

HOLIDAY  
ADVENTURE I.

ST. FRANK'S IN THE CONGO!

COMPLETE  
—INSIDE!

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## The SLAVER of KALALA!

*The popular Boys of St. Frank's in an exciting long complete story of  
adventure in the Mystery Jungle.*

Now Series No. 64.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

July 23rd, 1927.



The sight of Tommy Watson being kicked by the brutal Lorenzo was more than Nipper could stand. Leaping in, he crashed his fist into the man's jaw, while the other juniors swarmed round. Willy Handforth, wrenching the whip from the bullying slaver's hand, cracked it in the air. "Let him taste his own medicine!" he yelled.

The Schoolboy Slaves!Startling Adventure Yarn!**THE SLAVER OF KALALA!**

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

The Boys of St. Frank's, Irene & Co., and Lord Dorrimore in a stirring, long complete yarn of adventure in the mysterious Congo.

## CHAPTER 1.

## The Chain-Gang.

**T**HROUGH the African forest, in the sweltering, humid heat, came the chain-gang.

At the head of the column strode Otto Lorenzo, the slaver, and with him were several armed guards. Marching alongside the slaves were other armed savage warders.

All told, the party numbered full two hundred, and made an impressive picture as it progressed through the jungle, across patches of veldt, and into the forest fastnesses again.

The chain-gang was divided into two sections, the leading group being vastly different to their hapless fellow-slaves. There were twenty-one, all told, in this first gang, and they marched in single file, the chains jingling continuously, and making it impossible for any one member to lag. The guards

were armed with whips, and they cracked these ominously at the slightest sign of slackening speed.

Lord Dorrimore, the famous millionaire-explorer and big-game hunter, was the leader of the first chain-gang. Behind him stretched Nelson Lee, Umlosi, a dozen St. Frank's fellows, and Irene & Co., of the Moor View School.

Strange slaves, indeed!

And yet this was the unhappy truth. Lord Dorrimore's entire holiday party was in the hands of Otto Lorenzo, and they were being marched, with another gang of slaves, to the half-breed's rubber plantations.

That march had already lasted for three days, the course taking them mainly through the thick forests of the Oturi country. Their destination was the Kalala River, hidden away in the mysterious depths of the great Congo forest lands.

"They say we shall be there by to-morrow," remarked Nipper, the cheery captain of the St. Frank's Remove. "One more camp to-night, and by midday to-morrow we shall arrive."

"That doesn't cheer me very much, dear old boy," said Sir Montie Tregellis-West, who was just behind. "We're not likely to get much rest, are we? This frightful brute will probably set us to work straight away."

"Speaking to me?" said Tommy Watson, the next in line behind.

"As a matter of fact, no, Tommy-boy," said Sir Montie, turning his head. "Nipper is sayin' that we shall arrive to-morrow, an' I'm not particularly bucked at the prospect. I'm not, really."

"You ought to hear what old Handy is saying!" exclaimed Watson. "He's rapping on like the dickens. When we get to the slave plantations, he's going to knock Lorenzo silly, and release all the hundreds of slaves from the plantations."

Watson spoke with weary tiredness. The great Edward Oswald Handforth was just in his rear, and there was no squashing him. Ever since the trek had started, he had been openly rebellious. While the others submitted to the harsh treatment of their captors, Handforth resisted. As a consequence, his shoulders were smarting from the repeated applications of the lash. He seemed to take a delight in inviting it.

"I'm never going to let these brutes subdue me!" he vowed. "By George! We're British, and Britons never will be slaves!"

His chums, Church and McClure, vainly pointed out that popular tradition was one thing, and hard fact another. They *were* slaves, so what was the good of insisting that they never would be?

Fantastic as the position was, it was idle to minimise the significance of it. In these little-known wilds, it might be years before responsible authorities heard a whisper of the white party's predicament.

They would be missed, it was true, but Otto Lorenzo was already preparing some carefully-thought-out rumours, telling of a sad river tragedy in the Sansissi country, where a party of twenty-odd whites had lost their lives. Blacks were being bribed to bear out the story.

There was method in Otto Lorenzo's dangerous scheme. His practice was to seize blacks only, and he would never have been mad enough to capture a party of white people in the ordinary way.

His hand had been forced.

For Umlosi, driven into slavery by Lorenzo's agents in the ordinary course of things, had been sought for by Lord Dorrimore. The genial peer had been on a peaceful elephant-hunting trip, and he had brought the boys and girls along to give them a special treat during their holidays.

Umlosi had been found, and Nelson Lee had discovered the secret of the Kalala region. He had penetrated Lorenzo's rubber plantations, and had seen far too much for

Lorenzo's well-being. And all the other members of the expedition were naturally in possession of the ugly facts.

So the slaver, knowing that his very safety depended upon drastic action, had captured them all. The outside world knew nothing. If Lorenzo could help it, it never would know. Dorrie's little company was to disappear for ever within the wilds of the jungle.

They were being led into slavery!

## CHAPTER 2.

### The Lord of Life and Death!



OTTO LORENZO waved a fat hand in a wide sweep. "All this territory is under my control," he said majestically. "I know of everything that happens in every village and every town. My agents are everywhere. And men tremble at the mention of my name."

"I can believe the last bit," said Lord Dorrimore, nodding.

"Even as you will tremble—before I have done with you," went on the slaver grimly. "To the outer world, my friends, you are dead. Do not harbour any hopes that liberty will ever be yours. But if you bend to my will, and—"

"You might as well stop there, Lorenzo," interrupted Nelson Lee. "You needn't say anything further. For we'll only bend to your will under compulsion. We'll adopt every stratagem to get out of your clutches. We'll move heaven and earth to wipe out your accursed plantations."

"And so," murmured Dorrie, "say all of us."

Contrary to their expectations, Lorenzo displayed no resentment.

"What else can I expect?" he asked calmly. "You are British. And are not the British ever obstinate and stupid? One day—sooner than you believe, perhaps—you will lose this spirit of defiance. I expect it, and so I accept it with a good grace. But all men bend under the lash, sooner or later. If you prefer to suffer, it will be your own choice. But I am inexorable."

It was night, and in the dense bush at the back of the clearing the creatures of the forest were making their familiar cries. A camp fire blazed and crackled, and in the flickering light there were many tents.

Sprawling forms could be seen in many groups. The carriers, the guards, and the black prisoners, were asleep in the open. But some instinct in Lorenzo had led him to provide his white prisoners with tents. The girls were sound asleep, and the St. Frank's fellows were rolled in their blankets, too.

As a special concession, Lorenzo had permitted Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore to share his own supper, and to sit by his own camp fire. But they suspected that he did

this out of no generosity, but because he was anxious to give a display of his arrogance.

The man was a German-Portuguese, and his composition contained not one good quality of those nationalities. He was made up of the vilest traits of both. His very appearance was repulsive.

He was big, bloated, with beady eyes, and puffy cheeks. His frame was coarse, and his manners were execrable. Huge, brutally strong, he was more bestial than human. His trade was advertised in every inch of him.

And yet he seemed to regard himself as a sort of monarch—a ruler of destinies. He was, in very truth, a lord of life and death. At his bidding men were executed with less ceremony than the crushing of a beetle.

At first Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrmore had believed that Lorenzo was assuming this attitude especially for their benefit. They thought that it was his idea of humour.

But they were wrong.

The half-breed was serious. He really regarded himself as a superior being. His arrogance and grandiloquent airs would have been comic had they not been so tragically real. For this brutal man was in a position to enforce his will.

"We are within a few miles of the Kalala River," continued Lorenzo, after a short pause. "Beyond that stream, all is mine. I rule with complete and absolute power."

"I suppose you made a little arrangement with the Belgian Government?" suggested Dorrie mockingly. "Or was it the French Government—or the Portuguese? I confess I don't exactly know what part of the Congo we are in. But it's news to me that a section of it is conceded to you."

The half-breed laughed heavily.

"I care nothing for Governments," he said contemptuously. "I take no notice of these petty commissioners who come up the rivers in the puffing little steamers. I am beyond their reach. My territory is protected—guarded day and night. Within the bounds of my own area I am secure. You will learn much in these coming days."

"Apparently, we're in for a lively time," nodded Dorrie.

"I have no doubt you will find it strenuous," said Lorenzo. "Perhaps you are thinking of making a bid for liberty? What folly! My plantations are surrounded by a chain of rivers, and each river is charged with deadly electricity. My power-cables lie on the beds of these streams, converting the water into deadly death. None can enter my country—none can escape from it."

"And yet we entered, Lorenzo," retorted Lee. "We escaped, too."

The slaver scowled.

"I was unprepared for such a raid," he said. "It shall not occur again. After you have crossed the Kalala to-morrow, you will be so placed that your energies will exhaust themselves on profitable labour. You will have no time for escaping."

To argue with the man was a waste of breath. To plead with him was unthinkable.

Of what good to remind him that these schoolboys and schoolgirls had anxious parents at home? To appeal to his better nature was farcical, since he possessed none. Better to remain silent.

And the worst of it was, his statements were true. His slave plantations were indeed protected by electrified rivers, and all those unhappy mortals within his power were without hope, indeed.



### CHAPTER 3.

#### The Slave Plantations.

INGLE—the jingle of slave-chains!

The slaves marched wearily along the well-trodden path, and bore round the

tall clump of bamboo stems, and came within view of the great valley. In the distance, surrounded by graceful palms, stood the bungalow, with its wide verandas, and cool-looking sunblinds.

Beyond, the captives could see a number of corrugated iron buildings, and the refreshing glint of a waterfall sparkled in the midday sunshine. All down the valley were the rubber plantations and in various spots there were gangs of slaves at work.

The Kalala country had been reached.

Not an hour since, the deadly river had been crossed. A special bridge had been lowered into position from the "island" side, and the entire expedition had crossed in safety. This great expanse of territory, hidden away in a country that was supposed to be utterly wild, was actually a sort of island. There were rivers entirely surrounding it, and each river was electrified. Woe betide any unhappy slave who broke free and attempted to swim across to freedom!

"Well, we're here at last!" said Nipper, with a note of relief. "No more of this gruelling marching, anyhow. By Jove! My feet are sore and swollen, and I ache in every giddy limb. It's a wonder to me how the girls have stood it. They're true blue!"

"Yes, rather!" agreed Sir Montie. "I suppose we shall be shoved into some frightful cell, or other, an' left to stew until they've decided what work we're fit for."

"We're not fit for any work to-day," replied Nipper. "But it wouldn't surprise me if Lorenzo gave us some. It would be his idea of a joke."

When the bungalow had nearly been reached, a halt was called. The black slaves were marched away, and Dorrie's party was divided up. The girls were separated from all the others, and the boys were placed into small chain-gangs of six each.

This work was done by powerful Nubians—gigantic negroes who had been brought specially from the north. There was an overseer in charge of them—an evil-looking scoundrel who looked like a Mexican. There were all sorts of such ruffians serving under Lorenzo's banner.

The slaver himself came along after the work had been finished, and he proceeded to treat these white people in just the same way as the blacks. He made no distinctions.

"Take these girls, and put them at once into the factory with the black women!" he ordered curtly. "Let them be given the usual accommodation. If there are any disturbances, report to me."

"Just a moment!" shouted Nelson Lee. "You're surely not going to place these young ladies in company with the negresses, Lorenzo? I protest strongly!"

"By glory, an' so do I!" said Dorrimore. Lorenzo ignored them.

"You have your orders!" he said to the overseer. "Go!"

Irene Manners turned, and waved one of her chained hands.

"It's all right, Mr. Lee—don't worry about us!" she cried cheerily. "We're still keeping our spirits up."

"Rather!" chorused the other girls.

And off they went, as plucky as ever.

"Oh, the brutal rotter!" growled Handforth. "What the dickens can we do?"

"Nothing—yet," said Nipper. "Let's pretend to be submissive, Handy. It'll pay us in the long run."

"Wise words, brother!" murmured Browne, of the Fifth. "It is better to be wily than to maintain an open defiance that gets us nowhere."

Lorenzo came striding up.

"These boys!" he said, turning to another of his overseers. "Take them to the south plantation, and give them carrying work. Let them be placed in the ordinary huts."

"You're not going to make us work to-day, are you?" asked Tommy Watson. "We're all tired—we're——"

"Enough, boy!" interrupted the slaver. "Work is what you need. Work will conquer this stubborn spirit of yours."

"But some of these chaps are almost dropping!" shouted Church. "It's not fair! It's brutal and——"

Crash!

Lorenzo, striding up, brought the back of his hand across Church's face. It was a stinging, cowardly blow. The unhappy junior staggered back, and fell, dragging one or two of his companions on the chains.

"By George!" gasped Handforth thickly.

He was the next in line, and he acted with all his usual impulsiveness. It was the first time that Lorenzo had come so close to him. And it was an opportunity that Handforth had long awaited.

Thud!

Before the slave-driver could be aware of it, Edward Oswald had lunged out, and his fist, with tremendous force behind it, went crashing into the slaver's face.

## CHAPTER 4.

### Lorenzo's Way!



WITH a wild, snarling roar, the half-breed lost his balance, and went over backwards. That blow would not have felled him if he had been expecting it, but he had been taken by surprise.

"You rotten bully!" roared Handforth. "You touch Church again, that's all! We're not going to put up with your rot!"

There was a tense, significant silence, as Otto Lorenzo pulled himself to his feet.

Nelson Lee and Dorrie were aghast. They felt that Handforth would have to pay heavily for his impulsiveness. And the other boys were of the same opinion. They were able to keep their feelings in check, but Handforth was celebrated for his ramheadedness.

"So!" said Lorenzo, his voice shaky. "We will see, my young friend! You have dared to strike me, eh? It is just as well—for I shall now have an opportunity of proving that I am master. I do not whip my slaves unless they deserve it."

The blow had scarcely hurt him. A man of his coarse fibre was not easily capable of being pained. But his dignity had suffered, and he was determined to make an example of Handforth now—before the eyes of all the others. He would show them what came of defiance!

"Unchain this boy, and stand him apart!" he snapped. "Bind his wrists securely, and tie him to this palm. Let there be no waste of time."

The overseer fairly ran to obey the command. He knew that Lorenzo was in an ugly mood, and he was obviously afraid. The half-breed was feared by his slaves, his guards, and his overseers.

"Handy!" muttered Church, as Handforth was being unchained. "You shouldn't have done it, old man! You might have known what to expect."

"Huh!" snorted Handforth. "I don't care! This brute can do what he jolly well likes! He's not going to smash my spirit. I'll punch him again if he comes near enough!"

"Good old Handy!" murmured Dorrie approvingly.

"And yet the boy is foolish," said Lee, between his teeth. "No good purpose is served by this defiance. Far better to accept the situation."

"You're not weakenin', are you, old man?" asked Dorrie curiously. "Oh, sorry! I shouldn't have said that! It's not like you——"

"There is no weakness in accepting the inevitable, Dorrie," said Nelson Lee quietly. "It is far better to lead Lorenzo to believe that we are all cowed. He will watch us less closely then."

"Gad, that's true," said his lordship.

They watched Handforth as he was bound to the palm. It was quite obvious that he was to be whipped. They half expected to see him stripped to the waist, but it made little difference. For the junior was only wearing a light cotton shirt over his shoulders.

"Give me the whip!" said Lorenzo harshly.

He was speaking in English so that his victims should thoroughly understand him. His English was good, although slightly marred by an accent. And his men seemed to thoroughly understand him too.

He took the whip—a heavy dog-whip—and cracked it.

"Think that's going to scare me?" asked Handforth contemptuously. "Go ahead! You won't be able to make me yell, if that's what you're aiming at! By George! One of these days I'll get even!"

Slash!

The whip fell across Handforth's shoulders, and the watchers could see him stiffen. They all looked on in silent sympathy. Willy—Handforth's minor—was pale and drawn. But Willy was a cool youngster, and he knew better than to interfere. Any protest on his part would probably make Lorenzo more savage than ever.

Slash, slash, slash!

The whip rose and fell, its cruel thongs curling round Handforth's shoulders. But he uttered no cry. He just set his teeth, and endured the agony. It seemed to him that his back was being skinned.

"Now!" snarled Lorenzo, at last. "I have given you a taste, my young friend! Only a mere taste, bear in mind. As a rule, I administer no less than fifty lashes. But as you are new to this life, I will let you off with ten."

"You're a murderous bully, and——"

"Chuck it, Handy!" shouted Church hoarsely.

"Don't invite another dose, you idiot!"

All the fellows were shouting similar advice, and Handforth dimly realised that they were right. If a hornet couldn't be crushed, the best thing was to leave it alone.



## CHAPTER 5.

### A Brief Respite.

THE next few hours were gruelling. Without a minute's rest, the school-boy slaves were marched off to work. They were thirsty and weary, but Lorenzo gave them no respite.

They were taken to the plantations, and made to work beside the niggers, carrying heavy loads. And they were astonished by the great organisation of the half-breed's business.

It was not until late afternoon that relief came.

Then they were marched away, and thrust into two small, corrugated iron sheds. There

were no windows, and the doors were heavy, with powerful bolts on the outside.

There was a long line of these huts, set eight or nine feet apart. Six juniors were thrust into one, and six into the other. And Nelson Lee, Lord Dorrimore, and Umlosi, occupied the next hut in the line.

The white captives were being treated in exactly the same way as the ordinary slaves. For these long lines of huts were the usual quarters of the workers.

The heat inside was stupefying.

"Oh, corks!" groaned Watson, as he felt the perspiration pouring down his face. "We shall die in here—we shall simply suffocate!"

"They can't mean to leave us here!" muttered Church.

The rest were too exhausted to say much. They sank down, only too glad of the respite. Surely they were now going to be left alone for the night? Even the heat of that prison was a relief. They were alone—away from their brutal guards.

"How's your back, Handy?" asked Nipper huskily.

"Oh, it's all right," growled Handforth.

"Don't bother!"

"That's what he keeps saying to us," said Church. "He won't let us have a look——"

"What's the good of looking?" interrupted Handforth. "I can't even have a bath, or get any embrocation. My only hat! I never knew that slaves were treated so badly!"

Nipper and the others insisted upon examining Handforth's back. There was a certain amount of light in the hut, for all round the eaves were small holes for ventilation. The daylight came percolating through, and the interior of the hut was filled with subdued light.

"Poor old Handy!" said McClure, as they looked at the weals across Handforth's back. "Won't these brutes bring any water? Shan't we be allowed to wash?"

"If they bring any water, we won't wash in it," said Church. "I could drink a river dry!"

"In future, Handy, old man, you'd better go easy," said Nipper.

"What do you mean—go easy?"

"Hold yourself in check. It's easy enough——"

"If Lorenzo comes near me again, I'll black his other eye!" said Handforth fiercely. "Even if you chaps are scared of him, I'm not!"

"Rats!" said Nipper. "It's not a question of being scared, you chump. "But what's the good of banging your head against a brick wall? You only bring suffering on yourself by that sort of thing, Handy. There's only one policy for us to pursue."

"Yes!" said Handforth. "We'll defy him all the time!"

"No, the policy is to knuckle under," said Nipper. "When Lorenzo comes near us, we'll cower and shiver. When he passes, we'll shrink away. And when we're ordered to work we'll cringe to obey."

"Good gad!" said Archie Glenthorpe.

"Chuck it, Nipper!" said Watson.

"But I mean it," said Nipper.

"You mean it?" gasped Handforth.

"Yes, I do—and it's the only sensible policy," retorted Nipper. "The longer we remain spirited, the more kicks we shall get. We'd better let Lorenzo believe that we're thoroughly cowed and broken."

"Odds stunts and brainwaves!" murmured Archie. "I begin to see a chunk of good old daylight. We'll fool the blighter, what? Lull him into a sense of false security, and all that sort of stuff!"

"Of course," said Nipper. "It's the only way of getting the guards to relax their vigilance. A chance might come for us to escape. But we shall never be able to take advantage of it if we're constantly watched."

"By Jove, that's right!" said Watson breathlessly. "I say, you chaps, we'd better adopt that dodge!"

"Not likely!" said Handforth. "I'm not going to be a hypocrite!"

"A what!" snapped Nipper. "You silly ass, you'll spoil everything if you hold back. Look what happened to you this afternoon! Does this smarting back of yours get you anywhere?"

And Handforth was forced to admit the strength of the argument.

## CHAPTER 6.

### Supper!



"BUT why corrugated iron?" asked Church.

