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IN THE
JUNGLE!

THRILLING SCHOOLBOY ADVENTURE!

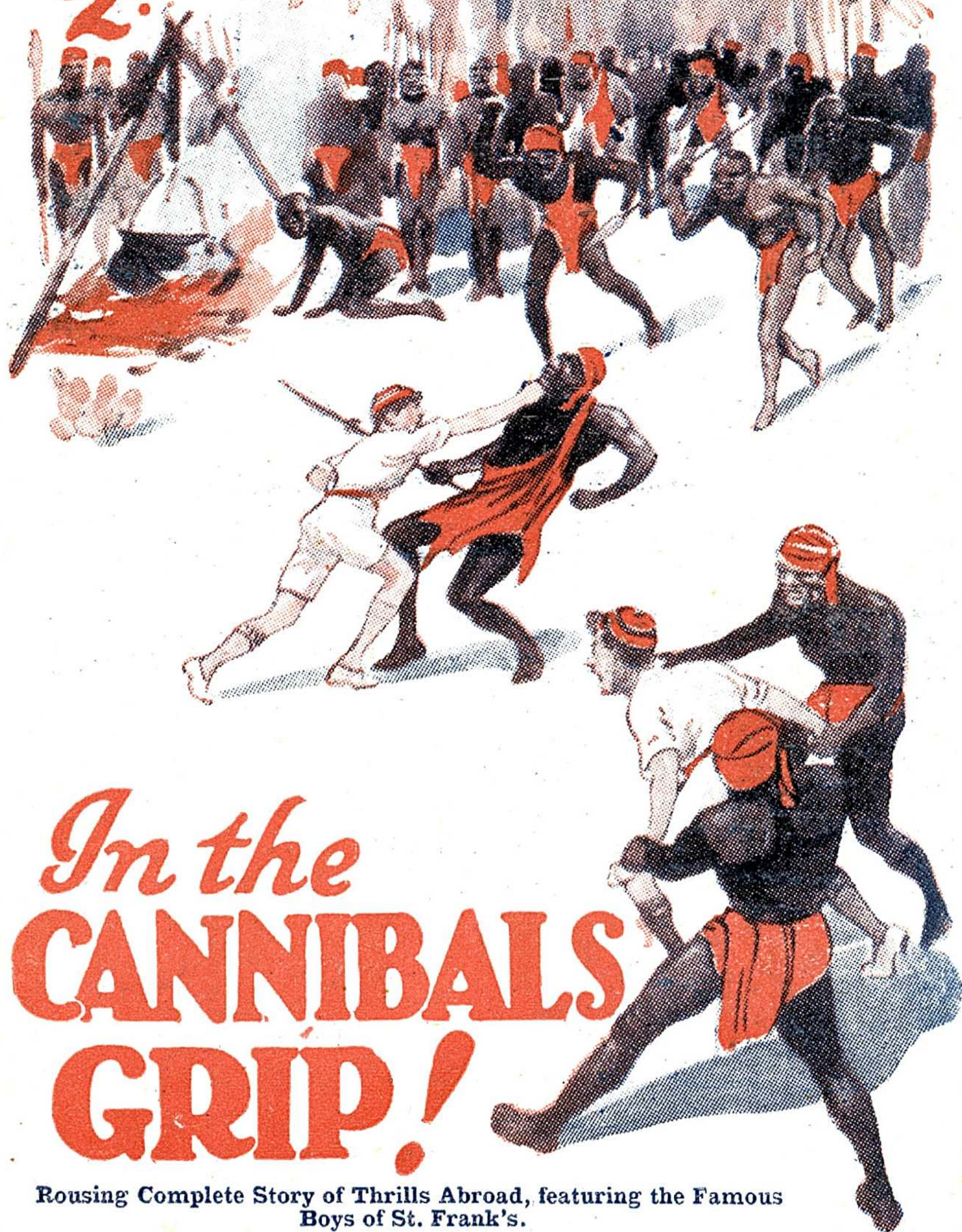
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In the
CANNIBALS
GRIP!

Rousing Complete Story of Thrills Abroad, featuring the Famous
Boys of St. Frank's.

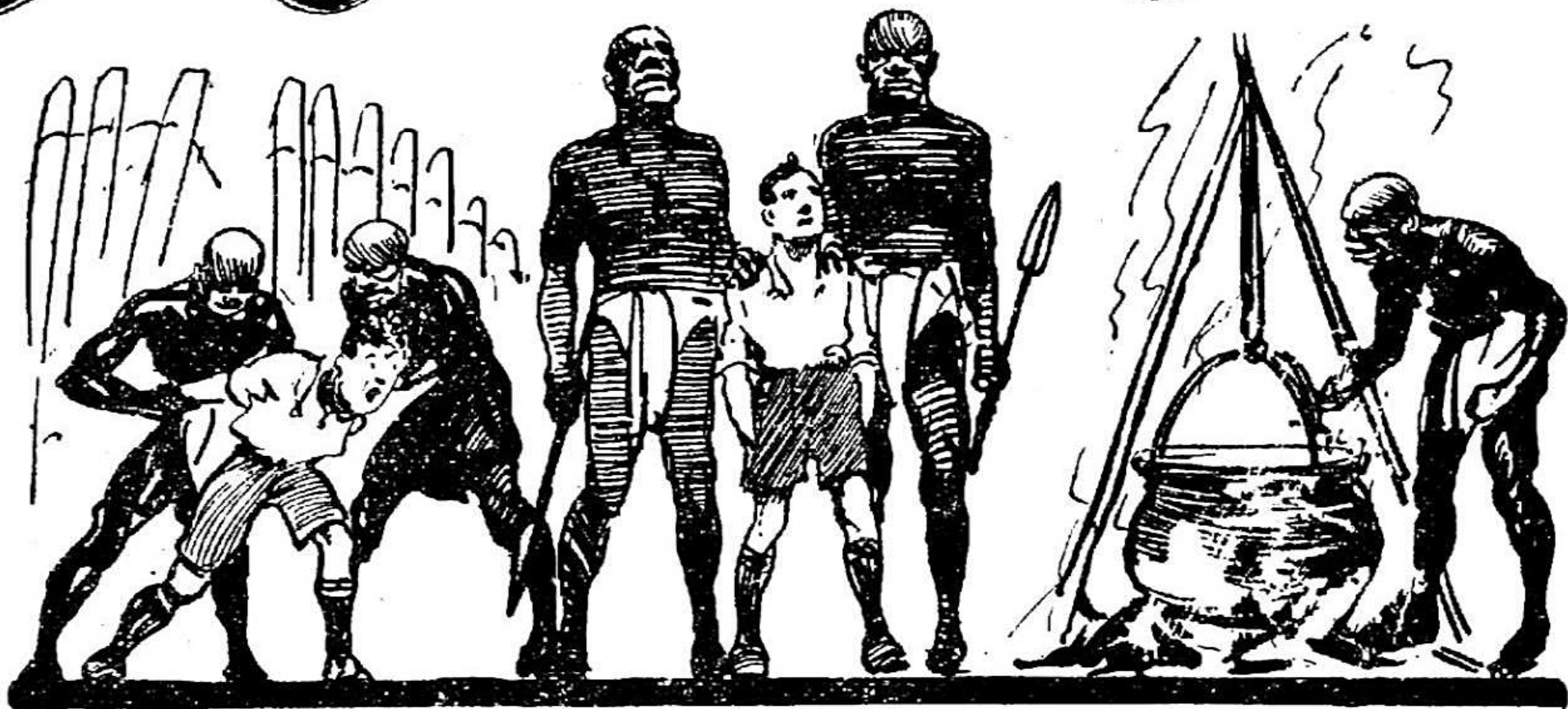
New Series No. 63.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY,

July 16th, 1927.



The wart-hog, enveloped in the white jacket Doris Berkeley had thrown over it, presented a terrifying spectacle as it emerged from the cave into the moonlight. At sight of it the attacking savages halted for a moment ; then, howling with frantic terror, they turned and bolted.

Amongst the Man-eaters!Thrills in the Congo!**IN THE CANNIBALS' GRIP!**

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

An exciting long complete story of mystery and adventure in Africa, featuring the Boys of St. Frank's, Irene and Co., and Lord Dorrimore.

CHAPTER 1.

In the Mysterious Congo!

LORD DORRIMORE examined the ground closely, and he could see the broken trail leading off into the young bamboo shoots, and through the tall elephant grass beyond.

"You think they went this way, old man?" he asked wearily.

"Not a question of it," said Nelson Lee, nodding. "This trail is fresh—not an hour old, in fact. They went this way, Dorrie, and we must follow. I hope to heaven that we soon overtake them."

"But why not go now—this instant?" asked Dorrie. "Man alive, we can't afford to wait! Don't forget that those six girls are absolutely alone, except for Archie. He's a good fellow, but he cannot expect to protect them from the dangers of the forest, an' from any possible attack——"

"It's not like you, Dorrie, to be hasty," interrupted Lee quietly. "The necessity for

discovering what has happened is urgent. It is vital. But we should only lose valuable time if we started off blindly. If we leave within an hour, it will be time enough."

Lord Dorrimore nodded.

"Of course, you're right," he said slowly. "More haste, less speed, eh? We need an hour's rest, too, by glory! Some of these youngsters are nearly droppin' from exhaustion. But an hour! It seems a deucedly long time!"

They turned back from the fringe of the forest, and hurried across the little clearing to where the tents were pitched. A bend of the Kalala River could be just seen through the trees, with the densely-wooded hills rising beyond.

They were in the heart of the African jungle—far, far up into the wildest section of the Congo territory. It was afternoon, and the Central African sun was blazing down with ferocious intensity.

"Half a dozen St. Frank's fellows—mem-

bers of Lord Dorrimore's holiday party—came running up, flushed and anxious."

"Any sign, gov'nor?" asked Nipper tensely.

"Yes, I think we can safely say we know which way they went," replied Nelson Lee. "We have found the actual trail."

"Then why not rush off, sir?" asked Handforth excitedly. "Come on, you chaps! Buck up, Remove!"

"Hurrah!"

Nine other St. Frank's fellows came hurrying round—Church, McClure, Tommy Watson, Tregellis-West, and others. They included Browne, of the Fifth, and Willy Handforth, of the Third, and a more dishevelled-looking crowd could not have been imagined.

That morning they had been smart in their white drill shorts and open-necked shirts. But now they were unutterably grimy. Their tropical clothing was tattered and torn, they were bleeding from dozens of minor cuts and grazes, and they were literally haggard with exhaustion and anxiety.

"Steady, boys," said Nelson Lee. "We can't hurry off as though we were about to cross the Sussex downs. We must break camp, and go in proper order, with rifles ready, and food for us all. We don't know how long this trail may be, and we must be prepared."

"But the girls may be in terrible danger, sir!" protested Watson.

"And the best way we can serve them is to do as I suggest," replied Lee. "To dash wildly off into the forest would be madness. There are many enemies in this district, and we must be prepared. You must all have a good wash, change your clothes, feed, and then get your packs ready. But don't be flurried—don't try to do things too quickly."

Handforth couldn't see it.

"We ought to go now, sir," he complained. "Irene & Co. might be captured by cannibals, or fighting lions, or having a scrap with a herd of elephants! Why can't we dash straight off?"

But the others could see Nelson Lee's point of view, and they fully realised that time would be saved by organising the search in a thorough manner, despite Handy's extravagant idea of what might have happened.

There had been much excitement of late.

Dorrie had brought his party into this country, to the rescue of Umlosi, his faithful Kutana friend. For Umlosi had been sold by the Oturi tribe into slavery.

And the Kutana chief was now with the St. Frank's party—rescued from his bondage. His actual liberation had been perilous and tricky, but Otto Lorenzo, the slaver, had been beaten.

But when the triumphant party returned to camp, a shock awaited them. Irene Manners and her five girl chums, who had been left in camp, were nowhere to be found! Archie Glenthorne had been left with them, and he, too, had mysteriously disappeared in the same way.

To rush off in search of them was the natural desire, but it would be far better to take a brief rest, and to start out in good order, carrying all the necessities of camp with them.

That hour was an anxious one.

The boys obeyed orders. They washed, changed, fed themselves, and got their packs ready. And they were compelled to admit, afterwards, that they were glad of that respite. It put new life into them.

In the meantime, Umlosi was receiving attention from Nelson Lee.

The unfortunate Kutana had been chained to a heavy post when found, and the only method of rescuing him was to bring the post with him. Lee succeeded in cutting through the cruel iron cuffs.

And after that Umlosi needed gentle attention.

His wrists were raw, his arms painfully swollen. His strength was sapped away until he was a mere weakling. But he was joyous in the knowledge that his beloved "N'Kose" had found him. And deep in his heart he was determined to have revenge on his torturers.

With his arm bandaged, his other hurts attended to, he was ready for the trail, and his services were likely to be of immense value. For Umlosi's reputation as a forest tracker was second to none.



CHAPTER 2.

On the Trail I

THE mystery of the girls' disappearance was a puzzling one.

What had happened?

Even Nelson Lee could not form any plausible theory. An examination of the camp had told him nothing. There had been no struggle—no fight of any kind. Everything was in perfect order.

A kettle had even been found on the wooden tripod, singing, and the teapot was next to it, ready for the water. The girls had tried their hand at baking, and had produced some really excellent griddle cakes. And there were biscuit-sandwiches ready, too. Over another fire, a big stew-pan was half filled with the duck Dorrie had shot in the early morning.

In the girls' tent everything was in order. They, with Archie, had simply gone. That was the mysterious part of it all. Obviously, something had alarmed them intensely, and they had run off into the jungle.

"I can only assume that a party of Lorenzo's infernal guards came down here to seize the camp," said Lee at length. "It was naturally impossible to fight them, and so the girls took to their heels, preferring the jungle to the open grassland."

"An' those curs followed them?" asked Dorrie, frowning.

"We can't tell that yet—but I very much fear that something of that sort may have happened," said Lee. "Well, we're all feeling refreshed now, and that food has done us a lot of good. We can give the order: get on the march at once."

"The boys are all ready," said Dorrie.

They were—ready and impatient.

"Blessed if I can understand what happened," Handforth was saying as he struggled with his pack. "But it's pretty certain those brutes of Lorenzo's must have appeared on the scene. Why didn't Archie, or Irene, or one of the others, write a note and leave it behind, so that we should know where they'd gone?"

"Oh, cheese it, Handy," said Church. "You couldn't expect them to stay behind and do a thing like that. They evidently had to leave in a hurry. The girls didn't even take their hats with them."

"That's pretty conclusive," said Nipper, nodding. "You can be certain they went in a hurry. Still, it's an awful pity we haven't got an indication of why they went. The only thing is to get on the trail, and to keep on until we find them."

"What about when darkness comes?" growled Handforth. "We've got to go on. We've got to follow those girls until we're dropping with fatigue! Imagine it! Lost in the African jungle without any food, or tents, or weapons! I'll bet they haven't got a match between 'em!"

"Yes, by jingo, that's a pretty startling thought," said Willy. "Not a match, eh? They'll be in an awful fix after darkness! This jungle is full of lions and other wild beasts!"

"Let me warn you, brothers, against the folly of alarming yourselves needlessly," said William Napoleon Browne. "It is more than possible that we shall meet with success long before darkness. Why, therefore, worry about what is liable to happen after darkness?"

But none of them could forget that remark of Handforth's.

The plight of the girls would be too terrible for words if they were alone in the jungle by night. The only possibility of safety was to light fires, and to thus keep the wild creatures at bay.

It was fortunate that Umlosi was now with them, for his skill as a tracker would come in useful. Both Lee and Dorrie were clever at that kind of work, too, but they freely admitted that they were mere novices compared to Umlosi. If any man on earth could trace the missing girls, he was the man.

And less than ten minutes later the party was off.

Nobody thought of Lorenzo and his slaves now. That region of terror, beyond the Kalala River, was forgotten. There was something far more urgent—something more vital, to occupy their attention.

They found that the trail struck off through the densest part of the jungle, and this was a help rather than a hindrance. For,

although it slowed their progress slightly, they were able to follow the trail without any delays. Even Handforth could have picked it out here, for the grass was trampled down, the bushes were broken, and there were even traces of cotton cloth on some of the thorns.

Eloquent evidence of precipitate flight!



CHAPTER 3.

The Swamp!

UMLOSI led the way, with Nelson Lee immediately in the rear. Then, in single file, came all the others—Nipper, Handforth, Browne, and right down to the last man. Dorrie brought up the rear.

Fortunately, there were plenty of rifles in the stores, and every boy had been provided with one. They were all members of the St. Frank's Cadet Corps, and they knew how to handle the weapons.

True, they had had no experience of big-game shooting, and they were liable to do more harm than good if they started shooting at any of the wild creatures. As Dorrie warned them, they might bring danger upon the expedition by any display of such zeal.

No, they had those rifles in case of a sudden attack by hostile blacks. Then it would be a grim fight for life—and the more shooting, the better!

The boys themselves were much more comfortable with those weapons slung across their shoulders. They felt that they were ready in case of danger.

Nelson Lee's policy was sound. For although a certain amount of time had been lost in getting off, the travellers were now comparatively fresh, and they made good progress.

Umlosi made no complaints. He was probably in great agony, and there was no doubt that his wounds had weakened him to such an extent that he was only a ghost of his usual self. But he concealed any pain than he suffered, and to all intents and purposes he was normal.

"I see bad signs, my master," he said, as Nelson Lee drew alongside over a piece of open country. "Art thou keen, Umtagati? Perchance it is possible that thou canst see these signs, too?"

"I confess, Umlosi, I do not follow you."

"It is ugly, my master," said the Kutana chief. "There were men along this trail. Big men, with bare feet."

Although Lee was such an expert, he had seen nothing of this. Umlosi's powers were uncanny. In that tangle of grass and creeper and undergrowth he had read the truth clearly.

"You mean the girls were followed, Umlosi?" he asked. "That is indeed bad."

"And yet there is reason for good cheer, Umtagati, for I read even more," said Umlosi. "The young white maidens were

greatly in advance. 'Twas some time later that the enemy followed."

"That's a relief, anyway," muttered Lee. "I was half suspecting that the girls had been captured, and were being led through the forest as prisoners. By James! I'd give anything to know what has actually happened!"

"Patience, my master, patience!" said Umlosi.

At the end of an hour the character of the country had changed considerably. The trees were bigger, heavier, and they closed overhead like a great canopy. Creepers hung down in festoons, and the very ground had become soft and moist.

The heat was stifling. Flies buzzed incessantly, and surrounded the travellers in swarms. It was a place of fevers and evil odours. And it seemed to most of the boys that the trail had completely vanished.

In places it was necessary to splash ankle-deep through mud, and to progress slowly and laboriously amidst the abominable clouds of insects which arose. And there was nothing on the ground to guide them. Not a mark—not a footprint—not even a broken creeper or grass.

And yet Umlosi could see, and could follow with ease.

Only once or twice was Nelson Lee at a loss. For he, too, could still detect that almost invisible trail.

They all knew that the day was closing in. They tried to forget it, for they would be in a serious predicament if they were compelled to camp in a swamp like this. But how could they camp? Each member of that expedition had resolved not to rest until they had discovered the fate of the girls.

The usual banter of the march was absent.

Handforth had none of his customary remarks, and even the loquacious Browne was silent. They trudged on tensely. Somehow they couldn't talk. For if they did wish to say anything, it was in connection with the missing girls, and it only seemed to make matters worse if they talked.

Instead of getting better, the swamp grew worse, until they were wading almost knee-deep through slushy, murky water. The air was heavier than ever, and so moist that it was almost like going through steam. The flies were becoming an intolerable nuisance.

"Umlosi, I'm beaten here," said Lee, as they sogged through the deadly swamp. "Surely you cannot still see the trail?"

"I follow, Umtagati," said Umlosi simply.

"You know that they came this way?"

"It is written here," replied Umlosi, pointing to the swamp.

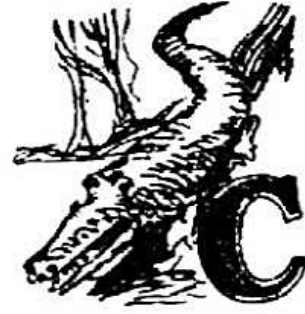
"It may be written to your eyes—but not to mine," replied Lee. "I hope to goodness we get out of this wretched bog before long. The whole place reeks of fever. At the first stop, we'll have quinine all round."

"There's something moving over to the left, sir," said Nipper, pointing. "Look at that hump there, sticking out of the water."

"It's only a floating log," said Handforth. But the floating log rolled over, revealing

a large gap, with many ugly teeth in it. It slid away into the swamp, and there were other brutes of the same sort.

"Crocodiles!" muttered Handforth. "Oh, my goodness! And Irene & Co. must have come through this horrible place!"



CHAPTER 4.

Nipper Anxious.

CROCODILES everywhere! That dreadful swamp was infested with them, and at the approach of the travellers, they went lurching away in the shallow water, splashing and hurrying. They were big and little, and the whole atmosphere reeked with the overpowering smell. It seemed that there was no way out of this fearful place.

Such a swamp, of course, would have been avoided by the main party. But the girls had probably entered it unknowingly, without realising where they were going. And having once started, they had been compelled to go through.

"There's only one cheering thought that occurs to me," said Nelson Lee as he caught Nipper's eye. "The girls came through this swamp knowing nothing of its perils. But if there were any blacks on the trail—well, the blacks might very possibly have abandoned the chase. They would have been afraid of this crocodile-infested bog."

"Let's hope that—"

Nipper's words were cut off, for Handforth had suddenly clutched him from the rear, and Handforth was pointing.

"Look!" he gasped. "What's that?"

"Eh? What's what?"

Handforth's face, in spite of the heat, was like chalk.

"What's that over there?" he asked hoarsely. "Just behind those filthy-looking creepers! I spotted it—"

"A panama hat!" muttered Nipper, aghast.

The other members of the party had broken the single file, and were coming round eagerly and intently. About twenty yards off, caught in a swirling eddy, was a panama hat.

And all the girls had worn such hats!

As far as the preliminary investigations had revealed, Irene & Co. had not taken their hats with them. But this floating trifle proved the contrary. One, at least, had worn a hat.

But was it only a hat? That was the dreadful thought which filled every mind. Were they to discover the first indications of a tragedy? They were almost afraid to approach.

