahead. Left £5,000,000 by his late uncle, he had taken up sport, broken all speed records of the land, air and sea, and had been bored to death on a world cruise. Now, in this new craft which had replaced his hydroplane Golden Carp, sunk by the Mongolians, he could get right into the thick of the fight.

He arranged night watches to enable them all to obtain much-needed sleep in turn.

"At dawn we'll head for Tainan," he announced.

"Aah!" Mike exclaimed. "That's where the Allied warships are going on their friendly visit. Do you suppose, sar, the yellow spalpeens have a thrick up their sleeves?"

"I do," Val answered decidedly. "After Mosaki's spot of bother at Fusan, he'll speed up whatever plans are afoot."

Mike restored his pipe to his grubby hand.

"'Tis comfortin'," he remarked, "that the consul at Fusan has sent a wireless warning to the Fleet."

"And a fat lot of good it will do!" Val responded. "He heard my yarn—Heaven knows it sounded fantastic enough!—and had signals made in cipher warning the ships and shore establishments. Double look-outs will be posted in the Fleet, but the ships themselves will carry on with the friendly job of 'showing the flag' to the Formosans at Tainan."

"In the good old Banshee," Mike murmured, "we can get to Tainan hours before the ships."

Scientific training in the Navy enabled Val to make some necessary adjustments to the Banshee's wireless set. He established communication with the Fleet, but dared not report the type of craft he had acquired. With delicate instruments the Mongolians would be tapping the ether, and only the most complicated ciphers were safe from them. Val had some of these elaborate naval codes aboard.

The chief result of the time spent at the wireless instrument was that he picked up a message that plainly indicated the Fleet was proceeding to Tainan as arranged.

Finding plenty to occupy him, he did not trouble to call Pompey for a watch that night, but allowed the negro boy to sleep.

He himself secured a "shut-eye" between 4 a.m. and dawn, when Mike roused him.

"Shake a leg, skipper!" the Irishman warned. "Bejabbers, the barometer is falling fast, and though it's sun-up, there's devil a bit o' sun to be seen at all, at all!"

Val donned his jacket and shoes and looked anxiously across the deserted sea towards the eastward. The red-bearded Irish seaman pointed with his clay pipe.

"See that, skipper! Looks loike someone's spilt pea-soup all over the sky. It means dirty weather, I'm thinkin'."

"Great sea-snakes!" Val exclaimed. "That's a typhoon brewing."

"Typhoon, is ut?" Mike hooted. He pointed skyward. "Pawat about unfolding the wings and getting up to the ceiling!"

"Too late! See those 'white horses'! Breakers! Hear that whistling? Hurricane wind! Get the hatches battened—I mean, screwed down. The Banshee's safer afloat; she's a good sea-boat. We'll ride out the storm better at sea than in the air."

They descended into the forward compartment which resembled the large cockpit of an aeroplane, and closed the circular hatch made of aldurine and rubber-lined on the inside.

"Get the engine started, Mike!" Val snapped.

The Irishman hurried aft, and on the way roused Pompey with a deft flick of his boot.

There was no time to be lost. Advancing from the eastward was the scourge of the Yellow Sea—the dreaded typhoon!

Rendering the hatch water-tight, Val could hear the whistle of the wind rising in crescendo to a savage shriek as though some fearful winged demon had been loosed from the sky.

"Pompey!" he roared. "Give that val-casite wheel a few spins—the one I showed you last night. Wind it over to the right till you can't get another turn from it. That'll raise the wheels under the old hooker. We don't want 'em smashed by the seas."

"Bery good, massa!"

He yawned, but his expression changed when Val issued the warning:

"And keep a tight grip, my lad! Dirty weather's coming! Take care you don't crack any of the machinery with that cast-iron skull of yours!"

He hurried to the controls, seated himself, and headed the Banshee due east toward the tumbling foam advancing across the leaden sea. His eyes peered through the thick screen of unbreakable glass, and, despite the decision to ride out the typhoon on the surface, he wondered how the craft would behave.

The Banshee was completely water-tight—he knew that. This strange, almost invisible craft had ample ballast tanks, and several huge cylinders which he believed to contain compressed air. The only purpose for the latter, so far as he had been able to judge, was to replenish the smaller cylinders used for the torpedo-tubes. This equipment

would help the Banshee to maintain buoyancy during the forthcoming buffeting.

The hurricane wind, rushing ahead of the foaming waters, rasped like steel knives along the metal, stream-lined hull of the craft. The tumbling mass of foam bore down on her, and Val caught his breath in anticipation of the hammer-blow of the storm-god.

An amazing spectacle! The sea about the Banshee was calm as the proverbial millpond; beyond the white vanguard of the typhoon stretched wildest chaos.

The Banshee dipped her nose.

CRASH!

For one devastating moment, Val believed they had got a passport for the Dead Men's Locker!

It was as if Neptune, in vengeful mood, had risen from the ocean depths and dealt a thunderous blow with a steel sledge-hammer! The Banshee reeled to the shock. The impressive scene of white foam and sulphurous sky was obliterated. To Val it appeared that the shadow of death had enveloped the craft.

Then, after that first ear-shattering crash, all the noise of a busy shipyard was loosened. To the repeated punch of giant seas, the metal hull of the mystery-craft shuddered till it seemed it must be split asunder.

The Banshee writhed and bucked while Val held a coarse through the giant's cauldron stirred by the typhoon. Vainly he looked for the horizon; the glass screen before him presented the appearance of a huge, oblong emerald.

"My stars!" he gulped. "She's going through the waves, not over 'em."

The colour deepened through all the shades of green until the screen was jet-black.

Haggard of face, Val gazed at the various gauges and indicators on the control-board. The Banshee was moving forward at a steady ten knots, which was all he had dared make for fear of straining the metal plates beyond endurance. The needle of the altimeter, used when the mystery-craft was in the air, was creeping round the dial—backwards!

For the first time, he took real notice of a second set of figures on the altimeter, arranged in the reverse way from those that ran clock-wise.

"What the blue blazes has gone wrong?" he muttered.

With every passing second, the Banshee was steadying herself, and soon she was travelling as smoothly as before the bursting of the typhoon. All noise died away except the almost imperceptible hum of the engine pumping the vapour.

Mike stambled forward.

"For hiven's sake, don't play the goat, sor!" he gasped. "The deck o' the old hooker's got a list fore and aft. Pawat's up!"