They had been sitting silent for some time, and Church unconsciously spoke

his thoughts aloud. They were growing accustomed to the stifling heat by now, and were feeling weary and sleepy.

"Why corrugated iron?" repeated Church. "It's about the last material I should use in a rotten climate like this! These huts are no better than ovens!"

"In the middle of the day we couldn't live in 'em," said Nipper, with a nod. "But there's a better reason than you know of, Churchy. It seems silly to put up these corrugated iron huts, but they're ant-proof."

"Which proof?"

"The white ants are dished when it comes to corrugated iron," explained Nipper. "They'll eat wooden houses completely—until there's only a shell left. The white ants are the curse of these tropical districts. But they're beaten by corrugated iron."

"I saw some ants this afternoon," said McClure thoughtfully. "Whacking great brutes. Ugly-looking things. But they weren't white—they were black."

"They've got all sorts—white, black, and red," chuckled Nipper. "The white ones are the worst pests. And that reminds me. There's something crawling up my giddy leg now. Oh, it's nothing—only a beetle."

"I saw a scorpion a minute ago," growled Watson. "My hat! This is a lovely sort of hole!"

"They're not going to keep us here all night, are they?" asked Church. "I wonder how the other chaps are getting on—Browne and Gresham and the rest? Let's yell!"

"That's a good idea!" said Tommy Watson eagerly. "I'm worrying about old Montie."

"Hi, St. Frank's, ahoy!" went up a chorus.

An answering shout came from the next hut.

"Keep your pecker up, you chaps!" came Willy's advice. "We're all right in here!"

"Slowly roasting, brothers, but so far underdone!" called Browne.

They all cheered, just to show that they were still full of spirit.

"It's good to know they're close to us, anyhow," said Handforth. "And old Dorrie and Mr. Lee are in the next hut, too. But I'd give my right arm to know what's happened to the girls."

"I was thinking of them, too," said Nipper slowly.

"If that beast has tortured them in any way, I'll—I'll——" Handforth paused, unable to think of anything awful enough. "But he wouldn't dare!" he muttered.

Another silence fell.

"I suppose, dear old lads, there's no chance of stealing out in the night watches?" asked Archie Gienthorne at length. "It would be rather priceless to escape——"

"It's no good thinking of that, Archie," interrupted Nipper. "There's not one chance in a thousand. Don't forget the corrugated iron."

"Dear old thing. I don't follow the trend."

"This corrugated iron has another use—in addition to being impervious to the white ants," said Nipper. "Imagine any of us trying to escape! And with guards marching up and down all night! You know what corrugated iron is, don't you?"

"We can't do a thing," agreed McClure. "The slightest touch on these beastly walls, and they sound like thunder. The guards would be on us in two ticks if we started any stunts."

The truth of the thing was disquieting. They might, in certain circumstances, have forced a board away from the wall of a wooden shed. They might have displaced some bricks of a stone one. They might have burrowed a hole through the hardened wall of a mud hut. But corrugated iron defied them. Any movement would echo for yards. As cells for the slaves, these huts were peculiarly suitable.

"It's no good—we can't escape, and we can't fool ourselves that there's any chance of it," said Handforth gruffly. "We're out of our chains now, but what's the use? As soon as they lug us out of here, we shall be chained again—and when they put us back we shall have these wretched iron walls round us. We're having a lovely picnic!"

The sound of voices came to them, and the bolts of their hut were suddenly shot back, making a nerve-shattering din in the iron hut. Then two of the Nubians entered, and





Frantically Willy floundered through the thick, muddy water, but before he could escape one of the huge Nubian guards had grabbed him by the shoulder. His hopes of rescuing the other St. Frank's prisoners were now shattered!

placed a large native basket on the floor. They went out again, and the bolts were shot home. The six juniors stared at the basket, and they could hear the next hut being entered in the same way.

"We're getting on, anyway," said Nipper. "Gentlemen, supper is served!"

palatable sort of stew mixed with it. Under any other conditions, the juniors would have refused it with scorn. But it was, at least, food. And they were famished.

"How do we eat the beastly stuff?" asked Handforth. "The silly idiots have forgotten the spoons and plates!"

"Fingers were made before forks, Handy," said Church. "They treat us like pigs, don't forget. It's a wonder they didn't serve all this stuff in a trough! As long as we get the food, we mustn't expect much else."

At first they fell to with a will. But as soon as the keenness had been taken from their appetites they felt rather sickened. The food was bad enough in itself, but it seemed much worse when eaten under these conditions.

"Put the wretched stuff away somewhere," said Nipper at length. "My only hat! Can you believe it, you chaps? Day in and day out—month in and month out—we're doomed to this life?"

"It's unthinkable," said Watson shakily. "Don't we have any beds to sleep on? Surely they're not going to let us lie on the floor?"

"What's the good of expecting beds?"

## CHAPTER 7.

### Locked in for the Night.



HE water was the first item on the menu that was pounced upon.

Happily, there was a great pitcher of it, and the minds of the schoolboy prisoners were relieved. They had had a haunting fear that they would be left thirsty during the night—and that would have been the worst of all torture.

But Lorenzo knew that if his slaves were starved or left short of water, their working energies would be impaired.

The food proved to be very rough and coarse. It was rice mainly, with an un-

asked Nipper. "Lorenzo's policy is to harden us. If we die, we die; but if we don't die, we shall become so used to these hardships that we shan't notice them. We're all a bit dazed as yet, but I expect we shall get used to it in time."

"It's no good—I can't believe it!" said Church flatly. "It's too horrible to think of! What about our people at home? What about St. Frank's? Do you mean to say we shall never go back?"

"Not if Lorenzo can help it," said Nipper.

They were all silent again at the very thought.

"Wouldn't it be lovely to escape from here, and release all the other slaves?" asked Handforth dreamily, after awhile. "You know, take old Lorenzo by surprise—sweep down on his bungalow, hoof him out, and release all the slaves! My hat! That's something to work for!"

"The only possible way to do that, Handy, will be to fool Lorenzo," said Nipper. "It may take weeks—it may take months. But the sooner we start fooling him the better. We must let him think that we're all cowed."

"It's an awful thought, but I'm game," said Handforth gruffly. "If all you fellows are in favour of it, I'm not going to stand out. And on the whole, it's not such a bad idea."

"I've always had an idea, old chappies, that Dartmoor was a pretty foul spot," mused Archie. "But it seems to me that the good old place is a dashed palace. I mean, the convict lads have beds to sleep on, plates to eat out of, and all that sort of thing. An experience of this kind makes a fellow appreciate things."

The others heartily agreed. And then the door was opened again, and Otto Lorenzo looked in.

"All comfortable for the night?" he asked, his voice full of gloating triumph. "We'll look after you well, my fine schoolboys! You'll get no lessons here—unless you're disobedient!"

Peering in, Lorenzo could see the juniors cowering away. He was so full of conceit and arrogance that he had no suspicion of the truth.

"Ah, so you're beginning to realise my power, eh?" he said grimly. "You'll learn more later—much more. This hut is your permanent dwelling-place. The door is your permanent bed. It may be hard at first, but you'll get used to it. They always get used to it!"

He closed the door again with a mocking laugh, and they heard him talking to the fellows in the next hut.

"Bravo, Handy!" murmured Nipper.

"Eh? What the dickens—"

"I know you wanted to dash out, and go in with the brute bald-headed, but you held yourself in check," said Nipper. "Good man! Keep it up, and we'll soon have that hound fooled."

"Our permanent dwelling-place!" murmured Tommy Watson. "Great Scott! It's too

awful to believe! But what can we do? How can we smash the tyrant?"

Nipper lowered his voice.

"We've dealt with tyrants before," he said. "At first, there hasn't been much hope. There hasn't been an opportunity to act. But Providence has a rummy way of ordering these things, my sons. And the greater the tyranny the sooner the chance to smash it!"

"You—you mean?"

"I'm feeling sleepy, and I'm feeling fairly easy in mind," replied Nipper calmly. "We've only got to keep our pecker up, and we shall come out on top. We may have to wait a bit—but we're strong enough. And when we do some to grips with Lorenzo—"

"Don't!" interrupted Handforth tensely. "The very thought of it makes me go all hot!"



## CHAPTER 8.

### The First Day.

DAWN came at last, and the prisoners were dragged out of their huts, chained together, and marched into line.

Rather to their surprise, they had slept well.

In spite of the hard floor, and the unwelcome visitors from the insect world, they had managed to get a long, refreshing sleep. They were all in the best of health, and their hardships, so far, had not impaired their stamina.

And it did Lord Dorrimore and Nelson Lee a deal of good to hear the fellows discussing the various adventures of the night. Sir Montie Tregellis-West, it seemed, had been bitten by a centipede, and his leg was swollen. Somebody else had found a scorpion inside his shirt, and had managed to get rid of it successfully. And all of them had fought grim battles with the mosquitoes.

But, on the whole, they had come out with flying colours.

"They're a sturdy, plucky lot," said Lord Dorrimore admiringly. "And those girls are just as good, too! I wish I knew where they were, Lee. It's no good askin' Lorenzo—he'll only insult us. Another day in the plantations, I suppose? What a life!"

"The trouble is, there doesn't seem to be any chance of altering the life," said Nelson Lee. "Dorrie, I'm just as reckless as any of those boys! I want to run amok! It's only with the greatest difficulty that I'm remaining calm."

"Calm?" repeated his lordship. "You may not believe it, but inside I'm a ragin' volcano. The only reason I don't burst into eruption is because I won't give Lorenzo the satisfaction of usin' his rotten whip on me. The only thing we can do is to bide our time."

"Wise words, N'Kose," murmured Umlosi, who was with them. "Be of good cheer, for the time will come. Did I not have a strange and wondrous dream? Methinks our durance will not be prolonged."

"Good old coal-box!" said Dorrie. "As a rule, you dream about gore an' battles. It's a change for you to have a cheery dream. I shall regard it as a good omen."

"What ho!" came a cry from Archie. "Breakfast, laddies! Absolutely the good old nose-bag! The dashed trouble is, they've forgotten to bring my jolly old cup of tea!"

Breakfast consisted of very much the same fare as they had had for supper. And they were compelled to eat it, with their chains hampering them.

There was something deliberate in this treatment. Lorenzo was treating these new slaves even more harshly than he treated his blacks. Perhaps he wanted to convince them of his immense power.

This was the first full day in the slaver's employ, and it was destined to prove a terrible one. After only ten minutes of respite for breakfast they were led off into the plantations.

Some of the fellows were put to the work of collecting the cups from the rubber trees—little cups filled with latex, the milky fluid which flowed from the cuts in the bark. Others were engaged in taking the heavy iron buckets from the collecting ground to the factory. They were doing the work of coolies—and all the time they were watched over by guards, and never allowed to obtain a moment's rest.

Frequently during the day the St. Frank's fellows lost sight of one another. They were unchained, and sent into different sections of the valley. They were forced to work shoulder to shoulder with niggers, and they gained a terrible insight into Lorenzo's brutality.

Many of these unfortunate slaves were scarred and maimed. They bore evidences of the torture that had been inflicted upon them.

There were hundreds of these black slaves, many of them having been on these plantations for years. They were spiritless creatures, beaten and cowed until they worked automatically.

They had no hope in life. They had been taken from their villages, and from their families, and they never expected to know the meaning of liberty again. Most of them were Kutanas—men of Umlosi's own tribe.

Otto Lorenzo had made the gravest mistake of his infamous career when he took the St. Frank's fellows into slavery. He meant to treat them as he treated the blacks—to break their will, and to gloat over their misery.

But he hadn't reckoned on their pluck!

## CHAPTER 9.

### The Brute!



HOWEVER, Nipper's policy was remembered.

During the course of the day, the juniors acted in accordance with the sugges-

tion that Nipper had put forth. They pre-

tended to be subdued. They cowered when the overseers came near.

Lorenzo himself went round on a tour of inspection towards the end of the afternoon, and his object was clear. He merely wanted to triumph over his victims.

He was given every opportunity.

He happened to come upon Nipper and Watson, chained together, and each carrying enormously heavy pails. They were staggering under these loads, almost exhausted by their arduous hours of labour. And as they caught sight of Lorenzo they shrank back, stark fear in their eyes.

The half-breed smiled contentedly.

"I see that my special treatment is having effect," he said. "But you needn't be afraid, my young friends. I don't hurt my slaves if they work well. Just behave yourselves, and obey orders, and perhaps your lives will be a little easier."

They said nothing, but cringed away.

And Lorenzo went on, and found very much the same spirit among the others. It was terribly difficult for Handforth to act a part in this way, but he proved equal to the task. He couldn't see any reason for it. He couldn't see that such methods would be fruitful. And so he acted under protest.

But he made a success of it. When Lorenzo came upon him he happened to be taking a moment's rest. The guards were otherwise engaged, and Handforth was nearly beaten. Extra hard work had been allotted to him since the early morning—no doubt by Lorenzo's orders.

The slaver came upon him unexpectedly, approaching from behind a neighbouring clump of trees.

"Oh!" gasped Handforth, as he caught sight of Lorenzo.

He cowered back with a gasp of terror.

"Don't—don't!" he shouted hoarsely. "I—I was only resting for a minute, sir! Don't whip me!"

"This is even better than I thought," said the slaver. "We are progressing very rapidly. Why, in a week's time we shall have you all docile. You are learning that it is better to bend to my will. It does not pay to defy me!"

He strode on, and Handforth gave a gulp.

"My hat!" he breathed. "I didn't know I could control myself so much. I thought I was going to smash him! I'm not so jolly sure of this game! It's better to hit out when we've got the chance!"

Soon afterwards, he was rounded up by the guards, and linked up to one of the chain-gangs. The slaves were being marched back to their quarters. The day's work was over, and many of the hapless juniors wondered how they had lived through it.

Tommy Watson, indeed, was so near to the point of physical exhaustion that he swayed as he walked. His gait became more staggering, and once or twice he nearly fell. Only by the greatest will power did he keep going.

And it so happened that Lorenzo was standing by the path, waiting to see his captives

go by. It was ill-luck—or possibly good luck, according to the point of view—which caused Tommy to stumble just as he was passing the slaver.

“Hold up, there!” said Lorenzo harshly. “Weakness, eh? I don’t allow weakness among my slaves!”

He lunged out with his foot, and delivered a brutal, powerful kick on the side of Tommy Watson’s leg. It was one of the most cowardly blows that the St. Frank’s fellows had ever seen.

Poor Tommy fell over, gasping with pain. That vicious blow had proved the last straw, he rolled over on his back, and sprawled in the path, his face haggard and drawn.

His nearest companions were half pulled towards him, by reason of the tethering chains.

“Come, up you get, you young hound!” snarled Lorenzo.

He delivered another kick. It was too much—even for Nipper. And Nipper was the fellow who had mooted the policy of pretence! All his make-believe went by the board.

Tommy Watson was one of his own special chums!

“You bullying brute!” he shouted furiously. And he leapt at Lorenzo like a young tiger. The cool, calm, collected Nipper! The advocate of finesse! It was an eye-opener for the others.

## CHAPTER 10.

### Not so Cowed!



URRAH!”

“Good old Nipper!”

“Slosh him!” roared Handforth excitedly. “By George! I thought you

weren’t going to— Great guns! That was a beauty!”

Crash!

Nipper’s fist had smashed into Lorenzo’s face. The second blow he had had from these boys in the course of two days! And then the slaver was called upon to face a veritable storm.

Before any of the guards could protect their master, all the nearest juniors were attacking. Willy clawed hold of Lorenzo’s hand, wrenched the whip from it, and swung it round.

“Let him taste his own medicine!” he yelled.

Slash, slash!

The whip curled round Lorenzo’s legs, and the brute roared with rage and pain. But the fight could go no further. Handforth managed to get fairly near, but he was dragged back.

The whips of the guards sang, and the juniors fell away, their skins smarting under the lash. And within a minute the chain-gang was held in check again. Nipper, utterly regardless of Lorenzo, was helping Tommy Watson to his feet.

“You shouldn’t have done it!” muttered Watson. “Oh, you ass! He’ll skin you alive for this!”

“Let him!” snapped Nipper. “I don’t care!”

“So!” snarled Lorenzo, fighting for breath. “You’re not so meek and spiritless as you pretended! It seems to me that I must make an example of one of you!”

“That’ll be you, Nipper!” murmured Watson. “Oh, he’ll torture you!”

But Lorenzo, white with rage, gave some harsh orders to his guards. And they made for Willy.

“So you want me, do you?” said Willy. “Just as you like. I’ve had my fling, and now I must pay for it. I’ll bet those cuts hurt you, didn’t they, you rotter?”

The plucky Third-Former was isolated, and held cruelly by two of the guards. Lorenzo had given them some swift orders in their own language. Without question, the slaver was going to exact a heavy price.

Nipper looked up, and his eyes blazed.

“Wait a minute!” he said fiercely. “What are you going to do to that youngster, Lorenzo? I went for you first—I punched you in the face. If you want to punish anybody, ick on me!”

Lorenzo ignored this hot outburst. He gave further orders to his men, and pointed down the path.

“It’s not fair!” shouted Nipper, anxiety now mingled with his rage. “It’s not fair to take him like this, and—”

“He’s gone!” said Handforth.

“The young boy shall suffer,” said Lorenzo, his voice shaky and purring. “He used my own whip to me—and there can be only one punishment for such folly. Much as I regret it, I greatly fear that you will never see your young companion again.”

Handforth went pale.

“What are you going to do with my minor?” he burst out.

“You will see—later,” replied Lorenzo. “You will not be very pleased. But rebels must be punished. I must make an example of this rash boy. I do not think you will dare to strike me again.”

“Oh, I was mad!” muttered Nipper, in anguish, as Lorenzo strode away. “After all I’d said, too! If I hadn’t gone for the rotter, Willy wouldn’t have used that whip! I’ve brought this on to him!”

“Rats!” growled Handforth. “You wouldn’t have been human if you had kept still—after the way Lorenzo kicked into Watson. But what are they going to do to my minor?” he added hoarsely. “What are they going to do to him? I’ve got to know!”

But the guards forced them to march on. If there were any flagging footsteps, or even if heads were turned, the whips cracked, and sometimes curled round the legs or shoulders of the slaves.

Lorenzo’s words had been dreadfully significant. What frightful torture was he going to inflict upon Willy? Surely those threats of his had been bluff? He would never dare

to act drastically because of that impulsive action of Willy's?

Torn with anxiety and doubt, the juniors were herded into their huts. Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore did not come till afterwards, and they knew nothing of the affair.

The heat was more stifling than ever. To-day had been hotter—an unusual, sultry, suffocating day of quivering heat. Thick masses of clouds were ranging themselves in the sky, but there had been no rain.

And in those terrible iron huts, the juniors were breathlessly discussing the problem of what was happening to Willy.

Had they known the truth, they would have gone off their heads with horrified rage!



## CHAPTER 11.

Ready for the Ordeal!

**W**ILLY HANDFORTH, in spite of his trepidation, was filled with a vague curiosity. What were they going to do to him?

He had expected Otto Lorenzo to punish him by whipping, but this was evidently not on the programme. What, then, was the game?

Willy was no super-boy, and he did not hesitate to tell himself that he was scared out of his wits. Neither did he hesitate to tell himself that he would never show it.

He instinctively knew that something particularly dreadful was marked out for him, and his heart was thumping hard. He hoped that whatever it was, it would be swift.

"Life's just one long thing after another!" he said, turning to one of his guards and addressing him. "Those beastly Oturis tried to roast me, and now your boss is going to show me some of his own tricks. Any idea what the stunt is?"

The guard either failed to understand, or he deliberately ignored him. At all events, the man gave no reply.

"All right—be unsociable!" growled Willy. "Hallo! What's the idea of this? Where are we off to now?"

The men were forcing their way through a tangle of thick thorn bushes and other undergrowth. It was a sort of backwater, as yet undeveloped. And as the men went they looked searchingly about them. They were trying to locate something.

They found it, too, for they suddenly halted, and threw Willy to the ground, flat on his back. There were a good number of ants about, and Willy did not feel particularly comfortable.

"Hi!" he protested. "What's the game?"

Ropes were being passed over him, and he now saw that the ends were hammered into the ground, on pegs. He was irresistibly reminded of Gulliver among the Lilliputians.

Ropes were passed over his legs, his body, and even his neck. This latter rope was stretched so tightly that it was impossible

for him to lift his head, even an inch. The instant he attempted to do so, the rope tightened on his throat, and threatened to choke him. His arms, bound closely to his sides, were useless.