It was Nelson Lee who waded through the deeper water.

"Careful, my master!" urged Umlosi.

"The crocodiles are treacherous brutes. Be thou of good caution."

Lee needed no warning, however. And he succeeded in retrieving the hat without

any untoward adventure. He gazed searchingly into the muddy water, and he was intensely relieved when he saw nothing but leaves and twigs and slimy creepers.

And a swift inspection of the hat proved reassuring.

There was a big thorn sticking in the crown of it. There was just a chance that it had been pulled from the girl's head by an overhanging bough. But this was an optimistic explanation.

"Whose is it, sir?" asked Handforth eagerly.

"The initials 'M.S.' are on the band," replied Lee quietly.

"Mary Summers!" muttered Nipper.

He was frantic. Of the Moor View girls, Mary was the one whom Nipper liked the most. They were, indeed, firm pals. He took the hat, and stared at it dazedly before he looked at Lee.

"Do you think anything awful has happened, sir?" he asked anxiously. "These ghastly crocodiles——"

"You mustn't get such ideas, Nipper," said Lee sharply. "There is absolutely no proof that there has been a tragedy. Let us press on, and see if we cannot overtake them. No good will come of assuming the worst."

"But it's awfully significant, sir," muttered Nipper. "Oh, why the dickens couldn't they have left some hopeful signs? I'm afraid, gov'nor—I'm terribly afraid!"

He said no more. They all reformed into line, and continued the march. The finding of that hat had had a depressing effect. True, it proved beyond question that Umlosi was right—and that the girls had come this way; but it conjured up most appalling possibilities!

Curiously enough, the nature of the ground changed almost immediately afterwards.

Within half a mile the swamp was left behind, and even the fever-ridden forest thinned out. And before long the expedition found itself overlooking a fairly wide stretch of open veldt. A number of gazelle were scampering away in the distance, and for an instant the travellers caught sight of a rhinoceros. Game was here in plenty.

Dorrie, in fact, felt a sharp pang as he noticed some fresh elephant spoor. Those great footprints could have been made only recently, and it was obvious that a big herd was in the district. Dorrie remembered that he had started out on this adventure to hunt for elephants. But what a difference now!

"Well, thank Heaven we've left that swamp region behind," said Lee. "The trail's easier to follow here, although the country is much more dangerous."

"Dangerous, sir?" asked Nipper.

"Yes—for those unarmed girls," replied Lee. "By the look of it, this whole district is full of big game—lions, leopards, rhinos. I tremble to think what will happen to the girls if we do not overtake them by nightfall. They'll never survive until the morning. They'll be at the mercy of those forest creatures."

"We've got to find them before dark," said Nipper fiercely. "We've just got to! Any other thought is too horrible for words!"

And yet it was a thought which haunted them all.



CHAPTER 5.

Archie the Optimist!

"WELL, here we are, all jolly and snug, and all that sort of thing," observed Archie Glenthorne cheerily. "I mean to say, this is somewhat priceless, when you come to have a good old look at it."

"It's somewhere to rest, anyhow," said Irene Manners wearily. "Poor old Dora! I'll bet you're having awful pain with that foot."

"I'm all right," said Dora with a brave smile.

Archie looked at the six girls benevolently. It was almost as though he were conscious of the fact that they were under his protection.

All of them were safe.

This was a fact which would have given untold joy to the rest of the party, could they have known it. And, at the moment, the girls had found a haven of refuge.

They were in the entrance of a cave. It was on fairly high ground, and set in the face of a rocky bluff which arose sharply from the veldt. Trees grew in profusion all round, and the chattering of monkeys could be heard incessantly. Occasionally there were other cries.

Nobody had explored the depths of the cave. It went back, dark and mysterious, and very narrow. But here, in the entrance, the air was comparatively cool, and the rocks felt companionable. It seemed safe there, after the horrors of the swamp and the steamy forest.

They had reached the spot at random, really. Now Archie was standing in the entrance, keeping one eye on the girls, and the other on the vista of woodland and bush which stretched out into the distance. He gave particular attention to a dense clump of trees fifty yards away.

"Any signs of them, Archie?" asked Doris.

"Absolutely not," said Archie. "The frightful blighters have absolutely vanished into the offing. I mean to say, there's not a sign of the foul lads. In other words, the good old posish brightens up somewhat!"

"Let's hope they won't attack us," said Mary fervently. "Doesn't it seem just like a horrible dream? First of all, those terrible blacks attack us from across the river. I don't seem to remember bolting from the camp. It's all so confused."

"And yet it's simple enough," said Doris practically. "The blacks came after us, so we ran. Archie tried to stop us, but finding that we wouldn't take any notice, he came along to look after us. Didn't you, Archie?"

"Oh, rather," said Archie. "Absolutely,

old girl. Not, that is, that I'm much good at looking after maidens in distress, and all that sort of rot. But I don't mind having a stab at it."

"What I can't understand is why those niggers didn't attack us?" asked Irene. "They just followed all the time—keeping behind. It was horrible; I kept wishing they would spring on us, and get it over."

"And then we caught sight of the good old cave," beamed Archie. "It's a rummy thing, but the foul blighters haven't dared to follow us any closer. I may be wrong, but I've got the idea that this cave is 'ju-ju'!"

"Ju-ju?" asked Irene.

"I don't absolutely know what it means, but it's ju-ju!" said Archie firmly. "All the best people in these tribes use the words. I mean to say, it's somewhat off the rails, if you don't trot out with this ju-ju stuff. It's done in the best circles, I'm told."

"Ju-ju means witchcraft, and things like that," said Mary. "Let's hope that this cave has a reputation for being ju-ju. Anyhow, those blacks haven't dared to follow us any nearer. Perhaps we shall be all right here for the night, too?"

Archie nodded.

"Precisely what I was thinking, dear old girl," he said. "It would be somewhat frightfully steep if we had to spend the night in the open forest, or on the prairie, hobnobbing with leopards and lions and tigers and things."

"There aren't any tigers here," smiled Doris. "You're thinking of India."

"Lions are just as good," said Archie. "Or, I should say, just as bad. I'm not a fastidious cove, but I rather draw the line at providing a lion with his supper. Absolutely!"

"Perhaps we shall be rescued before darkness," said Mary hopefully. "And yet I'm awfully scared that we shan't be. We don't know what's happened to Nipper and Dorrie and all the rest of them. Won't it be dreadful if they've all been captured, and we never see them again?"

"I believe they *have* been captured," said Tessa Love.

"What absolute rot!" protested Archie. "Frightfully sorry, old girl. I mean, brutal frankness, and all that. But, I mean, dash it! Kindly take it as an absolute fact that the lads will buzz along to the rescue in next to no time. The old bones are whispering it all the time."

"You really think we shall be rescued, Archie?" asked Doris.

"My dear old lily of the valley, absolutely!" said Archie stoutly. "I can't see the cheery rescuers in sight yet—but they're coming. Take it absolutely from me—they're coming!"

Archie's confidence was so firm that he put heart into the girls. And this was his intention. His optimism was forced, and his smile was even more forced.

For in his heart he was utterly dismayed. But his brave spirit would not let him reveal his true misgivings.



CHAPTER 6

No Matches!

ARKNESS would soon be coming on. This was another reason for Archie Glenthorne's secret concern. He was thankful,

indeed, that they had found this safe haven.

In this cave, with its narrow entrance, they could, at least, feel comparatively safe. For they could keep a constant watch, and if the blacks approached, they might be able to drive them off. It was most unlikely that any of the forest creatures would trouble them.

Archie reviewed the situation.

He wasn't particularly overjoyed. The girls had fled from camp with good reason. A dozen fearsome-looking blacks had advanced towards them, and they had bolted incontinently. And Archie had naturally gone with them, for it had been impossible for him to guard the camp single-handed.

But, to their surprise and consternation, the blacks had followed them. Hurrying through the forest, they had expected to be overtaken and seized. But for some reason the savages had kept behind. They had made no attempt to overtake the fugitives, although it was evident that they could easily have done so had they chosen.

Once, in the swamp, the blacks had vanished altogether, and the girls had believed that they had shaken their pursuers off. But in the more open country beyond the enemy had appeared again.

And now they were waiting—hidden in those neighbouring trees.

They made no attempt to conceal themselves, however. For a column of smoke was rising from the trees, proving that a fire had been lighted. There was something very sinister about this. The blacks were prepared to wait—and it seemed only too obvious that their object was to wait until the cover of darkness, and then attack.

And what of the rest of the party?

Archie could gain no cheer from his thoughts. Nelson Lee, Lord Dorrimore, and all the fellows had gone across that mysterious river. Willy had come, shouting to the others for aid. And thus he—Archie—had been left alone with the girls. And they didn't know what had happened—they didn't have any knowledge that the raid into Lorenzo's territory had been successful.

"Looking at the good old posish this way and that way, and by and large, it doesn't strike the old bean as being particularly ripe," Archie told himself. "In point of absolute fact, it's murky and mottled. Absolutely bleak, in fact. I wouldn't say a dashed word to the priceless girls, but it seems that there's going to be a considerable amount of dirty work at the cross roads."

"What's that you're saying, Archie?" asked Marjorie.



Led by Umlosi, the strange procession passed through the jungle. By the light of the flaring torches he picked out with unerring accuracy the trail that would lead them to the missing Moor View girls.

"Eh? What?" gasped Archie. "Oh, rather! I mean, yes!"

"You were looking very serious, Archie," went on Marjorie. "I don't believe you're so hopeful as you try to make out."

"Oh, rather!" declared Archie. "Oh, rather, with tassels on! I was just thinking that everything was all correct—oh, and so forth. It's a frightful job about supper, but—"

"We can do without food for once," interrupted Irene. "It's the prospect I'm thinking of. What are we going to do if the others don't come? What about to-morrow?"

"Try not to think of it," said Dora quietly.

She was older than the other girls, but rather more gentle. And she had ricked her ankle in the camp, and was in far more pain than she had allowed the others to know.

All the girls were looking very tired. But not one of them grumbled. What was the use? The situation was so appallingly grave that it seemed pointless to make it worse than it actually was.

"What about matches?" said Tessa.

"Matches, old girl?" repeated Archie with a start. "Oh, I see what you mean! Absolutely! You mean matches?"

"Yes, Archie. I mean matches," said Tessa.

"Priceless, jolly little matches," agreed

Archie enthusiastically. "I absolutely love the little beggars! I mean, there they are, nestling in the good old box— Eh? Good gad! What's the idea of this concentrated gaze? I mean, it makes a chappie go all funny!"

Six pairs of eyes were upon him.

"Where," said Doris, "are the matches?"

"Oh, absolutely," said Archie feebly. "You mean the matches? The fact is, you needn't worry about them at all!" He slapped his pocket reassuringly. "What-ho! And now, old buttercups, let's have a look at the vista. It seems to me that the good old sun is losing some of his pep. He's not so absolutely ferocious—"

"You do it very well, Archie, but you can't fool us!" interrupted Marjorie. "You haven't got any matches, have you?"

Archie wriggled.

"Well, as a matter of absolute fact— That is to say, as a fact of absolute matter— I mean—" He faltered and gulped. "The fact is, no!" he ended weakly. "It's a most frightful piece of bad news, but the old match department seems to be closed for repairs!"

"And that means we shall be in absolute darkness when the night comes," said Irene quietly. "And those blacks are waiting out there—waiting for night!"



CHAPTER 7.

Hope!

ARKNESS!

It came with true tropical abruptness. Lord Dorrimore's party, pressing on through the wilds, everlastingly on the trail, was compelled to call a halt.

The rescuers seemed to be no nearer their unknown destination. There was every evidence that another party had travelled this way, but the night had come, and they had not been overtaken.

"We can't camp, gov'nor," said Nipper fiercely. "We can't stop here all night, and leave Irene & Co. to face the darkness——"

"Steady, young 'un—steady!" interrupted Lee. "We're not going to stay."

"But Dorrie's preparing to make a fire, sir!" said Handforth. "We can't stop! Oh, it's too awful! We can't stay here——"

"Neither can we go on without torches," interrupted Lee steadily. "This country is full of big game, and it would be madness to proceed in the darkness. A brief rest is absolutely necessary. Be sensible, boys—don't get into a panic."

"If those girls can be in the darkness, so can we!" said Handforth gruffly.

"I can understand your point of view, but it is quite wrong," said Nelson Lee. "Our best chance of saving them is to arm ourselves with powerful torchlights. They will serve as a protection to ourselves, and will reveal our coming to the girls."

"Dry up, Ted—Mr. Lee's right!" said Willy. "What the dickens is the good of going on in the darkness? We shall be like a lot of sheep in a wood. Make yourself useful, and talk less."

For once the great Edward Oswald had no reply. He meekly obeyed Willy's injunction. Within five minutes a hasty camp had been made. Nobody thought of food, but Umlosi and Lord Dorrimore picked out numbers of resinous saplings, and the boys busied themselves in making many great torches. These were bound together with creepers, and would burn steadily, Dorrie reckoned, for upwards of an hour. Each was over six feet in length. A fire was necessary thoroughly to ignite them.

In spite of all the haste, it was not until an hour later that the party moved on again, and now the African night had descended in full. From all quarters could be heard the wild howling of hyenas, the occasional roaring of a lion, and other sounds which the boys could not recognise. But they could tell that they were in the wilds—in a region where human beings were few. They hadn't passed a native village ever since they had left the Kalala River.

Dorrie, who had tried to keep his bearings, had an idea that they were on the fringe of

the Oturi country. But he did not give much thought to the matter now.

When the march was re-started, there were many evidences of growing exhaustion. Some of the juniors were dragging their feet wearily, and it was as much as they could do to carry on.

They had had a hard day, and this long, arduous march on the top of it was having its due effect. But when they thought of their mission they steeled themselves, and fought against their exhaustion. They *had* to carry on!

And so the procession wended its way through the belts of forest land, over the stretches of open country—with Umlosi always in front, picking out the trail.

It was an impressive spectacle.

Fourteen figures stretched out in single file, each holding aloft a flaring torch. There was something heartening in the very sight, and hopes were beginning to rise, too.

"We can't be far off now, Nipper," said Watson. "We've come miles—and there's a limit to the girls' staying powers. They can't have marched much further than this."

"If we keep on, we're bound to find 'em," agreed Nipper. "But will they be safe when we do find them? Don't forget those blacks, Tommy."

"Forget them!" echoed Watson. "I can't keep the brutes out of my mind! Oh, when shall we know the truth?"

Nipper had no reply. He set his teeth, and tried to tell himself that the deadly ache in his feet was imaginary.



CHAPTER 8.

The Secret of the Cave!

"LISTEN!" said Tessa tensely.

"Odds starts and jumps!" murmured Archie. "Dear old girl, you absolutely sent shivers

down the old spinal department. I'm quivering like a table-jelly."

"Please, Archie!" said Tessa. "I—I heard something!"

Archie Glenthorne peered out into the darkness. A faint glow could be seen from the trees, but the intervening space was as black as ink. Over towards the right a full moon was just rising from behind the forest. But its rays had not yet reached the open ground in front of the cave.

"There's nothing," murmured Archie.

"I didn't mean out there," faltered Tessa. "It was—inside!"

"Odds gad!" breathed Archie.

He was startled. They hadn't looked for any peril from the interior of the cave. It was bad enough to crouch there, waiting for an attack which they all expected, but it was a hundred times worse to suddenly realise that they might be in danger from the rear.

Archie felt himself quivering from head to foot, but he forced a chuckle. To his own ears it sounded like the croak of a centenarian frog. But actually it was an excellent effort, and sounded quite cheery.

"Oh, that!" he said carelessly. "Frightfully careless of me. But a chappie is apt to chuck pebbles about when he's doing nothing. Pray forgive me, old girl."

"Did you throw a pebble into the back of the cave, Archie?" asked Marjorie.

"Eh? Oh, well—I mean——"

"Of course he didn't!" came Doris' voice. "Archie's a brick. He's doing all he can to comfort us!"

"I don't know what we should do without him," said Marjorie softly. "He's a dear!"

"Oh, I say!" gasped Archie. "I mean—oh, I say! Oh, that is—I say! Pray don't be so absolutely——"

"There!" interrupted Tessa. "I heard it again! Oh, I'm not jumpy—I'm not nervous! There is something!"

"Pray keep calm!" urged Archie. "There's absolutely nothing to be alarmed about. I'll buzz into the good old murkiness and investigate. Trust your Uncle Archibald! What-ho!"

He crept towards the rear of the cave, successfully keeping from the girls the fact that he was so scared that his skin was tingling. And this was no reflection on Archie's courage. Indeed, it was a proof of his sterling pluck.

There is no fear quite so devastating as that of the unknown. The girls, overwrought by their terrible experience, and tense with waiting, might have given way to a momentary panic. If they had done so, they would have had ample excuse.

But they would have run into the hands of the enemy—those lurking blacks who were outside, creeping nearer and nearer to the cave mouth. For some reason—some tribal custom, perhaps—the brutes had not dared to attack in open daylight.

Archie had thought of the dreadful possibilities in a flash, and he boldly went to the back of the cave in an attempt to calm his fair companions. He succeeded. But his own sensations were pretty awful. He vaguely wondered if this cavern was haunted. There was a mystery at the back here—a monster dwelt in the hidden recesses.

Archie's heart was thumping against his ribs like a steam-hammer. He had heard a curious scraping sound, mysterious and vague, and it was as much as he could do to prevent himself from rushing back.

"Anything there?" came a tense whisper.

"Eh? Oh, rather not!" replied Archie promptly. "A few yards of darkness, and all that sort of stuff. Rocks, too, by gad! But don't worry. I've only knocked off about two-thirds of my old napper! I don't suppose it'll be missed!"

He held his head dizzily. He had caught it a fearful crack on a hard projection, and he decided that his investigation had gone far enough. So he came back again, his object achieved. The girls had calmed down,

and were gazing out of the cave mouth, suddenly fascinated. For the moment they had forgotten the recent alarm.

A scene of magic had unfolded itself, as though by some fairy's wand. The moon, rising over the forest, had flooded the immediate foreground with a white brilliance. There was something indescribably beautiful in the wild scene. The African moon was astoundingly powerful, and every little object was picked out in the effulgence.

"Isn't it wonderful?" asked Irene, awed.

"A minute ago it was all dark—and now there's this!" murmured Tessa. "Oh, but look! Isn't there something moving over there?"

"Yes, and there!" said Mary. "And there, too!"

They looked out with startled eyes. The moonlight had revealed something else besides beauty. There were black spots on the ground—moving spots. They cast long, sinister shadows, and they were creeping nearer—converging upon the cave entrance.



CHAPTER 9.

Saved—by a Wart-hog!

ARCHIE GLENTHORNE gave a reassuring little murmur.

"We don't mind these merchants," he said calmly. "They're only the blacks, you know. Creeping round to bid us good-night, I suppose. I've heard they're frightfully polite johnnies!"

"Oh, Archie!" whispered Irene. "They're going to attack us!"

"Absolutely not!" said Archie. "The idea, old daisy, is for us to attack them. I mean, the first law of defence, so to speak, is to barge into the priceless old foe. That's what the best text-books say. You can absolutely take it from me."

Archie picked up a couple of stones in readiness.

Very brainily, he had spent over half an hour before dusk in collecting huge piles of loose stones, and the girls had helped him, too. They were stacked up near the cave entrance, ready to hand.

It was certainly a first-class scheme.

For that cave entrance was small, and some accurate stone-throwing might well hold back the most determined rush from the natives. A hard-flung stone, particularly a jagged stone, is a nasty missile, and Archie and the girls could be relied upon to fling them hard. It was a case of protecting their lives.

"Hadn't we better start?" asked Doris.

"I'll give the good old word in two jiffies," said Archie. "The big wheeze is to wait until they're a bit nearer. Then we'll let them have an absolute broadside. We'll catch them in the flank, and tickle them in the rear as they shoot off for the horizon!"

"I hope they *do* shoot off!" said Marjorie fervently.

A sudden scream came from Mary. It was only a slight one, but it startled the others.

"There's something in this cave!" panted Mary shakily. "I heard it just now—distinctly. "There's something moving at the back!"

"Odds mysteries and demons," murmured Archie. "This is getting somewhat curdled."

The moonlight had struck into the cave entrance, and the immediate front of it was bathed in the pale glow. This served to make the inner darkness more Stygian than ever. It was as black as pitch.

And then the thing happened.

There was a sudden commotion at the back of the cave, accompanied by a savage, alarming, snorting sound.

"Oh!" cried the girls.

"Good gad!" shouted Archie.

They didn't know what to expect, but in the very midst of their alarm they experienced a momentary relief. This thing, at all events, was an animal—and not a spook. It was some live thing which had made this cave its haunt, and had been lying low ever since the girls had come.

As a matter of fact, the brute was a wart-hog—and a very large specimen at that. He was angry, and he was about to charge. And his tusks were frightful, appalling objects of danger. Only a hog—but a wild one, and as dangerous as a lion in that confined space. Indeed, many of the minor creatures of the jungle—mostly spoken of with contempt—often prove to be the most deadly in actual contact.

"It's coming!" shouted Tessa, as there was a scuffle.

And then he came. Savage, infuriated, the wart-hog charged at the girls. He could see the figures, no doubt, outlined against the cave entrance, and he went at them blindly. It was a moment of peril.

Doris was the first to catch a real glimpse of the brute. By chance she was holding a light cotton jacket in her hand—one that had been very chic that morning. Now it was a rag.

But in the twinkling of an eye, Doris acted.

She flung the jacket with all her strength, and it struck the wart-hog full in the face, and spread over his entire head like a miniature sheet.

The creature swerved, thundered past, and tore out of the cave harmlessly, blinded and terrified.

It was all over in a moment. And not one of those in the cave yet realised that they would bless that uncouth brute.

For at that very moment the savages outside rushed to the attack. Nothing, it seemed, could have been more unfortunate for Archie and the girls. Their attention had been distracted, and they were not ready with their defensive stones.

There were fully a score of the blacks. With wild, awful cries, they swept towards

the cave, all concealment now flung to the winds.

Within ten seconds they would be inside, and the rest would be swift, deadly and indescribable.

But the wart-hog had something to say in the matter.

As the attackers came up, so the hog emerged. But he didn't look like a hog. He didn't look like anything on earth. With that white jacket covering his entire frontal region, and the ends flapping in the air, he presented a terrifying spectacle in the moonlight.