"Nothing's up," Val croaked. "We're down! Over a hundred feet registered on the dial—that's nearly twenty fathoms."

"Under the sea? For the love o' Mike, put her nose up!"

"Take charge here!" Val snapped. "If we keep our present course, we shall soon be crawling along the bed of the Yellow Sea!"

Leaving Mike at the controls, he dashed through the narrow metal-lined hull toward Pompey, who, after a rest, was slowly turning a vulcanite wheel again.

"Avast, you black imp!" Val howled. "That's the wrong wheel you're tinkering with!"

Pompey's jaw sagged.

"De wrong wheel! Sure, boss, I t'ought

"Go for'ard!"

Val slacked the wheel a few turns and

No wonder she's stopped bucking. We're travelling at twenty fathoms under the storm."

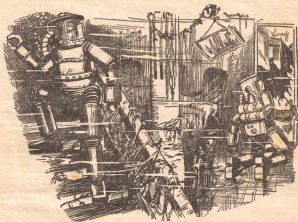
"Sainted Mither McCree! Why did I 'ave the ould windjammers!"

Val took over from him, and Pompey crept forward bearing a metal object under his arm.

"Sorry about de wheel, boss," he said. "I see wonderin' if dia will be ob use to yo' later! I opened a sort ob cupboard and found dis telescope."

Val looked back over his shoulder.

"Jove!" he exclaimed. "If I'd seen that before I should have understood earlier. It's a periscope."



Val saw the mirror shattered as the Mongolian diver struck at it with all his force. Then the man dropped to his knees and gazed at his handiwork in stupefaction. Seizing his chance, Val moved from the saloon and up the stairway.

hastened back to Mike. The reason of the Banshee's strange behaviour had become clear to him, and, for the first time, he understood certain gadgets connected with the wings, the tail and a horizontal rudder.

He experimented with some levers and watched the needle of the altimeter begin to drop back.

"Phew!" he breathed. "Now she's keeping on an even keel."

"Lucky I'm not superstitious," Mike mumbled, "or I'd say there was somethin' fishy about this hooker."

Val's perspiring face relaxed in a smile. "She's a whale, Mike! There's another secret about her and I've just figured it out.

The darky boy looked puzzled.

"I t'ought dat was a shell-fish, sah."

"Aw, you're thinkin' of a periwinkle, moe bboy," Mike said. "Listen, Pompey! Have you ever been in an airplane that swims under the sea?"

Pompey scratched his woolly head.

"Nebber, Massa Mike."

Mike grinned.

"Well, unbeknown to yourself," he said, "you aren't sp'aking the truth. You're in an airplane under the sea now—see!"

Pompey's eyes became round as saucers.

"Golly!"

"Quite true, my lad," Val smiled. "At present you're twenty fathoms down. And

when you tinkered with that wheel, you opened the valves to let the sea into the ballast tanks. So the Banshee lost her buoyancy and nosed downward."

A worried look clouded Mike's eyes. "Bedad, I've just thought o' something," he said. "We've come down all right, but phwat about whin we want to go up?"

"Dead easy," Val assured him. "Those big compressed-air cylinders have another use beside replenishing the smaller cylinders for the 'fish'-tubes. When we want to go up we operate the valves to blow the sea-water from the ballast tanks—some principle as in a naval submarine."

"Thin that's all right, sor," Mike murmured doubtfully. "Afther all, 'tis better down here in the smooth water than bucking that typhoon up above!"

The Phantom Navy!

TWICE within the next two hours, Val tried to reach the surface. The compressed-air apparatus for blowing the sea-water ballast from the tanks worked perfectly, but it was not until the third attempt that he found the weather had moderated.

The typhoon had passed westward and the tropical sun was pouring gold on the swirling seas.

The metal wings of the Banshee had been designed with scientific skill for use below the surface in the manner of hydroplanes. The swept tail became the horizontal rudder, and what was the altimeter of an aeroplane automatically resolved itself into the depth-gauge of a submarine. So the craft could move obliquely upward or downward, and the exact distance below the surface was recorded with perfect accuracy.

Val raised the wheels through the hull, or fuselage, and found they had suffered no harm. Then, after the hatches had been opened, he spread the wings, increased the speed to a fast clip over the surface, and rose into the air.

At a speed of nearly three hundred miles an hour he raced southward in the vapour-driven Banshee, and presently sighted the storm-battered Allied Fleet waddling along in the direction of the Formosan port, Tainan. But the look-outs aboard the ships could neither see nor hear the strange hybrid craft aloft.

"They won't make port till dusk," Val said to Mike.

"I've just been listening-in on the wireless, sor," the Irishman said. "A message came through in plain English. Ut said that the ships are to drop their hooks in Rotten Bay."

"Rattan Bay—you're nearly got it right. That's just to the northward of the port; ample room there for the Fleet."

"From phwat the signal said," Mike added, "the change o' anchorage came as a request from some Lord High Muck-a-Muck in Formosa, and the message was relayed to the Admiral o' the Fleet from the Commander-in-Chief at Hong Kong."

Flying at high speed, Val brought the Banshee over the blue hills of Formosa, and soon identified the port of Tainan and the bay to the northward. He flew lower at decreased speed, and at first could only see a few naval guard-boats beyond the bay. All seemed peaceful enough, and the boats were there apparently for the benign purpose of keeping the bay clear for the visiting Fleet when it arrived.

With the engine shut off so that the machine was completely noiseless, he banked low over the bay. He knew that, except at close quarters, the Banshee could not be seen owing to the property of the metal used in its construction. This deflected light in a manner that rendered it invisible at a distance, except in certain conditions.

Val peered intently down from the cockpit and saw several moving figures.

"Bejabs!" Mike muttered. "Am I asleep or am I dr'aming? If there aren't spalpeens walking on the water, I'm a Dutchman!"

"Pompey!" Val called sottily. "Bring my field-glasses."

The negro boy passed the glasses into the cockpit, and Val focused them to his eyes while the Banshee circled silently.

"Absolutely uncanny!" he breathed. "Mike, there are men down there, and they're aboard ships. Take a dekkie with the glasses. Those lighter patches you can see against the blue sea of the bay aren't shallows. They're anchored vessels—three of 'em, and of considerable size. What can it mean?"

The Irishman peered downward in amazement, and Val swung out seaward and turned into the wind. Then he alighted far beyond the guard-ships, and so easily that there was no more disturbance of the water than might have been caused by a fish-boat.

Mike followed his skipper below.