"You're making a thorough job of it, anyway," he panted. "You rotters! So you're going to leave me here to roast in the sun, are you? You—you rotten torturers!"

He was already feeling a kind of needle-prick on various parts of his anatomy, and he knew that those ferocious black ants were resenting his presence. But never for a moment did he realise their true significance.

The two Nubian guards stood back at last, talking excitedly together, and regarding Willy with childlike curiosity. And he could see that there was a look of terror in their eyes, too. There was more in this than he could fathom.

He knew that he was wrong about the sun. There couldn't be anything in that theory, because the sun had disappeared behind the heavy cloudbanks. Indeed, there was every indication that a storm was about to break. The air quivered curiously, and there was an ominous peace. The drone of countless insects filled the air, and from the neighbouring treetops came the excited chattering of monkeys. Birds were flying about in disorder, instinct warning them that Nature was soon to let loose her wrath.

Boom-boom-boom!

A peal of thunder rolled out like a battery of naval guns. It was a startling clap, and the echo rolled away across the valley in a series of heavy claps.

Just for a moment Willy hoped.

Perhaps the storm would prevent these brutes from completing their work—whatever that work happened to be. He wasn't going to be whipped, or anything like that, or he would never have been placed in this position. He felt there was something more sinister afoot.

Otto Lorenzo came, bursting through the undergrowth hurriedly. He scarcely gave Willy a glance. He shouted to his men, and pointed away towards the factory.

They ran off, and Lorenzo cast an anxious look at the sky. Then he gave another glance at Willy.

"Going to be a storm!" said Willy steadily.

"You'll see nothing of it!" snarled Lorenzo, in a sudden access of rage. "Did I not promise a drastic punishment? I am a man of my word! You'll suffer, boy! You'll suffer horrible torture—and when the work has been done, I shall bring your friends, and show them your bones!"

He strode off, and Willy felt strangely sick.

"Bones!" he muttered huskily. "What the dickens was he getting at? What did he mean—he'll show them my bones?"

Another crash of thunder burst out, accompanied by terrific lightning. The whole sky was darkening, and the full fury of the tropical thunderstorm was on the point of being let loose. It only seemed to make

Willy's plight worse. The elements themselves were conspiring to add to his terror.

His bones!

What had Lorenzo meant?



## CHAPTER 12.

### The Million Enemies!

**P**HEW! The little demons!" muttered Willy with a wince. "Oh, corks! They're coming for me properly now!"

The needle-pricks were getting worse. The ants were swarming over him, biting into his skin, and penetrating his flesh. The black ant of Africa is a terrible insect.

Already, Willy was suffering tortures. If he had been free, he could have torn the vindictive little creatures off. But he was tied down, unable to move hand or foot.

And the ants, slow to swarm round him at first, were now proving to be worse than a nuisance. They were becoming a menace. The pain was getting well nigh unbearable. And apart from the actual pain there was the horror of the thing. It was fearful to feel them crawling over him, biting into him—fearful to know that he was powerless to put a stop to their onslaught.

"The little beggars might chew chunks out of me," growled Willy, as he tried to force his bonds, and found them as taut as steel wire. "They might——"

He broke off, and into his eyes had come an expression of unutterable horror. A thought had come to him—vague at first, but rapidly taking shape.

He remembered something that Dorrie had once told him—about ants. He remembered reading an article in an English magazine by a man who had had experience of these black ants.

And Willy remembered a picture in that article. It was a picture of a pet monkey, chained to a pole—and the ants were swarming over the helpless little creature. And in the morning his master had found nothing but white bones——

Bones!

So that was what Lorenzo had meant! The ants! They were attacking him—swarming over him in tens of thousands now!

"The fiend!" gasped Willy. "He's left me here to be tortured! He's left me here to——"

But even Willy's staunch spirit quailed at the thought.

Those needle-points were awful now. He shouted, but the insects took no notice. They weren't frightened of such sounds.

Willy's terror was justified.

These black ants were a ghastly enemy. Men had been known to die from an attack by ants, even when they were fully at liberty to run, and to escape. For the terrible little creatures swarm in millions, and once they attack, they are more fearsome than a wild

beast. For one can, at least, fight for life against a wild beast.

Had Lorenzo done this deliberately?

There could be no doubt of it. His words proved it. Willy prayed that the murderous fiend would be justly punished.

A little relief was afforded him. There came a sudden burst of rain—sweeping down with truly tropical force. The ants were washed off him, and the water cooled him, too. But it was only a little flurry, and soon the air was still once more.

And back came the ants to the attack.

Willy sent up a prayer that he might soon be unconscious. He steadfastly refused to think of what might ensue. He wondered if some of the guards would come and release him. Perhaps——

"Yes, that's it!" he panted, wild hope within him. "It's only a trick—a horrible, torturing trick! It's Lorenzo's idea of a joke! He'll send his guards back to release me—and then laugh at my fright!"

Yet, right within him, Willy felt that this hope was idle. The guards wouldn't come back to release him. Lorenzo had been in grim earnest—and he meant his victim to perish!

But hope springs eternal in the human breast, and Willy listened. He half-expected to hear the approach of somebody. But only a roll of thunder disturbed the sullen silence. Even the creatures in the trees seemed to have stilled their voices, and ceased their activities.

But the ants kept on. They were renewing their deadly activities.

"They're not coming," gasped Willy. "They've left me here to die!"

In a frenzy, he wrenched at his ropes. Only when he had nearly choked himself did he desist. There was no escape—no possibility of getting free from this horror.

A sense of numbness was coming over him, and he wondered if this was the first indication of unconsciousness. If only he could swoon off now, he would be spared from the torture that Lorenzo had planned.

A blinding flash of lightning split the heavens from horizon to horizon, and the thunder came booming down like something solid. And then the rain. Rain such as Willy had never seen in his life.

Nature had come to his aid!

## CHAPTER 13.

### Saved by the Deluge!



**T** was like a flood. Willy Handforth, tied to the ground by stakes, was blinded and half-suffocated by the torrential rain. It fell from the sky as though a gigantic bucket had been overturned.

The drops came splashing over his face continuously, until he could scarcely get his breath. To open his eyes was impossible.

He was face upwards, exposed to all the fury of the deluge.

When he opened his mouth for breath, it was half-filled with water. All round him the spray was jumping up from the ground like a thick mist. And the roar of the torrent deafened him.

And there was one merciful, glorious result.

The ants, in spite of the grip of their deadly mandibles, were swept off his face, off his chest, and off every other part of him. They went floating away in the floods which rose magically across the ground.

This place was a little depression, tucked away in the heavy bushes, and there was no tall grass. And the soil itself was soft and spongy. This much Willy had known, for the stakes which held him had been driven in for over a foot. For him to pull them out by his own strength was a physical impossibility.

"Oh, thank goodness!" he muttered. "This rain has done the trick! They've gone—they've been washed away! And that brute has been cheated! Cheated by the storm!"

There was something providential in it. Willy's fear had gone, a great calmness had descended over him. He knew that his terrible peril was over now. The danger had come, and it had gone. He couldn't tell why, but he was convinced that the ordeal was at an end. Something told him that such fiendishness could never be permitted. Otto Lorenzo had not repented, but his devilish scheme had been frustrated in spite of him.

Willy was almost his cheery self again as the rain came pelting down. Those needle-pricks had gone, and he felt rather surprised that he suffered no after-effects. He wondered if he would see the marks that had been left from the bites.

And how about getting free?

His major and the other fellows couldn't come, of course. They were locked up in their huts by this time. And it was very doubtful if Lorenzo would come back, or send any of his men.

The blackguard had left Willy there to die. And the chances were that he wouldn't come near the spot again until the next day. It would never occur to him that his intended victim was still alive, saved by the rain.

The storm was still raging, and the rain was pouring down with greater force than ever. Willy could feel it swirling about him, running past his body. It was almost as though he had been staked down in the bed of a shallow stream.

A quick idea came to him. Surely the stakes would be loosened? The ground was soft, and with all this rain—

Willy tried to heave his knees up. He had tried before, but the awful cutting of the cords had forced him to desist. But now, to his joy, he felt a distinct "give." His first impulse was to struggle madly, and to fight in a frenzied effort to get free.

But common sense came to his aid. He ceased his efforts, and remained still for a moment. Every atom of his old coolness had

come back to him, and his quick brain was even thinking ahead. And his eyes were glittering with the possibilities that presented themselves.

"Steady, old son—steady!" he murmured. "There's no hurry! You can take your time now. As long as we go easy, we shall be as safe as houses. This is going to be rich!"

He was allowing the water to do its work. Now and again he assisted, by wrenching gently at the ropes. The rain, soaking miraculously into the soft ground, was vanishing almost as rapidly as it came down. Otherwise, Willy would have been in danger of drowning—for that shallow depression would quickly have formed itself into a miniature lake, with him staked to the bottom.

"Good!" he muttered. "That's number one!"

The stakes, almost washed out of their beds by the rain, came away freely now. And once the first one had become loose, the others were easy. In less than a minute, Willy was reaching up with his freed hands, pulling at the cord which crossed his throat.

"That's done it, you beggar!" he said breathlessly.

He sat up in six inches of water—free!

The next moment he was on his feet, and although the rain came down like mist all round him, his first thought was for his injuries. He didn't make any attempt to get away from this spot until he had examined himself.

To his astonishment, he found scarcely any signs of the ants' attack. There were numbers of tiny, insignificant little bumps on his hands and arms, but nothing to cause him any worry.

He realised that his imagination had been at work during the first moments of the creatures' onslaught. He had thought that he was being eaten, and that he would be all over terrible wounds. And, actually, he had not been far wrong. Only the sudden down-pour had saved him.

And now he was free. And Otto Lorenzo believed that he was dead! The possibilities were staggering.

## CHAPTER 14.

### Willy Makes Hay While it Rains!



WILLY suddenly, Willy was struck by a sombre thought.

What responsibilities were now on his shoulders!

He was the only slave in that whole valley at liberty! Had he been selected as an instrument to rob Otto Lorenzo of his power?

Willy reviewed the position.

And at the end of a minute he was filled with complete satisfaction. The darkness which now brooded over the land was not caused by the storm. The day had ended, and this darkness was natural. Lorenzo would not come near this spot to-night. It would

never occur to him that his victim had got free. That much was certain.

So there would be no searchers. Willy had a clear field, and it was up to him to make the best of his opportunities. He was a resourceful youngster, and he could be trusted to do this.

He dismissed the idea of going to the huts, and making an attempt to release the other juniors. He knew that it would be a failure. There were guards posted there, and the only possible way of getting the fellows out would be to open the corrugated iron doors. And they creaked horribly. Even if the guards were sheltering, they would hear those significant sounds.

"No, that wouldn't do," decided Willy. "I should be collared in two ticks, and I shouldn't have accomplished anything. The best thing I can do is to locate the girls."

This was his first task.

Everybody was anxious about Irene & Co. Later, he could think of some scheme to help the other members of the party. It would be quieter then. If necessary, he could hang about until the middle of the night.

"By jingo, that's it," he murmured. "I'll get up a ruse of some kind. I'll fake myself up as a ghost, and those guards will think I'm a new sort of Ju-Ju. But the girls come first. I've got to find out if they're safe."

Cautiously, he splashed his way through the sodden grass, and then discovered that it was comparatively easy to force a passage through the bushes out to the more open ground.

He caught his clothing on a number of thorns, and his skin was torn in one or two places. But he didn't worry. He stood there in the rain gazing down the long valley. There were lights gleaming in the distance.

"The power station," he told himself. "And those other lights, off to the left, are in the factory. Old Dirty Dick's bungalow is away here to the right. I don't think I'll do any exploring in that direction."

He remembered that the girls had been sent away to the factory, and he decided that his first field of research must be in that direction. He was a keen Boy Scout, the leader of his troop, and he had little or no fear that his movements would be detected. When Willy was on the warpath by night he was less conspicuous than a shadow.

He didn't waste any time, either. Flitting from bush to bush, and hiding behind various clumps of trees, he made good progress towards the factory. He had never seen inside it, but he knew that it was a considerable building, where the raw rubber was solidified, rolled into sheets, and where it underwent other processes.

Willy knew, also, that most of the slaves employed in the factory were women. The men slaves were kept to the plantations.

Luck must necessarily play a large part in his movements. If this was one of his "off" days he would find nothing. But he refused to accept this possibility.

He had been saved from those ants for a

purpose—so it was ridiculous to assume that luck would be against him.

He approached the factory as the storm was lessening in intensity. The rain had almost ceased now, and the flashes of lightning were few and far between. The thunder was disappearing into the hills beyond. It was necessary for him to exercise greater caution than ever.

He had no fear of being captured by any of the guards. He would easily be able to wriggle away if they laid hands on him. But that wasn't the point. He didn't want them to even know that he was prowling about. For that would spoil everything.

Once or twice he had a narrow escape.

He came upon two guards unexpectedly, and any dodging movement on his part would have been fatal. He stood stock still in the gloom, and the men passed within eight feet of him without even knowing that he was there.

Again, he wormed his way round a bush, and drew back just in the nick of time. A party of slaves were being marched towards the factory—having been delayed, obviously, by the storm.

And this time Willy caught his breath in.

Even in the gloom he could see that these slaves were women. If he followed them he might be able to catch a glimpse of Irene & Co. Perhaps these women were being led to their quarters.

He stole along in the rear, his heart beating rapidly, and his hopes high.



## CHAPTER 15.

### A Welcome Discovery.

"Only hat!"

Willy caught his breath in, and his eye gleamed with sudden joy.

Ten minutes had elapsed, and the hero of the St. Frank's Third was able to look directly into the windows of the factory.

Inside, electric lights were gleaming, and many figures were at work. Lorenzo, it seemed, had a night-shift in his factory, clear proof of the intensive production.

The building itself was much bigger than Willy had imagined. Unlike any of the others, it had two storeys, and was quite an imposing affair, stretching back for some way, and covering an immense area.

But his joy was caused by something he had seen through that nearby window.

Two figures had passed, trundling a kind of four-wheeled trolley, laden with crude rubber. And those two figures were those of white girls! It had been impossible for Willy to recognise her, although he had noted that the dresses were familiar.

Two of the Moor View girls!

This was a step in the right direction, anyhow. And they were safe, too—working





Desperately the juniors tunnelled under the hut that contained Nelson Lee, Dorrie, and Umlosi. "We're nearly through!" said Handforth excitedly. Just then Willy came running up. "Cave!" he called urgently. "The guards are coming!"

in the factory, the same as the negresses. Willy wondered how he could manage to get nearer, so that he could make an actual attempt to get into close touch with them. It would be good if he could talk with Irene or Doris, and learn the general news.

He had no hope of this, until he suddenly became aware of something else. Quite unexpectedly he noticed two dim figures on the end of the flat roof, far from the ground. They showed up ghost-like in the gloom, and he was certain that they were wearing white things.

And then, as he stretched his ears, he could hear voices. The thunder had almost ceased by this time, and a complete calm had descended. It was impossible for him to catch any of the words that were spoken, but there could be no mistaking the intonation.

Those two figures on the roof belonged to two of the white girls!

"This is too good to be missed," said Willy firmly. "There aren't any guards in sight, and it'll take me about five jiffs to get to the wall of that factory. We'll see what can be done."

He descended from his perch, and, awaiting an opportunity, he shot across the intervening space. He arrived against the wall of the factory, breathless. His idea was to call softly up, and to have a few brief words with the girls.

But he now saw something which made him change his mind.

There was a huge girder at the corner of the building, and all one way up it were large, square bolts. Willy gauged the distance carefully, and he considered the possibilities.

"Easy!" he murmured.

And judging by the way he climbed up that projecting post, gripping the sides of it with his knees, and resting his feet on the bolt-heads, it certainly appeared to be so. And at length he reached the top and hauled himself up above the parapet.

"Hist!" he whispered softly. "It's all right—keep cool! It's Willy!"

He heard two gasps, and the next moment Irene Manners and Mary Summers came rushing up to him. The girls were excited and joyous.

"Willy!" breathed Irene. "Oh, you gave me such a start! But you'll fall—you'll—"

"Cheese it!" interrupted Willy. "Quick! Any guards up here? Any chance of us being surprised?"

"I don't think so," put in Mary. "We're allowed to come up here to get cool—two or three of us at a time, and for just a few minutes. The factory's like an oven, and we should faint unless we had—"

"All right," broke in Willy. "I'd better nip over."

He drew himself over the edge of the roof.

and silently clasped hands with the two excited girls.

"What's the news?" he asked. "First of all, are you being ill-treated? That's what I want to know!"

"Not ill-treated—but the conditions are terrible!" murmured Irene. "We have to sleep in a dreadful hut, and we aren't allowed to move anywhere, and the food is awful. And we're worked until we're on the point of fainting. Oh, but it's too fearful to describe!"

"But how about you?" asked Mary. "We're dreadfully worried about you boys, and about Mr. Lee, and poor old Dorrie."

"We've been going through the mill, too," said Willy. "Lorenzo is a beast—a murderous blackguard! He tried to kill me this evening, but I won't tell you how. I'll only say that we'll never rest until we've smashed up this plague spot!"



## CHAPTER 16.

### Nipped in the Bud!

It was a great relief to learn that the girls were comparatively unharmed. At least, they weren't being tortured, and they seemed

to be faring slightly better than the boys.

Willy gave a few details of the work they had been doing—but he didn't say that they had been forced to labour under the whips, and that several of them had nearly collapsed under the ordeal.

"Now, I want a few details," he said, before they could ask him any more questions. "Where do you sleep? Where are your quarters?"

Irene pointed.

"You see those long sheds?" she asked. "Last night we were taken into the second one from the end, and I suppose we shall go there again. We didn't start work until mid-day—"

"Yes, I can see that this beastly factory is worked in continuous shifts," said Willy. "Well, I can't stop any longer. We mustn't take any chances. So long, girls!"

"But, Willy—"

"Well?"

"We want to ask you lots of things—"

"I'll bet you do," agreed Willy. "Girls always want to ask things! Never know such chatterers! But there's no time. If I'm colared up here, it'll be all up with the whole scheme of escape!"

"Escape!" they gasped in one voice.

"You bet!" nodded Willy.

"But—but—"

"Nobody knows that I'm at liberty, and I'm going to make hay while the sun shines," said Willy coolly. "I don't guarantee anything, but with a little bit of luck, there's no telling what might happen. Anyhow, pass the word round to the other girls as soon as

you can manage it; but don't give the game away, for goodness' sake!"

The next moment Willy vaulted over the edge of the roof, and Irene and Mary watched him, horrified, as he went down to the ground. They expected to see him lose his grip, and fall.

But he arrived safely. Then they caught a glimpse of a black shadow moving into the trees, and he was gone.

Willy felt that he had done well.

But not well enough. It was splendid to know that the girls were safe, but there was a plan of escape to be thought of. And after that the plan had to be put into execution. These were weighty matters, and Willy pondered over them as he squatted down against a pile of old rubbish and took a rest.

At last he decided that he couldn't do better than get near to the other St. Frank's fellows. He wanted to see how many guards there were, and he suddenly remembered that the moon would soon be up. Then it might be difficult for him to continue his investigations. He wouldn't be able to get anywhere near the huts without being spotted.

He cautiously turned round a clump of trees, and ran lightly towards one of the paths which would lead him back to the other huts. And then he met with a real misfortune—one that it was impossible to avoid.

With a sudden gasp, he found himself wallowing up to his knees in water. In the darkness, he had mistaken a flooded patch of ground for grassland. And the bottom of it was thick mud, in which his feet were held.

"Oh, crumbs!" he gasped breathlessly.

And then the crowning misfortune of all descended. Figures came running up. Guards! Willy was frantic. He wrenched at his feet, floundering noisily. It was useless to attempt concealment now. His one aim was to get away.

But before he could reach the edge of that treacherous patch, half a dozen of the great Nubians were on the spot. They waded out, and they seized him. And Willy's heart was like lead within him. After all his high hopes!

The men were obviously startled.

This was the boy who had been left to the ants—and they were rather frightened. Perhaps, they thought, he was bewitched in some way. Willy had a wild idea of doing his famous wriggling stunt, but before he could attempt it a man came hurrying along, carrying a powerful incandescent lantern. Willy's heart sank lower. He recognised Otto Lorenzo's stride.