The attacking savages pulled up in their tracks. And then, howling with frantic terror, they bolted. They fled insanely, every warlike instinct killed by their terror.



CHAPTER 10.

The Rescue!

WELL, I mean to say, that's that. What?" said Archie cheerfully. "A dashed happy development, as it were. Old Sitting Bull and his braves have absolutely melted into the undergrowth."

"Yes, they've gone—without leaving a sign," said Irene breathlessly. "Oh, but they might come back."

"Pardon the good old contradiction, but absolutely not," said Archie. "Why, my dear old teacup, you don't seem to realise what's happened."

"I don't," confessed Irene.

"Well, you see, we've first of all got to thank Doris," went on Archie. "I mean to say, of all the priceless stunts, that was the pricelessest. You're a better man than I am, Gungha Din! I mean, one swift swoop, and the old rhinoceros was converted into the nastiest looking Ju-Ju these blighters have seen for many moons."

"It wasn't a rhinoceros, Archie," said Marjorie.

"Then it must have been a blessed half-brother," said Archie firmly.

"And do you really think that those blacks mistook it for a demon, or something?" asked Irene doubtfully.

"I don't think anything about it," said Archie. "I know! These chappies are as superstitious as the Chinese. In fact, more so. I mean to say, much more so. They're all over superstitions. I believe they feed on the dashed things! And when these chappies saw Uncle Rhino legging it out of the cave in his nightshirt— Well, I mean, this spot is Ju-Ju for all time."

Archie's cheery chatter had an extraordinary effect on the girls. Without his reassuring presence, they would probably have given way to utter despair. But there was something extraordinarily calm about Archie. He took everything so urbanely. No matter

how serious the situation, he insisted upon treating it in a light vein.

Perhaps Irene & Co. didn't realise that the large-hearted junior was putting most of it on. Never in his life had he felt so utterly worn and tired. Yet the very mention of "forty of the best"—his usual formula—was anathema to his ears. He laughed it to scorn.

"Good gad," he said briskly. "Absolutely not, old girls. Who suggested this frightful shut-eye stuff?"

"I did," said Marjorie. "I think you ought to have a little sleep, Archie. The danger seems to be over now—for the time being, anyhow—so we'll keep watch while you—"

"Kindly refrain from being prepos.!" interrupted Archie sternly. "I'm keeping watch while you cheery ones drop off into the dreamless. A large dose is positively indicated. So kindly coil yourselves up, and leave everything to me. I'm as fresh as paint."

He strode out into the moonlight, just to prove how wakeful he was, and it rather disconcerted him when he found that his gait was unsteady. Indeed, his weariness was such that unless he kept himself well in hand he would drop down where he stood.

"I mean, this is getting somewhat steep," he murmured. "I don't dashed well know what to answer—" He broke off, staring into the distance. "Odds gad!" he went on, "More frightfulness in the offing, it seems. Oh, well, why not make a thorough night of it?"

He was looking at a glare of lights in the distance. They had come into view fully a mile away, from behind a thick belt of forest. There were evidently many figures. In that crystal atmosphere, he could see them, even at this distance.

"What is it, Archie?" asked Irene, with a catch in her breath.

The girls had all come out of the cave now, and were standing in the moonlight, looking at that distant spectacle.

"Oh, that," said Archie carelessly. "One of the good old torch-light processions. Quite a feature out here, you know. Perfectly harmless, and all that. These merchants amuse themselves with this sort of thing, I understand."

"You're a terrible spoofer, Archie," said Marjorie. "You know as well as we do that the natives don't generally go about with torches. Wouldn't it be too glorious for words if they proved to be old Dorrie and the boys?"

"Oh, don't," murmured Mary.

"Instead of that, I expect they're a lot of savages on the warpath," went on Marjorie. "They're coming after us, of course. They're going to attack us in earnest this time, and—"

"Kindly hoof me if I prove to be wrong, but prepare for glad tidings," said Archie unsteadily. "Old girls, I can absolutely see Handy! I mean to say, I've often said that

anybody could recognise that face a mile off—and, dash it, I was right!"

"Ted!" said Irene breathlessly.

They watched tensely, their hearts beating with growing rapidity. The procession came nearer and nearer. And then, at last, there could be no doubt.

"Yes, it's the boys!" cried Doris. "Oh, they've come!"



CHAPTER 11.

A Well-earned Rest.

WITH flagging footsteps, but with spirits still staunch, the searchers came on. The torches were beginning to die down now, and some of them were on the point of burning out.

Umlosi led the way, as before.

The unfortunate Kutana chief was so weak from his recent tortures that he found it difficult to walk steadily, but he never uttered a word of complaint, and all the others had been silent for a long time.

But Handforth couldn't contain himself for long.

"There must be an end of it soon!" he muttered huskily. "The girls can't have walked on all night—and through this darkness! We're bound to overtake them soon!"

"Steady, Handy!" murmured Nipper. "Somehow, I think we're getting near now."

"How do you know?" asked Handforth eagerly.

"I've noticed that Umlosi has turned to the gúv'nor three or four times in the last mile," said Nipper. "And there are other signs, too. Umlosi says there were some natives near us not long ago. How the dickens he knew I can't understand. But he's uncanny like that. I believe he smells 'em!"

"That wouldn't be hard," said Handforth heavily.

Umlosi suddenly came to a halt, and he stood there like a black statue, his torch held high.

"Wau!" he shouted. "They come, N'Kose!"

"What!" went up a dozen shouts.

"See. Umtagati—see!" shouted Umlosi. "Did I not tell thee to be of good cheer?"

"By the Lord Harry!" came a shout from the rear of the column.

Nelson Lee stared ahead. Figures were racing up—dishevelled, excited figures. There were seven of them. Seven! Nelson Lee closed his eyes for a second, and he felt something rise in his throat.

"Thank heaven!" he muttered fervently.

The girls were safe—and even Archie was unhurt. They came running up, too joyous to remember their weariness.

"Hurrah!" yelled Handforth wildly. "We've found 'em!"

"Oh, thank goodness!"

For about three minutes there was a wild

scene of greeting. Everybody was crazy with delight. Nobody thought of asking for any explanations yet. It was enough for the boys to know that Irene & Co. were safe. And the girls were satisfied to see the other members of the party intact, with Umlosi rescued.

"We thought you were murdered and eaten, and all sorts of terrible things!" said Handforth deliriously. "Oh, crumbs! I'm so relieved that I'm going dotty! Here you are, safe and sound!"

"I think we should have gone dotty, but for Archie," said Irene. "Oh, you wouldn't believe! Archie kept us right all the time. He said from the start that we should be rescued, and he's been a perfect brick. I never knew he could be so wonderful."

"He's true blue!" said Marjorie happily. "Dear old Archie!"

"Let's grab him, and shove him shoulder high!" sang out Johnny Onions. "Where's Archie? Let's show him——"

"I rather think he'd thank you if you left him alone," interrupted Dora gently. "And he said he was as fresh as paint!"

Archie Glenthorne was sprawling in the grass, his head resting on one of the discarded packs, a smile of contentment on his genial face. He was sound asleep, in spite of the tumult around him. The tension was over; his responsibility was done, and Archie, true to his character, had dropped off into "forty of the best and brightest."

"Good old chap!" said Nipper softly. "I'll bet you girls were glad he was with you! We call him a slacker, and make fun of him—but he's full of grit."

The excitement of meeting was so fierce that it soon burnt itself out. It had all been spontaneous, but every one of those youngsters was so tired that he or she was on the point of dropping, and both Nelson Lee and Dorrie were looking unutterably weary now that the tension was over.

"Boys—yes, and you girls, too," said Nelson Lee, "we're all fagged out. Let's leave explanations and all talk until the morning. Our party is intact again, and we all need sleep."

"Rather, sir," said a dozen tired voices.

"Unfortunately, there's still work to be done," went on Lee. "I want you boys to get one of the tents up at once, so that the girls can get straight to sleep. Then we'll make some camp fires, and take it easy."

"All hands to the pumps!" said Dorrie. "I know it'll be a strain, but the work's got to be done."

The fellows buckled to with a will, and at the end of half an hour Irene & Co. were sound asleep in their tent. They had rolled themselves in their blankets, fully dressed as they were, and five minutes after the fires were going the St. Frank's fellows were snoring.

Lee and Dorrie, in spite of their tiredness, kept watch in spells, and so the night passed.

CHAPTER 12.

Umlosi's Vow!



THE sun was high before Nelson Lee awoke from a well-earned sleep. Lord Dorrimore had been keeping the last watch, and he pronounced himself fresh and ready for anything.

"I'm not goin' to turn in again," he said firmly. "I've had five or six hours, an' I'm as fit as a fiddle!"

"I think we'll let the boys and girls sleep on," said Lee, as he took a look at the still slumbering forms. "In fact, we won't make a move from here until to-morrow morning, Dorrie. They can sleep the clock round."

"Just what I was thinkin'," said his lordship. "We can do with some more spells, too, before we go on the march again. There's no hurry. It doesn't matter if we stay here two or three days, if it comes to that. We're safe enough in this place."

"Do you know where we are?" asked Lee. "I must confess that my own knowledge of Central Africa is insufficient."

"I'm a bit hazy in my bearin's," confessed Dorrie. "But I've an idea that we're fairly close to the Oturi country. I seem to recognise those hills in the distance."

Umlosi, who had come up, pointed away to the north-east.

"The land of my people is beyond," he said. "The Kutanas live five days' march away. The Oturi country is more to the west. Those dogs and jackals occupy but a poor land. For are they not always thieving and plundering because of their miserable crops?"

"Well, what price breakfast?" asked Dorrie briskly. "Never mind about the location now. I've got some nice crisp bacon ready, Lee, old man. Hot coffee, too. What do you say?"

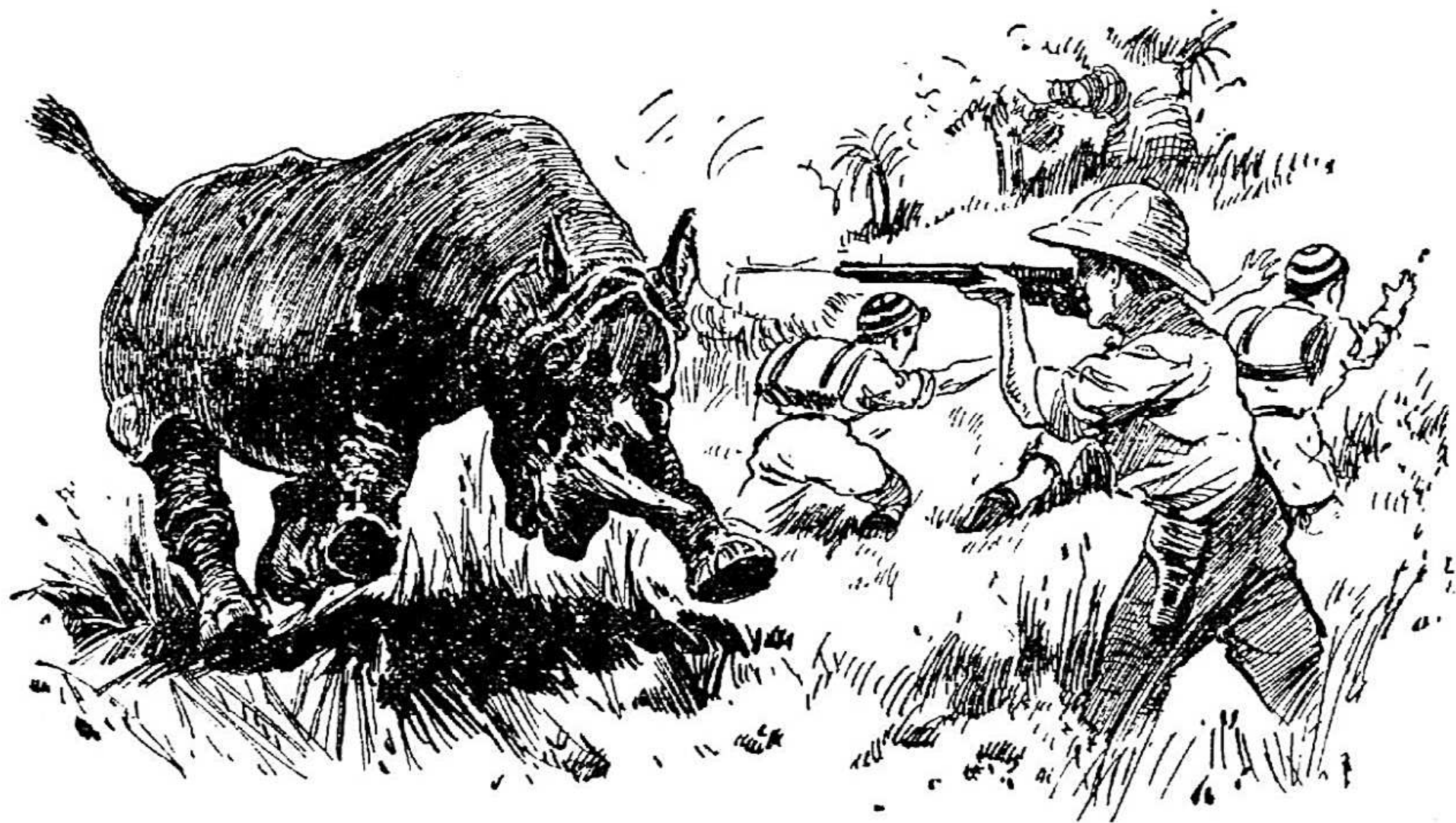
Nelson Lee smiled.

"I haven't tasted food for twenty-four hours," he replied. "Show me this feast, Dorrie, and let me fall upon it!"

It was almost noon before the meal was over. There had come no sign from the boys or girls. They still slept soundly, and Lee could not bear to awaken them. What was the use? No move would be made until the morrow, so they might as well sleep on.

Umlosi's wrists were much better. The swelling had gone down, and he was looking more like his usual self. But there was a grim glint in his eye. Dorrie had seen such a glint as that before—and it meant trouble.

"We've got to decide what we're goin' to do," said his lordship thoughtfully. "I imagine that those brutes who stalked the girls were some of Lorenzo's scum. He probably gave them orders to capture the girls without harmin' them. That's why they followed them so carefully, an' why they delayed action. Anyhow, we shall hear



The rhinoceros came madly on, its beady eyes full of fury, and only just in time did Handforth manage to dodge out of the way. Coolly, Dorrie waited, his rifle held in position. Crack! The weapon suddenly spirted flame, and the big brute seemed to stagger in its tracks!

more about it when the girls are awake."

"Yes, they'll be able to tell us the full story," said Nelson Lee. "What do you propose now, Dorrie? A return to our starting point? A resumption of the elephant hunt?"

Lord Dorrimore stroked his chin.

"This reminds me I want a shave," he said, as his fingers rubbed through the stubble. "Eh? Elephant hunt? H'm! I'm not so sure, old man. Of course, we've finished the job we came up here for. We've found Umlosi, an' released him—an' you'd think that the business was over. But there are one or two points to be considered."

"One being that we cannot return through the Sansissi country," said Nelson Lee grimly. "Both the Sansissi and Arkazoli tribes are hostile, and so we can't risk a passage through that territory. Wouldn't it be a lot better to work our way up into the Kutana country?"

"Just what I was thinkin'," said Dorrie. "We should be safe there."

"Ay, N'Kose, safe indeed!" rumbled Umlosi, "For are not the Kutanas my own people? My warriors will protect ye all, and die a thousand deaths ere harm should befall ye. In the land of the Kutanas there is safety for those whom it honours."

"That's very nice of you, old man," said Dorrie. "I know we shall be all right in Zenobu—your chief city. And, from there we can work our way upwards, an' then return to the Lower Congo by the ordinary recognised trade routes. But isn't there somethin' to be done first?"

"Good words, my father," said Umlosi fiercely. "Thou art referring to the dog

who placed me in captivity? Ay, there is much to be done! For are not hundreds of my own people enslaved and tortured by that jackal? Listen, N'Kose! I will return to this slaver, and I will bring my best warriors. I shall be revenged!"

Umlosi's voice was fierce as he made that solemn vow.

CHAPTER 13.

Plans for the Future!



NELSON LEE was looking rather grave.

"I well understand your emotion, old friend," he said. "And this talk of

bringing your warriors to Lorenzo's land is good talk."

"Thou art truly spoken, Umtagati."

"But I would remind you, Umlosi, that there must be no bloodshed," went on Lee. "That rather hurts you, eh?"

"Now," said Umlosi, "thy talk is bad talk."

"No, it isn't," put in Dorrie. "We can sympathise with you, old son, an' we appreciate how much you want to dig a spear into Lorenzo. But it isn't your business, or our business, either, to administer such drastic punishment. Your people would only get into an unholy lot of trouble afterwards—an' I dare say there'd be a few hangin's."

"But is this justice?" asked Umlosi, aghast.

"Africa isn't what it used to be," said Dorrie gently. "You can't go an' wipe up another tribe, an' kill a half-breed or two,

an' get away with it. You've only got to try that game, an' Administration comes down with a mighty heavy chopper."

"Thou speakest but too truly, my father," said Umlosi sadly.

"Still, this idea of bringing your warriors is first-class," went on Dorrie.

"Thou art speaking strangely, N'Kose," rumbled Umlosi. "Of what use to bring my warriors if they cannot fight? How can a battle be no battle? I would remind thee that hundreds of my people were kept in chains by this accursed Lorenzo. There are no slaves these days, my father! And yet my people are trapped by the dogs of Oturi, and sold into slavery! 'Tis my aim to take my warriors, and free these men."

"A splendid aim, too—and one in which we will help you," agreed Nelson Lee quickly. "But freeing them, Umlosi, need not include the killing of those responsible. By all means take your warriors, and rescue your own tribesmen. Let this slavery be wiped out. But let the recognised authorities punish Lorenzo for his crime. For he will be punished—you can rely upon us to see to that."

"That's the idea," agreed Lord Dorrimore. "You must confine yourself to liberating the slaves, Umlosi. Smash up this horrible slave tradin', an' we'll see that Lorenzo is punished. Let us march into Kutaland forthwith, an' start this good work."

"It is as thou sayest, my father," said Umlosi. "Thou are wiser than I, and thy decision is my decision."

He saluted gravely, and went off to commune with himself.

"Poor old beggar—he's cut to the quick," said Dorrie. "What he wants to do is to swoop down on the half-breed's precious valley, an' wipe out the whole bunch. But, of course, it wouldn't do."

"Decidedly it wouldn't," agreed Lee. "And if we support him in it, we should be arrested by the proper authorities—whoever they are—and shoved in prison as criminals. But it'll be a very different thing if we only free these slaves. That's a duty, old man. A duty to humanity. We can't leave this country until we've seen to it—and seen to it quickly."

His lordship nodded.

"It'll be even better than hunting elephants," he said happily. "Gad, it makes me boil to see any of these blacks bein' tortured! Some of them have queer ideas about diet—they take a fancy, now and again, to a human joint—but that's their own affair. Slavery is an accursed thing, an' I'll fight like the deuce to abolish it."

Nelson Lee glanced at some of the sleeping juniors.

"There are these youngster to consider, too," he said. "This plan of ours, Dorrie, will settle the problem admirably. The boys and girls came to Africa on a mere holiday jaunt, and they have already passed through more dangers than I'd care to think of. They mustn't undergo any further risks."

"There's no reason why they should," said Dorrie.

"No reason at all," replied Lee. "We can get into the Kutana country from here without taking any chances. And once in Zenobu, the youngsters will be safe."

"Just as safe as though they were back in England. The Kutanas are a warlike lot, but for some reason they look upon me as a sort of god, an' any friends of mine are sacred," said Lord Dorrimore. "It's Umlosi's own country, an' in Zenobu the boys an' girls will be given the time of their lives. I suppose you mean to leave them there while we attend to this slavery business?"

"Exactly," said Nelson Lee. "We'll come with Umlosi and his army, and we'll see the thing through."

"I don't think there'll be much need to tell the youngsters all the details," said Dorrie drily. "We'll just casually explain that we're makin' for the Kutana country—an' we'll tell them the rest when they get to Zenobu. A few of them might kick otherwise. They're beggars for danger."

Nelson Lee chuckled.

"Yes, they'll probably want to come with us on this slave-liberating job," he said. "Of course, there'll be no bloodshed, but all the same we'll leave the young people in Zenobu. Well, that's settled. Thank heaven, all the danger is over."

But even Nelson Lee, with all his astuteness, could not foresee the unforeseen!



CHAPTER 14.

To the Kutana Country!

THAT night, round the camp fire, Umlosi gave his two companions a full and detailed account of what he had seen on Otto Lorenzo's estate. It was not particularly pretty hearing.

As far as Umlosi could tell, the half-breed was fabulously rich. He lived in a grand way, and his rubber production was immense. How he got rid of it was a mystery. How he carried his rubber to the markets was his own secret. But there was evidently some channel by which he conveyed it to the outer world in safety, without any hint of its source leaking out. Certainly, nobody outside could ever dream that it was produced by slave labour.

There were hundreds of slaves on the estate. The majority of them had been stolen from the Kutana tribe, and it was small wonder that Umlosi's blood was boiling. These slaves were treated with abominable cruelty. Lorenzo's overseers were as brutal as himself. The man was a modern Simon Legree. His methods were harsh and brutal. Heaven alone knew how many of his wretched slaves died. He cared little, for he was being constantly supplied with fresh captures. He paid them nothing, and he fed them on starvation diet. Umlosi had seen

much, and he had suffered greatly, too. Yet he had only been in this monster's hands for a mere week or two. Scores of his tribesmen had suffered from Lorenzo's cruelty for months—years!

Men like Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore could not depart on an elephant shoot, knowing of such atrocities. Their first duty was to free these slaves. It would be impossible to get into communication with the proper authorities—at least, it would take many weeks. And then months might elapse before any action was taken. The authorities, indeed, would probably scout the whole story as farcical.

The only way was to assist Umlosi in his campaign, and to make it a peaceful campaign. And after the slaves were liberated, Lorenzo could be taken in custody by Lee and Dorrie, and handed to the right people.

That, in brief, was the general plan.

And the start for Zenobu would be made at dawn.