"Ut looks serious to me, sor," he said. "The yellow varmints sartingly have some dirty work in hand."

A howl of alarm rose from Pompey, farther aft.

"Yessoo! Oh, golly!"

Val darted in the direction of the cry, and the Irish seaman followed close at his heels. The negro boy came reeling towards them, and Val flung out an arm and caught him. The boy was trembling violently and the perspiration stood in cold beads on his dusky face.

"Great Scott! What's the matter, young 'un?"

"Sure, the poor h'athen is scared stiff," Mike said. "'Tis the worst o' being sooper-stitious. Phwat's got you groggy, me boy? Anyone would think you'd clapped eyes on a spook, bedad."

Pompey pointed a trembling black finger.

"He—he's dere!" he choked. "Fo' da love ob Mike, massas, be careful! De evil eye—he had one big eye, and—"

"Ho, ho, ho!" Mike laughed, moving aft. "A spook wid one eye! Faith, I'll soon show him phwat—"

He broke off short, and leaped back as though stung.

"Yew! Skakos aloive!"

Val released the boy, rushed to Mike's side, and gazed into an open recess in the metal bulkhead or wall. There, confronting him, was a robot man, seven feet tall and with one huge eye!

The phosphorescent glow with which the interior of the Banshee was lighted helped to create an effect so weird that the hard-headed young skipper was thrown momentarily off his mental balance.

He uttered a gasp of astonishment, but almost immediately he began to laugh.

"Splendid!" he chuckled. "My uncle and his pals seem to have thought of everything—even to including in the complement of the Banshee an up-to-the-minute diving apparatus."

Both Mike and the negro boy started to laugh, too, but their merriment rang a trifle hollow.

"Well, ut's a queer-looking spalpeen," Mike commented, "and 'tis no wonder that Pompey, the poor h'atben b'oy, got scared by ut. Ay, 'tis a diving-suit o' some kind! But where are the air-pipes and phwat-zots?"

Val gave a brief explanation of the diving apparatus which Pompey had located unexpectedly by moving a sliding panel in the bulkhead while in search of more provisions.

"Diving-rig of this kind," the skipper said, "was used ten years ago, in nineteen thirty-three. This particular suit is fitted with gadgets I haven't seen before."

"Inside, 'tis a robot as iver was!" exclaimed Mike admiringly. "You did some diving yourself in the Navy, sor?"

"I took an instructional course once," Val said, "and I've used the robot diving-rig. Nowadays, it's safe to go down to four hundred feet in it. See these valves at the side of the metal suit? They're for supplying compressed oxygen—contained in these cylinders—to the diver. He works 'em himself. This arrangement inside the helmet is the wireless telephone."

"Bedad, look at his hat!" chuckled Mike. "Ut reminds me o' the things in the Ballytoggin Museum phwat were used in the Great War—'battle bowlers,' they called 'em."

"That lid unscrews," Val explained. "Actually, it's a sort of hatch, and rubber-lined to make it water-tight."

He lifted Pompey to enable him to look through the unbreakable glass port in the helmet.

"Golly," the boy breathed, "dis Maww Robot am empty inside!"

"Phwat did you expect, yos blacking?" Mike inquired, grinning. "Did you think the spalpeen's innards would be full o' phwat duff?"

"Talking of duff," Val smiled, "let's have some grub, Pompey. Make it slippy!"

He concealed the anxiety he felt. The British, French, and American ships were on their way to Tainan, and had been warned already

of the Mongolian phantom navy. And Val could picture the smiles on the weather-tanned faces of the senior officers at the receipt of the news! Nevertheless, he was convinced that the Fleet was sailing into a trap of some kind.

It was useless to broadcast further wireless warnings; he must find out, if possible, the nature of the trap set by the enemy.

While he and his crew made a hasty meal, the Mongolian guard-ships steamed out to sea. They were gunboats of the type permitted by the disarmament treaty, and not calculated to rouse suspicion.

"We'd better sheer off, skipper," Mike suggested.

"We'll stay where we are," Val answered. "Those ships are half a mile apart, and none of 'em is heading this way. The Banshee can't possibly be seen at a distance."

When the gunboats had gone, Val took the Banshee into the bay—so cautiously that that craft stirred only a few "cat's-paws" on the surface of the sea.

He hove-to again at what he considered a safe distance from the invisible Mongolian ships, built of the scientific metal, aldurion, like his own amazing craft. He knew that if he approached too closely the ships would be discernible—and so would the Banshee become visible to the enemy. The twin tubes fore and aft were loaded with the miniature torpedoes in case of emergency, and he explained to Mike the means of firing them.

The finding of the robot diving-rig provided a hope that he might be able to reach unseen the mysterious ships anchored in the bay. Like all the naval diving-suits of 1945, the apparatus had a wire-protected propeller on a broad belt of copper. This propeller could be operated from inside the suit by switching on an electric current, and so the diver could move forward under the sea.

Both Mike and Pompey were dubious when he explained to them the daring plan he had formed.

"If the yellow b'oyos spot you," Mike said, "they'll pick you out o' that divin'-suit like a winkle from ut's shell and boil you in oil."

"Quit creaking!" Val retorted. "I'm going to take a peek at those ships, and at close quarters, I'll take jolly good care no one sees me."

In the shelter of a metal hatch coaming, Val entered the suit after Mike and Pompey had brought it from its locker. He gave final instructions as to the use of a small electrical winch for hauling the suit on board again on his return, and then Mike screwed down the lid.

Val peered through the great glass port. He had a view of Mike's red-bearded face and Pompey's small black countenance, both stamped with an expression of harrowing anxiety.

He smiled to reassure them, and turned his attention to the wonderful array of scientific gadgets within the suit. Then, having made a few simple tests, he gave the order for the robot to be lowered over the side.

Between them, Mike and Pompey operated the small winch to swing the heavy apparatus down the Banshee's sloping hull, and Val operated a lever to release a metal clip to which a flexible wire had been fastened.

With scarcely a ripple, Val, inside the robot diving suit, slid into the depths of the sea.

Thirty Fathoms Down.

FOR a few moments Val Crichton experienced all the dismay of his first diving attempt in the Navy. An appalling sense of loneliness oppressed him, and he switched on a powerful electric lamp. A shoal of striped fish flashed past in pale green water before the huge glass goggles, and were welcome company.

A depth-gauge registered the feet as he went down, and then his descent was checked by density of water.