"What is this?" demanded the slaver, as he held his light up. "O-ho! So my young friend! The ants failed to get you, did they! How did you get free from your ropes?"

"Go and eat coke!" snapped Willy fiercely.

He was ready to cry aloud with mortification. To escape now was out of the question.

Lorenzo gave some orders to his men, and Willy was immediately marched off. The slaver had been very quiet about his atrocious attempt to murder the fag.

"It is better to send him back to his companions," he muttered, as he watched the retreating figures. "I am glad he is alive. I have lost too many slaves through my temper."

## CHAPTER 17.

## Back in the Fold.



NIPPER gave Handforth a reassuring thump on the back.

"Hi," gasped Edward Oswald. "What are you doing, you—you silly ass—"

"Oh, sorry!" said Nipper. "I'd forgotten about your back, old man. I'm only trying to cheer you up. There's no need to be so worried."

"I want to know what's happened to Willy," said Handforth fiercely. "I shan't get a wink of sleep until I know!"

"And you won't let anybody else get a wink of sleep, either," put in Church. "Don't be an ass, Handy! Your minor's in the other hut, by this time, sound asleep, I expect."

"How do you know?"

"Well, I don't know, but it's the most probable thing, isn't it?" asked Church. "Willy's with the other crowd, and he'd naturally be taken back there."

"Didn't we ask, an hour ago?" demanded Handforth. "We shouted, and they told us that Willy hadn't come. And he's still missing! That beast of a Lorenzo is torturing him!"

"Even if he is, Handy, we're helpless," said Nipper quietly. "It's awful to think of any such possibility, but I can understand your state of mind. Still, it doesn't do any good to worry, does it?"

Handforth grunted.

"I suppose not," he muttered. "But if Lorenzo has done anything to my minor, I'll—I'll—"

"Listen!" interrupted McClure suddenly.

"Voices!" murmured Watson.

There were not only voices, but footsteps, too. And the door of the hut was suddenly opened with a devastating creaking and rattling. A small figure came bundling in.

"Willy!" roared Handforth.

"They've shoved me in the wrong hut!" growled Willy. "Still, it's all the better, I suppose. Hallo, Ted!"

Handforth leapt at his minor, and seized him. Then, suddenly, he realised that he was making an ass of himself.

"Of course, I knew you were safe enough!" he said gruffly, to cover his confusion. "You always wriggle out of everything, you giddy eel! Where have you been all this time?"

"Out with it, Willy," said Nipper.

"First of all, I'm going to stand with my face to the wall," said Willy deliberately. "I

want you to kick me, one after the other. Kick me as hard as you like. In fact, kick me until I howl!"

"The poor kid's crazy!" said McClure. "This slavery business has sent him off his rocker!"

"No, it hasn't!" snapped Willy. "But I deserve scalping!"

"Just now you wanted us to kick you."

"I deserve kicking first, and scalping afterwards," snorted Willy. "Look here! Do you chaps realise that I was free ten minutes ago?"

"Free!" they echoed.

"Absolutely free!" said Willy. "Lorenzo thought I was dead, and I had the whole night before me. Then I was crazy enough to get myself recaptured. I feel like biting chunks out of this corrugated iron!"

The other plied him with eager questions.

"Steady on—let him get some breath," said Nipper. "Begin at the beginning, Willy. Where were you taken to at first?"

Willy explained.

Nobody believed him, to begin with. His story about the ants sounded so fantastic that they thought he was spinning a yarn.

"Don't you believe it!" said Nipper. "Willy's telling the truth! Great Scott! What a ghastly fate! If we were against Lorenzo before, we're his enemies for life after this. He isn't fit to be hanged, even. Hanging is too good for him!"

The others were breathlessly interested as Willy told them of his escape in the storm. But the greatest thrill came when he gave them the news concerning the girls. This was reassuring, at any rate!

"They're all safe, so far, and Irene and Mary seemed pretty cheerful," explained Willy. "I expect they put it on a bit—just the same as I did. They didn't like to tell the real truth. But they're safe. That's worth knowing."

"By George, I should say it is!" ejaculated Handforth fervently. "Willy, my son, you've done wonders. It's a bit of a nerve, you doing all this, on your own."

"I'm disgusted with myself," said Willy. "If you think I've been patting myself on the back, you're wrong. I ought to have known that that patch of water was water, and not grass. I must have let my thoughts stray for a minute. It just shows you what happens when you stop concentrating. And I was going to organise a general escape, too!"

"Don't," murmured Church miserably. "Don't talk about escape! The very thought of it is like heaven!"

"Instead of escaping, we shall be lugged out of this place at dawn, and shoved in the chain-gangs again!" groaned Watson.

Willy lowered his voice.

"I'm not so sure," he whispered. "Look here, you chaps! I was idiot enough to get myself collared again—but I've brought something with me that might come in useful."

## CHAPTER 18.

## A New Hope.



IX voices came out of the darkness.

"What is it?" they asked simultaneously.

"Not much—so don't get excited," said Willy. "All the same, you never know what you can do until you try. And there's a glimmering of an idea in my head—"

"Never mind about the idea in your head!" said Nipper. "What's this useful thing that you've brought?"

"It's a piece of iron rod, flattened at one end, about fifteen inches long," said Willy. "I picked it up when I was near the factory, and I stowed it away under my belt—inside my clothes. Fortunately, those rotten guards didn't spot it."

"A piece of iron?" repeated Handforth.

"Yes."

"Flat at the end?"

"Yes."

"Fifteen inches long?" said Handforth fiercely. "You—you young rotter! What the dickens do you mean by fooling us like this?"

"Rats! I haven't fooled you!" said Willy. "Here it is!"

"I don't mean that!" growled his major. "But what's the good of it, anyhow?"

"I don't know, Handy—it might be useful," put in Nipper. "We haven't got a pocket-knife between us, remember. And there's no hope of getting hold of any tools. We're too closely guarded for that. Let's have a look at the thing, Willy."

It was passed over, and handed round.

"You don't seem particularly joyous about it, all of you," said Willy. "But I'm beginning to hope. I was wild at being collared, but now I come to think things over, it might have been for the best. Lorenzo is satisfied now. He thinks we're all safe in here for the night. And the chances are that he's gone to bed himself."

"What does that matter?" asked Church. "There are plenty of his guards about."

"But they won't be expecting any activity from us," said Willy. "Now, my idea is this. We can all do with a sleep, but tunnelling under this hut is a lot more important."

"Tunnelling!" breathed Handforth.

"Exactly!"

"But—but—"

"I've thought it all out," said Willy. "This ground is soft, and it only needs a tool of this sort to start the tunnelling, and there's no telling what might happen."

"By Jove!" said Nipper, his voice trembling. "It's an idea!"

"You see, we can't touch any of this iron-work—it makes too much noise," continued Willy. "But there's one great advantage of these corrugated iron huts."

"No foundations!" said Nipper quickly. "That's it," murmured Willy. "They're just held down by their own weight. We've only got to make a short tunnel, and we can be out."

"Oh, my goodness!"

"My only hat!"

"Let's make a start!"

"Plenty of time," said Willy. "Wouldn't it be better to make some sort of plan before we begin operations?"

"The best plan is to get out of the hut, and then tunnel into the next one," said Nipper briskly. "We shall be all together, then, and we can have a general jaw, and decide on the plan of action."

They were wildly excited.

Willy's adventures might still lead to an escape! His seizure of that piece of iron had been a stroke of genius. A simple thing—but it might mean so much!

Hope had sprung into every breast, and they all wanted to test the possibilities. It would have been out of the question to start a tunnel without a sharp tool of some kind—for the earth, on the surface, was beaten down hard.

Once the upper crust was conquered, however, it might be a comparatively easy job to burrow down near the corrugated iron wall and emerge into the open. It wouldn't really be a tunnel at all—but just a scooped-out passage-way.

The possibilities were stupendous, and the boys were filled with a wild optimism.



## CHAPTER 19.

## The Tunnel of Freedom:

LEEP, of course, was absolutely impossible.

Archie Glenthorpe had been slumbering at first, but as soon as he knew what was in the wind he grew as eager as the others. And there was a period of agonising suspense while Nipper tested the tool.

In utter darkness he worked. There was no possibility of getting a light here, and they wouldn't have risked a light, even if they had had their pockets full of matches. This was essentially a job to be done in the darkness. There were guards outside, patrolling. One fatal slip, and the whole project would come to an ignominious end.

But Willy's main idea was perfectly sound. If the earth proved to be at all tractable, an exit should be made within an hour. And then the others could be released. And after that— But they could make plans then, supposing they reached such a stage.

"Willy's right!" came Nipper's panting voice. "The ground's as hard as baked clay on the top—but soft underneath! Feel this!"

"My only topper!"

"We can do it!" gasped Handforth.

They were more excited than ever. Until that iron bar had come along, nobody had thought of tunnelling. For the floor felt like

brick. To have attacked it with their bare hands would have been futile.

But that tool conquered.

Once the outer surface was broken through, the under-earth was found to be curiously sandy. It could be easily scooped out with the hand, and Nipper took the first turn. Then the others, in succession, had five-minute spells.

And such was the enthusiasm of the workers that progress was remarkably rapid. They were all imbued with a new energy. Since being thrown into this hut, they had had two or three hours of rest, and that respite had done them good. Now they were willing to sacrifice all sleep. Freedom! The chance of it intoxicated them.

"We're nearly half through!" said Nipper, after twenty minutes of intensified labour. "The second half will be easy. Once there's a small hole through to the outer air, we can enlarge it at tremendous speed!"

"By jingo, Willy, it was a brainwave of yours to fetch along this bar!" said Watson enthusiastically. "At first I thought it was no good. But it's winning us to freedom!"

"Let's get out before we crow too much," said Willy. "And once we're out we'd better do something big. No sense in dodging into the plantations, and thinking that we shall escape."

"We might get across the Kalala River, and then bring help," suggested Church. "There's no telling—"

"My dear chap, don't get such wild ideas," interrupted Nipper. "For scores of miles there's nothing but dense jungle. We can't get away from this territory without stores and tents and provisions. No, we shall have to think of something different to that."

"I've got an idea in my head," said Willy. "But I'll reserve it until we've rescued the chaps from the next hut. It ought to be easy to get them out."

"Why?"

"Because there's been a lot of rain, and the earth's as soft as mud," replied Willy. "We can simply burrow down—"

"Hurrah!" came a triumphant gasp from the tunnel. "I'm through, you chaps—I'm through!"

"Quiet, Handy!" urged Nipper. "For goodness' sake, keep quiet!"

Handforth had only raised his voice a trifle, but Nipper was afraid that the enemy might have heard. An investigation on the part of the guards just now would have been tragic.

Handforth, who was working in the burrow, had indeed got through. Nobody had expected such swift success. And now that the opening had been made, it was enlarged rapidly.

At last it was big enough to admit the passage of the juniors. One by one, earthy and dishevelled, they pulled themselves out and breathed sighs of thankfulness.

Even if they were only at liberty for an hour or two, it would be worth it. The sweet air of the night was too glorious for words. After the dreadful stuffiness of that hut the outer atmosphere seemed intoxicat-

ing. And the night was utterly quiet, so far as human sounds were concerned.

A wind had sprung up, however, and it was swaying the near-by trees, and causing a general rustle. Of the guards there was no indication. But this was nothing to judge by. They were probably in one of the other huts, and would come out at the slightest unusual sound.

It was a great temptation to steal off at once, and to get right away from this place. But there were the other members of the party to be considered.

And the attack on the second hut was commenced.



## CHAPTER 20.

### The Great Idea.

"WHAT'S that?" asked Harry Gresham, waking up with a start.

"Eh?" muttered Duncan sleepily. "What's what?"

He sat up in the darkness, and found Gresham bending over him.

"Have they come?" asked the New Zealand boy miserably. "The rotters! So they're going to lug us out before it's even light—"

"No, no!" whispered Harry. "It isn't the guards—there's something else! I can feel something right underneath me—in the ground itself! And can't you hear a scraping noise?"

"Great Scott!" muttered Duncan, aghast.

Sure enough, the sounds were distinct. And the ground was quivering where Harry Gresham had been lying. Browne, Tregellis-West and Johnny Onions were awakened, and they all listened.

"What the dickens can it be?" asked Onions. "Do you think there's an animal of some sort— Look out, there!"

A section of the earth had suddenly caved in, and the boys waited breathlessly. The thing was utterly mysterious, and they could offer no explanation. In the tense silence, the scraping was interrupted by a whispered voice.

"I believe I'm through!" it said spluttering. "The giddy tunnel caved in just now, and half buried me. But I believe—"

"Joy!" murmured Browne. "Brother Handforth!"

A gasp sounded out of the ground.

"Are you there, you chaps?" came Handforth's eager inquiry.

"Yes!" panted Gresham. "But—but—"

"Keep quiet, you chaps!" urged Edward Oswald. "We're burrowing under your hut. We're going to get you out!"

"Oh, my goodness!" said Gresham dizzily.

For a moment he felt absolutely faint with sudden excitement. The whole thing had come with dramatic surprise. The five fellows in that hut had had utterly no thought of rescue—no dream of liberty. So it hit them like a bombshell.



“Close the door and put your weight against it!” ordered Nelson Lee. A spear hurtled inside as the boys strained and pushed at the heavy door. Lorenzo’s guards had arrived outside the slave-driver’s power-station!

Fortunately, they made no outcry—although they felt like cheering at the top of their voices. Even the cool and resourceful Browne was trembling from head to foot with emotion.

"Our brothers have been working miracles," he murmured. "I must confess that this is beyond my understanding. How have they done this wondrous thing?"

A minute later Handforth came grunting and gasping through the cavity, and behind him followed the others. This was Nipper's idea. If they were going to talk, it was better to talk inside.

"No time for explanations, you chaps!" said Nipper breathlessly. "We're free—and the guards know nothing. We've got to decide what to do—quick!"

"Let's have a barring-out," said Willy. "That's quick, isn't it?"

"You young ass—"

"Why not?" asked Willy. "When you come to think of it, the situation is very much the same as a school affair. Do you remember that time we barred-out against that brute, William K. Smith? Do you remember how we took possession of his power-house, and held it as a fort?"

"Great Scott!" gasped Nipper. "That's it!"

"Eh?"

"That's the idea!" panted Nipper. "It's the *only* idea! Why not make a raid on Lorenzo's power station? Why not pinch it?"

The others were stunned by the audacity of the proposal—with the solitary exception of Willy.

"I was going to suggest pinching his bungalow, but the power station is better," he said. "We shall be able to stop his factory, and everything. Besides, it'll be easier to hold."

"And later on we'll get the other slaves to join us," said Handforth fiercely. "We'll organise a huge revolt—a general rebellion!"

"Oh, corks!"

"Can—can it be done?"

"We can have a shot at it, anyhow," said Nipper. "If we don't seize this opportunity, we may never get another."

"Brother, they are great and splendid words!" declared Browne. "An opportunity lost is an unforgivable crime. We must take advantage of this chance with both hands—and we must *win*!"

They wanted to cheer and shout.

"Thanks to Willy's braininess, this opportunity has come days and weeks sooner than we ever expected," went on Nipper. "It's the last thing we could have dreamed of."

"And when you get down to brass tacks, it was Lorenzo's own doing," said Willy. "If he hadn't tried to murder me, I shouldn't have been able to get that iron bar. So we can thank the old rotter for this night's work!"

"The next thing to do is to burrow for the third time," said Nipper. "We'll release old Dorrie and the gov'nor—and Umlosi. Then



"Close the door and put your weight against it!" ordered Nipper, and he  
hurtled inside as the boys strained and pushed at the heavy door. The boys  
had arrived outside the slave-driver's power station.



A spear  
o's guards

we'll swoop down on the power station and hold the fort!"

It was an ambitious programme—a stupefying prospect of liberty was held out. Was there any chance of real success?



## CHAPTER 21.

### The Interruption.

ONE by one, they squeezed their way through the narrow orifice, their senses unusually acute, their determination to succeed their one and only thought.

But it was essential that the leaders of their party should be released before any decisive move was made.

Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore must be in this!

Not one of the St. Frank's fellows deluded himself that the seizure of the power station would be probable. It was a wild plan, at the best. But in the absence of an alternative scheme, it was the only thing to be done.

To make any attempt to get clear away from Lorenzo's plantations was fruitless. There were the electrified rivers to cross. And even if they succeeded in this dangerous project, they would be in the jungle, many days' march from any possibility of help. It would be suicide to wander out into the jungle like that.

It was equally impossible to hide themselves within Lorenzo's domain. His myrmidons would hound them out, and recapture would be a mere matter of hours. And after that they would never get another chance!

What, then, was the only plan?

To seize one of Lorenzo's main buildings, to barricade it, and to bar out the owner. There was no other possibility. It was a wild enough project, and there were endless problems which would present themselves later, even if success met their first efforts.

But this was no time to make difficulties.

It would be wonderful enough if they secured the power station. The subsequent difficulties could be overcome afterwards.

The very thought of such a success thrilled the St. Frank's boys to the core. They had had a good taste of the slaver's brutality, and they had every reason to know that he would maintain his heartless practices. The thought of foiling him now, at the very outset, was bewildering in its immensity.

Otto Lorenzo had made them his slaves, just as he had enslaved hundreds of helpless blacks. They would show him his mistake. He couldn't treat British boys as he had treated the natives.

"There's the power station," murmured Nipper, as he pointed to the distant lights. "We don't know how many men there are on guard, or at work, but there aren't likely



to be many. And we shall take them by surprise."

"It's over a mile off," whispered Watson.

"It won't take us long to cover a mile at the double," said Handforth eagerly. "But the first thing is to get Mr. Lee and Dorrie and Umlosi out. By George! Let's hope those rotten guards don't come nosing about!"

"Somebody had better keep on the watch while the rest of us are tunnelling," said Nipper. "You'd better take on the job, Willy."

"I'm game," said Willy readily.

And the breathless work went on.

With that faithful implement—a mere rusty piece of iron rod—the third excavation was started. And before long the juniors were grovelling on their knees, scraping at the earth and enlarging the cavity.

They were practised by this time, and they went the quickest way to work. They were constantly haunted by the fear that the guards would make a round of inspection and discover them.

But it was a risk that had to be taken.

"We're getting through!" panted Nipper, as he came up for a breather. "The hole's nearly carried under the iron wall."

Some of the fellows wondered why Lorenzo had not prepared against this possibility of escape. But the slaver had never dealt with a crowd of resourceful St. Frank's fellows before, and he had under-estimated their ingenuity. And there was some excuse for him, after all—for without that implement of Willy's, nothing could have been done. That had been the key to the whole escape.

"We're nearly through!" said Handforth presently. "Another ten minutes, and we shall be talking to 'em. I wonder what the time is?"

"Must be getting on towards dawn!" said Church anxiously.

"No, there are two or three hours yet," said Nipper. "Plenty of time, if only——"

A shadow came speeding up.

"Cave!" came Willy's urgent call. "The guards!"

## CHAPTER 22.

### A Quick Decision.



It was a dramatic moment. "Where are they?" asked Nipper in anguish.

"A dozen of the brutes!" gasped Willy.

"They appeared suddenly—out of one of the other huts! I think they must have got wind of something, and they're coming at the double."

"Good gad!"

"We're beaten!"

"Are we?" snapped Handforth. "By George! They'll never take me again! Let's fight——"

"Wait a minute, Handy—wait a minute!" interrupted Nipper. "Let me think. We've got to decide within a couple of seconds!"

It was no time for hesitation.

Within an ace of rescuing Nelson Lee and Dorrie, it was galling to be interrupted. But there was the fact, and it had to be faced. What could be done?

To stop here and meet the enemy would be madness. The only possible course was to make the bid for the power-station at once. And that meant leaving Lee and Dorrie in captivity!

Nipper was called upon to make a vital choice in a second.

He made it. If they remained, all would be recaptured—and thus their efforts would have been for nothing. If they made their dash now, there was a chance in a thousand that they might get through to the power-station.

"Come on!" shouted Nipper at the top of his voice. "To the power-station, you chaps! To the power-station!"

"Hurrah!"

There was a wild cheer—the releasing of a long pent-up store. And it went echoing through the night with startling effect. Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore, in their hut, knew exactly what it meant. For they had been listening for some time. They had heard the sounds of tunnelling, and had guessed the truth.

"Guv'nor!" yelled Nipper. "We've nearly got through to you—but the guards are on us! We're going to try to seize the power-station, and hold it!"