Lee went to sleep that night, easy in mind, and thoroughly contented. Dorrie remained on watch, and as he was building up one of the fires he noticed that Handforth was sitting up in his blankets, and looking round sleepily. He had awakened Church and McClure, too.

"Now, then, you youngsters," said Dorrie. "None of this wakin' up! Get to sleep again!"

Handforth yawned.

"By George!" he said. "I feel hungry!"

"So do I!" said Church. "What's the time? Isn't it dawn yet? I feel as if I've been asleep for ages."

Lord Dorrimore laughed.

"Just your fancy!" he said. "It's hours an' hours before dawn. You turn in, my lads! No grub until breakfast-time!"

He failed to mention that the juniors had already slept the clock round twice. It was small wonder that they were now wakeful—and hungry. But, believing that they had only been in their blankets for a few hours, they calmly rolled up again and continued their slumbers.

Dorrie grinned.

"They'll skin me in the mornin'," he chuckled. "Still, it's doin' 'em a world of good, bless 'em. They'll be fit for anythin' to-morrow."

He had never spoken truer words.

At dawn the entire camp was wakeful. All the boys and girls awoke amazingly refreshed. That long sleep had completely restored them. Their aches and pains had vanished. Even their bruises and cuts had healed. But their appetites were startling.

"It's a mystery to me," said Nipper, as he washed himself in a neighbouring stream. "I've never known a sleep do me so much good."

"Same here," said Gresham. "I keep feeling that I've been asleep for weeks on end!"

"And we couldn't have had much more than five or six hours, when you come to

reckon it up," said Handforth. "It's a giddy marvel! After all we went through yesterday——"

"Yesterday?" said Lord Dorrimore, strolling up and grinning. "You mean the day before yesterday!"

"No, I mean yesterday, sir," said Handforth.

"My dear young ass, you were asleep all day yesterday," smiled Dorrie.

"What!"

"You were all asleep," chuckled his lordship. "In case you don't know it, I'd better explain that you're a set of lazy young beggars! You were steadily snorin' from ten p.m. on Tuesday until an hour ago—an' to-day's Thursday."

"Great Scott!" yelled Nipper. "Have we been here all this time? No wonder we feel so hungry! No wonder our aches and pains have gone!"

"By George, we're fit for anything now," declared Handforth. "But what about breakfast? Where's breakfast?"

"Don't worry!" said Lord Dorrimore. "Mr. Lee has just gone off to shoot a herd of elephants. We thought you'd need somethin' substantial to satisfy your appetites."

"I could eat a rhinoceros this morning!" said Handforth.



CHAPTER 15.

On the March Again.

I was a cheery, lighthearted party which set off on the march two hours later.

With appetites satisfied, and with tissues restored,

the travellers started on the long trek into the Kutana country.

All their troubles were over, it seemed, and everything would now be plain sailing.

Irene & Co. were looking radiant after their refreshing sleep, and it was extraordinary how they had managed to smarten themselves up, considering how limited their supplies were. And Archie Glenthorne was as dandified as ever, rejoicing in the fact that he had recovered his famous monocle.

"Only a couple of days of this hard work," said Nipper cheerily.

"Which hard work?" asked Watson. "We're having the time of our lives, you ass!"

"And so," declared Montie, "say all of us, begad!"

"I mean carrying these heavy packs," said Nipper. "By Saturday morning, according to Umlosi, we shall be well into the Kutana country. And then he'll supply us with a score of hefty carriers, and we'll proceed on the march with due dignity and befitting pomp. And by what I can hear, we shall have a high old time in Zenobu."

"It sounds like a perfume," grinned Watson.

"Well, I expect Zenobu has its own per-

fume," agreed Nipper. "Most of these native towns have, anyhow. Still, joking aside, Umlosi's chief city is a go-ahead, enterprising place. They're even getting the telegraph there, and white people are settling. Old Umlosi's jolly proud of his precious capital."

"Isn't it rather funny that the Kutanas should be pinched by that rotten slaver?" asked Tommy. "If the country is so go-ahead, you'd think they were proof against that sort of thing."

"Kutanaland is a big territory," said Nipper. "There's a big range of hills between us and the capital, and it seems that all the people on this side of the hills are primitive and semi-savage. They're the ones who have been victimised. Near Zenobu, the country is getting quite civilised, and there are all sorts of schemes of development. But it'll be days before we get out of this wild region."

When nightfall came, camp was made in a thickly-wooded part of the country, and hardly a village had been passed during that long march. They were near the Oturi country, but would steer well clear of it, and enter the Kutana region on the following day.

The juniors were rather sorry that there would be no big-game hunting. There was plenty of sport to be had about here, but Dorrie was all for pressing on. He would not rest content until his charges were safely in Zenobu.

"There's a real hotel there," he said, "to say nothin' of the Residency. Kutanaland is under British administration, an' Mr. Commissioner Minter is one of my oldest pals. You youngsters will have the time of your lives."

But the next morning, soon after the party had got on the trail again, an example of Dorrie's shooting was unexpectedly witnessed. The incident came as a complete surprise, and it was exciting while it lasted.

Everybody was marching along, swinging to a good stride, when a sudden commotion was heard over in the bush to the left. Dorrie, who was in the rear, had his rifle ready on the instant.

Then he let out a wild yell of alarm.

"Look out, in the middle, there!" he shouted.

"Great Scott!" gasped Watson.

There was a wild rush. A huge rhinoceros, without warning, was charging the line, and he came on, broadside, like a young avalanche.

"Dodge, Handy!"

"Oh!"

Handforth, by a sort of miracle, leapt sideways and crashed over, the weight of his pack overbalancing him. But that swift action had saved his life, for the rhino thundered by, and charged into the bush on the other side. The weight of his feet, as they hit the ground, sounded like an earthquake.

"My goodness!" gasped Handforth. "Where is he?"

"Gone, thank Heaven!" said Church breathlessly. "Oh, crumbs! I thought you were going to be caught on that brute's fearful spike!"

"Well, the danger's over now!" said McClure.

"Don't you believe it!" exclaimed Nipper. "That rhino was savage, and the brutes have a habit of coming round, and charging for a second time. We'd better be on the alert!"



CHAPTER 16.

Handy's Long-lost Brother!

HERE was much truth in Nipper's warning, for a minute later the rhinoceros came into sight again, and there could be no doubt that he was intent upon making another charge.

The line had already been disorganised, and nobody knew exactly where the dangerous monster was about to attack. Quite evidently, he had taken a dislike to the party, and his idea was to wipe it out.

"All right—leave him to me!" sang out Dorrie coolly.

At this sort of thing he was supreme. He stood right in the infuriated rhino's path, and calmly put his rifle to his shoulder. He took aim as though he were about to fire at a stationary target. The others watched, their hearts in their mouths.

The rhino came on, his beady eyes full of fury, his speed almost incredible. And then, when it seemed that Dorrie would never fire, the brute put his head down for the charge—uncovering the one vulnerable spot. Dorrie had been waiting for that second.

To have fired sooner would have been idle, for the shot would have had no effect whatever. But it was different now. The target itself was insignificant, for only that one place in the rhino's body was fatal.

Crack!

Lord Dorrimore's rifle spurted flame, and the bullet thudded to its mark with absolute precision. The rhino seemed to stagger in his tracks for a second, and then he turned a complete somersault, shaking the very earth. He rolled over and over, stone dead, finishing up a foot or two from Dorrie.

"It's the only thing to do with 'em," he said cheerily.

"By Jove, that was a good shot, Dorrie!" exclaimed Lee, hurrying up.

"Nonsense!" laughed Dorrie. "I couldn't miss him."

"It's a jolly good thing you didn't miss him, sir," said Willy. "There'd have been one of this party left behind if you had."

"They don't often charge like that, but when they do you've just got to be drastic," said his lordship. "I think we'll leave him

just where he lies. There'll only be a few bones left by to-morrow."

And the expedition went on its way again, most of its members shaken with the exception of Dorrie. He had regarded the whole incident as a trifle, and did not even want to discuss it.

There were no further untoward incidents during the march, and when they camped again that night Umlosi was in the best of humours because they had reached the Kutana country sooner than he had expected. Exactly how he knew they had crossed the border remained a puzzle. There was no appreciable difference in the landscape, and there were still no villages.

They camped close to a small river, in the shelter of the forest. A high wind had sprung up, and there was some promise of rain, too.

Handforth received a bit of a fright that evening. He had expressed the greatest contempt for all the forest creatures, but he was compelled to admit that he was scared stiff. And the joke of it was he needn't have been scared at all.

Wandering away from the main camp, he was suddenly startled by a movement amid a clump of long bamboo stems. And then, before he could back away, he came face to face with an enormous gorilla, not fifteen yards away.

"Great guns!" gasped Handforth.

The size of the gorilla staggered him. It was of truly Herculean proportions. Handforth had often wanted to see one of these great gorillas—having heard that they could break a lion's neck with the greatest ease—but now he wasn't nearly so enthusiastic.

The creature was evidently an "old man" gorilla—one that roamed about alone. He must have been over six feet in height, and the span of his arms was probably not less than eight feet.

He stood looking at Handforth with a quaint, child-like curiosity. He didn't seem to be very impressed. And Edward Oswald himself was physically incapable of moving an inch. He had an idea that if he ran, his last moment would come.

And just then the gorilla opened his mouth and emitted a devastating, screaming roar. The sound was utterly terrifying, and Handforth had an idea that his hair was standing on end.

"Hallo!" said Dorrie, looking up. "Old man gorilla!"

"Where, sir?" asked some of the other fellows.

"Don't rush—don't rush!" said his lordship. "You'll only scare him away!"

"But aren't you going to shoot him, sir?" asked Duncan.

"I never shoot gorillas," replied Dorrie. "It's a rummy thing, but whenever I've been huntin' the beggars—to capture them alive, you know—I've always felt that it's pretty low-down. They're so bally human in their ways, you know."

"But aren't they dangerous, sir?" asked Watson.

"Not unless they're provoked," replied his lordship. "Come on. Let's have a look at this chap."

They pushed their way round a clump of mimosa and thorn, and came within full sight of Handforth and the gorilla. There were several gasps of horror. But Dorrie only grinned.

"Hallo!" he said. "Handy seems to have found his long-lost brother!"

Handforth wasn't feeling at all brotherly, however. The gorilla had now come a step or two closer, and he was making a whining noise, and beating his closed fist on his chest. This latter operation produced a curious "clopping" noise, and he was hoping to scare Handforth away by it.

Then he roared again, and Edward Oswald bolted.



CHAPTER 17.

Disquieting News!

"TEADY, old son!" said Dorrie calmly.

"Shoot it, sir—shoot it!" gasped Handy. "Oh, my goodness! He's after me!"

"And he's still coming on, too!" panted Church. "No wonder you bunked, Handy—no wonder you scooted!"

"Bunked!" said Handforth, with a start. "Scooted?"

"Yes, you ran like the dickens!"

"By George, so I did!" said Handforth huskily. "But I wasn't scared! Not likely! And to prove it, I'll jolly well go back, and punch the beastly thing on the nose! I'm not going to have you chaps calling me a funk!"

He gripped himself, swung round, and was pulled up in the nick of time by Dorrie.

"Don't be a young ass," said his lordship. "I've known a V.C. to bolt from a gorilla. But you needn't be alarmed. This chap is only curious. He doesn't mean to attack us."

"But I thought they were horribly dangerous?" asked Handforth.

"Then you thought wrong," said Dorrie. "Now an' again you might meet one that becomes treacherous—just the same as any domestic dog will go mad. But on the average they're harmless enough. It's the natives who spread these fantastic yarns. A gorilla is one of the biggest bluffers of the African forest. If he can't scare you away by his roarin', he gives it up as a bad job, an' leaves you alone. He doesn't go about lookin' for excitement."

As if in proof of this, the gorilla roared again and again, beating his chest, and looking terribly dangerous. Then, turning on his heel, he vanished amid the trees.

"What did I tell you?" asked Dorrie, grinning. "And yet, if he had liked, he could have torn the whole crowd of us to bits. Those brutes have got the strength of fifty Samsons."

Handforth looked indignant.

"Well, all I can say is, it's a fraud!" he said tartly. "I always thought these gorillas were more dangerous than lions!"

"Well, now you know different," smiled Lord Dorrimore. "It doesn't do to take too much notice of what you hear. But you can't get away from actual experience, can you?"

Later on, they saw one or two families of gorillas, harmlessly roaming through the forest, and showing only a passing interest in the travellers. Inexperienced hunters might have shot at them, and thus earned their resentment—but Dorrie was too old a hand for that.

Next day they found themselves in one of the Kutana villages, and decided to make a halt there for lunch. The whole population had come out to welcome them, and Umlosi was greeted with tumultuous scenes of joy. All these Kutanas recognised him as their Chief.

"Well, we're safe enough now," said Nipper, as he and Mary and a group of the others stood watching the quaint scene. "We're well into the Kutana country, and we shall be in Zenobu by Monday."

"It seems impossible that there could really be any danger in Africa," said Mary. "The natives here are all friendly, and they treat us as though we were sacred. Even the head-men bows and scrapes as if we were Royalty."

"We're as safe as if we were at St. Frank's," said Handforth, with regret.

"You don't seem to like it, Ted," laughed Irene.

"Oh, it's all right, but it's taken the spice out of things," said Handforth. "Even the giddy beasts of the forest are safe! It seems to me that we've had all the fun!"

Curiously enough, at that very moment the head-man of the village was talking earnestly to Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore in Swahili. He was looking troubled, and even frightened.

"Lord, there is danger," he was saying, as he looked at Dorrie. "Five men of this village have already been taken from us. The Oturi warriors have ravaged every village for miles, and they have taken our goats, and they have taken our young men."

"This is bad talk," put in Umlosi gravely. "For did we not think that all would be well in my country?"

"When were these Oturi dogs last seen?" asked Dorrie.

"Lord, they came but two days since," replied the head-man. "It is said that they have gone far to the south, but I do not believe these lying stories. The Oturi are still near. They wait. Therefore, lord, let your eyes be wary, and your ears keen. Let your weapons be ready."

Later, Lee and Dorrie had a moment's chat.

"Is that man to be relied on, do you think?" asked Lee.

"The trouble is, we can't tell," replied Lord Dorrimore. "Most of 'em, I'm afraid, are incapable of tellin' the truth. But in this instance there's no reason why he should warn us for nothin'. But I don't think we need make any alterations to our plans."

"It would be awkward to do so," admitted Lee.

"We'll go straight ahead," continued his lordship. "Umlosi is arrangin' for a number of these men to accompany us as carriers. We shall be a pretty big party, an' the Oturi aren't likely to attack us. They'll go for small groups of harmless natives, but they wouldn't dare to monkey with white men. The best thing we can do is to forget it."

But they didn't forget it. They weren't allowed to forget it.



CHAPTER 18.

Ambushed!

"THIS is more like the real thing," said Nipper cheerfully.

They were on the march minus their loads. Twenty Kutanas had been engaged as carriers, and another dozen were travelling in advance of the party, clearing the way through the forest. Travelling was now made comparatively easy. The hardships of the trek were over.

It was early morning, for they had remained overnight in the Kutana village—some delay having been occasioned in the securing of the bearers. Now it seemed as though the last vestige of danger had gone, together with the last of the discomforts.

None of the boys and girls had been told of the head-man's warning, and they didn't even know that Oturi raiders had been wandering about in the Kutana country. They felt that they were among friends, with no further possibility of attack.

"There's no need to alarm the youngsters unnecessarily," remarked Dorrie. "Not that they would be alarmed. I believe they're feeling a bit bored, as a matter of fact. Still, it's better to say nothin'."

"Yes, particularly as there's hardly any chance of the Oturi coming anywhere near us," said Nelson Lee. "But, candidly, I shan't feel really easy until we have got all these youngsters into Zenobu."

Umlosi's attitude was not very comforting. He was looking troubled and grave, and whenever Dorrie spoke to him he shook his head and rumbled words of much misgiving. His "snake," it seemed, was telling him that everything ahead was black and uncertain.

Umlosi had made an extraordinary recovery during the last day or two. Much of his strength had returned, and his hurts had

nearly all ceased to trouble him. They were healing splendidly.

And here he was, in his own country, marching towards his own capital. He had every reason to be in the happiest of moods. Therefore, Dorrie took notice of his despondency.

He even made up his mind that it would be a good plan to take a long detour. He suggested it to Nelson Lee.

"We're not in any particular hurry," he said. "If we take a straight course, as we're goin' now, we shall have to go through a good many miles of this thick forest-land. And that's where the Oturi are liable to be lurkin', if they're lurkin' anywhere."

"Is there another route, then?" asked Lee quickly.

"We could cut west, an' keep in touch with a chain of villages all the way," said Dorrie. "Umlosi's been tellin' me. I didn't know it before. The trouble is, the distance is nearly half as much again."

"We must go that way," said Lee decisively. "Good gracious, Dorrie! What does it matter about an extra day or two? We won't continue on this present route through the forest. We'll——"

"Hallo!" interrupted his lordship. "What the—— Good glory!"

The air had suddenly become filled with the most fiendish cries. The travellers were making their way along a well-used forest path, one of the main routes of the country. Thick forest was on either side, and the sun scarcely penetrated through the gloom of the thick foliage.

But the peace of that scene was now destroyed.

Hundreds of figures appeared, as though from nowhere. Fearsome looking figures—painted, decorated, and be-plumed.

"An ambush!" shouted Lee thickly.

In that second he realised that their decision to change their course had come too late. The Oturi raiders were upon them—were attacking even now!

The whole line was thrown into utter disorder.

Consternation reigned, but not one of the boys or girls had any thought but that of resistance. And Dorrie was pleased to notice, in that tense moment, that the Kutanas held their ground, instead of fleeing in every direction, as the carriers of some other tribes might have done.

"Don't let 'em bowl you over, you chaps!" yelled Handforth. "By George! This is going to be a fight! Come on, you painted rotters!"

"Absolutely!" bellowed Archie.

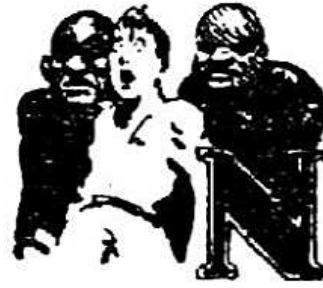
"We can fight—but it's hopeless!" said McClure breathlessly. "Look at 'em! Scores! Hundreds! We don't stand an earthly!"

"That doesn't matter!" yelled Handforth. "No surrender!"

"Not while we can breathe!" agreed Nipper stoutly.

CHAPTER 19.

Captured by Cannibals!



NELSON LEE suffered agony for the first two minutes.

Agony of mind alone. For he believed that all these youngsters were to

be massacred on the spot by the wild, shrieking Oturis. But it turned out that their bark was worse than their bite.

Not a spear was used. The Oturi were in such numbers that they overwhelmed the party by force alone. To kill any of the victims was needless! They were beaten by weight.

And it became more and more evident that there was a grim, significant object in this procedure. Although the white people could have been utterly wiped out at the very beginning of the fight, they were preserved. Instead of being killed, they were captured, unharmed.

Lord Dorrimore, at least, felt that he knew the reason.

He had heard many rumours that the Oturi were cannibals. Of late years they had only practised their orgies in secret. Only a few stories had got abroad. In the past, the Oturi tribe had held the record of being the most savage cannibals in the whole great region of Central Africa. These savage blacks seemed to have all the characteristics of their forefathers.

For years the Oturi would remain peaceful, and then some trifle would give rise to a war palaver. There would be a killing, and then, perhaps, a general massacre of some peaceful village. And after that, for several months, the Oturi would be maddened by the old lust.

It seemed that this was one of their bad spells.

The fight in the forest had been brief. So brief, indeed, that it could scarcely be regarded as a fight. Handforth had managed to get in a few hard blows, but his knuckles suffered more than the enemies' heads. Nipper and Browne, too, had battled hard during the first few moments. But in a flash, it seemed, everybody was held—bound by strong, cruel creepers. Then they were placed in a double column, with the Oturi warriors running round, shouting, and generally behaving with wild jubilation.

Lord Dorrimore had thought, for a grim moment, of using his revolver. Lee had had the same idea. But commonsense had warned them not to use their weapons. All would have been lost if they had done so. For, without question, these excited savages would have speared everybody, regardless of any orders that their chief might have given.

"What are they going to do with us?" asked Irene frantically.

"Goodness knows!" said Doris, as they



When he saw his minor being taken away—taken away to be roasted alive by these cannibals—Handy struggled frantically. “Lemme go!” he shouted, but the other juniors held him back determinedly. They realised that resistance would only make matters worse.

watched the antics of the enemy. "My only hat! Ted was grumbling at the tameness of things this morning. I hope he's satisfied now!"

Handforth happened to be in front, and he had heard.

"Satisfied?" he repeated. "I didn't get a chance to slosh the brutes!. Oh, crumbs! What a rotten frost! A scrap like that, and I hardly got an uppercut in!"

"Never mind about uppercuts," growled Church. "We're in a horrible fix now. These blacks are the bitterest enemies of the Kutanas. Umlosi's with us, and we're his friends. So we shall all be treated in the same way."

"Why haven't they killed us?" asked Gresham. "I thought these blacks always killed their victims? Why, we're in a worse fix than ever now! Every one of us collared—and no possibility of a rescue party."

"My hat, that's a pretty awful thought," said Duncan. "If one or two of us had escaped, they might have got word to the authorities, or to Zenobu. Then the rescue party could have come along."

"What would have been the use?" asked Johnny Onions. "These punitive expeditions take weeks and months to prepare, and by the end of that time we shall be either dead, or tortured so much that we shan't want to be rescued."

The incident had taken everybody by utter surprise. Travellers in Africa do not expect to be pounced upon by hostile savages nowadays. Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore had thought that there was a possibility of a skirmish or two with the Oturi raiders. But never for a moment had they believed that such a wholesale capture as this could occur.

"It's the rottenest piece of luck we've ever had," said Dorrie fiercely. "Ye gods! Doesn't it prove the truth of the old sayin' that you mustn't count your chickens before they're hatched? We thought we were safe. An' now we're in the worst danger of all!"

"What do you mean, Dorrie?" asked Lee.

