

THE NELSON LEE

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THE PERIL of the YELLOW MEN!

Captured by the Tong! A stunning long complete yarn of thrilling schoolboy adventure, featuring Nelson Lee, Nipper, and many other favourite characters at St. Frank's.

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THE PERIL OF THE YELLOW MEN!



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

CHAPTER 1.

The River House Raiders!

“JUST a minute!” said Hal Brewster.

The leader of the River House School juniors was looking down the lane towards Bellton village. Ascott and Glynn and Kingswood and Robinson and the rest paused. They were on the point of getting over the stile which led into Bellton Wood. It was a half-holiday, and the November day was mild and bright.

“What’s the idea of waiting?” asked Dave Ascott. “We don’t want to get mixed up with any of the Saints this afternoon. It’s too risky!”

“Yes, rather!” chorused the others.

They were rather glad that they had not been sighted by any of their St. Frank’s rivals. For they were more or less loaded up with packages of an interesting nature. It was Hal Brewster’s birthday, and the River House chaps had been to the village to obtain the wherewithal for an extra special feed.

YOU'LL ENJOY EVERY WORD OF THIS FULL-O'-THRILLS YARN!

Swiftly and methodically the inert bodies of Nelson Lee and Nipper were transferred from the wrecked armoured car to the Ford van—and once more the dreaded Fu Chang Tong had struck; once more the Housemaster-detective and his assistant were in the hands of this ruthless Chinese society whose vengeance is—death!

"There's nothing to be scared of," said Brewster with a grin. "There aren't any St. Frank's chaps about, and what do we care if there are? We're not afraid of them, are we?"

"There's such a thing as being cautious," said Georgie Glynn, taking a firmer hold on his bag of doughnuts.

"There aren't any Saints about this afternoon," said Hal. "The postman's just coming up the lane, and I want to see if he has got any more letters for us. He doesn't get round to the River House until nearly tea-time—and by waylaying him here we can get our letters heaps earlier."

"Well, it's not a bad idea," admitted Kingswood.



It was always a sore point with the River House fellows that the postal authorities should have the letters delivered at St. Frank's first. Everybody with a grain of sense knew that St. Frank's wasn't half so important as the River House School.

Mudford, the postman, was toiling slowly up the lane. He appeared to have a fairly large consignment this afternoon. For, in addition to his bag of letters, there were one or two parcels festooned about him.

"Those St. Frank's chaps aren't likely to start any rot, anyhow," remarked Brewster as they waited. "Nipper's practically out of the running these days—and with Nipper lying low the Remove is more or less leaderless. We're safe enough!"

"Hope so," said Ascott, glancing uneasily towards St. Frank's.

"I hear that they've got police officers up at St. Frank's," said Kingswood. "Men on guard outside the Ancient House—so that Mr. Lee and Nipper shan't be surprised by any of those Chinese rotters."

"It's a funny thing they can't do something about it," said Ascott. "Anyhow, if

Mr. Lee and Nipper are in such danger, why don't they clear out? There's no telling what might happen."

"Well, never mind that now," said Brewster. "Here's old Muddy. Let's bag our letters. Hallo, Muddy! Anything for us this afternoon?"

The postman paused, and regarded the River House boys suspiciously.

"None of your larks, young gents," he said. "Don't forget that I'm a servant of the Government, and if you lay 'ands on me——"

"Perish the thought!" said Brewster in horror. "Lay hands on you, Muddy? What an idea! A more harmless, innocent crowd of refined young gentlemen than us you couldn't find in a day's march."

Mudford grunted.

"Ye mean I couldn't find a more mischievous pack of young rascals in a day's march, Master Brewster!" he retorted. "I'm allus scared o' you youngsters when you look so harmless-like."

Brewster grinned.

"It's my birthday," he said cheerily. "I just want to know if you have any letters for me, Muddy. And while you're about it, you might see if you have any letters for any of these other chaps. It'll save you the trouble of carrying them all the way round."

"Right ye are, Master Brewster," said the postman, diving into his bag.

Kingswood, at Mudford's rear, gave Hal Brewster a significant look, and pointed at a square parcel which reposed on Mudford's back. Brewster strolled round casually, and he had a look at that parcel, too.

"Twig who it's addressed to?" whispered Kingswood.

Brewster twigged. It was a big brown-paper parcel, and the label on it announced the fact to all and sundry that it came from "Angus Thomson, Confectioner—Famed Far and Wide for Cakes and Pastries." And the label was addressed to Master Dick Hamilton, Remove Form, St. Frank's College.

Hal Brewster opened his eyes wider. Then he glanced round at the other River House juniors, and winked.