He switched on the small propeller and steered a compass course in the general direction of the anchored mystery ships.

"Here's hoping the luck's in!" Val muttered to himself.

But he knew he needed more than luck to accomplish the task he had set himself. He must exercise superb judgment and take the greatest caution in ascending.

His object was to gain the shelter of one of the Mongolian ships, but he had to locate

their exact position. To do this might require two or three ascents to the surface.

If he accomplished these in a slick manner, he did not think the rounded metal helmet would be recognised as part of a diving-suit. There were dolphins sporting in the bay, and, he assured himself, it was much more likely that any look-out aboard the Mongolian craft would take small notice of any object that appeared briefly.

The risk had to be taken.

"Now for it!"

The robot apparatus was fitted with compressed-air flasks and small ballast tanks on the principle of a submarine. And Val, who had been instructed in modern naval diving rig, made his first ascent from a depth of several fathoms with gratifying ease.

He switched off his lamp, and the olive-green sea assumed a lighter hue where the sunshine penetrated. Then the water rolled from the glass goggle, and he looked out upon the surface of the bay.

Now he was nearer the shore than where the Banshee was lying. But he only dared to remain up a second or two for fear of being spotted.

In that brief space, however, he saw enough to set his heart beating fast with excitement. Three great shapes in the form of funnel-shaped ships rose against the sky. He saw them as though through a haze, for the metal of which they were constructed was not clearly defined except at close quarters.

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Take a look at the cover of this week's GEM reproduced in miniature here. It's a long call from the quiet Sussex backwater of St. Jim's to the bustling, busy streets of Liverpool, the great seaport of the North! What are Tom Merry & Co. doing in Liverpool? You'll never guess! Get a copy of this week's GEM and read Martin Clifford's ripping long complete yarn of the cheery chums of St. Jim's up North! It's packed with thrills and fun, so don't wait—get your copy right now!

Ask for the

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Not far from them were some things which looked like logs floating on the water. He was just in time to see a diver, in similar rig to his own, turn a valve on one of the objects, and the thing sank from view. Then the diver, too, vanished below the surface.

At a depth of twenty feet Val propelled himself nearer to the spot where he had seen the other robot. He was not surprised that the Mongolians were equipped with modern diving apparatus, but he was extremely curious to know what job that other diver had in hand.

"I'll take a closer peck at the ships first," he told himself.

The idea occurred to him that if he appeared near the spot where the Mongolian diver had vanished, he could make a more prolonged survey without risk. Anyone seeing him then would mistake him for the other man. And in this belief Val made a mistake that nearly cost him his life.

He operated the valves to blow the miniature ballast tanks of the suit and rose slowly till his helmet was clear of the sea. Then his amazed eyes, peering through the glass port, saw the nature of the ships. They were large aircraft-carriers—a type of craft absolutely forbidden by the disarmament agreement of the nations! And ranged on the flight-deck of each warship was a great wisp of brood of fighting planes, all built of the same strange metal as the ships themselves!

The Mongolian races had armed and were ready to strike. In Rattan Bay lay a squadron of death, and the British, French and American warships were steaming directly into the trap! If they could manage to destroy the Allied ships of the China Station, the yellow men could press on with further diabolical schemes to acquire a Pacific empire.

The danger threatening the friendly Suez en route to Taisan so engrossed Val's mind that he was unmindful of peril to himself. Then the sudden rip of machine-gun bullets over the water near him gave grim warning. Swiftly he flooded the ballast tanks and sank into the depths, and found himself almost stifled.

More oxygen from the cylinders revived him, and he was able to think clearly again.

The machine-guns fired from one of the aircraft-carriers had been noiseless—at least, Val had heard nothing through the microphones he wore in his helmet.

How had the Mongolian machine-gunners come to identify him as a stranger? He turned a switch to listen in by the wireless telephone, and heard a voice speaking gurglingly in a foreign tongue. Although unable to understand the language, he made a shrewd guess that the other diver beneath the sea was being warned.

He rightly judged, too, that during his visit to the surface the Mongolian diver had been in telephonic communication with one of the ships. If that man were the only diver at work in the bay and had reported that he was on the sea-bed, the appearance of a

second diver—Val himself—must naturally have alarmed the ships' crews.

The promptness with which the machine-guns had been brought into action convinced Val that the enemy diver's work in the bay was furtive and important.

What was the man's secret task?

Val descended into the depths, saw a pale green glow of light and propelled himself toward it. That light revealed where the enemy diver, equipped with an electric lamp, was at work.

Above the man in his weird diving suit was stretched a curious array of metal cylinders shaped like a large grid-iron, at a depth of a few fathoms. The "grid-iron" was composed of those log-like objects such as Val had seen earlier on the surface, and he saw the Mongolian diver add another to the strange grid and adjust a copper wire between it and the adjoining cylinder.

Val ascended a couple of fathoms, and found himself close to the extraordinary metal grid that extended for a considerable area in the bay. At this distance he switched on his own lamp and looked carefully at the objects which composed it.

Then the whole dastardly plot of the yellow men was illuminated as though by a lightning flash! The objects, each the size of a 21-inch torpedo, bore a mark similar to a stencil he had seen on Chinese naval torpedoes in a Shanghai dockyard. That mark, it had been explained to him, meant that the missile was packed with a form of picric acid, the deadliest explosive in existence!

At a depth not much below the keel level of a warship was the death-trap. The phantom ships of the Mongolians would steal away; the Allied ships would come to anchor in Rattan Bay as arranged. A button would be pressed somewhere in a shore station, or electric contact established with the copper wires connecting the grid, to fire the explosive. Then the anchored ships of Britain, France and America would hurtle to destruction!

He turned away from the grid—and not a moment too soon! A shadowy shape was approaching him. For an instant he believed it might be some marauding shark, and then he recognised the Mongolian diver. In the metal claws over the hand of the other robot was a heavy wrench, and a single blow of that on the side of his helmet would shatter his ear-drums and probably result in death!

Immediately Val switched off his lamp and sank deeper in the sea. The darkness lasted but for a couple of moments, and then the water around him assumed a greenish tinge to the illumination of the rival diver's higher-powered lamp.

A sunfish and several colourful jellyfishes passed before Val's gaze as he used the propeller in the effort to escape the death that threatened. The silence of the marine depths was unbroken.

The whole affair seemed utterly unreal—like some ghastly nightmare! Vainly he strove to evade that searching lamp, and

headed toward a broad, rakish object which he quickly recognised to be the damaged funnel of a wreck on the sea-bed.