"Go ahead, boys!" roared Lord Dorrimore.

Nelson Lee shouted something, too, but the fellows didn't hear. They were running—pelting off with every ounce of speed. They were appallingly alarmed, for the fear was on them all that they might fail. This sudden discovery had upset their calculations. They had intended to get Nelson Lee and Dorrie out, creep to the power-station and make a sudden rush.

But now they were compelled to run the gauntlet of Lorenzo's jackals for over a mile. It might make all the difference between success and failure.

If there were sufficient men awake, they would bar the way, and then the venture would be disorganised and recapture a mere matter of time.

"Keep together!" shouted Nipper as they ran. "Everything depends on us now. Just the twelve of us! If we fail, everything's lost!"

"We shall win, brothers!" said Browne confidently. "We're only a handful, but I venture to assert that we are a handful."

"Hurrah!"

"St. Frank's for ever!"

They cheered as they ran, and the guards whom Willy had seen were racing along in the rear in hot pursuit. But they were easily outdistanced by the fleet-footed schoolboys.

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The danger might come from any other enemies in front. And by this time, no doubt, Lorenzo himself had been aroused, and would be rushing out to make inquiries.

The boys had one big advantage.

Nobody knew what their objective was—nobody but themselves. And the overseers, if there were any about, would never imagine that the power-station was threatened. It was probably the last place they would concentrate upon.

And this not only proved to be the case, but fortune favoured the boys in an extraordinary way.

There were over half a dozen men at work in the power-station, under the charge of Lorenzo's second engineer. Everything was going on as usual. The great electric motors were humming, and the machinery in general was causing no trouble. Some of the men were taking things easily, and the engineer was having a smoke outside under the stars.

From the distance he heard the sounds of curious cheering. This man was a Russian—as a matter of fact he was an escaped murderer, and the type of scoundrel that Lorenzo welcomed. He knew at once that that cheering was being raised by the new slaves. And he was filled with curiosity to know what was happening.

So he left his post.

That was the first piece of luck. The second piece of luck lay in the fact that the other men, finding their chief gone, ran out to inquire into the excitement, too. They saw

lights gleaming and swaying over towards the slaver's big bungalow. And the engineer and his men ran in this direction, believing that the tumult had come from there.

And that was the third piece of luck.

For the twelve St. Frank's fellows, rushing straight for their objective, had a completely deserted power-station in front of them—waiting to be seized!

## CHAPTER 23.

### The First Success!



"COME on, you chaps!"  
"Down with them—and fight like demons!"  
"Hurrah!"

Mildly excited and determined, the twelve swept into the power-station with all the force of a regiment. It was a big, square corrugated-iron building, with the motors and other machinery in full sight. There were numbers of high windows and a pair of huge double-doors, which stood wide open.

"There's nobody here!" shouted Nipper tensely.

"They must have gone out to see what the noise was about!" yelled Gresham. "That's a piece of luck for us! We're in!"

"Slam the doors!" roared Handforth.

"Yes!" snapped Nipper. "They'll be on us in a minute! Quick, you fellows—lend a

hand! We've got the place now—let's hold it!"

"Hurrah!"

"They're sliding doors!" shouted Church.

"One heave, and we'll have them closed."

"Hold on!" shouted a new voice. "Any room for a little one?"

A figure dashed in.

"Dorrie!" yelled Nipper, overjoyed.

"You bet your life!" said Lord Dorrimore.

"Come on, Lee—buck up, Umlosi! Good man!"

The boys were overwhelmed with delight. They hadn't expected anything so fine as this. And the very instant that Nelson Lee crossed the threshold he automatically took command.

"Close the doors, and put your weight against them!" he said crisply. "Dorrie, get up to one of these windows, and see what's doing. Umlosi, you stand at one of the other windows. And be careful of shots. They're bound to act drastically."

With a grinding shriek the heavy iron doors were closed. To everybody's satisfaction there was a strong metal clasp, and this was forced into place, sealing the doors tightly.

For the moment the position was won.

But outside an increasing tumult was making itself heard. The enemy, having recovered from the first shock, was preparing to attack. But as yet the position was secure.

"How did you do it, gov'nor?" asked Nipper breathlessly.

"When I jumped on the excavated spot, the floor collapsed, and we were able to wriggle our way out," explained Lee. "Thanks, you boys, for helping so famously. We were right behind you all the time."

"And we never knew it!" shouted Handforth. "But did you ever know such luck? We didn't even have to fight to get the place!"

"But we shall have to fight to hold it!" said Lee. "How you boys escaped from your huts is a mystery to us; but we'll inquire into that later."

"Yes, the main thing is to hold the fort," said Nipper. "My hat, it's fine to see you again, gov'nor! And we're free! We've beaten that hound, and we're going to hold him at bay!"

"They're coming!" sang out Lord Dorrimore. "Oh, for my gun! I'd give 'em a taste——"

"If it's a gun you want, what about this, sir?" asked Gresham excitedly. "There are three or four here, too—revolvers as well!"

"What!" yelled his lordship. "Ye gods and little fishes! Am I blind? Why didn't I see these before? Look at this, Lee!"

He dashed round the humming machinery and stood gloating over a wide shelf, where there were a couple of shot-guns, two old-fashioned rifles, and some heavy service revolvers. There appeared to be supplies of ammunition, too. No doubt Lorenzo had kept these arms in the power station, as a safeguard against any minor revolt. For the power station was the most valuable of all his property.

It was a glorious discovery, and both Nelson Lee and Dorrie seized a revolver apiece and filled their pockets with cartridges. They were prepared to shoot with deadly effect. They had many young lives to protect in addition to their own. Lorenzo's hordes

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would have no mercy if they once succeeded in getting inside this building.

For the slaver would never take another chance with these prisoners. He would shoot them out of hand—and gloat over the massacre. That was an absolute certainty.

So the defenders were grim and relentless in their determination to hold on at all cost.



## CHAPTER 24.

### The Rage of Otto Lorenzo!

**F**EVERISH activity was the order of the minute. None of the boys waited for any instructions, for they instinctively knew what to do. This building had been seized—and it had to be held.

And all those St. Frank's fellows had had experience of stirring barring-outs. Their knowledge came in handy now, although this affair was grimmer and more deadly than any school barring-out.

"Barricades!" somebody had shouted.

And all hands were busy at the work of barricading the doors and windows. Much would depend upon the first onslaught. And if that could be driven back, and the fortress held, they might have time to consolidate their position before the next assault was launched.

Fortune was unquestionably on the side of the weak.

All round the dynamos and motors were a number of steel gratings, loosely set over concrete channels. Nipper discovered that they could be lifted clean out. One after another they were heaved up and jammed with tremendous effect against the doors.

Others were lifted and set across the windows, wedged against the iron girders of the building. There were ladders, too, and these were utilised swiftly and effectively.

"Look out, boys!" shouted Nelson Lee. "I'm going to switch all the lights off—they're too dangerous. It's black outside, and we make easy marks for the enemy."

"Go ahead, sir!"

"We're ready for the rotters now!"

A moment later Lee pulled over the great switches, and the power station was plunged into darkness. Another cheer went up from the juniors. They were all feeling elated by their initial success, and they refused to consider the possibility of being recaptured.

Outside, the excitement was increasing. Lorenzo's black slave guards were running about, frightened and bewildered. They could not realise what had happened. The Russian engineer was contemplating a bolt, for he feared that Lorenzo would blame him for the entire calamity. What story could he tell when he was questioned?

And then Lorenzo himself arrived.

It was moonlight outside, and the defenders, at the windows of the power station, were

able to see every movement of the enemy. Before the lights had been switched out the exterior had seemed black. But now the positions were reversed.

"Where are they?" thundered Lorenzo as he ran heavily up. "Where are these accursed British dogs? Why are they not recaptured?"

"Yah! We've beaten you, Lorenzo!"

"Down with slavers!"

"Try and get us out if you can!"

Otto Lorenzo, nearly crazy with rage, stared at the power station—his most prized possession. Until this moment he had not known the truth. And now he was staggered beyond words.

He had heard that the white prisoners had escaped. The story had come to him after he had been awakened from his sleep. That, in itself, had been a shock—but he had only promised himself the satisfaction of making them suffer tortures for their audacity.

Rushing out, he had noticed that the shouts were coming from the direction of the power station. He ran there without a suspicion of the truth. He had expected to find the boys recaptured.

And this chorus from the big power station appalled him. He knew the truth in a flash. They had seized the place, and had barricaded themselves in.

Lorenzo didn't anticipate much trouble in evicting them, but he was terribly afraid for his machinery. He felt convinced that they would wreck it, and do irreparable damage. And that thought alone nearly drove him out of his mind.

It had taken him years—literally years—to smuggle that costly material into the wilds. And if it were now destroyed, his whole factory would be destroyed, his production reduced to a minimum, and he would never be able to replace the damaged mechanism.

So, in spite of his insane rage, he paused.

"Where's the engineer?" he shouted, twirling round. "Where's that cur, Krotkin? Why did he—"

"They swept in like wolves!" shouted Krotkin, the engineer, running up. "I heard sounds, and hurried out to see what caused them. And then, before I knew anything else, they were in."

Lorenzo swore savagely, and his heavy fist crashed into Krotkin's face, and the man toppled over, half knocked out.

"You needn't blame your engineer, Lorenzo!" shouted Lord Dorrimore. "Even if he hadn't run out, we should have pitched him out. You'd better accept the position with a good grace."

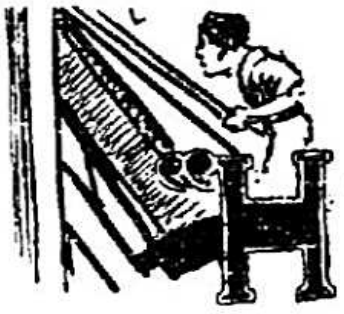
"It'll be all the same if you don't!" roared Handforth. "By George, you bullying brute! We're getting our own back a bit sooner than you expected, aren't we?"

The half-breed shook both his fists at the victors.

"Wait!" he snarled. "You think you can defy me? But I will drive you out of this place, and you shall suffer a thousand tortures!"

## CHAPTER 25.

## The First Attack!



A, ha, ha!"

"Go and eat coke, you old rotter!"

"We've got you whacked this time!"

A chorus of defiant yells came from the windows of the power station. There were four windows altogether—two at the front, one on either side of the central doors, and a smaller one at both ends. The entire back of the place was solid wall.

This was all to the good for defensive purposes, as Nelson Lee had seen at a glance. The end windows could be easily held by one or two defenders at each, leaving the main body of the besieged garrison to look after the front. And there were over twenty of the mutineers.

The smaller windows had already been blocked up, and the boys lost no time in strengthening these barricades to the best of their ability. The front windows, overlooking a wide section of the valley, with the factory, the store buildings, and the bungalow, in full view, had a cleared space in front of it, with a fringe of palm trees flanking it.

"As long as we can hold the front, we shall be safe enough," remarked Lord Dorrimore genially. "By gad, Lee, I didn't anticipate anythin' of this sort! It came out of a clear sky! These youngsters are as artful as a crowd of monkeys! Who'd have thought it?"

"Lorenzo took on a more difficult job than he supposed," replied Nelson Lee. "He can't treat these boys as he treats his poor niggers. There's a different spirit in them, Dorrie—and in us, too, I hope."

"There is!" said Dorrie grimly. "We'll show Lorenzo what sort of a hornets' nest he has stirred up. At the same time, we don't want to get too cocksure, do we? By the way the boys are yellin', you might think we're havin' a harmless little picnic. But it's liable to get gory before the mornin' comes."

"That's just what I'm thinking," muttered Lee. "But, whatever happens, the boys have done famously, and I have nothing but praise for them. With such a spirit, we ought to maintain a hard resistance. The trouble is, these walls are not so thick as I would have liked them to be."

Nipper had joined them, and he could see the anxious expression on Nelson Lee's face.

"You think Lorenzo might smash them down, gov'nor?" he asked. "He'd need a battering-ram, or a war-tank for that job."

"There's another possibility, Nipper," said Nelson Lee. "This is quite ordinary corrugated iron, and it might just as well be cardboard when it comes to stopping rifle shots."

"By gad, you're right there!" said Lord Dorrimore, with a whistle. "If Lorenzo an' his guards surround this place, an' fire a couple of volleys into us, the walls will be riddled until they look like a sieve. An' there's no cover in here!"

But Nelson Lee was not so pessimistic.

"I don't think Lorenzo will give any order to fire," he said. "He'll try to get us out of here alive."

"He's not so concerned for our precious lives, sir," said Nipper dubiously.

"Perhaps not—but I rather fancy he is concerned for his precious electrical apparatus," replied Lee. "Promiscuous firing through these corrugated-iron walls might do irreparable damage to the storage plant—to the delicate motors—and to the expensive switchboard. Indeed, any stray bullet might render the entire plant useless. And Lorenzo won't be able to get replacements very easily. No, I don't think he'll be so drastic, although it is just as well to remember the possibility."

Curiously enough, Lorenzo himself was, at that very moment, gathering his Nubians, his other guards, and his overseers, in readiness for a grim attack. They were gathering in the dark patches of shadow cast by the factory and the thick trees.

"I am going to get those young fools out of that place within the next five minutes—and they'll come out dead!" Lorenzo was snarling. "I've had enough of them! I'm taking no more chances!"

His chief overseer, a dark, cunning-looking Greek, gave him a quick glance. There was an expression of alarm on his face.

"What are you going to do, boss?" he asked sharply.

"You'll see, Popodos—you'll see!" shouted Lorenzo. "I'm having no mercy on these cubs! I'll riddle the whole power-station with bullets, and they'll fall at the first volley. They think they're clever—but they're not! They think this corrugated iron will protect them—but it won't!"

"You'd better go easy, boss," urged Popodos. "You'll kill these blamed youngsters, but you might do something else, too. You'd best go easy."

The man spoke with an East-side New York accent. His parents were both Greek, but he had been born in New York, and knew no other language but English. Incidentally, he had drifted to Central Africa, and into Lorenzo's employ, because the New York police, Scotland Yard, and the Paris police all wanted him equally badly for more than one assassination. Yet he looked a thin, miserable, harmless enough individual.

"Go easy, eh?" raved Lorenzo. "I'll show you how easy, fool! You'll obey my orders, Popodos, and you'll—"

"But the machinery, boss?" asked Popodos. "Krotkin is nearly crazy with worry about it. If you fire through the walls, you'll, maybe, do so much damage that the whole outfit will be snookered!"

The slaver caught himself up abruptly.

"Yes, yes!" he muttered hoarsely. "You are right. I mustn't take chances. It was difficult enough to get the original plant. I can't risk it. I shall have to settle with these cubs in a different way!"

So it was only by a fluke that the fate which Dorrie had outlined did not descend



Snap! As Nelson Lee pulled down a switch a number of lights came on, and the air was rent by wild shrieks from the attackers. Sparks flew, and the boys saw one of the savages loose his hold of the window. Nelson Lee had electrified the whole of the power-house walls!

upon the staunch garrison. But for Lorenzo's overseer, he would have wiped them all out.

## CHAPTER 26.

### The Onslaught!



**H**ANDFORTH peered eagerly through a gap in the barricades.

"It's rummy!" he said, frowning. "There's no sign of anybody. Why don't they attack us? What's the idea of leaving us in suspense like this? It'll be daylight soon."

"Mr. Lee says that it's only just the middle of the night," murmured Church. "Time goes slowly on a night like this because so much happens all at once. Why, it's not half an hour since we rushed here from the huts."

"It seems like hours," said McClure.

They looked round, and could tell that Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore were busy in one of the other corners of the power-house. But in that gloom it was impossible to see what they were doing. Nipper came up from the shadows, and joined the watchers at the window.

"Anything doing?" he asked.

"Not a thing!" growled Handforth. "I

thought the old brute would have made an attack before this."

"He's afraid of his dynamo and things," said Nipper. "He'll probably launch a big assault soon—but I don't think we shall have to dodge any bullets. Lorenzo will throw his men against the place, and try to enter by force, and drive us out."

"Just like a school rebellion," said Handforth. "The real barring-out touch. By George! Did you ever hear of such a thing? A barring-out in the wilds of the African jungle."

"I was just wondering about the girls," said Nipper soberly. "We've collared this place, and if we have any luck we shall be able to hold it. But I shan't feel satisfied until Irene & Co. have been rescued, too."

"My only hat!" gasped Handforth, staring. "In all this excitement I'd forgotten—"

"Here they come!" shouted Watson abruptly.

"Eh?" gasped Handforth.

"Absolutely, old cheese!" put in Archie. "I mean to say, the Charge of the Dark Brigade, as it were, what?"

"Crumbs!" muttered Church. "There's about six hundred of them, too!"

"Onward came the dirty six hundred," murmured Archie. "Overseers to the left of them, overseers to the right of them, and that bally blighter of a Lorenzo to the rear of them. Absolutely!"

It was an indication of the spirit which filled them all—this light-hearted chatter of Archie's. They had seized this place, and all the enemy's hordes wouldn't force them out of it.

And the hordes were now coming!

It was an exaggeration of Church's to place their number at six hundred. Actually there were three or four dozen, but they made a bold show as they came charging across the open space, armed with heavy wooden poles. In the moonlight, the attackers could be plainly seen—mostly Nubians and other slave-guards of the same type.

"Thank heaven, Dorrie!" muttered Lee. "They haven't got a gun between the lot of them! They're going to batter down the door and the windows."

"Are they?" asked his lordship gruffly.

"That, at least, is their object," amended Nelson Lee. "I rather think we shall give them a surprise."

A shout came from one of the windows.

"They're nearly on us, sir!" yelled Nipper. "What shall we do? We haven't had time to get any weapons yet, and—"

"Stand back—all of you!" commanded Nelson Lee. "Keep your hands off any kind of metal! Stand away from the windows, and see that you touch nothing but the concrete floor!"

"What the dickens——" began Handforth.

"Quickly!" roared Lee, in an urgent tone.

The boys leapt to obey.

"What's the giddy idea?" asked Handforth.

"We wanted to watch the attack, and to keep the rotters out. If they swarm round the windows, we shall stand a fat chance standing here, shan't we?"

And then came a noise as though the entire building was collapsing over their heads. When heavy poles are battered against a large expanse of corrugated iron, there is generally a shattering din.

Figures appeared at the windows, and the juniors watched in an agony of suspense. Hands clawed at the window-frames, at the hastily-placed barricades, and at every available hold.

"Now!" said Nelson Lee tensely.

"Let 'em have it!" chuckled Lord Dorri-more.

## CHAPTER 27.

### A "Shocking" Business!

"STAND back, boys!" roared Lee. "Remember what I said."

"But they're getting through, sir!" bellowed

Handforth excitedly. "In another minute they'll——"

Snap!

Nelson Lee pulled down a big switch. Instantly a number of lights came on, and at the same second the air was rent by wild shrieks from the windows. Sparks flew, and

the attackers fell writhing and screaming from their clutching hold.

"Good egg!" shouted Dorrie. "It's worked!"

"But—but——" began Gresham, startled.

"Can't you see?" asked Nipper. "The gov'nor's connected one of these main wires to the corrugated iron! The whole building is electrified, and if we touch anything we shall get a dose of juice stronger than the kick of an elephant!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Hurrah!"

The juniors were overjoyed, and they cheered lustily in order to relieve their feelings. From outside came the sounds of much gasping, with the running of bare feet on the hard ground.

Snap! Lee switched off again, and Dorrie ran to the nearest window.

"All clear!" he shouted. "Come on, boys!"

There was a general rush, and from the windows the defenders could see Lorenzo's guards in full retreat. Two or three of them were lying prostrate near the wall, still suffering from the shock.

"Gad, that's the best of pinchin' a power-station!" grinned Lord Dorrimore. "It's lucky you know somethin' about electricity, Lee. I couldn't have altered those wires to save my life. Smart, I call it!"

And, without question, the ruse had been clever. By the simple disconnecting of a power cable, and re-connecting it to the iron walls of the building, Nelson Lee had created a wonderful defence system. To attack such a place by hand was impossible.

"Look at Lorenzo!" grinned Nipper, as he pointed to a figure in the moonlight. "He's fairly dancing with rage. He didn't expect to see his bullying guards come back so quickly, did he?"

"Be ready to fall back, boys, at the first sign of another attack," warned Lee. "We can't do better than keep a strict watch at every window."