"These brutes are cannibals—that's what I mean," muttered Dorrie. "An' just recently they've been gettin' more an' more out of hand. Two German big game hunters were captured and eaten only a couple of months ago—but the authorities are only just beginnin' to wake up. The Oturi country isn't under British administration, worse luck."

"If you knew of this, why didn't you tell me before?"

"I didn't want to jaw about things like that," growled Dorrie. "An' what did it matter? We didn't plan to go into the Oturi region, an', in fact, we've given it a wide berth. How could we anticipate anything like this?"

Nelson Lee was silent. Dorrie was perfectly right. They were in Kutaland, and had had every reason to believe themselves secure.

But now they were formed into a long line, and their savage captors made them march. They were led off to the thickest part of the jungle, to an unknown destination.



CHAPTER 20.

Prisoners of K'Laba!



TWO days of hard, terrible marching. Afterwards, the members of Lord Dorrimore's holiday party looked back on that march vaguely, hardly able to remember all the details.

It had been a forced march—with a pace which was utterly gruelling in that hot climate. The Oturi had forced them ever on, resting only for a few hours after nightfall.

Fully three score of men had formed the vanguard of the great party, clearing the forest with great skill. There had been scarcely any delay. And by the end of the first day, they had crossed a big, shallow river, and had then entered the Oturi country.

After that, village after village had been passed through, and each one was inflamed with excitement.



When he saw his minor being taken away—taken away to be roasted alive by these cannibals—Handy struggled frantically. "Lemme go!" he shouted, but the other juniors held him back determinedly. They realised that resistance would only make matters worse.

At night, the prisoners had heard the distant beating of drums. The Oturis were gathering in the chief town for the great event which was to come. The whole tribe was fanatically inflamed.

And then, at last, the Oturi city had been reached. Hundreds of painted savages lined the way into the town of huts, and K'laba, Paramount Chief of the Oturi, welcomed his warriors with due pomp. There had been many palavers between K'laba and his thirty chiefs, and all of them were now gathered in the great central clearing of the native town.

"This is a good capture," said K'laba, as he eyed the prisoners. "Our warriors have done well. Let Umlosi be brought before me."

Umlosi was singled out.

"Chief of the Kutanas!" sneered K'laba. "You have dropped low, O Umlosi. And ere long your whole miserable tribe will be wiped out by the all-conquering Oturi. Our wise men have predicted this, and our wise men are never wrong."

Umlosi was looking cool and dignified.

"Fool and prattler!" he replied. "You will kill me, and you will kill the white lords, and the young white boys and maidens. And then you will be triumphant. But later, K'laba, you will hang from one of yonder trees, and the white soldiers will burn your town, and for years the Oturis will be as lepers."

K'laba frowned. He was a huge, bloated ruffian, maddened by his recent victories, and too stupid to realise that he would be called upon to pay the price.

"Take him away!" he shouted. "There will be special treatment for Umlosi after the feast. This great victory must be celebrated in a fitting manner. Our people shall have much to delight their eyes."

And Umlosi was taken, and thrust into a filthy hut. He had no doubt whatever that he was to be tortured. He knew the customs of the Oturis well. His sufferings were acute already, for he was a great chief, and he was being treated as the very dirt.

His fellow Kutanas were spirited away, and they were either imprisoned, or killed out of hand. Neither Umlosi, nor Dorrie could tell.

All the whites were given better treatment, it seemed. For they were divided into three parties. Lee and Dorrie were placed in one thatched hut, the girls in another, and all the boys in a third. And these huts were quite clean and habitable. Guards were placed outside the doors, and other men patrolled round them.

The Oturi city had been entered soon before dusk, and Lee expected that they would all witness a terrible orgy that very night. But the preparations, it seemed, were not sufficiently advanced. And although fires were blazing throughout the night, and there was much activity, none of the prisoners were interfered with.

Most of the boys and girls, being healthy and thoroughly tired, managed to get a good deal of sleep. It didn't much matter, in any case, for there was plenty of time to sleep on the morrow.

Shortly after dawn, the excitement died away, and before long the town was so quiet that it was hard to believe that there had been any commotion. Some of the prisoners thought that this unusual quietness denoted a change of plan.

"Perhaps the Kutanas are on the warpath, and have come to our rescue," said Handforth eagerly. "Perhaps all the men have been called away, and there's a battle going on—"

"You needn't kid yourself, old man," interrupted Nipper. "You mustn't take any notice of this sudden peace. These blacks need sleep as much as we do, and by this time the first flush of their victory has worn itself out. They're preparing themselves for the big event."

"You're not very cheerful!" said Tommy Watson.

"Well, it's better to face the facts," growled Nipper. "It won't do any good if we fool ourselves."

Obtaining a glimpse out into the big space, they could see that the streets were sunny and peaceful. Children were playing about, and dogs were barking. Some of the women were outside their huts, pounding meal in great earthenware bowls.

In fact, a more peaceful scene could not have been imagined.

And during the morning, and right into the afternoon, most of the captives slept. There seemed nothing to talk about, the heat was oppressive, and sleep was welcome after the strenuous march.

Food was brought occasionally, and it was by no means unpalatable. But there was something very significant in this lull.



CHAPTER 21.

No Hope!

DON'T want to be pessimistic, but this strikes me as the calm before the storm, old man," said Lord Dorri-more, shaking his head.

"I've seen too much of these infernal savages! Everythin' seems very tranquil now, but I'll wager there'll be a big difference an hour before sunset."

"We've got to look at this thing squarely, Dorrie," said Nelson Lee in a sober voice. "Where was the blunder?"

"Blunder?" asked his lordship.

"Yes, blunder," said Lee. "A terrible thing of this sort ought never to have happened. Surely we could have guarded against it? Somebody must have been at fault."

They were sitting near the doorway of their own hut, just clear of the beam of hot sunshine which slanted in. Outside, the guards were sleepily talking together, and Dorrie was idly watching the movements of a two-inch long centipede as it wriggled its loathsome way from under a stone.

"I don't know about anybody bein' at fault," he said slowly. "It's easy enough to be wise after the event, Lee. But how in the name of all that's confounded were we to expect this? Even Umlosi didn't guess anythin'. We were in his own country, an' we thought everythin' was rosy."

"Yet we ought to have known," declared Lee. "The great pity was that we didn't take that western route to start with. We shouldn't have walked into the ambush at all." He struck a match, and lit his pipe. "Not that it's any good looking back," he added. "We've got to think about our pre-

sent predicament. Any chance of escape, Dorrie?"

"Not a ghost," said his lordship, shaking his head.

"We're armed," said Lee. "I don't know why, but they haven't taken our revolvers away, although they pinched our rifles."

"The worst thing we could do—an' you know it," said Dorrie. "We'd kill a dozen of the brutes, I daresay, an' then they'd be on us. My policy with these cheery merchants is to give 'em their head. They're a slow lot. An' while they're palaverin' an' generally wastin' time in preparations, we might be rescued."

"By Umlosi's men?"

"That's what I was thinkin' of," said Dorrie, nodding. "Of course, it's only one chance in a thousand, but I simply refuse to believe that we're all booked for the stockpot. The thing's too ghastly. Somethin' *must* happen."

Lee remained silent. It seemed so useless to talk.

And in the other huts the situation was very much the same. The girls were calm, but this coolness of front was only assumed. Never would they show themselves to be frightened! Yet, inwardly, they were frightened, and with excellent cause. They were terrified by the thoughts which could not be dismissed.

And the St. Frank's fellows were the same. One or two of them suggested action, but all this came to nothing. For it was idle to talk of escape. How could they get out of this hut in broad daylight? And if they got out, what then?

And it was no good making plans for the night, because the chances were that the Oturi would forestall them. They had plans of their own, no doubt.

And the knowledge that these savages were cannibalistic was present in every mind. There was some fetish or other about the custom. The witch-doctors were mixed up in it, and the eating of human flesh was less of a feast than a ritual.

The great question was, had the Oturi sufficient fanaticism to indulge in the practices of their forefathers? On rare occasions, these tribes would break out, and then nothing could hold them. Was Dorrie's party to witness such atrocities? Were there to be human sacrifices—and were these victims to provide the sport?

Towards evening, as Dorrie had hinted, there came signs of activity. Parties of men took possession of the great central space, and there was much work being done. Immense stacks of wood were carried in, and a fence seemed to be in the course of construction. Other wood was brought and piled in great heaps—fuel, no doubt, for the ceremonial bonfires.

A big stir was making itself felt, and the uncertainty of the whole situation became more acute.

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CHAPTER 22.

No Chance of Escape!

SOMETHING appears to be decidedly doing, laddies," observed Archie Glen-thorne, an hour later. "Our jolly old hosts are gathering in considerable slabs, dash it. I imagine that we shall soon be led out, and introduced to the good old toasting-fork."

"Why can't they take us out of this rotten hut?" growled Willy. "It's getting stifling in here—and I've had about five cockroaches down my neck already!"

"I expect they'll take us out when they're ready," said Nipper. "There's something on the move, anyhow. And anything's better than suspense. If they're going to put us into the cauldron, let 'em do it, and get it over."

"They'd better try that game on with me!" said Handforth fiercely. "By George! We'll fight to the last ditch! If we do go under, we'll go under game!"

"Hear, hear!"

"That's the spirit, Handy!"

"Without wishing to minimise the sentiment of Brother Handforth's remark, let me

point out that this talk of going under is decidedly premature," remarked Browne, of the Fifth. "It pains me to hear this reference to a last ditch. Rather let us discuss our escape."

"There's no escape, you ass," said Onions.

"Possibly not, brother, but it is more congenial to discuss it than to talk of going under," replied Browne calmly. "I would like to suggest that such talk can only depress us."

"Old Browne's right," said Nipper, nodding. "There's no sense in meeting trouble half-way."

"I am gratified that I have at least one supporter," beamed Browne. "My own pet scheme is to dash out into the sunshine, crack every head within reach, and then proceed to capture the town."

"We can't do that, you ass!" said Handforth, staring.

"I am willing to grant that the project is an ambitious one, but, at least, the picture is alluring," replied Browne. "Let us dwell upon pleasant thoughts, brothers. Alas, I fear that the evening is not likely to be wholly congenial. So we must steel ourselves by cheerful flights into the realms of fancy."

Handforth snorted.

"Wouldn't it be more practical to smash down the back of the hut, and sneak out?"

he asked. "All these savages are in the square here. If only we can get out—"

"Yes, by Jupiter!" said Church eagerly. "Perhaps we could find a way into the girls' hut, too, and rescue them! And then there's Mr. Lee and Dorrie! Why not make a shot at it?"

"Hear, hear!"

"Let's make an attempt to escape!"

Most of them were excited, but they all knew that they were kidding themselves. It would be easy enough to break through the flimsy side of the hut, but there would be no chance of real liberty.

Handforth, in fact, actually forced a hole, and was disgusted to find half a dozen Oturi warriors in full sight. There wasn't a foot of cover within a hundred yards.

Not that the plan ever came to anything. For while Handforth was still trying to tell himself that there was a chance, the hut was entered by a number of men, and the prisoners were hustled out.

At first they were dazzled by the blazing sunshine which came slanting across the tree tops. The sun was getting low in the sky, but it still possessed terrific power.

The meaning of that rough fencing was now explained. For the boys found themselves led into a kind of pen—something after the fashion of cattle. The pen was quite small—merely thirty feet square, and mainly composed of eight-foot poles, lashed together, six inches apart. Once inside there was no escape, for the poles were surprisingly strong, and their tips had been acutely sharpened. In addition to this, Oturi warriors stood all round, five or six feet apart.

What was the meaning of this pen?

Obviously, there was some grim business afoot. For dances were now being inaugurated. Parties of men, weirdly and grotesquely painted, were going through a kind of rehearsal, and K'laba himself was striding about, attended by his chief advisers, superintending the whole affair.

"This looks cheerful!" said Nipper, as they sought in vain to shield themselves from the blistering sun. "There's going to be a feast to-night, you chaps. There's going to be a tremendous celebration. I wonder if we're down on the menu as the principal course?"

"I can't believe it," growled Watson. "Even these awful-looking blacks wouldn't descend to such horrors."

"Horrors to us—but a picnic to them, old tulip," remarked Archie.

"Yes, and this ought to be a lesson to us not to grumble," said Willy. "We didn't like that hut because it was too stuffy, but this sunshine is worse than anything. Oh, for some shade!"

"By George!" said his major, with a sudden note of joy in his voice. "Here come the girls!"



CHAPTER 23.

Suspense!

It was some consolation, at all events, for all the members of the party to find themselves together. Nelson Lee, Lord Dorrimore, and Umlosi, were put into that pen, too, and

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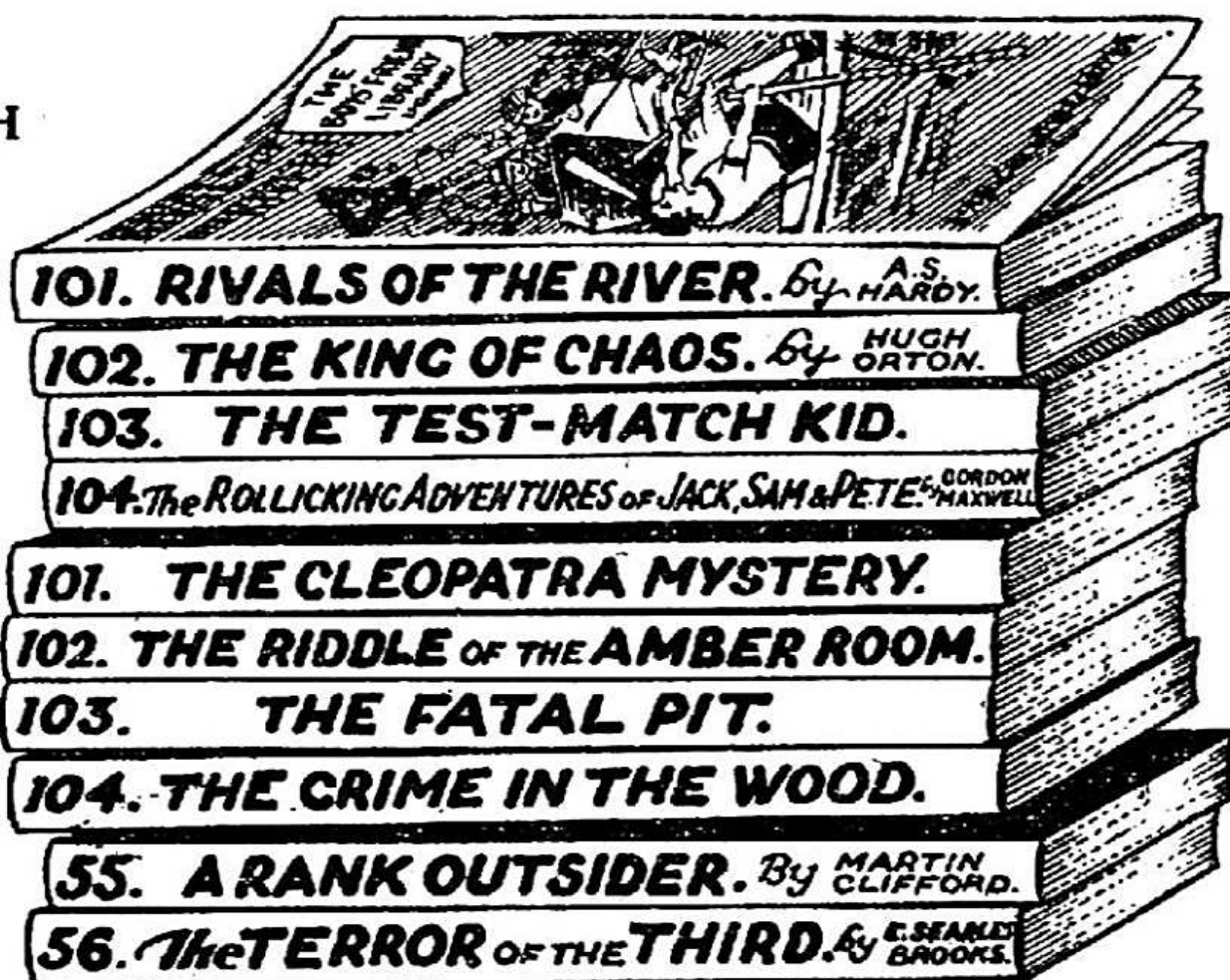
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they were able to exchange greetings with the others.

Neither Lee nor Dorrie were allowed to say what was in their minds.

"I cannot express my sorrow, young 'uns, that this terrible thing should have happened," began Dorrie. "I feel responsible

But that was as far as he was permitted to go.

"Oh, dry up, sir!"

"It's not your fault, Dorrie," said Irene. "We're all in the same boat, and we've got to look brave about it—even though we feel dreadfully panicky inside."

"We'll show these blacks a bold front, anyhow," agreed Mary. "We won't let them amuse themselves by hearing us scream and cry for mercy."

"Not likely!" shouted the juniors.

"Gad, that's the spirit!" said Dorrie, with a lump in his throat. "We knew what these youngsters were made of, didn't we, Lee? Well, anyway, we're able to have a chat before the show starts. Let's be thankful for small mercies."

"We've got seats in the grand-stand, sir!" said Nipper. "We're able to see everything that's going on——"

"But we don't know which of us is to provide the star turn," murmured Browne. "I have cast my eye round generally, and I fear that Brother Handforth is already earmarked. I have noted many hungry looks in his direction."

"Oh, cheese it!" said Handforth huskily.

"I've felt helpless once or twice in my life, but never so helpless as this," muttered Lord Dorrimore, taking Lee aside. "They've pinched our revolvers now, an' we're left defenceless. Do you think they mean to butcher us all?"

"I'm afraid to say what I think," replied Lee. "Dorrie, this whole affair is ghastly. I wouldn't mind so much for myself, but when I think of all these young—— But what's the use? That sort of talk won't make it better."

He stood with clenched fists, his face haggard and drawn. And even Dorrie, the genial, had never before looked so stricken.

Umlosi joined them, full of self-condemnation.

"Don't talk like that, old friend," said Dorrie quietly. "Nobody was to blame. We've just got to hope for the best. Glory, when I think of the way these youngsters are bearin' up! They're even making jokes! Let's profit by their example, an' try to look cheerful."

Soon afterwards the need for conversation ceased. The prisoners had been finding it increasingly difficult to talk. For there was nothing to discuss. It seemed all wrong to talk about trivialities—and they tried to avoid discussing the possibilities of the evening.

So it was a general relief when an enormous din started—a din so devastating that any kind of speech was difficult.

Drums were being beaten, and the dancers

were getting ready in the big space in the centre of the town. They made the most unutterable noises as they danced, and at first there seemed to be a sort of rhythm.

But this soon petered out. In spite of the heat, the dancers kept on until they were well-nigh exhausted. Then, as they fell out, others took their places. And so it went on—continuously. And the Oturis were working themselves up into a mad, fanatical frenzy.

The day died, and as the dusk deepened, great fires were lighted, and there were other significant preparations. Utensils for cooking were now in great evidence, and yet there was no foodstuff. At intervals, crowds of the cannibals would come whirling round the pen, shrieking at the captives and trying to terrify them.

In this they were disappointed—and greatly surprised, perhaps. For the captives remained calm and indifferent. Whatever their inward thoughts, they revealed nothing. But the suspense was utterly nerve-shattering. They were getting to the stage when they wanted something dreadful to happen. Anything was better than this long, torturing wait.

And then, at last, a move was made. The rough gate of the pen was flung open, and a dozen warriors entered.



CHAPTER 24.

The First Victim!

"DON'T—don't!" murmured Doris tensely.

She held Irene's arm so tightly that the other girl winced. But she managed to hold back the involuntary scream which had risen in her throat. She and the other girls were standing in a little group, and all the St. Frank's fellows had unconsciously placed themselves round

"They're coming for us!" whispered Irene fearfully.

"Let them come," panted Mary. "Oh, we've got to be brave! I want to scream madly, but I won't! They shan't see me fainting, either."

Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore were trying to place themselves in front of the Oturi warriors. But they were thrust aside contemptuously and forcefully. They were powerless to attack, for these men were carrying ugly spears and they were ready to use them, too.

The leader pointed, and the others pushed Gresham and Tregellis-West out of the way, and took hold of Willy Handforth. It was perfectly clear that they were acting under orders, and that one certain prisoner was to be selected.

"My minor!" gasped Handforth hoarsely.

Willy found himself seized by two painted giants.

"Hallo!" said the fag calmly. "What have I done to deserve this honour? I'm first, eh? Right-ho!"

He was led away, and Handforth seemed to go mad.

"Lemme go!" he shouted, as the other fellows held him. "You rotters! You cads! Lemme go!"

"Steady, Handy!" muttered Church, holding on tightly.

"I'll smash you for this, you beast!" roared Handforth furiously. "Take you hand away, Nipper! Take it away, you rotter——"

"Handy—Handy!" pleaded Nipper. "It's no good getting frantic."

"They've taken my minor!" shrieked Handforth. "Let me get at them, I tell you!"

But the others continued to hold him. They forced him to the ground, and kept him down.

"So long, Ted—so long, everybody!" sang out Willy, as he walked out. "Pity I haven't been able to shake hands all round, but I'll try to keep my pecker up. Good old St. Frank's!"

"I can't stand it!" muttered Dorrie chokingly.

Handforth collapsed at last from sheer exhaustion, and his captors pulled him up, and were startled by the pallor of his face.

"We had to hold you, old man," sobbed Church. "You'd have been killed otherwise. Those brutes had their spears ready, and they'd have run you through."

Edward Oswald groaned.

"That's what I wanted!" he muttered. "Do you think I can stand here, and see them torturing my minor? I'd rather be dead! Why didn't you let them finish me off? I shall go mad!"

The others were silent. They had saved Handforth's life by their action, but they could understand his point of view.

"No, Handy, you're wrong," said Nipper quietly. "There's no need to die until your time comes. While there's life there's hope. And poor old Willy's still alive."

"But they're going to torture him!" croaked Handforth.

He staggered to the fence, and clutched at the poles, staring out wildly. Most of the others were staring, too, horrified. Irene & Co. were in the same little group, silent and breathless. At first, they had thought that the warriors were going to take them away.

The scene was impressive, indeed.

Darkness had come now, and the four great fires in the open space were blazing and crackling merrily. All around, in thickly congested ranks, were thousands of the Oturi, a great many having come in from all the surrounding villages.