His brain worked with dynamic intensity. Thirty fathoms deep below the sea he recalled a conversation held with an old skipper in a Singapore hotel. The man had mentioned the wreck of the Japanese liner Daimyo in Rattan Bay during a storm. This wreck was the ill-fated Daimyo, and now the ship which had brought death to a hundred men offered him a renewed lease of life!

The water became paler green about him, and Val clearly saw the wrecked steamship's rusted hull. The Mongolian diver was drawing nearer to him, and he alighted on the Daimyo's deck, stopped the propeller attached to the metal diving-suit, and stepped into the saloon entrance.

At this depth his leaded shoes felt no heavier than ordinary outdoor wear, and, without difficulty, he descended a stairway.

He had no weapon but a knife, and his only hope was to go into hiding somewhere and make his escape when opportunity served. Then, to his utter dismay, as he walked down the saloon, he saw another robot diver advancing to meet him!

Instinctively he raised a hand as though to ward off an attack. The other man precisely imitated the gesture. He half-turned away and looked round; the other diver acted in similar manner.

To Val the interior of the diving-suit had become stifling, but a smile wreathed his face as he realised that, at the far end of the saloon, was a full-length mirror!

He moved quickly over a wood-grain carpet and a giant crab sidled from his path. Small fish darted over the tables and empty chairs. He sought sanctuary behind a gilded pillar and looked toward the stairway.

The Mongolian diver entered the saloon and moved cautiously forward.

Peering round the pillar, Val saw the man pause and then walk forward again. He was looking straight down the saloon and saw a diver, similarly rigged to himself, advancing toward him. He saw that the supposed adversary now was armed with a wrench like himself!

A few more steps took him within range. He swung the wrench and struck with all his force. Val heard the sound of the shattering blow through his microphones and saw the mirror splinter in jagged fragments of glass. The rival diver dropped to his knees and gazed at his handiwork in stupefaction—and, seizing the chance, Val moved swiftly from the saloon and up the stairway.

Without further mishap Val made a compass course in the direction of the Banshee, and rose within a cable's length of the craft, which he could faintly discern on the water.

Within ten minutes he was back on board. "Quick!" Val panted when Mike had helped him out of the diving rig. "We've got to clear out of this!"

While he got the engine going and turned

the craft's stern to the bay, he hastily told the Irishman of his amazing discovery.

"Bogorra!" Mike exclaimed. "We've got to find our ships and stop them!"

The Banshee quickly gathered speed, and Val prepared to take the craft aloft. And then, just before he took off, there was a dull, rumbling explosion, and Mike, looking astern, saw half the area of the bay heave upward as though a huge marine volcano had erupted. Amid that boiling water, a huge vortex appeared in three separate places.

The Banshee was in the air and banking heavily before the astounded Irishman could find his tongue.

Val looked down at the foaming bay and the huge eddies running seaward.

"Good heavens!" he gasped. "The mine has been sprung."

At closer range, he saw faint evidence of wreckage which proved beyond doubt that the plotters had been hoisted by their own petard. The three Mongolian aircraft-carriers and their deadly brood had been destroyed by the trap laid for the Allied Fleet!

"'T would seem, sor," mumbled Mike in an awed tone, "that somewan has blundered."

A voice sounded from the foot of the short, metal ladder that led to the cockpit. Pompey was standing there, and looking almost as scared as when he had found the robot man in the locker.

"M-massa," he stuttered, "dis child hab made a small blobber."

Val stared hard at him.

"What the thump do you mean, young 'un?" he demanded.

Pompey confessed.

"I was tinkerin' wid de works of one ob dese torpedo-tubes, sah. De pressed air went off wid a puff and I t'ink one ob de torpedo fellows got loose."

The colour flooded into Val's face.

"Phew!" he breathed. "I should jolly well think it did! So that was it—a torpedo!"

He remembered that the torpedoes had not been set for the correct running depth, and the "sh" must have kept a deep course from the stern of the Banshee toward the shore and ran full-tilt into the grid-iron of high-explosive below the surface of the bay. Then the whole carefully-laid "mine-field" had exploded and destroyed the Mongolian ships in the vicinity.

"I—I see hoping you're not bery angry sah," Pompey mumbled contritely.

Val headed the Banshee over the Yellow Sea. His answer left the darky boy wondering.

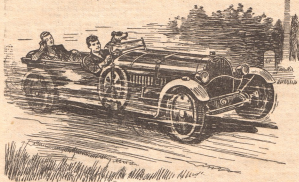
"N-no, I don't blame you, Pompey," he murmured. "But I've a notion that a certain fellow named Mosaki will soon be tearing his remaining hair out by the roots!"

(One long thrill is "The Island Invaders!" next Wednesday's nerve-tugging yarn of our three charms' fight against Mosaki, the leader of the yellow races. Don't miss it, whatever you do.)

Bud's Heavy-Handed On A Light-Fingered Crook!

OPEN THROTTLE!

By DAVID GOODWIN



Flash Ted in Trouble.

THE car's pace was so hot that even Mr. Babbit had to stop singing. The wind whistled over the low racing-screen like a gale. The hedges flashed by, two long, green streaks. Even Bud, whose nerves were as tough as copper wire, was rather astonished as the Bugatti swept round the bend.

"Moves, doesn't she?" said Cyril joyously.

"She can go. But the Great North Road ain't exactly Brooklands track, sir," suggested Bud.

Babbit looked at him sharply.

"Scared?" he asked.

Bud laughed.

"We'll see," replied Babbit the Bountiful;

and, noticing a car ahead, which was also travelling at a rapid pace, he opened his throttle.

The other car was a long, low Alfa racer, nearly all bonnet and engine; a smartly dressed young man was driving, with a girl in a leather cap beside him. The Bugatti overhauled them, and Babbit tooted his horn insolently.

The other driver gave a glance back and took up the challenge, darting ahead.

"He's a sport—see me eat him up!" chuckled Babbit; and the two cars tore along the road side by side, like two bullets from a gun.

The pace was terrific, well over eighty miles an hour. Babbit drew ahead slightly; the road took a sharp bend, and, instead of slowing, he swung round the corner with a roar, wide out and just abreast of the Alfa's bonnet. There was a market-cart in front, and the Bugatti avoided it by the fraction of an inch, leaving the horse plunging and the driver screaming and swearing. Babbit and Bud had been within a hair's-breadth of a deadly crash.