"What about the back wall, sir?" asked Willy. "Wouldn't it be a good idea to bore a spy-hole in that side, so that somebody can keep an eye near it?"

"It's a good idea," said Nelson Lee, nodding.

Outside, Lorenzo was trying to reorganise his force. But the men were frightened by their first experience. They were talking volubly, and it was quite plain they did not relish another shock.

"Phew! We can do with this breathing spell," said Tommy Watson. "What's that you were saying just before the attack started, Nipper? About the girls, I mean?"

Everybody was silent.

"We shall have to think of something," said Nipper, after a pause. "We've escaped from Lorenzo's slavery, and there's some hope that we shall be able to keep the half-nelson on this power-station. But we've got to remember the girls. We shan't be really safe until we've gathered them into the fold."

It was a troubling thought. But every-



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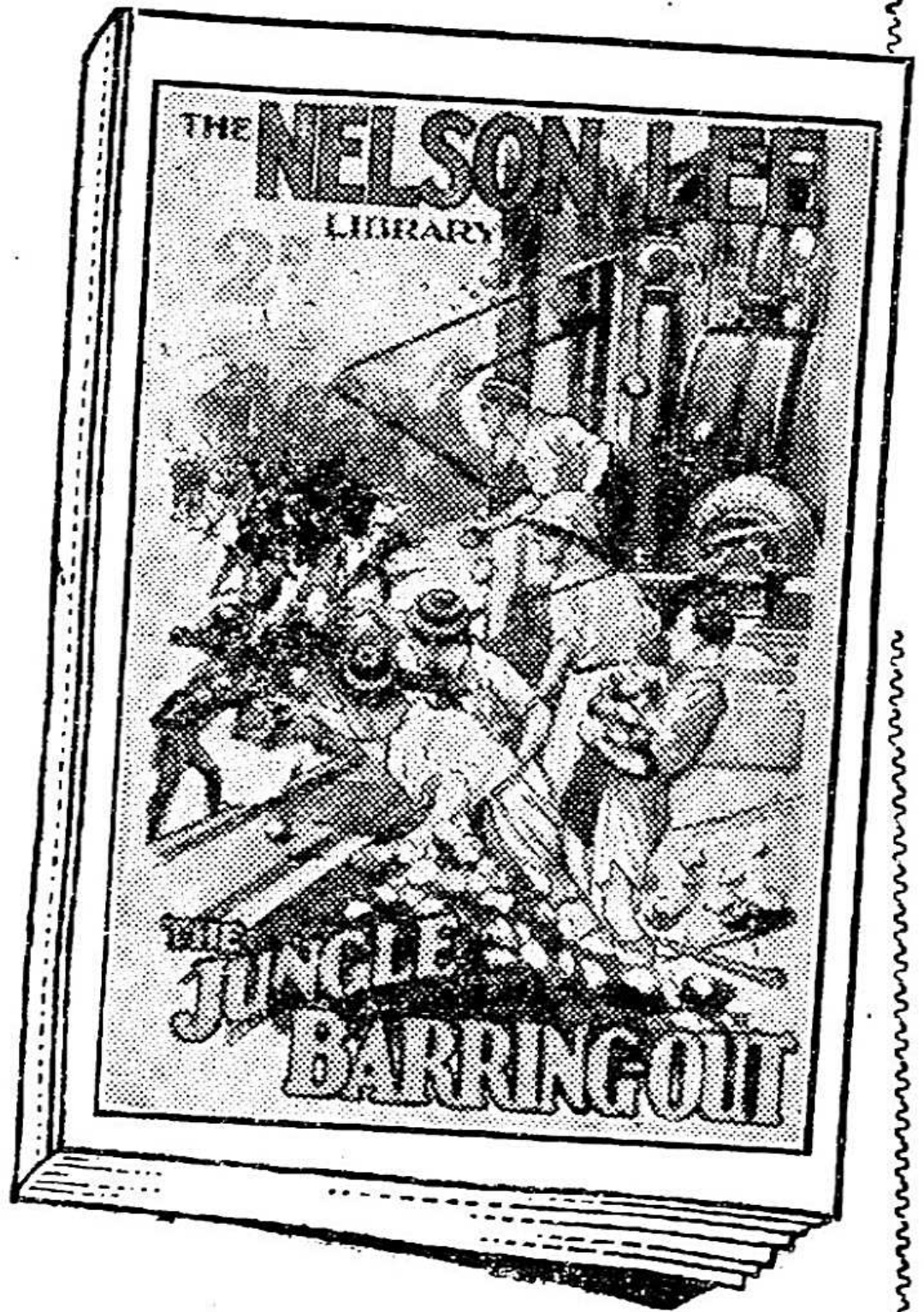
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body recognised that nothing whatever could be done. To leave the power-station was plainly impossible. All hands would be needed to repel any further attacks that might develop. And the girls, in all probability, were sound asleep after their hard work. And Lorenzo was far too busy to think of them.

The slaver, in fact, was at his wits' end. His anxiety for the safety of his electrical machinery had completely mastered his rage. He knew that caution must be his watchword.

So the seizing of the power-station had been doubly brilliant. It not only provided an excellent shelter for the rebels, but Lorenzo himself was afraid to attack it. It was an enormously valuable point.

### CHAPTER 28.

#### No Surrender!



OTTO LORENZO strode forward in the moonlight, waving a large white handkerchief. Eager eyes watched his approach, and it was noted he was quite alone. He came

to a halt fifteen yards from the front of the power-house.

"It's all right—you can come on," said Lord Dorrimore. "We respect the white flag where we come from. We shan't put a bullet into you, much as you deserve it."

Lorenzo's scowl could be plainly seen in the moonlight. He advanced several paces further.

"You have made a bold move, my friends," he said, in a sullen, subdued tone. "Perhaps I drove you to it. Perhaps my treatment has been too harsh."

"Rats!" shouted Handforth. "What put that idea into your head? We've all been charmed at your kindly hospitality!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Clear off, Lorenzo—we're not surrendering, if that's what you've come for," said Nipper tartly. "We're not your slaves now!"

The half-breed kept himself under control with difficulty.

"I am prepared to make terms," he said fiercely. "If you will surrender, and come out from this building, I'll supply you with ample quarters and good food. My treatment has been a mistake, and I realise it. I regret it. I should have known better than to



treat Britishers in that fashion. I am ready to—"

"Yah! We don't believe a word of it!"

"You can't fool us with that talk!"

"Absolutely not!"

"I wholeheartedly support the boys, Lorenzo," called Nelson Lee. "You have shown us your methods, and you have proved yourself to be a blackguard and a brute. We are not prepared to make terms on your word alone."

"So that's that," said Lord Dorrimore. "If we believe this bluff we shall find ourselves in chains within five minutes—an' flogged within ten. You can go back to bed, Lorenzo!"

The slaver breathed hard.

"If you come out, I will give you escort beyond the Kalala River, and out into the open forest," he promised. "You shall all go free—completely free. As a guarantee of my good faith, I will arm fifty of my slaves with rifles, and will make them your escort. They have no reason to love me, and they will afford you full protection."

"That's not good enough," replied Lee curtly. "Empty rifles are useless to anybody, Lorenzo. You are not fool enough to provide them with ammunition. And we are not fools enough to believe such bluff."

Lorenzo writhed. For, of course, his promise had been bluff from start to finish. And it angered him to see that his word was discredited even before he spoke it. He flew into a sudden passion—one of those uncontrollable fits to which his many years in the tropics had rendered him liable.

"Fools—fools!" he snarled. "You won't listen to reason, eh? Then I will drive you out by force! I will put you back into the chain-gangs, and torture you until you are no longer recognisable as human beings!"

A chorus of angry yells went up.

"You lying rotter!" shouted Handforth. "We knew how much to believe. If you don't clear off now, we'll come out after you!"

"Yes, you'd better go, Lorenzo," said Nelson Lee grimly.

"By George! That's an idea, you know!" went on Handforth excitedly. "Quick! Let's open the doors, grab the brute, and hold him as hostage! His men won't dare to attack us then!"

"Hurrah!"

"Steady, you fatheads!" said Nipper sharply. "Lorenzo's still holding that rag—and we can't touch him."

"My hat! I'd forgotten that," said Handforth breathlessly. "All right, you rotter—you're safe!"

But Lorenzo hadn't waited to listen. The thought of being captured by these victims of his put such terror into his craven heart that he was fleeing as fast as his bulk would allow him to.

"They're obstinate!" he panted, as Popodos joined him. "We've got to do something! We must do it now—or else we may never

recover the power house intact. Those accursed boys may wreck everything."

The Greek was looking at the moon.

"The moon is going down, boss," he said. "Soon it will be black—as black as the outside of a nigger. Then will be the time to attack. And why not use the slaves?"

"How?" muttered the half-breed.

"There are hundreds—and what the blazes does it matter if half of them get killed?" asked Popodos. "The Oturi can provide us with plenty more. Send them on to attack—and tell them that if they turn back they'll be shot."

"That's good—very good," said Lorenzo breathlessly. "Given sufficient numbers, we can smash through by force alone."

"It'll be the darkness that'll win for us," said the Greek cunningly. "They won't know an attack is coming, and we can send two forces at once—one at the front, and one at the rear."

"There are no windows at the rear," frowned Lorenzo.

"All the better," said the other. "A heavy charge, with a tree-trunk, will smash through that corrugated iron like paper. And once we're through, the rest'll be easy."

"You should have been a soldier, Popodos," said the slaver admiringly. "You are full of big ideas. Strategy! That is our only course! Come, let us prepare this attack. We shall win!"



## CHAPTER 29.

### Suspense.

THE silence was oppressive. Everybody within the power station was feeling the effect of it. An hour had passed, and the moon had gone. Clouds obscured the stars, and the night was as black as pitch.

The strain was beginning to tell on those staunch defenders.

They had been worked all the previous day until they were on the point of dropping, and they had had no sleep after that ordeal. Excitement alone had kept them up.

But this lull was having its deadly effect.

For an hour there had been complete and absolute peace. Lorenzo and his men had apparently given up the fight, and were prepared to wait until the morrow. But the uncertainty was nerve-racking.

Many of the juniors had fallen asleep just as they stood, leaning against the walls. Some were sprawling on the hard concrete. Nipper, Handforth, and one or two others were still awake, and they stood at the windows, straining their eyes into the blackness beyond.

"What's happening?" asked Nipper huskily. "Since Lorenzo went there's been no sign. It's awful! An attack would be better than this tension."

"And we can't do anything, either," growled Handforth. "It's a pity the moon went down. We don't know what's in the wind now. By George! I feel half dead with fatigue!"

This was a surprising admission from Handforth, but it was the literal truth.

"Perhaps they've really given it up for to-night," said Gresham, who was another of the wakeful few. "Wouldn't it be a good idea for us all to take the opportunity, and get some sleep?"

"It's a marvellous idea," replied Nipper, "but it can't be done."

"Can't be done!" echoed Harry. "I could fall asleep in three seconds if I only relaxed."

"Then don't relax," said Nipper. "Too many of the chaps are asleep already. It doesn't matter how we feel, a watch must be kept. The guv'nor and Dorrie and Umlosi are at the other windows, and we can trust them to keep awake. What was that?"

"Eh?" murmured Handforth. "What was which?"

"Look—over there!" whispered Nipper. "Can't you see a sort of black blur? It seems blacker than the rest— No, it's gone now. My imagination, I suppose. A chap's eyes get tricky in this darkness, especially when he's half-dazed with tiredness."

They spoke in weary voices. The high-speed rush was over, and this unexpected respite was worse than any noisy attack. It was sheer agony to stand there, waiting—waiting for something that might or might not develop.

"Who's that?" asked Nipper, turning abruptly.

"You ass!" gasped Handforth. "You startled me!"

A figure was moving nearby, and it halted.

"It's only me, young 'un," said Nelson Lee. "I'm just going up on the roof again. Keep a good watch—"

"On the roof, sir?" repeated Nipper.

"Again?" said Handforth. "We didn't know you'd been there at all!"

"I've been on the roof for quite a little spell," said Nelson Lee. "You may have noticed a ladder and a trapdoor at the top of it. Very useful. Watch carefully, and you may be able to see a little better very shortly."

He passed on, and Handforth scratched his head.

"What did he mean—see a little better?" he asked.

"I don't know," said Nipper. "But you can bet he's been up to something."

Lord Dorrimore met Lee at the foot of the ladder.

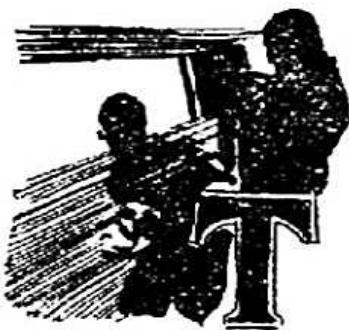
"Think there's anythin' doin'?" he inquired.

"I'm not sure, but I believe there's something big in preparation," whispered Lee. "Don't let the boys know, in case I'm wrong. In any case, we shall soon know for certain."

"Umlosi says there's danger," murmured Dorrie. "Either he's got eyes like a cat, or he can smell the beggars. Anyhow, he swears that crowds of enemies are preparin' to swoop down an' wipe us up."

Nelson Lee vanished, and the silence became more oppressive than ever.

And outside, Mr. Otto Lorenzo was on the point of launching his offensive.



## CHAPTER 30.

## Light on a Dark Subject.

WO big forces were in readiness—one under Popodos, the Greek, and the other commanded by Krotkin, the Russian.

Each force consisted of over a hundred slaves, with numbers of the Nubians to act as spurs. And the slaves were shivering with fright—but unable to resist the orders. They had been told that the first man who turned back would be shot dead. They were to smash into the power station with huge logs, and force an entry. Others were to rush in through these gaps.

It was a simple plan, and depended largely for its success upon the absolute darkness. It would be a surprise attack. Whispering orders, the overseers went round their forces, giving deadly threats.

"Is everything ready?" muttered Lorenzo feverishly.

"Looks like it, boss," said Popodos. "These guys ain't much use, anyhow—they're scared stiff. But maybe they'll do the trick. It all depends upon—"

He broke off with a gasp, blinking and shielding his eyes.

Without warning, a dazzling beam of light had shot out from the roof of the power station. It hesitated for a moment, swung round, and became still, illuminating the two big forces of blacks. They were instantly thrown into dire disorder and confusion.

"Great Scott!" yelled Handforth. "Look at 'em!"

"A searchlight!" shouted Nipper exultantly. "So that's what the guv'nor's been up to!"

Several of the other fellows awakened, and went to the windows. They stared out, blinking and shouting with excitement.

"This has put a damper on old Lorenzo's game!" grinned Handforth. "No need to fear a surprise attack now! By George! Just look at 'em! Look at the beggars breaking ranks and running!"

"Hurrah!"

The slaves, already frightened by the overseers' threats, were thoroughly demoralised by the searchlight. To make matters worse, a perfect fusillade of gunshots sounded. Lee and Dorrie were at it for all they were worth—firing harmlessly into the air, but with tremendous effect.

The unhappy blacks were breaking away from the ranks, and fleeing in all directions. Even the cruel whips of the guards were futile. Nothing could stop this retreat. The slaves were rushing off in absolute panic, to be lost in the surrounding darkness.

"Poor beggars!" muttered Nipper. "They'll be rounded up sooner or later, and flogged, I expect. But it's lucky for us, all the same."

"Lucky!" grinned Willy. "I should say it is lucky! Lorenzo will never round up those crowds until it's daylight—and that means that we're safe for the rest of the night. Mr. Lee's a wonder!"

"Hear, hear!"

"That's twice he's saved us within a couple of hours," went on Nipper. "Look at that searchlight! He's swinging it round, and confusing the enemy all the time. I say, what a glorious thing to have all this electricity at our command!"

"We're the masters of the giddy situation," said Handforth confidently. "If it comes to it, we can keep hold of this place for days—weeks! They'll never drive us out!"

"I hate to assume the rôle of a wet blanket, brother," murmured Browne, "but I have a slight suspicion that we may be hungry after the end of a week or two."

"Hungry?" said Handforth blankly.

"There are cases on record where strong men have fasted for forty or even fifty days," continued Browne. "But I tremble at the prospect. I feel that I am not built—"

"Oh, cheese it, Browne!" muttered Church. "Fancy, you chaps! We hadn't thought about

food at all! What the dickens are we going to do about grub?"

"Never mind about grub," said Nipper. "Isn't it sufficient for to-night to know that we're the masters of the situation? We've defied Lorenzo, and we're holding his power station. His latest attack has failed, and he isn't likely to make another just yet."

"Yes, we've got lots to be thankful for," said Watson fervently.

And the others heartily agreed with him.

Lorenzo, white with impotence and rage, was trying to get his slaves together again. Everything had gone wrong this night. These British schoolboys had escaped, and now a great number of his nigger slaves were wandering about the plantation in the darkness—loose, for the first time in years.

Lorenzo raved in vain. He swore that when he regained control he would exact a terrible price. But Lorenzo was still being defied. The power station, held by a mere handful, was beyond his reach.

And so the light wore on. Within that frail fortress the tired garrison was still anxious and uncertain. They were worried, too, on behalf of the Moor View girls. Irene & Co. were still in the hands of Lorenzo. Would the brutal slave-driver vent his spite on them? The girls would have to be rescued as soon as possible—but could that be done?

The very air seemed to be charged with suspense. All felt that Lorenzo was still plotting—still scheming to smash their resistance and crush them under his heel!

THE END.

**COMING NEXT WEEK!**

**DON'T MISS IT!**

Defying  
the  
Slave-driver!

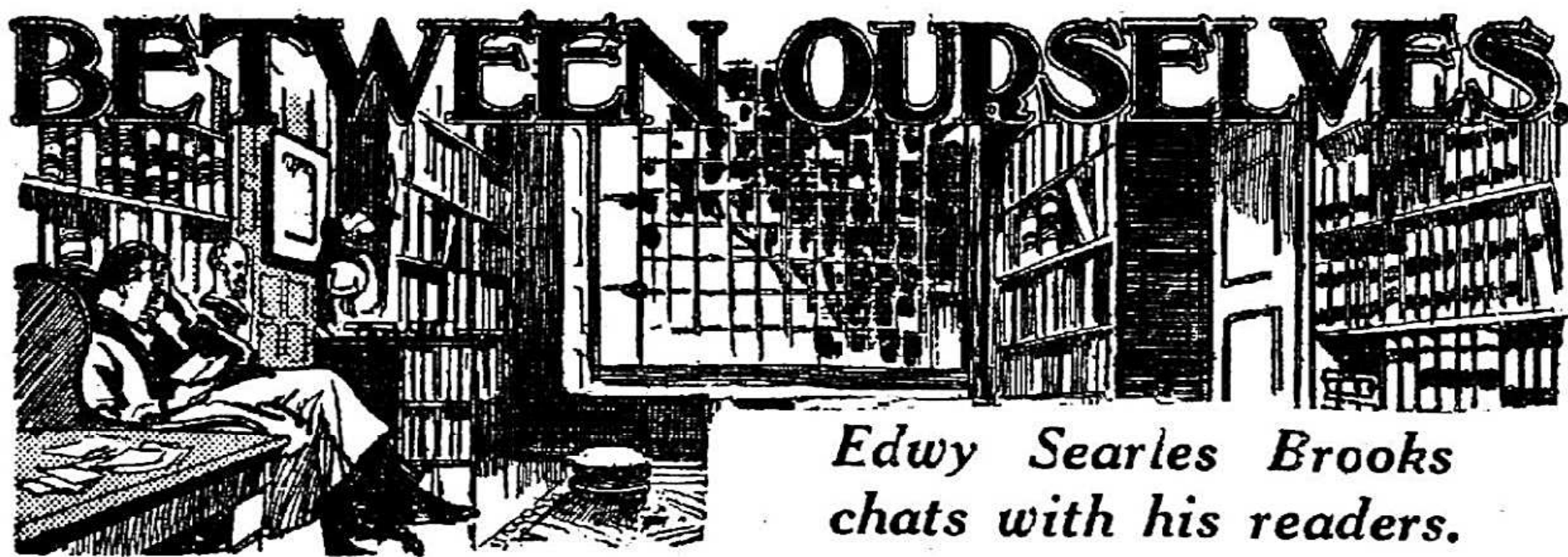


Beset  
by  
Cannibals!

The Boys of St. Frank's, Irene & Co. and Lord Dorrimore have many thrilling adventures in this grand long yarn. If you miss it you'll miss a treat, so make sure of next week's N.L.L. by ordering NOW!