In the central space between the great fires there was a raised wooden platform, glaringly illuminated by the flickering flames. And just in front of this platform stood a long kind of trestle, and a huge native, in the most grotesque get-up, was making the most frantic antics. This man was obviously the witch-doctor. His hand was grasping a

long knife, which flashed in the moonlight, and there could be little doubt as to the nature of his duties.

The whole thing was horribly clear.

But Willy, to the merciful relief of his companions, was not led straight to the table. He was taken on to the platform, and K'laba reached out, and felt his arm, talking continuously meanwhile.

"That's it, old door-knocker!" said Willy contemptuously. "Have another go at me! You needn't worry—I shall be tender enough! My hat! I'll have the satisfaction of punching you in the eye before I get done in, anyhow!"

He turned and waved his hand.

"Watch me give him a good old sock!" he shouted.

And Willy was as good as his word, too. Before his guards could stop him, he lunged forward, and drove his fist, with all the weight of his shoulder behind it, crashing into K'laba's left eye!



CHAPTER 25.

Handforth Gets Loose!

K'LABA was a big man, but he had been unprepared for that blow, and he reeled completely over, for there was no back to the stool on which he sat.

With a devastating crash, mingled with wild howls, he toppled completely off the platform, and landed in a disordered heap on the ground.

"That's one for his nob!" said Willy defiantly.

He expected those words to be his last. He was, indeed, absolutely certain that half a dozen spears would be thrust into him as a reprisal for his action.

But the warriors had had no orders—and they were taken aback, too, by the disaster to their chief. They stared stupidly. And from the pen came a roar of cheering, much to Willy's gratification.

K'laba picked himself up slowly.

All the wind had been knocked out of him, and, furthermore, he had caught the back of his head a fearful crack on the ground. His head-men were helping him up, jabbering angrily and excitedly. And he was led back to his "throne" and the proceedings continued.

"That's funny," said Willy. "He's going to give me a chance to kosh the other eye! I might as well make a pair of it."

The chief glared at Willy, and roared at him in his own language. He shouted, gesticulated, and made ferocious grimaces.

"I don't believe a word of it," said Willy, at the end of the tirade.

He felt himself pulled back, and he was still vaguely surprised because he had not been slaughtered. But K'laba evidently had



Otto Lorenzo gazed at his prisoners sneeringly. "You are my slaves—bought and paid for!" he said. "I am the supreme master, and my power is absolute!" And those behind the stockade knew that he spoke the truth.

something more impressive in mind. Mere killing was not severe enough for this insolent youth.

Instead of being placed on that wooden trestle, and prepared for the roasting-spit, Willy was led aside. There was much jabbering, and much excited talk in general. And then the idea became clear.

But from the pen it was difficult to see what was happening.

"Good old Willy!" roared Handforth, his panic now gone. "Did you see that, you chaps? He punched that old beast in the eye! That's the way to treat 'em!"

"Willy's a young demon," said Nipper. "I don't think any other chap would have had the nerve to do a thing like that. Poor kid, I was afraid he'd be murdered on the spot."

"Oh, he's a brick!" cried Irene.

"They can't kill him—it's too dreadful!" said Tessa shakily.

Nelson Lee was grasping Dorrie's arm.

"I'm sorry the youngster did that," he said quietly.

"Sorry?" repeated Dorrie. "Man alive, it was worth a thousand quid! By glory, what a spirit for you!"

"I know that, but the penalty will be

ghastly," said Lee. "Can't you see what's happening, Dorrie? They were just going to kill him—but now they're going to torture him."

"Great gad!" muttered his lordship. "I hadn't thought of that."

But it was obviously true enough. K'laba, in order to be satisfied, was preparing a terrible vengeance. The witch-doctor was making his plans, even now. Willy was bound hand and foot—but not in the ordinary way. He was being tied to a great, twelve-foot pole.

He couldn't understand why. He was being tied in the centre, and the whole thing seemed objectless to him. But Willy was unable to see what was going on behind him. If he had been permitted to look round, he would have received a shock.

Two trestles were being roughly erected, one on either side of the nearest fire. There was a fork at the top of each trestle.

"It can't be possible!" panted Nelson Lee. "Look, Dorrie! Can't you see? They're going to put that pole across the two trestles! And Willy in the centre—"

"By heaven!" shouted Lord Dorrimore, aghast.

But Handforth had seen now.

At first he was only dimly alive to the truth. And then, in a flood, he knew what it all meant. He clutched at Church and McClure so fiercely that they cried aloud.

"They're going to torture my minor!" shouted Handforth. "Look! They're going to roast him alive! Oh, the fiends! The monstrous devils! Can't we do something? Can't we save him?"

Church and McClure could say nothing. They were nearly choking. Their chum's anguish was too much for them. And they, too, could see Willy being carried towards the fire.

If Handforth had been frantic before, he now became imbued with unnatural strength. Previously, he had simply gone crazy with anguish. But now his rage took another form.

His minor was about to be tortured—in the most horrible way. And Handforth remained terribly calm. His eyes were blazing, and his face was set. And before any of the others could stop him, he ran back, and then charged with all his strength at the side of the pen.

Crash!

There was appalling force behind that charge. One of the poles splintered, and Handforth wrenched it out of place, and burst his way through into the open space beyond.

"By George!" he roared. "We'll save you, Willy! Come on, you chaps! Back up. St. Frank's!"



CHAPTER 26.

A Dramatic Interruption!

LORD DORRIMORE gritted his teeth.

"This is the final scene, Lee," he muttered. "They've done it now!"

Nipper, Tregellis-West, Church, McClure, and the others, were rushing for that gap in the pen, rallying to Handforth's call. They meant to sweep out, and go down fighting.

But the move was doomed to failure.

Three or four of the guards flung themselves towards the gap, and closed it. They thrust their spears across the opening, and none of the other fellows were able to get out.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Nipper. "Handy's cut off!"

"We can't go and help him!" groaned Church. "I daren't look—I'm afraid to see what's happening!"

But he looked all the same, and for the moment he was heartened.

Handforth was dodging death in the most astounding manner. Dozens of the Oturi warriors tried to stop his progress, but he eluded their spears by mere inches.

In the meantime, Willy was steeling himself for the ordeal. He knew what was going to happen. He had seen those trestles now, and he understood why he had been tied to the pole. It gave him some grim

consolation to see that the fire was blazing tremendously.

"It'll soon be over—that's one good thing," he muttered, between his clenched teeth. "Rats! I'm blubbing! Thank goodness the other chaps can't see me!"

In spite of all his strength of will, his eyes were wet, and he had a sensation in his throat as though he were choking. For a flash, he thought of his home—his father and mother. And he sobbed. After all, it was hard to be done to death in this fiendish manner.

His emotion was suddenly changed to resentful fury when he saw, out of the corner of his eye, that a number of the enemy were beating the fire down with long sticks. Others were heaping green wood on to it, so that the flames were quelled, and dense volumes of smoke arose.

They didn't want their victim to die too soon!

If they were going to torture him, they meant to torture him properly! If they had left the fire alone he would have been unconscious within ten seconds, and thus mercifully spared. But no. They wanted him to suffer. K'laba must have his satisfaction.

The great pole was hoisted on to its trestles, and Willy sent up a last prayer. He was choked with smoke, and the heat radiated up in waves. But the fire had been dampened so successfully that as yet the victim was not even scorched.

Little did the cannibals realise that they had cheated themselves by their desire for prolonging the agony!

For Edward Oswald was on the scene. He had reached the immediate zone of the fire—although he, himself, could never understand how he had got there. Between the pen and the fire were fully a hundred blacks, and by some miracle he had dodged the lot.

And now, with one bellow of despair, he charged.

The first trestle went flying over, and the long pole, with Willy on it, slewed round, rolled over, and dropped clear of the fire. And Handforth grasped the end of it, and pulled it away.

"Willy, old man!" he panted huskily.

"Thanks, Ted!" said Willy, in a faint voice. "I—I didn't expect to see you again, old son! By Jove, that was pretty quick of you! The flames were just beginning to lick through!"

"They shan't torture you like this, Willy!" gasped Handforth. "I'll smash them all—Leggo! You demons! Let me go!"

He was being hauled back. Forgetful of the enemy, he had knelt by Willy's side, and now it was too late for him to fight. Grasped from behind, he was pulled roughly back. K'laba was shouting at the top of his voice, and half a dozen men swung Handforth up, and prepared to obey the orders of the chief.

What these orders were, nobody knew. But one thing was absolutely certain. Handforth was doomed to instant death. The witch-

NEXT WEDNESDAY!

"THE SLAVER OF KALALA!"

The schoolboy slaves!

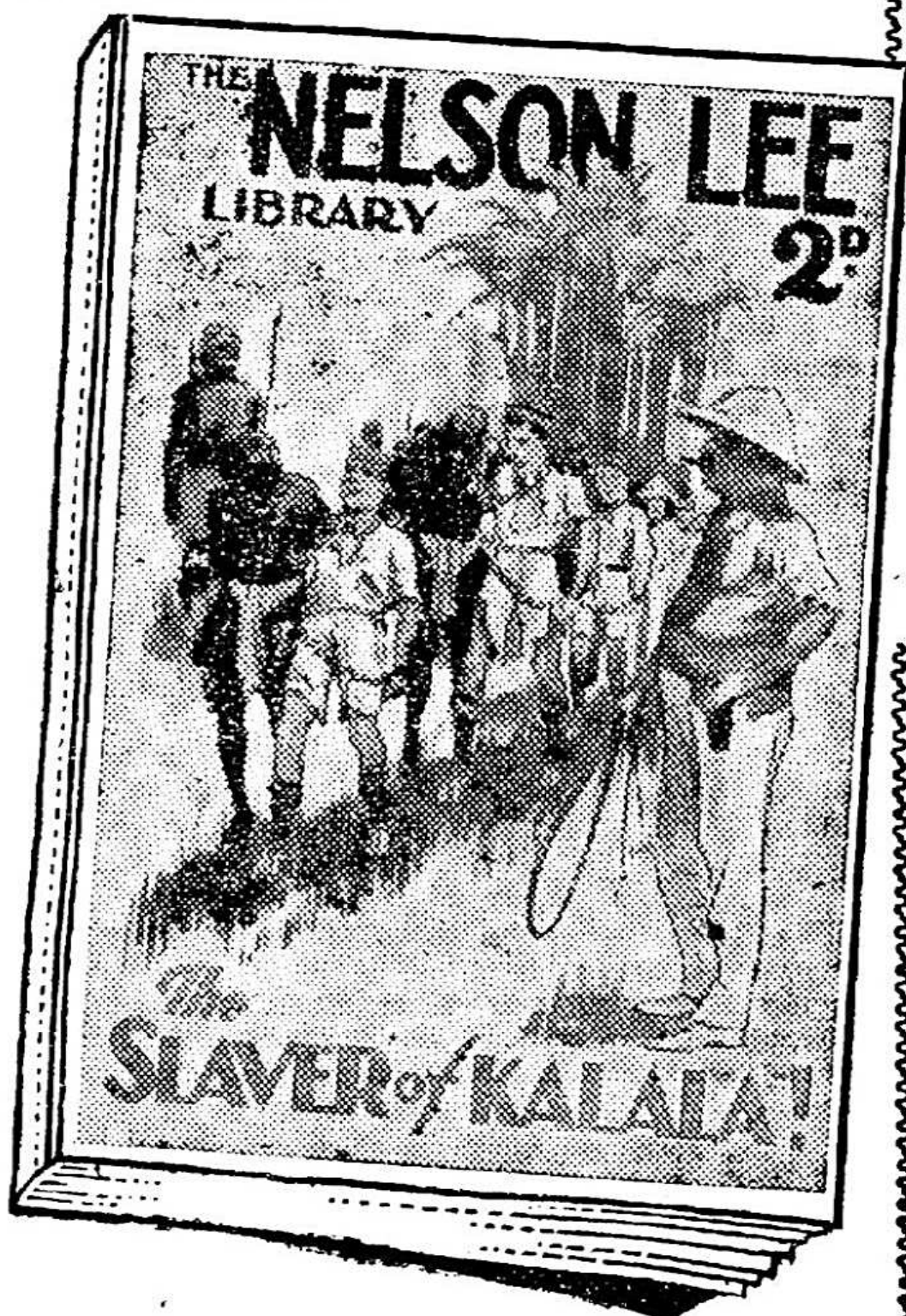
Captured by Otto Lorenzo, the tyrannical Portuguese half-breed, and, chained together, made to work in the broiling sun!

Willy Handforth, staked to the ground, tortured by an army of ants!

These and many other thrilling adventures befall the St. Frank's holiday party in next week's exciting story. This is the best of the series so far, and if you miss it you'll miss a treat. The way to prevent that is to order your copy from the newsagent in advance!

"BUCKING UP OLD ALGY!"

This unique serial, written by Archie Glenthorne, the genial ass of the Remove, is tremendously popular. Next week's instalment is better than ever!



ORDER TO-DAY!

doctor was flourishing a long knife, and Handforth was being whirled towards him.

At the same moment, other men were lifting that pole again, and setting the trestle on its end.

And then, at that crucial moment, an interruption came which was as unexpected as it was dramatic. It surprised the captives, and it surprised the captors.

A commotion sounded down the crowded street, and some figures came forcing their way through the throng. They swept into the glare of the firelight, and it could be seen that the foremost figures were dressed in European clothing, with drill shorts, open-necked shirts, and pith helmets.

They were Otto Lorenzo and his picked men!

CHAPTER 27.

K'laba Cowed!



"HURRAH!"

"Saved—saved!"

A chorus of shouts went up from the boys and girls as they saw the familiar attire of the newcomers. For a moment they

thought that a relief force had arrived, and that the white men were being followed by columns of native troops.

Lee, however, caught his breath in.

"By James!" he muttered. "Lorenzo!"

"Yes, so I see!" said Lord Dorrimore. "Gad, I never believed that I should live to welcome the sight of that black-hearted rogue! But, to be honest, I was never more pleased to see a man in all my life!"

"He's provided a welcome interruption, at all events," said Lee. "But has he sufficient power to stop this orgy? And, if so, will our position be in any way improved?"

Dorrie looked startled.

"Ye gods!" he ejaculated. "Out of the fryin' pan into the fire, eh? I hadn't thought of that! I don't suppose Lorenzo is any too well disposed towards us. He's quite liable to join in the fun!"

They remembered their invasion of the heartless slaver's territory. They had dragged Umlosi away from his clutches, and had only won free from that trap by the merest chance. It was the irony of fate that Lorenzo should now come, and put a stop to this cannibal festivity.

Otto Lorenzo was a half-breed. He was part German and part Portuguese—and, like

many half-breeds, his composition was made up of the worst elements of both nationalities.

He possessed the brutality and hard business head of the Prussian—combined with the cruel cunning and fiendish callousness of the Dago.

"Hold, K'laba! I see you!" he said sternly.

"Lord, I see you!" answered the Oturi Chief, his eyes glittering with evil fury. "You come at a strange moment. I heard naught of your approach, and—"

"I tell not when I approach, dog!" interrupted Lorenzo harshly. "What is this I see? What orders of mine have you been flouting? Have I not forbidden you to sacrifice your captives? Have I not paid you big money to obey my orders?"

"Lord Lorenzo, your words are true words," muttered K'laba sullenly. "But these captives are Umlosi and his friends. They are my enemies. They are the enemies of the Oturi. Am I not permitted to make war on my enemies?"

Lorenzo swung round, and gazed at the scene. The Oturis had fallen back, and Handforth was now standing alone. He was staring at the half-breed, dazedly aware of a confused sense of relief. His brain was whirling, and he only knew that he had been saved from sudden death.

Willy was safe, too. The interruption had come in time to prevent the tragedy. And a strange silence had fallen over the entire assembly. The dancers were still, the shouting had ceased. There was something remarkably impressive in the power of this scoundrelly half-breed. His very presence had been sufficient to bring the crazed savages to their senses.

And yet Lorenzo was only accompanied by two dozen armed guards! Four of them were white men—the dregs of humanity, by their appearance. Brutal, villainous-looking types, of no particular nationality. They were the sort of men one might have expected to enlist under the slaver's banner.

That he had a pact with the Oturi was obvious. These people, no doubt, supplied him with slaves for his great rubber plantations. And he, in return, kept them in luxury. He supplied them with salt, with meal, with plentiful food stuffs. The Oturi had always been a half-starved tribe, although of late years they had fattened. Prosperity had come to them—and here was the explanation.

K'laba, in spite of his fierce, burning desire to continue his tortures, dared not offend this half-breed. The wily Chief knew which side his bread was buttered. And he feared this man as he feared no other. He knew, moreover, that unless he obeyed orders on the instant, Lorenzo would shoot him down, and appoint one of his head-men in his place. For had he not become Paramount Chief in that very same way? His predecessor had been shot by Lorenzo. And since then K'laba had ruled. Lorenzo was the real Chief of the Oturis, and his word was law.

"I see much that angers me," said the half-breed, turning back to K'laba. "You shall suffer for this disobedience, you jackal! Your

captives are my captives—and yet you would burn them and eat them."

"Lord, I could not curb my warriors," said K'laba feebly.

"You are lying, K'laba, and it is my habit to shoot liars as they stand," replied Otto Lorenzo. "But perchance I will spare you. Give orders for these white youths to be put back among their companions."

"I obey!" gasped K'laba, shivering with fright.

He shouted some shaky orders, and his warriors sprang to obey them. By this time, Handforth had wrenched Willy free from his bonds, and they were both standing together.

"It's that rotten slaver," Willy was saying. "We're still alive, Ted, old chap, but I'm not sure that we're any better off."

But Handforth laughed lightheadedly.

"No better off?" he echoed. "You young ass, I don't care what happens now! We're alive—and this horrible cannibal orgy is over!"



CHAPTER 23.

The Respite.

MINUTE later, Handforth and his minor were seized, and conveyed back towards the pen. But the Oturis now handled them gently, and with a sort of deference. Their arrogance had completely gone.

"Bravo, Handforth!" said Nelson Lee, as the pair were thrust in. "That was wonderful, old man!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Handy!"

"Oh, Ted, you saved Willy's life!" cried Irene tearfully. "And we're all saved now! These men have stopped everything!"

It was some moments before Handforth and Willy could speak. They were both surrounded and thumped on the back, and generally welcomed.

"I thought it was all up at first," confessed Willy. "When they shoved me over that fire, I cried like a blessed kid! I don't mind admitting it, either. I feel all shaky and faint still."

"Yes, but what's going to happen now?" asked Watson. "If we're saved, why are we still kept penned up like this? Why don't they let us out?"

"Give them time," said Nipper.

Tregellis-West looked at him quickly.

"There's somethin' rummy in your tone, old boy," he murmured.

"Yes, and there's something rummy in my mind, too," said Nipper softly. "We're out of the hands of the Oturis—but we're in the hands of Lorenzo. The great question is, which is the better?"

"Begad!" breathed Montie. "I wonder!"

"All the same, we can't help feeling relieved," went on Nipper. "It doesn't matter how brutal Lorenzo is, he's a cut above these cannibals. At least, he doesn't murder his victims, and cook them!"

"Yes, but he makes slaves of them," said Watson. "Oh, corks! Do you think that

"We'd better not think at all!" interrupted Nipper. "Let's wait, and see what happens."

Lorenzo was still talking to K'laba, and his tone was as harsh as ever.

"It is well," he was saying. "I came in time, then, to prevent any of these killings. All are alive and unharmed?"

"Lord, I have said so," replied K'laba sullenly.

"If you have said lies, then I will have you whipped," said the slaver. "I will make you one of my slaves, and appoint one of your head-men as Chief. Those who serve me must serve faithfully, or they go! Remember that, K'laba!"

"I will remember, lord," faltered the Chief.

He looked very much like a balloon that had been pricked. All his arrogance had gone. His very bulk seemed to have lessened.

"Give orders for this palaver to finish," continued Lorenzo. "Let the men of all the villages go back to their huts. Let your own men remove their paint, and let them forget this night. Quench the fires, and order your womenfolk to sleep. This is my will, and it must be satisfied."

Within five minutes a remarkable change was taking place.

The crowds melted as though by magic. The fires were beaten out, and the excitement of an hour ago had been quenched. Otto Lorenzo stood looking on with a grim, gloating expression on his face. He was in no hurry. He could wait.

And K'laba, the Chief, could do nothing but consume his fierce anger. He was infuriated at this interruption. He had evidently believed that he could indulge in one great orgy without the great "lord" knowing of it. And it filled him with consternation to find Lorenzo here. His anger was great, but his relief at still being alive was greater. For he had expected Lorenzo to shoot him, and he was childishly eager to obey the commands of his master, lest he should still die.

And at last nothing remained in that great space but the pen, with its prisoners. The fires had all gone, but the African moon was shining with great clearness, and a chill seemed to have come into the air.

CHAPTER 29.

Out of the Frying-pan!



NELSON LEE shifted his position, and restlessly clasped and unclasped his hands.

"Two hours!" he muttered. "The hound! Why doesn't he come, Dorrie? Not a word! Not a sound! No,

he leaves us here, in this pen, as though we were cattle indeed!"

"'Tis his way, my master," said Umlosi. "Wau! We have escaped one torture, only to suffer another! Do I not know this man? Foul as the Oturis are, they are clean compared to Lorenzo! For are they not ignorant and savage?"

"You're right, old friend," said Dorrie. "These Oturis know no better. Lorenzo is the villain of the piece. What an infernal cur to leave us here like this—without even comin' across an' introduc'in' himself. Hang it, he's a white man, isn't he?"

"Nay, N'Kose," said Umlosi. "By accident his skin may be white, perchance—but methinks he is blacker than the night itself!"

There was something peculiarly contemptuous in Otto Lorenzo's attitude. He had saved the Oturis' captives, but he had not come near them. As a matter of fact, he was in the Chief's hut, feasting himself, and gloatingly chuckling over his new victims. It pleased him to leave them like this. Later, he would enjoy himself still more.

Lorenzo had already met Nelson Lee and Nipper. He had captured them, and they had escaped. And their friends had freed Umlosi, and they had all eluded him. It would now be his turn to triumph. And Lorenzo had a scheme in mind which pleased him mightily.

In the pen all was quietness.