Here was a find!

A large parcel from Thomson's, the big cake people in Bannington! Everybody in St. Frank's and the River House knew Thomson's. It was a fine, imposing establishment in Bannington High Street, and it was justly famous for its cakes.

"Here you are, Master Brewster," said Mudford at length. "There's three for ye. One for Master Norton, another for Master Ascott, another for Master Wellborne——"

"Never mind Wellborne's," said Hal. "You can keep his, and deliver it at the school. We'll just take ours."

They received their letters, and Mudford prepared to move on.

"Just a minute," said Brewster casually. "About this parcel, Muddy."

"Which one?" asked the postman. "There ain't no parcels for you young gents. I've got two or three 'ere——"

"So we notice," said Brewster. "But there's one on the starboard side—addressed to Nipper, of St. Frank's. It looks a heavy parcel, and we think it's perfectly disgraceful that the postal authorities should overload you so much. If you like, we'll relieve you——"

"Here, none o' your games, young gent!" protested Mudford. "You won't relieve me of nothin'! Didn't I warn ye not two minutes ago? That there parcel is for Master Hamilton——"

"We can't bear to think of you labouring up the lane with so much weight," said Kingswood gently. "Come on, you chaps. We'll give Muddy a hand. We'll take this parcel from him, anyway."

"No, ye won't!" shouted the postman defiantly. "Young rips! That parcel ain't yours, and you're not goin' to 'ave it!"

"Poor old Muddy!" said Brewster sympathetically. "How do you think you're going to stop us taking it? Don't be worried—it's all in the game. Haven't the Saints sometimes bagged our parcels? Well, it's our turn to bag one of their's!"

The River House juniors crowded round the unfortunate postman. Before he could protest any further, the parcel was lifted from him, and definitely and firmly bagged!

"HALLO! Look down there!"

Edward Oswald Handforth, of the St. Frank's Remove, spoke in a startled voice. Church and McClure were with him—and Fullwood & Co., of Study I, were close at hand, to say nothing of Archie Glenthorne and Alf Brent, and one or two others. They were all at the turn of the lane, being on their way down to the village. And there, in full sight, was Mudford, the postman, apparently having a wrestling match with a number of River House boys.

"Something fishy about this," said Ralph Leslie Fullwood. "I'll bet those River House rotters are boning one of our parcels."

"By George! We'll soon see!" shouted Handforth. "Come on!"

Incidents of this kind were fairly common, and the St. Frank's juniors recognised the signs in an instant. Brewster & Co. would never have treated Mudford with such violence if they had been merely taking one of their own parcels. The very fact that Mudford was protesting, indicated that Brewster & Co. had no legal right to the big square parcel which they had just grabbed.

"Better go easy!" panted Church. "There's a big crowd of those River House chaps!"

"Who cares?" yelled Handforth. "I'll take on three of 'em single-handed—and you fellows are game for two each, aren't you? Down with the River House!"

"Absolutely!" said Archie Glenthorne. "What ho! Tally ho, and all that!"

Brewster & Co. were considerably surprised. They had not expected any St. Frank's fellows just then. They saw the

enemy approaching, and they immediately decided that this was a case for retreat.

"Into the wood, you fellows!" sang out Brewster briskly. "We've got heaps of time. They'll never collar us—and we've got their giddy parcel!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Poor old Nipper!"

The River House juniors bolted, chuckling with glee. That parcel felt heavy, and there was little doubt that it contained one of Mr. Angus Thomson's biggest and richest Dundee cakes.

Hal Brewster knew the very shape and size of boxes in which Mr. Thomson invariably sent out his Dundee cakes.

Mudford, red with indignation, was still breathing hard when Handforth & Co. and the other St. Frank's fellows surrounded him excitedly.

"What's happened?" demanded Handforth breathlessly.

"Young scamps!" said the postman darkly. "That's what they are! There ain't nothin' safe from their mischievous 'ands!"

"Don't we know it?" asked Fullwood. "Whose parcel was that?"

"An' me single-anded!" said Mudford hotly. "They never give me a chance!"

"You're wasting time!" roared Handforth. "Whose parcel was that?"

"Well, it wasn't theirs, an' they 'adn't no right to it—"

"Was it one of ours?" shouted McClure.

"It was addressed to Master 'Amilton—"

"Nipper's!" bellowed Handforth. "They've bagged one of Nipper's parcels!"

"From Angus Thomson's, in Bannington," nodded Mudford.

"A cake!" went up a general yell.

"And Brewster & Co. have bagged it!" snorted Handforth. "Come on! We've wasted too much time here already! Are we

going to let those fatheads bag Nipper's cake?"