**OUT ON WEDNESDAY!**

**PRICE TWOPENCE!**



*Edwy Searles Brooks  
chats with his readers.*

**NOTE.**—If any reader writes to me, I shall be pleased to comment upon such remarks as are likely to interest the majority. All letters should be addressed to EDWY SEARLES BROOKS, c/o The Editor, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Every letter will have my personal attention, and all will be acknowledged in these columns. But please note that the acknowledgments cannot appear until at least five weeks after the letters reach my hands. Those of very special merit will be distinguished by a star—thus\*—against the sender's name. Communications which indicate writer's age are naturally easier for me to answer. My photo exchanging offer (mine for yours—but yours first, please) is still open—E. S. B.

**H**OW do you like this new idea of mine? Well, it isn't exactly new, because I've been doing it now for quite a number of weeks. I am referring to the publication of extracts from readers' letters. Now and again I feel like filling up the two whole pages with these extracts. You may think that it means less work for me, but you're wrong. One reader wrote to me the other way and called me lazy—said that I was neglecting my own work, and printing extracts from readers' letters because it saved me a lot of trouble.

The poor chap didn't know what he was talking about. It takes me a lot longer to prepare these extracts for publication than it would do to write my own "piffle" (as this same complimentary reader put it). But my main object in printing these paragraphs is to show all you other readers that there is no earthly reason why parents should be opposed to my stories. I am trying my hardest to kill that ridiculous idea. I don't claim that my school tales are educative or instructive or elevating, but I'm jolly well going to stand hard and fast to the statement that they are clean and healthy.

Ralph Sewell\* (St. Ives), Claude Weber (East London, S.A.), Joseph Stock (Bethnal Green), L. T. Holt (Harrow), "Patience" (Birkenhead), "Cheeky Nineteen" (Ealing), Reginald Quarrell\* (Yeovil), Gladys Marjorie Bowen\* (Old Hill, Staffs), John F. Smith (S.E. 17), P. M. Howe (Oxford), Rev. Clive R. Beresford\* (Camden Town), Edna Howlett (Westcliff-on-Sea), Leslie Strachan\* (Forest Hill), "Handy" (Belfast), R. H. Smoothy\* (Rochford), J. B. Obermane (Brighton), W. Matthews (U. Holloway), "Loyal" (Blackpool), Geo. Eldridge (Brighton), Ronald C. Wolfson (Bargoed),

C. J. Wheeler (Gibraltar), Geo. W. Dear (Treorchy), Mrs. Gracie P. Wilson (Loughborough).

\* \* \*

Yes, Ralph Sewell, that problem of yours is a tricky one. But there ought to be an easy way out. This is what you say: "I suppose you will agree that lending one's copy of the 'N.L.L.' is an excellent way of gaining a new reader? Yes, but here's the point. An energetic Nelson Lee-ite lends his copy to a non-reader, who eagerly devours it. On being asked his opinion he naturally says 'Jolly fine,' etc., and then asks for next week's. Thus the non-reader becomes an enthusiastic follower of St. Frank's, and is content to remain so as long as he can obtain his copy free of cost. I should imagine there are quite a number of readers who are compelled to lend out their copies for fear of offending their 'friends' by refusing to do so week after week." Well, my opinion, Ralph, is that if these "friends" get offended, they can't be very good friends. The best way is to refuse to lend any more copies, and say quite plainly that if these readers are really enthusiastic they will henceforth purchase their own copies. Yes, you are quite right about my birthday. It falls on the same day as Archie Glenthorne's.

\* \* \*

I hope that friend of yours, Gladys Marjorie Bowen, will buck up and write to me, and I am glad that you are determined to make her do so. I like to get letters from all readers, remember.

\* \* \*

There is one letter in this week's batch that I am going to reproduce in its entirety, as I really do think that it might be very useful to some of you readers who have to read the Old Paper in secret. If your father, or mother, or uncle, or aunt, or guardian,

object to the St. Frank's tales, please let him—or her—read the following. It is a very nice letter from the Rev. Clive R. Beresford, of 33, Rochester Road, Camden Town, London, N.W.1. Mr. Beresford has given me full permission to print this letter, and I do hope that its publication will be of service. Here it is:

"Dear Mr. Brooks,—I have been meaning for some time to write to you and express my appreciation of your work in the NELSON LEE LIBRARY, but I'm afraid that it isn't always easy to get just that five minutes or so required to do it.

"However, I hope that you will accept it now, even though belated, and you will understand that my gratitude is real when I say that I am a priest, and consequently have a great interest in seeing that the right sort of literature is available for the boys amongst whom I work.

"The 'N.L.L.' is delivered here each week, and I confess that my Wednesday breakfast is always somewhat lengthy on that account, and I have a shelf full in the boys' library, which is always well patronised, and at the present moment I am trying to get hold of early back numbers in order to comply with the demand for a COMPLETE set, to be bound up by series! Honestly, I don't think our library money could be expended better.

"With all good wishes for the continued success of the 'N.L.L.'"

"Yours very faithfully,  
CLIVE R. BERESFORD.

"P.S.—I send my 'dial,' taken in camp with two other devoted readers of the 'N.L.L.' I think a photograph of our 'Favourite Author' would be a great asset to the library corner, don't you?—C.R.B."

I would like to point out to all readers that Mr. Beresford is very anxious to get hold of early back numbers. See what you can do. I'm sure you'll help him to get a complete set for the library.

The Old Paper, Leslie Strachan, was first published on June 12th, 1915, and the first St. Frank's story appeared in No. 112, dated July 28th, 1917. There is not a separate paper called "The St. Frank's Magazine."

Your letter was very interesting, R. H. Smoothy, but there is really only one sentence that I have space to comment upon. This is the sentence: "Well, Mr. Brooks, I feel I am writing to an old friend." Thanks, old man! That's just what I like. I want all you readers to regard me as an old friend, and to write in a friendly, pally way. None of the formal stuff, eh? Just sit down and jot off your letters to me as though you were writing to a chum.

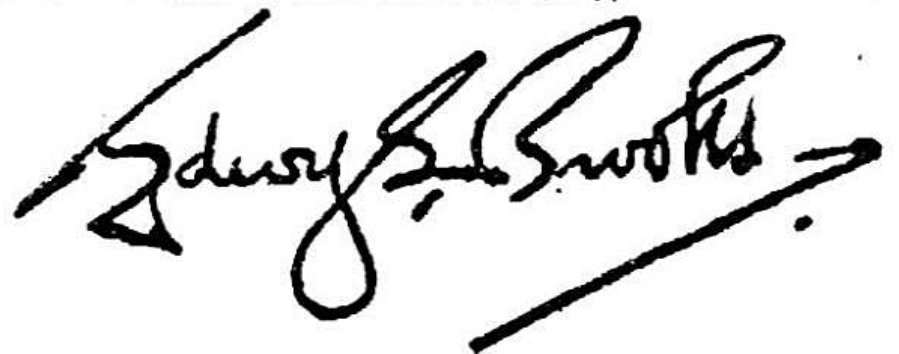
Anthony A. J. Meehan (Cappagh Finglas, Co. Dublin), J. Philip-Gourlay (Dundee), H. R. Stageman (E.C.2), Michael O'Brien (Limerick), Laurence Stanley Elliott (East

Ham), Terence Sullivan\* (Tufnell Park), Harry McMahon (Broken Hill, Aus.), Louis Van Luyck (Edegem, Belgium), H. Frederick Mullett (Combe-St. Nicholas), Ronald S. Derham (Woolwich), Ralph Hicks\* (G. Coxwell), "Cocoa" (E.12), Bob Stockley (Hackney), B. Sanders (Paddington), "Handy the Piece-Maker"\* (Peterborough), Madge Davies (W. Bromwich), B. Frederick, G. Farmer, C. Merry, J. Haleston, and Walter Blackville\* (Melbourne).

No, J. Philip-Gourlay, I am not such an old spoofer as you make me out to be. This is what you say in your letter: "You can't kid me that your name is Edwy Searles Brooks. By gosh, I'm not as stupid as all that! I suppose you have got an ordinary name, such as Smith or Brown, only you want to swank a little bit." Well, J. Philip-Gourlay, I have asserted in these columns, more than once, that Edwy Searles Brooks is actually my own name. And I'll assert it again. There's no spoof about it all. And "Brooks," after all, isn't such a swanky, distinguished name, is it? It's a good name, of course, with a running flow to it, and it's British. The "Edwy" is real old English, too, and the "Searles" was given to me after one of my great grandfathers. With regard to your P.S., yes, write again—and again. I have certainly not had enough, even though you do think my real name is Smith or Brown.

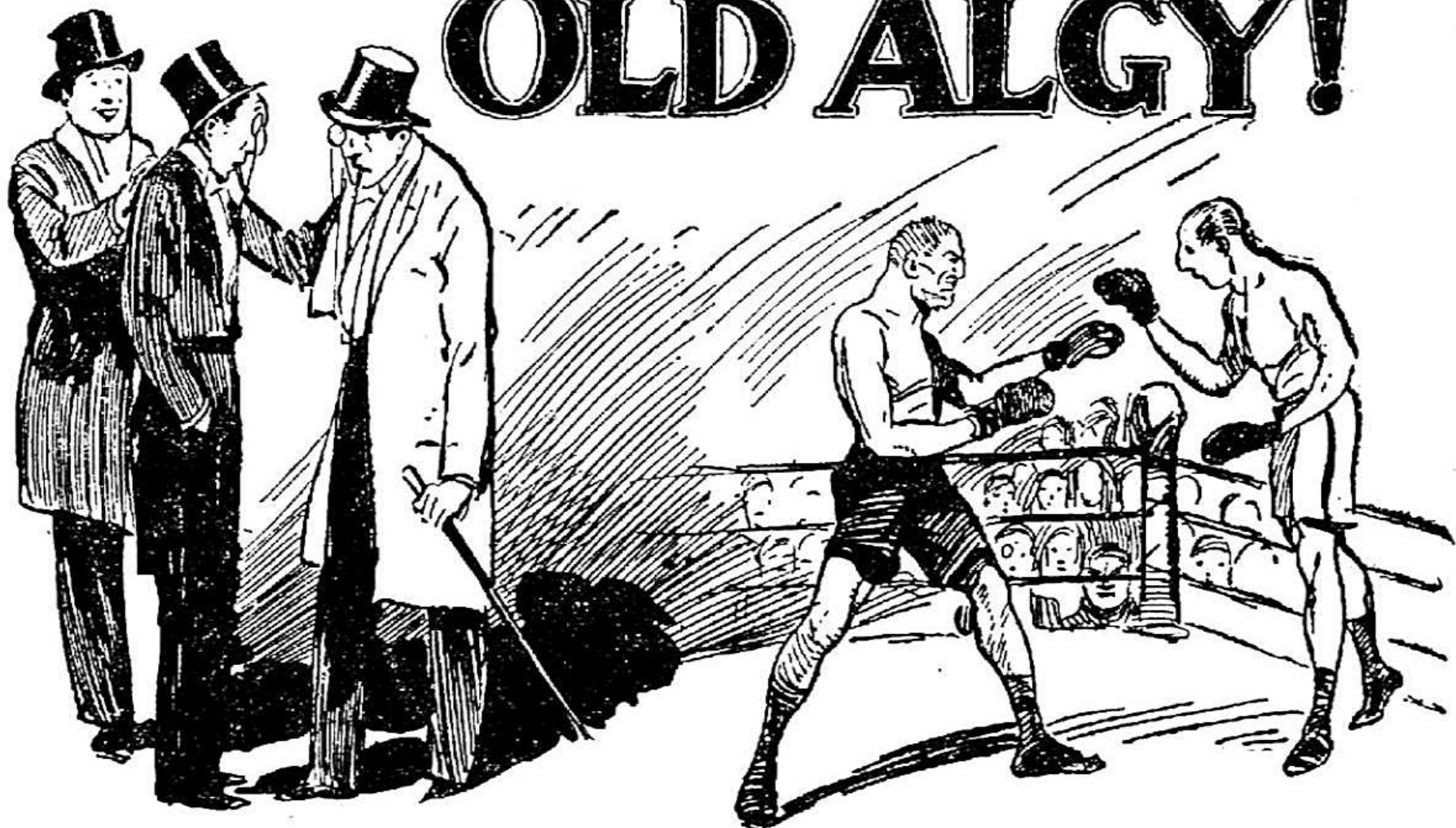
I'm no expert on old coins, "Sunny," and when you ask me the value of a George III. penny, dated 1807, and a halfpenny of the same date, I can only tell you that they are worth at least three-halfpence. Perhaps some of my readers, who are experts in old coins, can give me the information, and then I'll pass it on to you. None of you other readers will know who "Sunny" is, but he'll know!

I wonder how many more of you Australian readers are going to ask me the same question? I am referring to you now, Harry McMahon. You want me to write a series of stories, with the St. Frank's fellows in Australia. My only hat! Practically all you Australian readers are asking for that series. I would very much like to please you, but I don't know how the home readers would care for such a series. That's why I'm writing this now. Perhaps readers in general will mention this matter when they write to me next, and if there is a general desire for an Australian series, perhaps I may be persuaded to write one. But if I do, I shall expect all you Australians to go easy with me if I make a mistake or two.



Something New in Serials!

# 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.

Young Algy is unable to fight, and Algernon Fitzpercy takes his place. He does quite well—so well that Bill Huggins—the injured boxer's manager—offers to train him. Algy accepts, but is dismayed when he learns that the training quarters are situated at Barton Priory, for that is where his stern Aunt Martha and Uncle George live!

(Now read on.)

## At the Good Old Training Camp!

**B**ARTON PRIORY was a frightfully sleepy sort of place. I mean to say, one of those dashed villages—or, I should say, one of those forsaken holes—where the blighters of tradespeople close for the good old dinner-hour. And a chappie can't say anything worse than that, can he? I mean, it shows what sort of a place it was.

Mind you, the scenery was pretty priceless. One of those ripping little spots in North Essex, where the countryside was absolutely littered with woods and valleys and undulations, and all that sort of fruity material.

Algy Fitzpercy was the most unhappy chappie under the sun as he and Bill Huggins drove down to Barton Priory from London, on the day following that scrap with Liverpool Luke at the Blackfriars Boxing Palace.

Here was old Algy, engaged to go into training with Bill Huggins, and Algy was beginning to regret that he had ever had anything to do with the foul business.

At first it had seemed a pretty ripe scheme. A

frightfully good way of getting clear of all his debtors, and out of the old life.

And here he was, going to Barton Priory—the absolute spot on the map where his Uncle George spent his week-ends. That is to say, Barton Priory was Uncle George's country seat; but, of course, the old blighter was dodging about in the City all the week, piling up the millions.

Algy didn't mind Uncle George so much. It was his Aunt Martha that he was frightfully scared of. For Aunt Martha lived in the place constantly. I mean to say, absolutely always. It wouldn't have been so bad if Aunt Martha kept indoors, like a lot of other chappies' aunts.

But Aunt Martha was one of those ladies who do a lot of dashing about the village, and the surrounding environs. You know the sort of thing I mean—popping into cottages, and hobnobbing with the vicar, and chatting with the good old curate, and all that sort of stuff. And Algy had a frightful horror that he would meet his Aunt Martha face to face in the midst of his training. And that, of course, would be a tragedy. For Aunt Martha looked upon all boxers as a kind of inferior species. In her opinion

they weren't human beings at all—but of less account than those things that wriggle about in a stagnant pond.

And it was a favourite topic of Aunt Martha's to broadcast her opinion that Algy would come to a frightfully bad end. She had never exactly been strong for the poor old boy. And if she ever saw him mixing with Bill Huggins, and messing about with boxing gloves, she would slice him out of her will with one vast swish. And the thought preyed on old Algy's mind to such an extent that he was looking more like the wreck of the Hesperus than anything else by the time the outskirts of the village hove into view.

Of course he had told Bill Huggins all about it; but Bill, with that airy way of his, had said that there was nothing to worry about. Algy thought there was, and he worried. To make matters worse, they had come down to the blighting place in Mr. Huggins' car.

At least, Bill called it a car.

And if Aunt Martha happened to spot him in the good old chariot, seated beside the beefy Bill Huggins, the whole countryside would resound with her screams. She was that kind of person. Absolutely a dragon, if you know what I mean.

"I rather think I'd better bob down, don't you know," said Algy, as they came into the good old village. "All sorts and kinds of people know me here, Bill."

"That's all right, young gent," said Bill Huggins. "You're in good company."

"Oh, rather!" agreed Algy hastily. "But these Barton Priory people are frightfully narrow-minded. I mean, they wouldn't understand. And as for my Uncle George, and my Aunt Martha, they would have fifty-seven varieties of fits if they saw me now. I mean, they own all the houses and things round here, to say nothing of the sticks and stones."

"I don't hold with people what have them prejudices," said Bill decidedly. "You're a man, Mr. Fitzpercy, and you're your own master."

"Oh, absolutely, but—"

"Then everything's all serene," said Bill. "I'm surprised at you, young gent, being afraid of your aunt like this! It ain't manly!"

"But, dash it, you don't know my aunt!" protested Algy, stung to the quick by that frightful slur. "I mean, she's— Well, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to describe her as the Family Curse. Absolutely!"

But Bill refused to see eye to eye with the poor old lad. And it was as much as Algy could do to conceal himself during that drive through the village. He lugged his hat down over his face until his dial was completely obliterated. And at last, much to his relief, the training camp was reached.

But it was another shock for poor old Algy when he discovered that the camp was situated on the very outskirts of Uncle George's park. Overlooking the dashed place, in fact. It wouldn't have been so bad if the training camp had been the palatial sort of spot that Algy had pictured in his mind.

But it wasn't.

It was a sort of cross between a barn and a rabbit-hutch, if you know what I mean. A mouldy sort of shack, without a single rose round the door.

And when it came to sleeping, Algy felt that life had dealt him the worst blow of all. For the poor old boy had to sleep in a sort of doss-house place, with sundry beefy merchants who had been brought down as sparring partners. After the good old life in town, this sort of thing was too much for Algy's constitution.

He lay in bed that night, on a sort of hard plank with knobs on, tossing about and rolling this way and that way, and pitching all over the place. He couldn't sleep for nuts. As a

rule, he was off into the good old dreamless in about twenty-five seconds. But to-night it took him two whole frightful minutes before exhaustion overtook him and he relapsed into the state of coma, as prescribed.

### Strenuous Days for Old Algy!

"HALLO! I mean, eh? What's all this? What, I mean, is the priceless scheme?" Old Algy spoke in a somewhat peevish voice. The poor old egg was feeling only about half hatched, as it were, and he had an instinctive feeling that the hour was unearthly. The sun was trickling in through the window at a perfectly frightful angle. And then it came upon Algy, with a flood of horror, that it was only just about dawn.

Bill Huggins was standing over his bed, and the sheets and sundries had been yanked off. And there was Algy, in the full glow of his pyjamas. It was a bit of a frightful blow for Bill, but he was a brave man.

"Time to get up, Mr. Fitzpercy," he said, blinking slightly.

"Oh, absolutely not!" said Algy bleakly. "You don't mean to say that it's ten o'clock!"

"It's just struck four," said Bill.

"Four!" bleated Algy, in a ghastly tone. "Why, you frightful fright! You don't expect me to stagger into the cold, grey world at such an hour as this? Why, dash you, this is the time I generally go to bed!"

"Things are different now, young gent," said Bill Huggins patiently. "You're under my care—you're trainin' in my camp. Next week you'll have to be up at three!"

"If you proceed with this foul business, there'll be no next week for Algy!" said the poor old lad, as he tried to grab the bedclothes. "I absolutely protest, Bill. In fact, I won't have it! Good gad, no! What do you think I am—one of those slaves?"

But it was no good. Algy had to get up. Not only Bill was gathering round, but all the other merchants of the camp, too. And as there was no further peace for Algy, he groped for his clothing.

But all he found was a pair of shorts, a sort of sweater, and a pair of running shoes.

"What's all this?" asked Algy blankly.

"Your clothes, young gent," said Bill. "Get into 'em quick, and then we'll go for a cross-country trot. I'll make it easy for the first mornin', so you needn't worry. But runnin' is the best exercise for makin' the muscles supple—"

"But, I mean to say, what about the good old car?" asked Algy. "Why run when you can ride?"