"My word, the fellow's mad!" thought Bud. For it was a foolish thing to do; it was bad driving.

Once into the straight stretch again, Cyril whizzed along harder than ever, saying goodbye to the other car, which gave it up and slowed down.

"How's that, umpire?" said Cyril.

"Why, sir, I think other folks have a right

THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

Bud Kelly, a clever young motor mechanic, gets fired from his job in a garage. Accompanied by his dog Pincher, he sets out to walk to London. On the road he meets a youthful millionaire named Cyril Babbit, whose Bugatti car has ceased to function. Bud soon puts the trouble right, so Babbit offers the young mechanic a job as chauffeur-coalet, which Bud promptly accepts. Then they head for London, with Cyril singing merrily as he drives.

to the road besides you," replied Bud calmly. Cyril took a look at him. Bud was serene and smiling.

"Good!" said Babbis. "If you'd got the wind up, I'd have given you a month's pay and shed you on the road. No guy that gets the wind up is any use to me. You'll do!" He chuckled. "I don't always drive like that, my lad. I was only trying you out."

"You can't scare me—nor my dog, either," replied Bud coolly.

"Dog?"

Cyril looked back with a start. Pincher was standing behind, with his paws on the back of the seat, and his cold nose touched the back of Cyril's neck. Cyril had not noticed Pincher before. When the car first started, Pincher had nipped quietly in behind and curled himself up; and now he was investigating Cyril, for he did not know what to make of him.

"My sainted aunt! Is that thing yours?" said Cyril.

"I hope you don't mind," replied Bud nervously. "He's used to cars, and he's as quiet as a lamb unless anybody worries him. Lie down, Pinch!"

"Ugly-looking tyke!" growled Babbis doubtfully. "Won't do for me! Pincher, do you call him? Don't like his name. He isn't a breed one. What was his mother—an ant-eater?"

Babbis was thinking that he would not care to have a dog around with so little "class" about him as Pincher. He looked disreputable.

Babbis did not object to dogs; he had two Irish wolf-hounds at home and a Cocker spaniel, all pedigres, and they had cost him two hundred pounds the three. Pincher would have to go.

Bud was feeling sad. He realized that he would have to be separated from Pincher; it was not to be expected that he would be allowed to keep a dog. He would have to board Pincher out somewhere. He could afford it out of two pounds a week. But the thought made him miserable. Pincher and he were partners.

He said nothing for the next half-hour, but sat quiet while the Bugatti tore London-wards, and wondered what sort of a "boss" this youthful millionaire was likely to be. It struck him that Cyril Babbis needed a keeper more than a chauffeur and valet. Things were certainly going to be lively. Babbis did not seem a bad sort, but Bud already suspected that his young master was what he called a "mag."

"I'm hungry!" said Cyril as the car buzzed past some cross-roads and entered the town of Wellstead. "And thirsty. Gee, I could empty a cellar! We'll stall off here for lunch."

He halted the car in front of the Royal Oak Hotel, and the three of them descended.

"Hi! Paper!" shouted Cyril, and went off to stop a passing newsboy who carried a bundle of racing journals. Pincher followed him, sniffed at his trousers doubtfully, and came back to Bud.

"Run 'un, ain't he, Pincher?" said Bud. Pincher cocked one ear and grinned. He was not sure about Babbis, did not think much of him, but rather liked the smell of his boots. He looked like a man who was well off for bones.

"He's my boss, same as I am your boss," said Bud. "You'll look after him, same as you look after me."

Pincher licked his lips thoughtfully. He quite understood that Babbis was one of the party. Pincher saw how it was.

It was his job to look after the property of his master, and in his doggy mind he decided that Babbis was the sort of fellow who could do with looking after.

Just then a dim, rather sooty-looking man, with a dirty satin necktie, came past on his way to the hotel bar, and Bud gave him a glance.

"Hallo, Flash Ted!" said Bud genially. The man looked up with a start and scowled at Bud.

"Who are you gettin' at?" he snarled. "Nothing!" replied Bud. "Haven't seen you since Huntington races."

"Well, you keep them sort o' names to yourself," growled Flash Ted threateningly, "or you'll get a flip behind the ear."

"No offence," said Bud dryly, and the sooty man passed on.

Just then a chauffeur in uniform, who was a stranger to Bud, came by and gave a wink at Flash Ted, who nodded very slightly and passed on into the hotel. Bud, who seldom missed anything, watched him go and turned to find Cyril at his elbow with a racing paper.

"My four-year-old, Tomlight, has won his trial at Newmarket, and he's a snip for the Chester Cup!" said Cyril cheerfully. "We'll celebrate it! Come and have a drink!"

Bud was amazed at this invitation and did not much like it. His employer was getting too familiar. Besides, Bud was up against a difficulty. His mother did not like saloon bars, or any other kind of bars, and had extracted a promise from Bud not to go into them—at any rate, for the purpose of having drinks. But he did not mention this, for he doubted how his employer would take it.

"If you don't mind I'll run the car into the yard and go over her; I don't like the way the engine's pulling," he said.

"Well, have a drink first."

"No, thank you, sir," said Bud.

"As you wish," said Cyril, frowning.

Bud hesitated.

"But might I say a word, sir? There's one or two funny people around this place to-day, and if I were you I'd keep my eyes skinned."

Mr. Cyril Babbis suddenly flared up.

"What do you mean? My servant giving advice to me! Take that car through the gates; I'll speak to you presently."

"There goes my job!" thought Bud ruefully as he climbed into the car. "I shall never learn to keep my face shut. But the fellow's just an ass!"



Bud ducked under Flash Ted's fist and closed with him. His heel clicked behind Ted's, and the pair of them came crashing down together, Bud on top.

Cyril Babbit passed into the saloon bar of the Royal Oak. Pincher took a look at his master to see whether he was wanted, and decided to follow Cyril into the hotel. Pincher felt interested in Mr. Babbit, and he was a dog who liked to see life. Besides, he had never promised his mother not to go into bars, so he slipped through close behind Cyril, deftly side-stepping the swing-doors before they could shut on his tail.

There was quite a noise in the saloon, and a crowd of people. Babbit, pushing his way to the mahogany counter, greeted a big, red-faced man in a loud check suit.

"Hallo, Jim!" he said.

The big man turned round. It was Jim Scott, a Chiswick bookmaker.