A dramatic reaction had followed the startling events of the evening. Nearly all the boys and girls had fallen asleep. They felt physically exhausted, as though they had been on the march for days. Even Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrmore were aware of a faintness, a dizzy weakness. They had escaped a terrible death, and the reaction was severe.

"We can be quite sure that Lorenzo will deal with us in a drastic manner," Nelson Lee was saying. "His insolent behaviour now is a certain indication of his attitude. He has saved us from the Oturi for his own purposes."

"Well, we planned to go back to his rubber plantations, didn't we?" asked Dorrie bitterly. "I've got a hazy idea that we shall go back in different circumstances, though. What's it like to be a member of a chain-gang, Lee?"

"It's unthinkable, Dorrie," said Nelson Lee, frowning. "If this man dares to humiliate us all to that extent— And the girls, too? What of them? Good heavens! The prospect appals me."

"It's certainly bad enough," admitted Dorrie. "And yet we oughtn't to grumble. This man has saved our lives, an' we can be quite certain that he won't kill us himself. Even slavery is better than what we've been saved from. A fellow does stand a chance, anyway."

Further discussion was interrupted. A figure was seen in the moonlight, and everybody in the pen watched it. Even those fellows who had been sleeping were aroused.

Lorenzo was coming across from the Chief's dwelling. His very approach was arrogant.

He swaggered absurdly, and came with deliberate slowness. And then, at last, when he had reached the rough wooden fencing, he stood there, examining the captives as he would examine a herd of cattle.

"Well?" snapped Lord Dorrimore at last. "Are we fat enough for your Infernal Highness?"

Lorenzo laughed evilly.

"So you still joke, Lord Dorrimore?" he asked. "Yes, I know who you are—I know quite a lot. News travels very quickly in this country, and for weeks I have followed your activities."

"I am flattered," retorted Dorrie.

"I do not forget your little excursion into my own territory," continued Lorenzo. "You saw quite a deal there, didn't you? You saw my slaves, you saw my methods of labour."

"Is this quite necessary?" asked Lee quietly. "If you mean to release us from this pen, Lorenzo, why in Heaven's name don't you do it? Can't you see that there are some young ladies here? You are a white man—and we are white men. Have you no grain of honour?"

"Fine talk from cannibal prisoners!" sneered Lorenzo, with a sudden raising of his voice. "I will release you when it pleases me. Possibly you fail to realise that you are slaves. As slaves, you are penned, and shall be dealt with at my leisure."

"These boys and girls are frantic with thirst!" said Lee furiously. "Slaves or no slaves, they are human beings, and in the name of humanity I urge you to—"

"Quite a tirade!" interrupted Lorenzo coolly. "You are mine, my friends—bought and paid for! And as I deal with my other slaves, so I shall deal with you. From this minute onwards you are less than the goats in the field. I am the supreme master, and my power is absolute!"

CHAPTER 30.

Slaves!

OTTO LORENZO spoke in all seriousness.

There was something fantastically grotesque about the man. He meant what

he said—and believed that what he said was true. His long years of activity as a slaver had probably warped his mind. And he now regarded himself as a monarch. His arrogance was unbelievable.

"Do you think I shall ever let you return to outer civilisation?" he went on, his voice becoming fierce. "You have seen too much, my friends! You know my methods—and you know the secret of the Kalala region. I am not vindictive, and so I shall spare your lives. You will become my slaves—and work in my plantations."



"You can't mean this!" shouted Dorrie. "You hound! Don't you realise that most of these youngsters are schoolboys and school-girls?"

"I realise that they are young—and strong—and capable of specialised work," replied Lorenzo. "I am sorely in need of this new blood. These niggers, the accursed fools, are afraid of electricity, and of many of my appliances. But such boys as these will be useful—they will become valuable assets. I can train them well—"

"Rats!" shouted Handforth. "We'll smash your machinery to bits before we touch it!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We'll smash you, too!" roared Nipper.

Lorenzo remained perfectly calm.

"I have my own methods of training," he went on. "But why should I waste my breath now? It is undignified for a master to talk with his slaves. You shall be taken to your huts, and food and drink shall be brought. There is a long march ahead of us."

Without another word he turned on his heel and walked away.

And soon after they were taken to their huts, and food was brought, and they were allowed to sleep in peace.

But on the morrow, soon after dawn, they began to realise that Otto Lorenzo was a man to be really feared. As soon as a good meal had been disposed of, the captives were brought out into the open. Long lines of carriers were waiting, loaded and ready. Numbers of armed men were walking up and down. And there was a general bustle of activity. And then Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore appeared.

They were fastened together by a strong, light chain. And every St. Frank's fellow was joined to that chain in the same way. Even the girls were not spared. The whole of Dorrie's party was formed into a long chain-gang. And Lorenzo strutted up and down, superintending the work, ignoring the protests and indignant shouts from the juniors.

Nelson Lee and Dorrie were powerless. To argue with this man was only to invite abuse. Both of them fought against their natural desires, and they fiercely vowed that they would store up their rage. Sooner or later, Lorenzo should pay to the full!

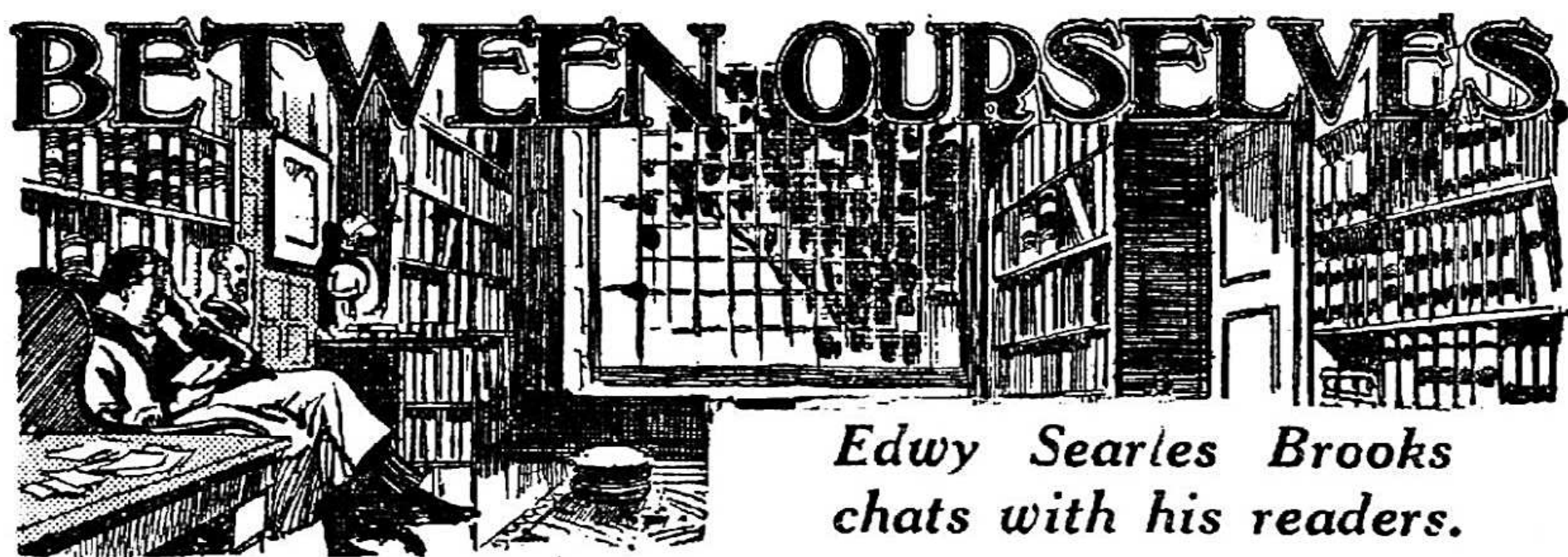
But for the moment he was the master.

And the chain-gang was marched off along the trail, with guards in front, at the sides, and in the rear.

And so Lord Dorrimore's party left the city of Oturis, and the route led through the trackless jungle to the slave plantations!

THE END.

(There is a load of thrills in next week's topping yarn entitled "THE SLAVER OF KALALA!" Make sure of reading it by ordering your copy of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY in advance!)



*Edwy Searles Brooks
chats with his readers.*

NOTE.—If any reader writes to me, I shall be likely to interest the majority. All letters c/o The Editor, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, E.C.4. Every letter will have my personal columns. But please note that the five weeks after the letters reach my hands, by a star—thus—against the sender's name, naturally easier for me to answer. My photo please) is open indefinitely.—E. S. B.*

pleased to comment upon such remarks as are should be addressed to EDWY SEARLES BROOKS, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, attention, and all will be acknowledged in these acknowledgments cannot appear until at least Those of very special merit will be distinguished Communications which indicate writer's age are exchanging offer (mine for yours—but yours first.

BEFORE I start commenting upon any of this week's letters, there are one or two points that I want to chat about.

* * *

First of all, I get lots of letters without signatures. What I mean to say is, instead of signatures, they have a kind of undecipherable cryptogram, frequently accompanied by sundry dots and flourishes. Can you imagine my feelings when I am attempting to elucidate these horrors, so that I can acknowledge the letters? And afterwards, if you please, these readers write to me and complain bitterly because I have spelt their names wrongly! So if you have any feeling for me at all, please sign your names clearly, and give your FULL names—not initials only. It might even be a good idea to put your names—in printed characters—at the heading of each letter.

* * *

Now I'm going to quote a few words from one of this week's letters, as I want to make a remark on them later. Here are the few words: "I am so pleased that I may be allowed to write to you, but, so as to be on the safe side, I will only send you some scribble about once a month. Will that do? One can see from the names in 'Between Ourselves' that you have an enormous postbag. Well, I am thankful for your brief reply, for it conveys the news that one's letter is appreciated." I would like to tell this reader that I appreciate every letter I receive, and he can write to me once a week if he wants to. But, of course, I cannot guarantee that I can reply once a week. Even as it is, I am afraid I am getting snowed under. But if you readers are content to write to me, and to see your names only in acknowledgment, you can be quite certain that I do read your letters, that I enjoy reading them, and that I keep them all.

* * *

Here is another letter from this week's batch: "To tell you the plain truth, I was never really good at writing, and my grammar is poor. So

I'll make this short as possible, so that I shouldn't bore you too much, as I have already done." Now, that's quite wrong. I know very well that we can't all have a perfect knowledge of grammar, and I don't want any readers to refrain from writing to me because they fear that they might make a bloomer or two. Don't worry about trifles like that! Write to me, and let me have your comments. If the grammar is poor, I will forgive it. But I generally notice that those readers who run their own letters down are the best writers of all. Funny, isn't it? False modesty? No, I rather think it is true modesty.

* * *

Now I'd better acknowledge this week's letters, or I shall be getting into trouble.

* * *

Laurence Stanley Elliott (East Ham), Norman Lyttee (Portadown), Elsie L. Chowley (Taunton), "Kubix" (Enfield), Roy Lewin (Southampton), M. A. Rajabally (Rangoon), Dudley Clarke (Montreal), Terence O'Grady* (Dungannon), Tom Rhodes (Ashton-under-Lyne), "Harry Gresham" (Hollinwood), James A. Evans (Sheffield), Gerald Waterman (Montreal), Eric Meakin (Ilkeston, Derby), "An Enthusiastic Aussie Reader" (Caulfield, Vic.), John B. Ashe* (Cardiff), Leslie Turner (Elland), F. Edgar Coomber (Tufnell Park), J. W. Barge (Birmingham), Ronald Guton (Barnstaple).

* * *

I don't think you mean to do me an injustice, Terence O'Grady, but I would like to tell you that you are quite wrong. This is what you say: "Sometimes I think that when you receive letters from readers, you just look at the names at the end of them and put them down for publication in your Chat. Then I suppose you put a star to every other one or so, and comment upon the contents of two or three which you do read." That makes me a lazy sort of bounder, doesn't it? I want to assure you—and every other reader, too—that I only put

stars against the names of those whose letters deserve stars. Terence will see that I am giving him a star, in spite of his slur upon my methods.

Thanks, Tom Rhodes, for your very interesting letter. I rather liked this bit: "The much-talked-of Northestrian series is not a bit silly, but forms food for thought for readers who take an interest, and think over these things without condemning immediately. I am one of these readers, and can say that however fantastic and impossible a story may seem, you *always* give a very solid and material reason to back it up." That's just the point. I'm really afraid that lots of readers do condemn hurriedly, without giving themselves time to think. I don't mean they condemn my stories alone—but all stories.

No, Leslie Turner, I have never visited the film studios at Shepherd's Bush or Elstree. But I have visited many studios at Hollywood, and had the pleasure of seeing several big films in course of production. Well, it was hardly a pleasure. I found the atmosphere of the big Hollywood film studios far from restful. I don't mind admitting that I was quite relieved to get out of them. Acting for the films is by no means the joy that some enthusiastic aspirants believe it to be. In fact, it's very much like hard work, with a capital H. And the majority, I fear, get more kicks than ha'pence!

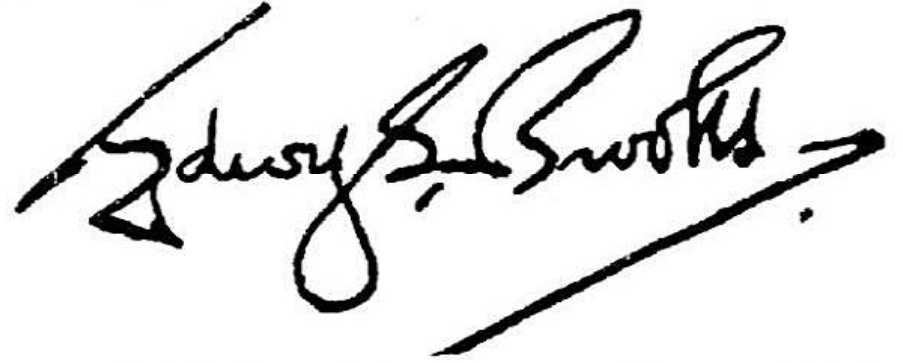
Now, F. Edgar Coomber, what do you mean by it? Fancy asking me a thing like this: "How do you wangle the exchange of photographs? I'm keen after one of yours, and there's plenty

of mine available, but I don't know how to work the trick!" Haven't I told all readers numberless times that they only have to send me their photographs, and that I will then send an autographed photo of myself in return? What could be simpler?

J. W. Barge, of 3C, 4H, Belmont Passage, Lawley Street, Birmingham, (Member No. 1728 of the St. Frank's League), writes to me as follows: "Reading 'Between Ourselves' pages lately, I find some readers require back numbers. So if one or two from Birmingham will let me know I will gladly give them some—that is, providing they will pay postage. Quite a fair offer, I think. I have them two or three years old—perhaps four—if that will do."

It certainly is a fair offer, J. W. Barge. I note that you only invite Birmingham readers to apply to you. But I expect you'll get quite enough applications!

Now, I must apologise this week for leaving lots of letters unanswered—giving only their acknowledgments. But I am at the end of my space, and I must ask you to forgive me. If there were any important points that needed answering, please write again. I know it sounds a bit steep, but I'm sure you'll excuse your old pal.




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Begin It Now!

BUCKING UP OLD ALGY!



By ARCHIE GLENTHORNE.

WHAT HAPPENED LAST WEEK:

Algernon Fitzpercy receives a great shock when his Uncle George tells him that he will have to earn his own living.

He goes to the Blackfriars Boxing Palace with his two special friends, Lord Bibbington—known as Bibbles—and the Hon. Eustace Caxton, to see the fight between Young Algy, an unknown boxer, and Liverpool Luke.

On the way to the Palace, Bibbles' car collides with a taxi containing Young Algy, who is so injured that he is unable to fight. Bill Huggins, the boxer's manager, is terribly indignant—until Bibbles suggests that Algy Fitzpercy—who was quite a clever boxer at school—should take the injured boxer's place. Algy reluctantly consents.

(Now read on.)

Fifty of the Best!

OLD Algy seemed to be in a pretty rotten sort of posish, if you follow me. There he was, being prepared for the ring by Bill Huggins and two similar sweater-clothed merchants, and in the offing loomed a fifteen-round scrap with Liverpool Luke.

Of course, that fifteen-round scheme was by way of being a joke. Absolutely! Algy felt that he would be doing pretty ripplingly fine if he managed to survive the first round. He had a hazy sort of idea that he would hear the good old gong clang out, and then a sundry assortment of stars would drift into his vision, and he would wake up twenty-four hours later in hospital. That was Algy's notion of what was to take place.

But old Bibbles and Eustace were more optimistic. They knew that Algy had been more or less renowned at school. Something

of a lad, in fact. And, after all, not many epochs had elapsed since those hectic days.

It was perfectly true that Algy was looking more like a ju-jube than a human being, but after he got into the ring he would probably brace himself up, and dash into the fray with certain elements of vim and go.

"Brace up, Algy, old cucumber, and show the populace some of your old stunts," said Bibbles genially. "Our mutual friend, Mr. Huggins is relying on you, and so, dash it, are we! I mean to say, Algy, it's absolutely up to you!"

"Rather!" agreed Eustace. "And don't forget that fifty of the best are waiting. Not, that is, that you'll be frightfully interested in a mere matter of fifty quid."

"Why, you blighter, I'm only attempting the dashed business for the sake of that fifty!" gurgled Algy, as he allowed his spine to wilt back in a good old chair. "I hope that fright-

ful merchant isn't coming back to do any more thumping and rubbing, and effects of that sort or order."

"No, I think you're just about ready for the ring now," said the Hon. Eustace. "But you're not absolutely telling us Algy, that you need the fifty?"

"Need it!" bleated Algy. "Good gad! Do you think I'm doing this for fun?"

He glanced round, and saw that the dressing-room was momentarily empty. Empty, that is, except for the presence of old Bibbles and the Hon. Eustace. Not that they really counted for much. The Huggins blighter, surrounded by various underlings, had buzzed off to the ring, probably to make one or two preliminary broadcasts to the impatient populace.

"Absolutely," said Algy, lowering his voice. "I didn't tell you lads before, but you might as well know the ghastly truth. I'm broke!"

"That's nothing frightfully new, is it?" asked Bibbles.

"But you don't seem to grasp the horrible nature of the situation," said Algy. "I'm not broke in the ordinary sense, as it were. But my Uncle George has been backing losers on the Stock Exchange, and he's in some sort of a mess. He's been buying Mexican Oils, or something, and the frightful stuff must have leaked. Anyhow, the flow has ceased."

"The flow?" said the Hon. Eustace.

Bibbles and the Hon. Eustace jumped a yard or so into the air and turned pallid. At various times in their careers, they had feared that their own allowances would be cut off in their prime. The horror of it was always haunting them, in fact—and when they heard their best pal telling them of his own troubles their hearts bled. Absolutely bled, I mean to say.

"How utterly utter!" said Bibbles bleakly. "Kindly allow me to offer many suggestions of sympathy, old boy. I mean, what can a chappie say in the face of a stark tragedy like this? So old Uncle George has dropped a spanner in the gear box?"

Algy nodded.

"I can't altogether blame the old egg," he replied. "I mean, he seems to have hit several snags, or something. Can't afford to whack out any longer. And so your old college chum is cast upon the world, in a way of speaking. I mean to say, it's now up to me to earn my own dashed living."

"Boxing, what?" said the Hon. Eustace brightly. "By Jove, don't you know, that's a stunt! Why not take up boxing, Algy, as a good old professional? Some of these chappies earn thousands of pounds. Absolutely thousands! I mean, look at Dempsey!"

"A millionaire!" said Bibbles, nodding. "And there's Tunney, too——"

"Oh, I say, there's no need to blither like this, you chumps!" interrupted Algy. "I mean, I rather fancy that boxing, as a career, is not precisely the niche for Algy. In point of absolute fact—and to put it briefly—I shan't be fit for any career after this foul night's work is over! You surely don't sup-

pose that Liverpool Luke will leave anything of me? By the time he's finished, they'll have to pick up my dashed remains with a vacuum sweeper!"

But further conversation was nipped in the bud, as it were. For at that moment in rolled Bill Huggins and his myrmidons. And they had the most frightful expressions of determination on their frontispieces.

Zero hour, by the general look of things, had begun to chime!

Like a Lamb to the Slaughter!

IT seemed to poor old Algy, as he was shoved through various passages and things, that he was a criminal being taken to the dashed scaffold. He had a sort of feeling that the end was near.

Not that he really looked so bad. For old Algy, in a sort of way, was an athletic-looking cove? Rippling muscles, brawny chest, and all that sort of stuff. The good old muscles were not rippling so heftily as usual, perhaps, but what could be expected? Algy had been slacking about like the dickens for weeks and months. All the same, he looked a fairly good proposition to the enthusiasts who were waiting around the arena.

The fact was, Algy was frightfully confused. He had often visited this place as a spectator, and he had rather enjoyed the business. But now that he found himself in the ring, surrounded by sundry masses of yelling humanity, he received a sort of impression that his knees had turned to elastic. However, he managed to get to his corner, and he sat down. Various gentlemen in jerseys and sweaters gathered round with towels and sponges, and so forth.

Algy noted, with a comfortable sort of feeling, that Bibbles and the Hon. Eustace has obtained ringside seats just near his corner. It was rather good to know that the dear lads were so near, ready to whisper words of encouragement into his ears.

As for the rest, the hall was filled to suffocation. It seemed to Algy that there were about five hundred and fifty-three thousand people there. Faces everywhere, I mean. Floods of them—in a sort of massed formation. There they were, those faces, and the majority of them were open. That is to say, these chappies who owned the faces were making various remarks.

Then Algy gave a start. About two hundred miles away, on the other side of the ring, he could see Liverpool Luke. It occurred to Algy that this couldn't be an ordinary ring. It was a frightfully big affair—more like a meadow. But that, of course, was only poor old Algy's excited state of mind. As a matter of absolute fact, the ring was of the regulation order. And by no means bad, as rings go. And there was Liverpool Luke.

Not precisely a handsome lad. In fact, absolutely not. In earlier life, apparently, a nasty accident had happened to one of his ears, and it was now doing its best to grow into a pink imitation of a cabbage. His nose,

too, could not be described as classic. It was one of those noses which start well, but which finish nowhere. You know the sort of thing I mean—a nose that once seen could never be forgotten.