"You don't seem to understand," said Bill. "This is exercise, Mr. Fitzpercy. As I said, I'm going to make it easy for the first mornin'. We shan't go for a longer run than seven or eight miles."

Algy nearly fainted on the spot.

"Seven or eight miles!" he repeated, staring glassily at Bill.

"Just a little trot," nodded Bill.

"Oh, rather!" bleated Algy. "Dashed good! One of your jokes—what?"

But he soon found that it wasn't a joke. It was more like a sort of tragedy.

The poor old bean was carted out, shoved between two of the trainer chappies, and there was no escape. After about five hundred yards, Algy felt that the end would be swift. But, curiously enough, by the time he had run a couple of miles he was feeling frightfully braced. The good old exercise was doing him good.

Of course, the dear old boy didn't realise how flabby he had become. His muscles were like marshmallows, and his lungs had become so frightfully disused that he was soon wheezing like a bicycle pump.

And, to make matters worse, and to put the final touch on the tragedy, he had a haunting horror of meeting Aunt Martha. He knew that it was one of her favourite pastimes to sally forth in the early morning, to give Christopher Columbus his morning exercise. Christopher Columbus, by the way, was a fox terrier, and Algy was rather attached to the little blighter. In fact, he regarded Christopher Columbus as the pick of the good old household. When Algy had been wont to visit Barton Priory for the week-end he only went there to see C.C.

And, naturally, the thing happened.

I mean, just as Algy was trickling home, worn to a good old shadow, who should he spot down the good old road but Aunt Martha and the terrier. There they were, stepping it out briskly, and coming straight towards him.

It was a frightful moment.

What, in fact, could be done? If Aunt Martha saw him like this, dashing about the countryside in sweaters and things, she would pass away on the spot. Of course, they might be all to the good; but Algy had a horror of the inquest. Besides, he didn't want to have it on his conscience that he had gone into the business of assassination.

So there was only one thing to be done, and Algy did it. By a ripping piece of luck, Bill Huggins and the other trainer-chappies were ahead, and Algy saw his chance.

There was a hedge close by, and he didn't wait to find a gap. He took one dive at that good old hedge, and sailed over it!

#### No Escape from Aunt Martha!

**S**PLASH—splish—and so forth!

Poor old Algy received the shock of his sweet young life.

Instead of landing in a grassy meadow, as he had expected, he took a header into the foulest ditch in the whole of Essex. It was such a shock to Algy's system that for several epochs he believed that death, the great reaper, had collared him.

I mean, just imagine the old boy's feelings.

In order to escape from Aunt Martha, he dived over that hedge in a tranquil spirit of triumph. And then—zing!—right into that blighting pond. And not an ordinary pond, mark you. Or, should I say, ditch? That's the worst of this story-writing business. A chappie has to be so frightfully careful, or he forgets what he has just been writing about, dash it! It wasn't a pond that Algy fell into at all, but a ditch.

Well, having put that straight—without messing up the good old manuscript by crossing out sundry words—supposing we get back to the doings? There was old Algy, in the ditch. Absolutely in the ditch. And, mind you, when I say ditch, I mean ditch. It wasn't a river, or anything of that sort, full of water. In fact, there wasn't any water at all. It was mud.

And mud of the most murky order. Thick, glutinous stuff, not unlike a mixture of treacle, toffee, and soot. The sort of stuff you could stick a pole into, and leave it standing.

Just try to imagine our hero's feelings. (That's rather good, that bit. I mean "our hero." All the best author chappies refer to their priceless old lad in that way.) There he was, head downwards. That's the point I've been trying to get at for quite a long time. Absolutely head downwards! With his legs sticking out into the open air, waving for help.

Not that any help was likely, for Bill Huggins and his pals were running on, totally unconscious of the fact that Algy had performed a diving act.

It was a frightful time before Algy could extricate himself, and then, when he crawled up the bank and spread himself over the landscape, he utterly failed to appreciate the smell of the fresh morning dew. I mean, that ditch was too utterly utter for words. If the sanitary inspector Johnnie had come round, he would have kicked up an awful fuss.

But Algy had sufficient presence of mind to get going. He didn't want to be on the spot when Aunt Martha came by. It would be just like her to have a look over the hedge and spot him. So Algy legged it with considerable vim and energy. It is perfectly true that he steered an erratic course, for his brain was reeling. And when it came to a matter of appearance it can hardly be said that Algy had improved nature.

Nobody could call him a handsome sort of lad, even at the best of times. But just now he looked shocking to a degree. There was very little of Algy left on the surface. He was smothered from head to foot with blackness—dripping, sticky blackness which fell off in blobs as he ran.

His one idea was to get as far away from Aunt Martha as possible. And you can imagine the dear old boy's thankfulness when he reached the other end of the meadow and charged through the hedge, and found himself on another road—a sort of lane, with priceless grassy banks on either side. It somehow seemed a bit familiar, but Algy didn't pay much heed. After all, all these country lanes look very much alike.

And there he sat, on the grassy bank, recovering his breath, and wondering how he could get himself clean. He rather thought that he would need to indulge in about four hundred and fifty-six baths before he would again be fit for the society of respectable people.

Old Algy was fastidious, in his own way. A bit of a nut, if you know what I mean. Always jolly particular about his appearance, and even addicted to the use of perfume. A frightful habit, that. I mean to say, no self-respecting chappie would smother himself with parma violet, and so forth. It's rather a different matter with the girls, because girls go in pretty strongly for that sort of thing.

Well, to proceed with the tragedy. There was Algy, sitting on the bank, his brain too dead to function properly, when he heard a footstep—to say nothing of a startled sort of exclamation in a voice that gave Algy the shock of his young life.

He looked up, staring out from his mixture of mud. And there, not five yards away, was Aunt Martha!

Absolutely!

Poor old Algy nearly fainted. He didn't know how it had happened, but it was pretty obvious that he had staggered round in a sort of half-circle, and he had broken through the hedge, and had got back into the same lane. And now it was too late to bunk.

He sat there, fairly goggling at his aunt, and he was so frozen with helplessness that he was utterly helpless. If you know what I mean.

Algy seemed to be gazing at Aunt Martha in a sort of dream. There she was—big and formidable, something like a human tank. A vast woman was Aunt Martha, with a face something after the style of a meat-chopper. I mean to say, a dangerous-looking face. A face that gives a chap the pip.

Well, it was all up. Algy resigned himself to his fate, and he waited for the worst.



## Getting Rather Frightful!

"WHAT," said Aunt Martha, "is this?" She gazed at Algy in shocked surprise. It was pretty obvious to her that something foul had happened. I mean, people don't usually come across strange merchants with mud all over them by the roadside. Positively not. And Aunt Martha completely overlooked the fact that she hadn't been introduced, and gave voice.

"Eh?" breathed Algy. "I—I— That is—I should say—"

"My poor fellow! Whatever has happened?" asked Aunt Martha, coming closer, and staring at Algy with such sympathy in her eyes that Algy could hardly believe that he was awake. He knew jolly well that his aunt would never look at him in that way. And it sort of proved to the old boy that Aunt Martha hadn't recognised him.

This was a rather jolly sort of thought.

And, after all, there was nothing very surprising about it. Algy wouldn't have recognised himself, if he could have gazed upon his features in a mirror. Well, strictly speaking, there were no features to gaze upon. Only a mass of half-dried mud, with a couple of eyes staring out of it, and with a gash that represented Algy's mouth, a bit lower down.

Aunt Martha was a keen-eyed sort of female, but she had her limitations. She couldn't see through that mud. And so she came to the conclusion that this was some poor wayfarer who needed assistance.

It was just the last thing that Algy required. His one thought was to get away; but he was always like a chunk of putty when his Aunt Martha was near by. His blood sort of congealed in his good old veins, and his muscles became padlocked.

"You must let me help you," said Aunt Martha kindly. "You have evidently had an accident, and— Christopher! Christopher! Come here at once!"

But Christopher Columbus, the terrier, was making a few personal investigations. How the blighter did it was an absolute mystery. I mean to say, everybody knows that fox terriers have pretty hefty scent. They know people in a tick. But how the dickens Christopher Columbus smelt Algy through that coating of mud was pretty marvellous.

But there it was—the good old terrier knew Algy in two and a half shakes. And there he was, prancing up and down, making leaps at the poor old chappie's frontispiece.

"Woof—woof—woof!" barked Christopher Columbus joyously.

That sounds pretty potty, I know, but how can a chappie describe the bark of a dog? It looks a dashed lot worse if you shove down "wow—wow—wow!" I mean, we author chappies have these most beastly knots to tangle us up now and again. It isn't until you start writing a story that you realise what heroes authors really are. I mean, just have a shot at it, and see!

Aunt Martha was frightfully upset about Christopher Columbus. She didn't like the way the blessed dog was making friends with this supposed stranger. And Algy himself didn't like it, either—for it was quite possible that Christopher Columbus would give the game away.

"I take it, my poor fellow, that you are recovering from some sort of accident?" asked Aunt Martha, coming closer. "If you will tell me your name, I will see what can be done—"

"Glub—glub—glub!" said Algy.

He thought it a priceless sort of scheme to make only a few noises. Perhaps Aunt Martha would be frightened away. She was always shoving her nose into other people's business like this. She couldn't go anywhere without inter-

fering, if you know what I mean. One of those sort.

And then, just when things were becoming frightfully difficult, something else happened. A car came whizzing round the corner, driven by some rustic merchant with yards of whiskers. Quite possibly the whiskers blew into his face and obstructed the view. Anyhow, the good old car made a bee-line for Christopher Columbus, and before the little chappie could get out of the way it seemed that he would be reduced to sausage-meat.

But Algy was frightfully fond of Christopher Columbus, and he made one leap forward—to the rescue. Taking all in all, it was a priceless piece of work on Algy's part.

If he had been acting for the films, he would have received about ten thousand pounds on the spot for that piece of work. He grabbed Christopher Columbus, and then dived headlong into the grass. Only by the fraction of a fraction did the car miss him. It went careering on, and the old boy with the whiskers was so startled that he forgot to put the brakes on, and vanished into the offing.

"That was perfectly splendid!" said Aunt Martha breathlessly. "You brave man! You have saved my Christopher's life!"

"Glub—glub—glub!" agreed Algy, still keeping to the programme.

But it didn't seem to work. Aunt Martha wasn't at all frightened. She came to a decision that turned Algy's blood to water.

"I really must do something to help you!" she said. "You'll come with me at once—you will come home. And there, my poor man, you must have a bath, and clothing will be provided for you, and you will be once more set on your way."

"Oh, I couldn't!" bleated Algy, startled into coherent speech. "I mean—"

"I will not be denied!" said Aunt Martha firmly. "You have saved Christopher's life, and you are in dire trouble yourself. Come with me, and you shall have the best of everything."

And there was such firmness in her tone that Algy could do nothing but obey. It was more than he dare do to refuse. Never in his life had he disobeyed his Aunt Martha. Of course, he was a man now, but that made no difference. Aunt Martha was the sort of woman who can command Prime Ministers, if you know what I mean.

And Algy staggered up, and proceeded to leg it towards the moated grange, as it were. He absolutely didn't know what was going to happen now.

*(There's no doubt about it, Algy is in the most frightful fix. If his aunt gets to know who he actually is, and what he is doing, he'll be sliced out of that will in a tick. But wait until next week, and then you'll receive a frightfully big surprise!)*

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# THE LAND OF THE INCAS.

A Fascinating Article Dealing with the Romantic Country of Peru.

## The Conquest of Peru.

**O**F all the countries of South America perhaps Peru is the most fascinating. For Peru and a large area surrounding it was the ancient empire of the Incas. And even to this day can be found there wonderful remains which show the high state of civilisation the famous race had attained.

The rule of the Incas came to an end in the sixteenth century. For in 1531 Spain, then at the zenith of her pomp and magnificence, produced a man whose ambition was to conquer Peru.

That man was Francisco Pizarro, without whose illustrious name no mention of Peru would be complete.

Ten years previously Mexico had been conquered by Cortes. And Pizarro determined to annex Peru. How he set out from Panama with 183 men and landed at Tumbrez, how he tricked the reigning monarch of Peru, how he divided the kingdom with his friend Almagro, and how in the end the two quarrelled, Almagro being killed and Pizarro himself being assassinated, form a thrilling romance which is too long to be told here.

The Spanish rule lasted up till the 19th century. It was not till 1821 that San Martin, the liberator of Chile from Spanish rule, entered Lima, the capital, and declared Peru an independent State. During the next six years the Spaniards were gradually driven from power till in 1826 Callao, their last stronghold, was evacuated.

## As it is To-day.

Peru, of course, is to-day vastly different in many ways from what it was in the times of the Incas or even under the Spanish rule. But even now it is a country of romance, of adventure, of excitement. Nowadays it is a republic governed by a senate, and having at its head a president. The town of Lima has a university, and the railway connecting the capital with Oroya is one of the most remarkable in the world.

But civilisation has not altered Peru entirely. It still possesses much to stir the heart and excite the imagination.

In the central part, between the mighty Andes and the Pacific, the scenery is magnificent. Many rivers fertilise the land. Along their banks are to be found vineyards, sugar-cane plantations, cotton plantations,

and fruit gardens. The vegetation indeed is most beautiful.

## In the Mountains.

Then there is the Sierra region. This district is much wilder, and it is here that bandits and fugitives from law have their haunts. For here is ground perfectly suitable for lawless men. Here the lofty Cordilleras raise their snow-peaked heads. There are deep, gloomy ravines; and at the foot of the mountains stretch bleak, rugged plains and valleys. In the south are volcanoes, and between the mountains are cold, inhospitable table-lands.

The nature of the country beyond the eastern spur of the Cordilleras again changes. Here there is a stretch of densely wooded land. The climate has a steamy warmth which is very unhealthy. This part stretches as far as Brazil, and contains the sources of many rivers which flow into the Amazon.

From the warmer parts of the country many agricultural products come, such as sugar, wheat, maize, cotton, indigo, yams, tobacco, and vanilla. Fine timber is also exported; so is cotton. Rubber is also shipped down the Amazon to a large extent.

## The Lost City of El Dorado.

The animals native to the country include the llama, alpaca, guanaco, and vicuna. For travelling mules are mostly employed. The alpaca is bred for its wool, though sheep have been introduced by Europeans.

Peru is rich in minerals. There are silver mines, copper, tin, and lead mines. But the richest are the gold mines. The Incas used to use gold as freely as we use copper.

Even now in the mountains there is said to be a lost city of the Incas, for ever locked from the world in the heart of the hills. Here the streets are paved with gold and the buildings roofed with it, so it is told. But so far this wonder city, which is called El Dorado, has not been found.

The population of this vast tract of land is less than half that of London, and for all its natural wealth the inhabitants are poorly off.

Nevertheless, Peru is a fascinating country. With its hills, its gorges, its wide valleys and craggy mountain passes, it still attracts all those who long for adventure. And many there are who will yet seek their fortune from the golden wealth of the old-time Incas.

# HOW TO JOIN THE LEAGUE

## ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE APPLICATION FORM No. 77.

<b>SECTION A</b>	<b>READER'S APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP.</b>
	I desire to become enrolled as a Member of THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE and to qualify for all such benefits and privileges as are offered to Members of the League. I hereby declare that I have introduced "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY" and THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE to one new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. Will you, therefore, kindly forward me Certificate of Membership with the Membership Number assigned to me, and Membership Badge.
<b>SECTION B</b>	<b>MEMBER'S APPLICATION FOR MEDAL AWARDS.</b>
	I, Member No..... (give Membership No.), hereby declare that I have introduced one more new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. This makes me ..... (state number of introductions up to date) introductions to my credit.
<b>SECTION C</b>	<b>NEW READER'S DECLARATION.</b>
	I hereby declare that I have been introduced by (give name of introducer) ..... to this issue of "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY."
(FULL NAME) .....	
(ADDRESS) .....	
.....	

### INSTRUCTIONS.

**INSTRUCTIONS.—Reader Applying for Membership:** Cut out TWO complete Application Forms from Two copies of this week's issue of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY. On one of the forms fill in Section A, crossing out Sections B and C. Then write clearly your full name and address at bottom of form. *The second form* is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out Sections A and B, and writes his name and address at bottom of form. Both forms are then pinned together, and sent to the Chief Officer, The St. Frank's League, c/o THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4. **Member Applying for Bronze Medal:** It will be necessary for you to obtain six new readers for this award. For each new reader TWO complete forms, bearing the same number, are needed. On one of the forms fill in Section B, crossing out Sections A and C, and write your name and address at bottom of form. The other form is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out Sections A and B, and writes his name and address at the bottom of

the form. Now pin both forms together and send them to the Chief Officer, as above. One new reader will then be registered against your name, and when six new readers have been registered, you will be sent the St. Frank's League bronze medal. There is nothing to prevent you from sending in forms for two or more new readers at once, provided that each pair of forms bears the same date and number.

Bronze medallists wishing to qualify for the silver or gold medals can apply in the same way as for the bronze medal, filling in Section B. Every introduction they make will be credited to them, so that when the League reaches the required number of members, they can exchange their bronze medal for a silver or gold one, according to the number of introductions with which they are credited.

These Application Forms can be posted for 4d., providing the envelope is not sealed and no letter is enclosed.

### A FEW OF THE ADVANTAGES OF JOINING THE LEAGUE.

You can write to fellow-members living at home or in the most distant outposts of the Empire.

You are offered free advice on choosing a trade or calling, and on emigration to the colonies and dependencies.

If you want to form a sports or social club, you can do so amongst local members of the League.

You are offered free hints on holidays, whether walking, biking or camping.

You can qualify for the various awards by promoting the growth of the League.

If you want help or information on any subject, you will find the Chief Officer ever ready to assist you.



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.

#### The Musketeers' Club.

W. Strachan, 232, St. Vincent Street, Glasgow, C.2, is getting on well with his Musketeers' Club. The members are musical. Two of them are good at the drum; the founder is A1 on the cornet. They can face the music any day of the week! The club intends forming a football team for the 1927-28 season.

My Glasgow chum goes on to say something about the Badge; "May I suggest that those brilliant Badges should be in the form of a button, just like the Boys' Brigade badges?"

What about this suggestion?

#### A Tennis Challenge.

Tom Robinson, of the S.F.L. Club, Tufnell Park, challenges members of the League for the championship at tennis. Address all letters to Tom Robinson, c/o Captain Green, 22a, Lady Margaret Road, Kentish Town, London, N.W.5.

#### Why Not Join?

A South African chum tells me that while on a cycling trip he ran up against a young fellow who said he was a member of the S.F.L. It turned out that this was pure swank on the individual's part. He knew nothing about the League. But why does he not turn a sham into a reality, drop the make-believe folly and become a Leagueite? Nothing is more stupid than pretending to be what you are not.

#### A Naturalist.

J. B. (Uttoxeter) asks me for the name of a firm of naturalists. I recommend him to apply to Messrs. Watkins & Doncaster, Strand, London, W.C.

#### Birds' Eggs.

In reply to a Haslemere correspondent, wild birds and their eggs are protected by the law. He should have a look at the list of protected birds in the local police station.

#### Sleeping in the Garden.

A Lymington pal cannot get away for a holiday, so he is buying a tent, and intends to sleep out during the summer in his garden. This is a first-rate stunt—and a healthy one.

#### CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.

Will members interested in camping communicate with H. Green, c/o Len Clifford, 24, Lady Somerset Road, Highgate Road, Tufnell Park, London, N.5.

R. A. Lambourn, the Corner Stores, Shinfield, Reading, wishes to correspond with readers in South Africa interested in stamp-collecting and photography.

Maurice Gooch, Crookes, Newent, Glos., wishes to hear from readers interested in cross-country running, and all sports, also gardening.

Alison Ackroyd, 11, Powis Grove, Brighton, Sussex, wants a complete set of the "Funk of St. Frank's" series.

Jack Bailey, Poverty Bay Club Box 154, Gisborne, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with readers.

G. Roscoe, 52, Tunnel Road, Edge Hill, Liverpool, would like to hear from readers in his district who will join his cycling club. Ages 14-16, or thereabouts.

Roy Gilbert, c/o Butter Factory, Tauranga, New Zealand, wishes to correspond with stamp-collectors.

J. R. A. Cumming, 17, Hay Street, King William's Town, Cape Province, South Africa, wishes to hear from readers in South-West Africa, Tasmania, Rio de

(Continued on next page.)

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