"What, my noble young sportsman!" he chuckled, holding out a huge fat hand. "Welcome as the dew-sprangled daisies to the sunshine, Mr. Babbit, sir! What price Torch-light now? Lay you nine hundred to four centuries!"

"Done!" said Babbit. "Put it in your book. What'll you have?"

He ordered two drinks. And at that

moment the seedy-looking man, Flash Ted, as Bud called him, glanced up quickly as he heard Babbit addressed by name by the bookmaker.

Flash Ted was lounging at the bar with a half-emptied pot beside him. He moved a little closer to Cyril, whose back was towards him. There was quite a crowd round the bar.

A short distance away sat Pincher, with his tongue hanging out, patiently watching the scene of life and movement around him. He wondered why all these men were chattering to each other and drinking things out of pots. His master never drank out of a pot. However, Pincher was a dog of the world, and understood that people have different tastes.

Cyril Babbit reached round behind him, slid a hand under his coat, and drew a fat pocket-book from the hip-pocket, where he always kept it. He took out a pound-note, tossed it on the bar to pay for the drinks, and slid the pocket-book back again.

Pincher was interested. The pocket-book was evidently Babbit's bone, so to speak, and

Babbit prized it. When Pincher had a bone he buried it, not having any pockets of his own. It seemed a queer place for a man to hide his bone—at the back of his trousers—but then men are queer and wonderful creatures. Pincher grinned, and hung his tongue out a little farther, watching patiently. There is a lot to be learned from men if you are a keen sort of dog and keep your eye on them.

Suddenly there was a growl, something white streaked across the saloon like lightning, and Flash Ted, spinning round, yelled at the top of his voice.

Pincher had Flash Ted by the calf. He did not like the flavour of it; he had tasted much better calves, but he held it like a vice.

"Yah-hah! Ow!" howled Ted, dancing round the room. "Call him off! Take him off! Oo! Wow!"

"Gur-r-r," growled Pincher, his mouth muffled with trouser-leg. "Gur-r-r-wag!"

In a moment the saloon was in a pandemonium. Ted bumped into a customer and spilled his drink, sending him flying against another customer, whose drink was also spilled, and the two customers used strong language, and began to fight each other. Pincher was whirled to and fro, but he held Ted's leg as though he were anchored to it.

"Knock the brute off! Kick him!" cried a dozen voices.

Somebody threw a water-bottle at the dog and missed him. The fat bookmaker launched a furious kick at Pincher, which grazed his shoulder. Pincher let go for a moment, zipped the ankle of his assailant, and the fat bookmaker fell backwards on top of Cyril, who gave a gasp of dismay. It was done in a moment, and Pincher had hold of Ted again, who tripped, and came to the floor with a bump. The landlord hurried forward, shouting indignantly.

The swing doors opened, and the astonished face of Bud appeared. He saw Pincher standing with his paws on Flash Ted's chest, daring him to move.

"Call your beastly dog off!" panted Cyril furiously, struggling to his feet. "I told you—"

"Come off, Pincher," cried Bud in dismay. "What d'you mean, Pincher, starting a rough house in here?"

"Wow!" protested Pincher, as his master hauled him off.

"Chewing a poor bloke's leg off!" whined Ted, getting on to his feet. "Show me the chap that owns him. I'll have the law on him! I'll have the beastly dawg shot! I'll claim damages—"

"It's my servant's dog," said Babbit hastily. "Here, don't make trouble about it. If a liver's any use to you—"

He clapped his hand to his hip-pocket, and gave a cry of consternation.

"Lost anything, sir?" exclaimed Bud, quick as a flash.

"My note-case. Two hundred pounds in it!" gasped Babbit.

Flash Ted was already on his way to the door; so quietly and deftly did he slip away that the others hardly noticed him going. But Bud was quicker still, and reached the swing doors in front of him.

"Here, you wait a bit, Ted," said Bud, pushing him back quietly.

"Get out o' my way!" hissed Ted, and, finding his exit stopped, he dealt a savage blow at the boy's head. Bud ducked under the man's fist and closed with him; his head clicked behind Ted's heel, and the pair of them came down together, Bud on top. There was an astonished shout from the company.

The swing doors opened and a big policeman put his head in.

"What's all this?" asked the policeman stolidly.

"Somebody's taken two hundred of the best off me!" cried Cyril.

"And you'll find it on this gentleman on the floor, here, officer," said Bud coolly, getting up.

Off to London.

THE constable put Ted on his feet, paying no attention to his excited denials and protests.

"At your old tricks again, Flash Ted!" he said, securing him and running a hand over his clothes. He drew the note-case out of Ted's side pocket. "This yours, sir?" he said to Babbit.

"That's mine," replied the amazed Cyril. A pair of handcuffs clicked on Ted's wrists. The policeman verified the contents of the case, returned it to Cyril, and, pulling out his pocket-book, solemnly took notes and names and addresses. He smiled grimly as he jotted down Cyril Babbit's name. The rest of the crowd were silent and uneasy. Flash Ted said nothing. He darted a glance of venomous hatred at Bud, but held his tongue.

The chauffeur in uniform, whom Bud had noticed outside, stood by the bar and watched them both, with a faint, cunning gleam in his eyes. Pincher sat to one side, with the air of a dog who has had a successful rath-bunt, and calmly scratched his left ear with his foot.

"That's all right," said the policeman, pocketing his notebook. "You'll be notified, Mr. Babbit, when the case comes on. Now, Flash Ted, we'll take a little walk to the dear old home."

He led Ted out. As soon as the pair had gone an excited babble of talk broke out.

"By James, that dog's worth twenty pounds of anybody's money!" exclaimed a bystander, and the crowd began to gather round Babbit.

"Here, let's get out of this!" he said hastily, and led Bud clear of the saloon and into the hotel lounge. "How the dickens did this thing happen, Bud? It's a giddy miracle! It's got me beaten!"

"Oh, it's quite easy!" said Bud. "Flash Ted sneaked your case, sir, and Pincher was close by and saw him do it—must have. That's quite enough for Pincher. He had

him as quick as he'd have a rat by the neck."
 "Great Scott! You mean to say he knew—"

"Sure thing! He's learned the trick. Once I went to sleep under a hedge and a tramp tried to nick my dinner—a packet of bread an' cheese in my side pocket. Pinch was in the ditch, and he got that tramp before he could turn round. I was pleased with Pinch about it. And, of course, Pinch knows we're travelling together—he's wise to it that you belong to me—I mean, that I belong to you, sir—and he'll look after you just as he would me. He's been on tramp before.