Bill Huggins was making various remarks to the audience, and the referee was turning up his sleeves and preparing for the fray. And then, before old Algy could quite realise it, somebody jabbed him in the rear, and he was on his feet. He found himself facing Liverpool Luke, and after that a sort of gong sounded, and the crowd gave a whoop.

"Time!" remarked some merchant.

And immediately after that it seemed to Algy that another war had started. He had a distinct impression that a bomb had come through the roof, and that it had exploded on his midriff. Anyhow, he felt his feet leave the floor, and then he sailed about two feet into the air and landed on his back. A chappie in his shirtsleeves was bending over him, wagging a hand up and down and mouthing at him.

"One—two—three——" sang out this blighter.

"Buck up, Algy!" urged a familiar voice. "Get to your feet, old bean!"

And Algy recognised the voice of Bibbles. Then, in a sort of way, he knew what had happened. Luke had evidently got one home—a good old left swing or something. Anyhow, Algy felt his brain clearing by leaps and bounds. He began to realise, all of a dashed sudden, that he was in the ring and that he was supposed to be boxing. Besides, he remembered that fifty quid. He had a sinister sort of suspicion that Bill Huggins wouldn't whack out unless he lasted a couple of minutes or so.

Anyhow, he got to his feet. He didn't know how he managed it, but he found himself firmly on his pins once more, and there was Liverpool Luke, sparring like the dickens and getting ready for another dash at him.

"What-ho!" observed Algy fiercely. "So that's it, is it, what?"

And to the relief of Bibbles and Eustace, and rather to his own surprise, he stood his ground, and revealed a glimpse of his own old form. For, after all, Algy had been a dashed good boxer in his day.

Everything was coming back to him now. He felt that he was awakening out of a dream, and the old boy gathered himself together, as the poets put it, and sailed in.

Not So Dusty!

BIFF!

Yes, absolutely! Kindly allow me to repeat the good old expression—biff! And let me further explain that that biff came from old Algy's fist. Liverpool Luke received it in the centre of his facial section, and he reeled backwards like anything, and Liverpool Luke was surprised—for two good and sufficient reasons.

Firstly, he had come to the conclusion that his opponent of his was beneath his con-

tempt, and he hadn't expected any sort of blow at all, and, secondly, the blow itself was so frightfully hefty that the lad from Liverpool had an idea that a motor-bus had hit him.

"Good man!" said Eustace enthusiastically.

"Start work!" observed Bibbles.

A lot of fighting and running about occurred before Liverpool Luke came to himself, and the most frightful things would have happened to Algy if the gong hadn't sounded just then. In other words, the first round was over.

"You ain't doing so badly, young gent," said Bill Huggins, as Algy tottered to his corner. "Might be a lot better—but you might be a lot worse, too! Keep it up, and you'll do!"

"Oh, absolutely!" babbled Algy.

As a matter of fact, he was frightfully surprised. He had never expected to survive the first round. He couldn't quite understand it, even now, and he settled himself back for a long, happy rest. But in about three seconds and a quarter the gong sounded again, and there he was, on his feet, leaping hither and thither, jabbing out this way and that way, if you follow me.

I don't suppose you actually will follow me. When it comes to describing a boxing match, it's a bit above my weight. The trouble is, I know exactly what happened, but I'm dashed if I can find the right words. It's frightfully awkward for a chappie when he's trying to write things. I mean, not so easy as it looks.

But I want you to realise what happened.

When old Algy went into the ring, he had a fear that he would be knocked out in about ten seconds. It never occurred to him that he might be able to last against this professional chappie from Liverpool. The thing had absolutely staggered him. But then, almost before he knew it, Algy was re-born, so to speak.

The shouts of the onlookers, the familiarity of the ropes, and the energies of the good old referee. All these things, as it were, helped to lift the old lad out of his rut. And before he knew where he was, and much to the amazement of old Bibbles and Eustace, Algy not only held his ground, but once or twice he came frightfully near to knocking Liverpool Luke through the ropes.

And one or two biffs that Luke got home aroused all the fighting blood of the Fitzpercys. It surged up, and a certain amount of it, to tell the absolute truth, oozed forth. Not that Algy knew anything about it at the moment. He was too busily engaged.

And—would you believe it?—the dear old fellow absolutely lasted until the fifth round! Yes, the fifth round. Absolutely! Incredible and unbelievable, perhaps, but there it was. There, I mean, the thing positively happened, and Bill Huggins was now looking fairly content. That strained, haggard look had gone out of his visage. This substitute was putting up a scrap, and that was all that Bill Huggins cared about, and none of

those enthusiasts who had paid good money to come into this place were aware of the fact that the Algy in the ring was not the same chappie as the Algy on the handbills.

At one time it almost seemed that Algy would carry right on, and last out for another five rounds. But that was expecting rather too much. For it mustn't be forgotten that Algy was frightfully out of condition. He hadn't worn a boxing glove for months, and he had almost forgotten what it was like to walk, or to skip, or to jump. Just recently he had been lounging about doing nothing, and he had even been known to hire a taxi in order to cross the street.

But the form was there. Absolutely on the spot. It stood out in chunks, if you can understand me. Anybody who knew anything about boxing could tell that old Algy was the goods. Flabby sort of goods, perhaps, but there was no getting away from it. Even Bibbles and the Hon. Eustace were frightfully surprised. They hadn't expected anything so juicy as this. When it came to a matter of science and real boxing, Algy could make sundry rings round Liverpool Luke.

But Luke's hitting was somewhat heftier. And the good old result was inevitable. That is to say, just when the fifth round was nearing its completion, Algy grew careless for a second or two.

He didn't know exactly how it happened, but he had a vague sort of idea that Liverpool Luke had picked up a sledgehammer from somewhere. The thing hit Algy on the chin, and lifted him off his feet, and after that Algy knew practically nothing. Through a lot of mist, and to the accompaniment of bells and chimes and whistles, he heard the referee counting, and Algy was "out!"

Liverpool Luke had won the scrap, and the ordeal was over. But as Algy was being carried towards the dressing-room he recovered slightly, and one thought was in his mind. Fifty quid! Fifty of the best and brightest! He had earned them—he had started on the right road to fame and fortune! With his own fair hands he had actually *earned* some money! It was such a novel experience for old Algy that it brought him round quicker than any cold sponge.

A Shock for Algy!

"YOU don't think it was an absolute Bill Huggins grinned hopefully.

frost, then, what?" asked Algy

"Young gent, you was absolutely priceless," he replied. "I mean to say, you gave the crowd its money's worth, and that was all I wanted. You're a ripper!"

Of course, Mr. Huggins didn't actually use those words, but they're near enough, and Algy was so frightfully pleased and bucked that he was forgetting all about his hurts. One of his eyes was blue round the edges, and his nose was inclining slightly towards

the north-west, but these were trifles. He had got dressed again by this time, and Bibbles and Eustace were standing by, waiting for him to trickle forth with them. They meant to see him home—and it is quite possible that they were expecting some sort of celebration, by way of a reward for their masterly efforts. After all, old Algy would have fifty quids in his pockets, soon, and Bibbles and Eustace knew exactly where to spend it.

So far, however, the fifty had not put in an appearance, and Algy felt that it was about time to make some mention of the fact.

"Without wishing to be impatient, or anything of that sort or order, what about it?" he asked. "In other words, Mr. Huggins, when do I touch?"

"Oh, the purse?" said Mr. Huggins. "That's right, young gent. You shall have your fifty quid just as soon as you like. But there's something I want to say to you. How do you like this business?"

"Like it?" repeated Algy. "Like fighting, do you mean to say?"

"How do you like boxing in the ring—as a professional?"

"Well, to tell you the truth, old boy, I haven't given it much thought," replied Algy. "Of course, it's frightfully exciting, and all that sort of thing—and one might even say that it's got a punch attached to it, too, but as a profession—well, no. Not for Algy."

Bill Huggins looked thoughtful.

"I was thinking about putting you into training, young gent, if you'd care for it," he said. "I could make a good boxer of you. You showed up well to-night. I was expecting an absolute disaster, and you did wonders."

"That's frightfully decent of you, to put it that way," said Algy, beaming. "So you really think that you could do something with me, what?"

"I'm darned sure of it," replied Bill. "A couple of weeks of training and you wouldn't be the same feller!"

And then it came to old Algy in a kind of flood. Here he was, at a loose end, with nothing to do—and with all sorts of merchants dunning him for cash. He knew jolly well that it would be a risky proceeding to go back to his chambers, and to live the old life. Of course, the fifty quid would come in handy, but it wouldn't go far, and there were those creditors, waiting to pounce. And there was no Uncle George to rely upon.

Algy was under the surface at first. He couldn't quite grasp it all. But, the fact was Mr. Bill Huggins was delighted. He had seen the possibilities in Algy, and he was a man with an eye to the main chance, as it were. The real Young Algy was out of the running—and would be pretty helpless for weeks to come.

"You see what it is, young gent," said Bill. "I'd like to make a real boxer of you. Yes, and there's money in the game,

(Continued on page 42.)



All LETTERS in reference to the League should be addressed to the Chief Officer, The St. Frank's League, c/o THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon St., London, E.C.4. Enquiries which need an immediate answer should be accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope.

A Tribute from a Senior.

I AM Publicity Manager for a large firm of engineers, but I find time on Saturday to read the most excellent stories of St. Franks' in the "N. L. L." They keep me young . . . I hope Mr. Brooks will be spared to give us these inimitable yarns for many years. They are the work of a genius." So writes Mr. A. R. Warbis. And so, likewise, say all of us.

The "Also Ran"!

Apropos of a letter which reaches me from a chum who is a bit down in the mouth, it is just as well to remember that the "also ran" may get plenty of credit. A ton of circumstances may prevent his winning the race, but it is trying that counts in the long run, more than winning. My correspondent seems out of heart with his job, and he does not quite know what he wants. Of course, it may be that he is really a rampaging genius. I counsel him to pull up his socks and make his job his interest.

"Ist Verboten."

That's what you see stuck up all over Germany, and it means a thing is jolly well forbidden. I call the attention of Tim of Todmorden to the notice in respect to his suggestion about cutting the claws of his cat. Not on his life he mustn't! There is a clause in the agreement against such a step! A cat keeps its own claws in trim itself.

Camping Out!

A good many readers have asked me for tips about camping out. Such a holiday is one of the most enjoyable possible, and the cost is slight.

A serviceable tent can be made out of Government aeroplane fabric with a forked stick to make a sloping roof. Other equipment consists of ground sheet, billycan with three sections, sleeping suit, toilet articles, knife, fork and plate.

You want to select a camping site near some fresh water, and with a background of trees as a wind screen. Out away the turf before making a fire; this can be started with twigs and without paper, and it should be made pyramid style, the smaller twigs first and then going on to thicker pieces. Use "green wood" for the tripod on which to hang the billycan.

The beauty of such a jaunt lies in the fact that you can keep moving on and seeing the country. Always ask permission before pitching camp.

Badge Day.

A chum at Rangoon asks me if it would not be a good idea to nominate a Badge Day, when all members would wear the Badge of the League. What about it?

Should He Go Alone?

Hard cheese on a Westminster chum! He had fixed up a fortnight's cycling tour to Cornwall and back with a friend, but now the latter finds he cannot go. He asks me if he should go on the trip alone. He is seventeen. Of course, he alone can decide the matter, but there is no doubt he would derive a lot of pleasure from such a trip, and it's odds on that he would meet good cycling companions en route.

Another Holiday Query.

R. E. N. (Aldershot) wants to know something of the places of interest round Southampton. The town itself is quite interesting, and the New Forest is easily accessible on a bike. I advise my correspondent to add a few miles to his journey and see something of the Kennet Valley, dropping down into Southampton by the Newbury and Winchester route.

Edge Hill Club.

This club is going great guns. I have a letter to hand from the Chief Organiser, P. Young, 9, Wrayburn Street, Edge Hill, Liverpool, who says cheery meetings are held in the parlour, where quiet games can be played. Later on a club-room will be secured. The latest balance sheet shows a highly satisfactory state of affairs.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.

A. Horton, Jun., M.R.I., Oxford Road, Manchester, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere, especially stamp collectors.

Robert Johnson, 11, Loughborough Road, Leicester, wishes to hear from cycling and sports clubs in his district; also with members overseas, Canada and Europe, etc.

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"BUCKING UP OLD ALGY!"

(Continued from page 40.)

too. Big money! Why, as soon as I've licked you into shape, I could get you a match with one of the best boxers in London!"

"No, really?" said Algy.

"Yes, with a purse of two or three hundred pounds, too," went on Mr. Huggins.

Algy jumped.

"Two or three hundred—pounds?" he repeated.

"That's what I said, sir!" replied Bill. "And I ain't exaggeratin', neither. There's big money in this game, as I said before. You're a good boxer, and I can train you so that you won't know yourself. What do you say to it? Why not come down to my trainin' quarters, in the country, and go into the thing thoroughly? Put yourself in my hands, and——"

"Dash it, I will!" said Algy, coming to a sudden resolve. "In the country, what? Away from all these blighters who are waiting for money from me! Down into the green and fertile rustic valleys, what? I'm your man, Mr. Huggins!"

"Good man!" said the Hon. Eustace enthusiastically. "That's the spirit, Algy! Dash it. I never thought that you had it in you! Your uncle has stopped your allowance, but you'll soon show him that you're independent of his blessed money!"

And then and there it was settled. It was a sort of ripe solution to Algy's problems.

"And when will you be ready to come down to my trainin' camp, Mr. Fitzpercy?" asked Huggins briskly.

"Absolutely to-morrow!" replied Algy. "I mean, the sooner the better. Bad news travels fast, don't you know, and crowds of my creditors will be waiting for me on the doorstep before long. By the way, where are these training quarters of yours, old boy?"

"Down near a little village called Barton Priory, in Essex," said Mr. Huggins. "It's only a small place, and very quiet, and——"

But poor old Algy had jumped as though somebody had stuck a carpet tack into him. Barton Priory! Why, that was the very village where his Uncle George lived! It was his uncle's country seat—and frightfully exclusive!

And here was old Algy, arranging to go down to the place as a boxer—to go into training in Bill Huggins' camp! The plot was thickening somewhat murkily, and the forthcoming events promised to be fruity in the extreme.

(Next week we shall see what happened to Algy when he got down to Barton Priory—and when he came face to face with his dragon-like aunt!)

THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE.

(Continued from page 41.)

Frank Cooper, 4, Cross Street, Hove, Sussex, would like to hear from a reader in his district with a view to forming a club.

Albert Freeman, 69, Fawcett Road, Deptford, London, S.E.16, would like to hear from readers in his district who would help to form a social and sports club. This club will be a branch of Mr. George Wilson's Amberton Club in Peckham.

John C. Murgatroyd, 61, X, Flatt's Parade, Beeston, Leeds, wishes to correspond with readers in his district and in London; also with a scout.

Edward Marshall, 14, Durnford Street, New Basford, Nottingham, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere who wish to sell back numbers of the "N. L. L." (old series) from 1 to 568.

Cyril Harris, 29, Greenwell Street, Darlington, would like to correspond with readers in Canada and South Africa.

H. Troy, 9, Burnett Street, Redfern, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia, wishes to correspond with readers.

James H. Duhig, 34, Rook Street, Poplar, London, E.14, wishes to hear from readers anywhere interested in hobbies.

V. C. Kirkham, 46, Station Road, Stechford, Birmingham, wishes to hear from readers interested in cigarette card collecting.

Harry Gill, 16, Prospect Road, Gornal Wood, nr. Dudley, Staffs, wants the "N. L. L." for the year 1923 also Nos. 10—55 (new series). Would exchange large number of various papers.

Kenneth Rawson, 55, Carter Street, Burnley, wishes to hear from readers in his district.

L. Jefferson, 12, Alliance Avenue, Cliftonville, Belfast, has back numbers of NELSON LEE LIBRARY which he is willing to sell.

C. A. Whelan, 123, The Grove, Stratford, London, E.15, wishes to correspond with readers.

Ernest Regaldi, 22, Landridge Road, Fulham, London, S.W.6, wishes to hear from readers anywhere.

Alfred Plimmer, 55, Bromley Road, Walthamstow, London, E.17, wishes to hear from readers interested in camping, cycling, and swimming, and who would help to form a camping club.

Erik Ormerod, "Treggena," 16, Ashbourne Avenue, Blundellsands, nr. Liverpool, wishes to correspond with readers.

Joseph Grower, 107, Stamford Hill, London, N.16, wishes to correspond with readers overseas for the exchange of coins.

Leonard S. Buckett, 47, Swansea Road, Norwich, wishes to obtain copies of the "N. L. L." containing "Marooned at School."

P. J. Roche, "Sublin," 14, Navy Street, Coburg, Melbourne, Australia, wishes to correspond with readers interested in sports—swimming, jumping, running, cycling, camping, tennis and boxing.

THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE.

The Application Form for membership of the St. Frank's League appeared in last week's issue. It will be published again next Wednesday. All holders of BRONZE MEDALS who have qualified for SILVER MEDALS and wish to exchange their medals for the higher award, should send their medals, together with a stamped addressed envelope, to the Chief Officer, the St. Frank's League, c/o "The Nelson Lee Library," Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4.

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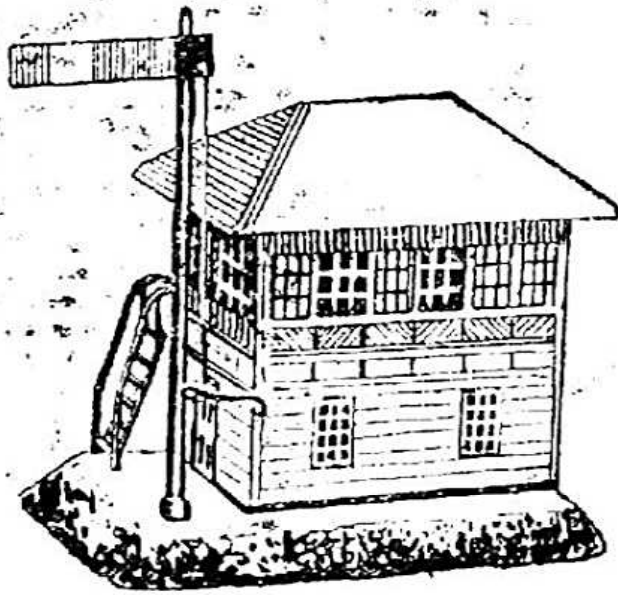
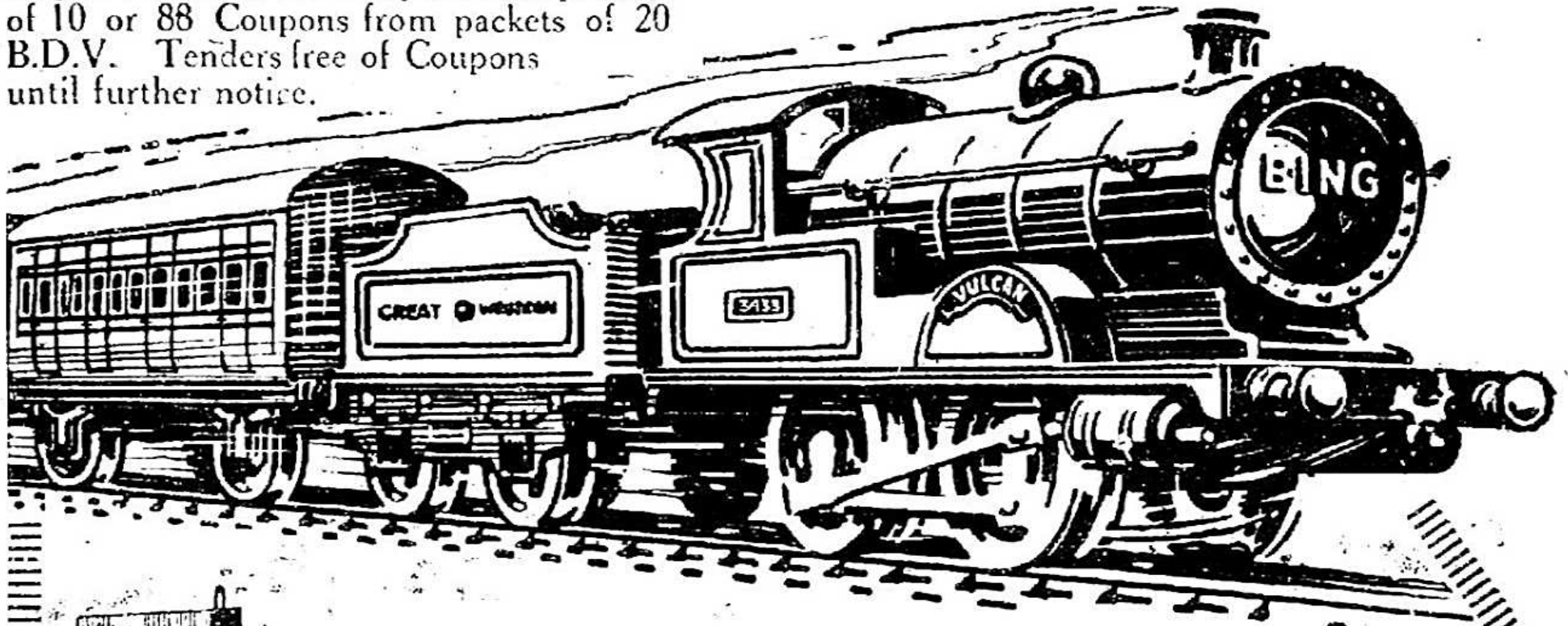
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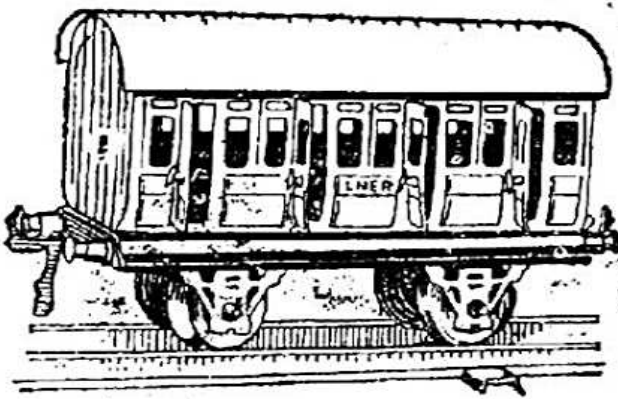
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