"No fear!"

"Not likely!"

"Good gad, no!"

And the Removites went tearing into the road, hot on the trail of Hal Brewster and his merry men.

By this time the River House fellows had got well into the wood, and they thought it better to stick to the footpath. It was so easy to get separated and disorganised by

taking to the trees. And if one of them should happen to get into the hands of the enemy, it would go hard with him. Unity was strength.

UNFORTUNATELY, Hal Brewster & Co. encountered a snag.

As they made a turn in the woodland path, they beheld a number of figures coming towards them: Harry Gresham and Sir Jimmy Potts and Jerry Dodd and Vivian Travers and Duncan and one or two other Ancient House Removites.

"Oh, help!" groaned Brewster. "The countryside is littered with St. Frank's chaps this afternoon! Just our beastly luck!"

"What are we going to do?" gasped Glynn. "These chaps are bound to stop us, and then Handforth and the rest will come up from the rear."

"Can't be done," said Brewster quickly. "We'll dodge off here to the left—there's a bit of a clearing. Come on!"

Travers and Gresham and the others knew that something was happening—for they had just caught sight of Handforth & Co. in full cry. They saw the River House fellows swerve into the wood.

"Buck up, Remove!" came a yell. "Hold 'em, Remove! Don't let 'em get past!"

WHO'S WHO AT ST. FRANK'S.



DAVID BIGGLESWADE.

A prefect, and a very popular one with the Junior School owing to his easy-going nature. Keen on all sports.

"Hurrah!"

"Down with the River House!"

Brewster & Co. were now thoroughly alarmed. They had disturbed a hornets' nest—just when they had felt themselves to be so safe, too. They were completely outnumbered, and they knew that their only chance was to elude their pursuers.

But in the excitement they had made a grave tactical blunder. In choosing this particular part of the wood, they had made escape impossible. Hal Brewster was the first to realise it, and he pulled up short with a gasp.

"Steady!" he shouted. "Look out, you idiots! There's a deep gully on the other side of these bushes! You'll break your necks if you force your way through!"

The others pulled up, startled. It was perfectly true. This was a dangerous part of the wood. There were some thick bushes here, and just on the other side of these bushes there was a sheer drop into a steep, rugged gully. There had been more than one accident owing to people plunging through these bushes without knowing what lay on the other side.

"Our only chance is to pretend that we've lost this giddy parcel!" panted Brewster, as he shoved it hastily behind one of the bushes. "Right about face, you chaps! Every man for himself! River House for ever!"

"Oh, rather!" said Kingswood feebly.

He, like the others, realised that they did not stand one chance in a thousand. The situation was looking black for the River House raiders.

CHAPTER 2.

Literally a Bombshell!

"ON them!"

"Hurrah!"

"Now then, altogether—charge!"

The St. Frank's crowd, excited and heated, went for Brewster & Co. baldheaded. The River House fellows were standing with their backs to that barrier of bushes.

"Hold on!" gasped Hal. "Stop it, you fatheads!"

"Not likely!" snorted Handforth. "Where's that parcel you boned?"

"Parcel?"

All the River House boys repeated the word in a tone of astonishment.

"Pax!" said Brewster, holding up a hand. "Let's get this thing clear."

"Pax be blowed!" retorted Handforth. "You're not going to get out of this hiding so jolly easily! Even if you hadn't burgled one of our parcels, we should have scragged you."

"Come on, Brewster—no fooling, dear old fellow," said Travers gently. "Mudford says that you borrowed a parcel addressed to Nipper. What about it? It'll save an awful

lot of bother if you hand it over without any fuss!"

Hal Brewster looked astonished.

"Are you sure that Mudford wasn't dreaming?" he asked. "Parcel? You can see that we haven't got any of Nipper's parcels. What the dickens are you talking about?"

"Well, well!" said Travers. "You appear to forget, dear old fellow, that we also have the evidence of our eyes to support the evidence of Mudford. We saw you in the very act of committing this dastardly robbery."

Brewster shrugged his shoulders.

"All right—if you're so jolly certain, find the parcel!" he said. "You can see that we haven't got it—and I can give you my word that we didn't drop it on the way here. I think all of you must have been dreaming."

Handforth gave one of his characteristic bellows.

"Are we going to let these River House chaps argue with us?" he demanded furiously. "They've hidden that parcel somewhere—in the bushes behind them, probably."

"My only hat!" muttered Glynn.

"There you are!" roared Handforth. "Did you hear that? Glynn's given the game away!"

"Glynn's an ass!" snapped Hal.