"As for Finch Ted, sir, I've worked on the Great North Road a year, and I know most of the wrong 'uns on it. Ted's a professional thief, and that fat booksaker, Jim Scott, is a wretched. You couldn't be expected to know these things, Mr. Babbitt, but a chap like me, who filled the tanks of fifty cars a day, and gets the news from all the garages, has to keep his eyes open. Ted only came out of Bedford Guel last week. And if you've got any bets with Jim Scott you'd better call them off. That's all."

"Great Jupiter!" said Babbitt explosively. "You and your dog! Bud, I wouldn't part with either of you for all the giddy gold in

and told Bud to change places with him.

"Let's see you drive," he said.

Bud drove through the traffic nautly and skilfully. He had had plenty of practice in town driving. He seemed to take no risks, and yet he passed everything. Cyril was pleased. He gave his address—100, Eaton Terrace, and Bud showed that he knew London well enough. He pulled up at the number, a big, coener house, with a garage of its own.

"Put up the car, and come in when you've done," said Cyril, nipping out. "Ask for the library. You'll find me there."

Bud looked with awe at the magnificent mansion, and at the footman in livery who opened the door as Cyril mounted the steps. Then he drove round into the garage.

The garage was splendidly fitted up, and contained two other cars. But there seemed to be nobody in charge. Bud got the hose, and washed down the Bugatti at once. Then he overhauled the engine. It was nearly dark by the time he had done, and as he closed the bonnet a big Napier landaulette came sliding into the garage.

The Napier was empty, except for its chauffeur, a lanky, dark-faced man in an olive-green livery. Bud recognised him at a

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the Mint! Here—come here, Fincher!"

He picked up the dog, and, hoisting him triumphantly on to his shoulder, marched into the dining-room, to the astonishment of several small motoring parties who were sitting at the tables. Fincher smiled cheerfully and licked Babbitt's ear.

"Come on, Bud! Come on! have lunch—the best this one-horse place can give us!" said Cyril.

During lunch the hotel manager came up, smiling and rubbing his hands; he hoped Mr. Babbitt found the lunch all right. He apologised for the presence of a bad character in his saloon bar, and was very glad he had been caught. Babbitt told him the credit was all due to Fincher and Bud.

Bud, by the time the meal was over, felt he was beginning to like Cyril a good deal better. He might be an ass, but he seemed a very decent sort of ass. Cyril paid the bill, and tipped a howling waiter a ten-shilling note.

"Now, then, away for London!" said Cyril, springing into the car. "After all, London's the place where things hum. You stand on me—I'm going to make London sit up an' take notice!"

The Bugatti car burned the ground, laying the miles behind her like a ribbon.

When they reached London Cyril stopped

glance. It was the same chauffeur he had noticed in the bar of the Royal Oak.

"It's you, is it!" said the chauffeur, stepping down. "Saw you at Wellstead, didn't I, in young Cyril's car?" He looked sideways at Fincher, and spat out the stump of a cigarette. "You've got a good job, kid," he said patronisingly. "How long d'you think you'll keep it?"

"Accordin' to the luck, I expect," replied Bud cheerfully. "Do you belong here, mister?"

"Me! I'm shuvver to Mr. Hotham Finch, your boss's uncle. Hot-Stuff Finch, they call him," said the young man in green arrogantly. "But mostly I'm drivin' his son, young Barney Finch. An' he's hotter stuff still!"

"Ah," said Bud, as he walked out, "then I take it your young master, who's such hot stuff, is Mr. Babbitt's cousin—what?"

"Sharp lad—guessed it in one!" sneered the man in green. "And I'll lay six to four," he muttered, under his breath, as he watched Bud's retreating back, "that young Barney'll mighty soon shift you out of this—an' your dawg, too!"

(Bud seems to have made an enemy of Mr. Hotham Finch's chauffeur, but Bud knows how to look after himself, as you'll see in next week's splendid chapters.)

KIDNAPPED!

(Continued from page 29.)

a dandy fight—" He paused, realising that Mr. Alvington was present. "Thank you, sir," he added. "You just came in time."

"Tell me, Farman," said Lee. "Do you know who those men were?"

"I—I—" The new junior paused. "I guess I'd prefer not to speak, sir."

"Come, come, that won't do!" said Lee sharply.

"I'm real sorry, sir—but I can't just say a thing," said Farman, quietly.

"You silly ass!" roared Handforth in his impulsive way. "We want to have those rascals arrested! Do you mean to say you know who they are—and you won't tell Mr. Alvington?"

"Say, I'm fixed kind of queerly—that's all," was Farman's reply.

"Mr. Alvington retained you—" began Watson hoily.

"I know that, and I thank Mr. Alvington with all my heart, I guess," said the American junior quietly. "But I just can't say a thing! That's all there is to it. I surely thought I was done for—until I heard you getting around."

Farman was curiously affected by the incident. He seemed grave, and his face was very pale. It was as though he had received a great shock. And he was disinclined to say any more.

But we were all jubilant, nevertheless. Our little expedition had panned out very well indeed. For, if I hadn't conceived the idea of going out to rescue Farman from Fullwood & Co., he would have been spirited clean away!

The next day there was considerable excitement at St. Frank's.

Excitement amongst the juniors, that is—especially the Fossils. Once again I was in the limelight. Edward Oswald Handforth was in high feather; he was surrounded with glory, and that suited him.

Tregellis-West and Watson and Handforth and I didn't receive any punishment whatever. We were highly praised instead. But the truth of the strange affair didn't come out.

Farman, for some unaccountable reason, remained silent.

And so the episode ended. Taking everything altogether, it had ended satisfactorily. But why had Farman been kidnapped? Why had he refused to speak? He knew something—that was certain. But he kept it to himself.

And what was his connection with Mr. Thorne? The mystery, in a way, was still deep. And then, both Nelson Lee and I were somewhat worried about the Chinaman. Was he a member of the 'Fu Chang Tong,' and had we been discovered in our eavesdropping at St. Frank's?

Days passed, and nothing further happened. Ah! at the end of the week, everything was as usual. But the way was and I were still a little bit uneasy. Had the 'Fu Chang' discovered us?

Only time would show.

THE END.

(Next Wednesday's dramatic long complete story "Tried by His Form!" is one that every reader will enjoy immensely from start to finish. Make a point of ordering yours "Nelson Lee" in advance.)



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