"Oh, I say!" gasped Glynn. "I didn't mean—"

"If you want that parcel, you'd better take it!" yelled Hal Brewster. "Back up, River House! We're not going to give in tamely, are we?"

"Rather not!"

And the River House juniors formed themselves into a solid defensive body, with their backs to the heavy clumps of bushes. The Saints had retreated a little way, and now they prepared for concerted action.

"By the time we've finished with these fatheads they'll look like scarecrows!" said Handforth, with relish. "Of all the nerve! Bagging Nipper's parcel, and then refusing to give it back! I mean, even when they're cornered!"

"Cornered be jiggered!" said Hal Brewster. "If you idiots attack us you'll think you've butted up against a brick wall!"

"Come on!" shouted Handforth. "On 'em, you chaps! Charge!"

"Absolutely!" sang out Archie stoutly.

And the rest of the St. Frank's fellows, clenching their fists, dashed to the attack. It was a swift, devastating onrush. Brewster & Co. were really to be commended for their courage. They were in the minority, and yet they had never thought of knuckling under. But, after all, the St. Frank's juniors, in similar circumstances, would have acted in exactly the same way. The motto of the rival groups was "Never Say Die!"

Valiant as Hal and his companions were, they could do nothing to stave off that fierce

attack. They swayed under the force of the rush, and Kingswood let out a howl of alarm.

"Look out!" he gasped. "There's a precipice behind these bushes! You're forcing us over it!"

"Great Scott! I forgot the gully!" ejaculated Hal Brewster. "Hi, you chaps! There might be an accident!"

"Don't take any notice!" shouted Handforth excitedly. "It's only a wheeze of theirs to——"

"It isn't!" interrupted Brewster frantically.

Just then Ascott went half through one of those bushes, with Gresham and Duncan on him. By pure chance, Ascott kicked against Nipper's parcel, and it hovered for a moment on the brink of the chasm and then went tumbling down.

"That's the parcel!" yelled Gresham, as he caught a glimpse of it.

"Well, it's gone now, and that cake must be smashed up into——"

Ascott's gulped words were not finished. For an extraordinary thing happened.



THE excited juniors heard a dull, thudding crash as the box hit the bottom of the gully. And then, immediately following, came a violent, shattering, devastating explosion.

Boom!

It took them all by surprise. The force of it was terrific—but, mercifully, that force went straight upwards, and so passed them, for none of the juniors was bending over the edge of the gully at the moment.

Yet, even as it was, half the fellows were flung over, as though a giant hand had struck them. They were deafened, bewildered, stunned. And up into the air went a great mass of stones, earth, dead ferns and broken twigs.

Then followed a tense, bewildering silence. The air was filled with pungent, acrid fumes, which came rolling up from the gully in choking masses.

Handforth was the first fellow to pick himself up, and the expression on his face was one of utter bewilderment.

"What—what happened?" he asked dazedly.

"Goodness only knows!" said Hal Brewster, with a gulp.

"Is anybody hurt?" shouted Gresham hoarsely. "That was a bombshell! Somebody might have been killed!"

"Dear old boys, I believed I am killed!" came a dismal murmur from Archie Glen-thorne. "Good gad! Not to say, odds shocks and staggerers!"

Nobody took any notice of Archie, for he was obviously unhurt; and it was soon discovered that all the rest of the fellows were intact. They had had a lucky escape—but only because that bomb had exploded at the very bottom of the gully. Had it expended its force in the open many of them would have been killed, and many seriously injured.

"My only sainted aunt!" breathed Handforth. "I can't understand it! What was it that exploded, anyhow?"

"That parcel must have hit something—perhaps it dislodged a big stone?" suggested Brewster. "By Jove! That's it! And the

stone must have struck against an old bomb!"

"What do you mean—an old bomb?" asked Handforth, staring. "They don't keep bombs down in these gullies!"

"It's one that was dropped by one of the German raiders during the war," said George Glynn excitedly. "That's what Brewster means!"

"Of course!" said Hal, nodding. "It must have been lying there for years without anybody suspecting its presence."

"I don't believe it," said Vivian Travers, shaking his head. "For the love of Samson! What duffers we are! It was that parcel which exploded!"

"The—the parcel?"

"Yes."

"You're mad!" said Handforth. "How could the parcel explode?"

"There was a cake in it," nodded Kingswood. "Cakes don't explode, do they?"

"Dear old fellows, there's more in this than meets the eye," said Travers, with a grim note in his voice. "Have you forgotten that that parcel was addressed to Nipper? How do we know that it came from Angus Thomson's, in Bannington? That label was only a bluff!"

"But—but—— Great Scott!" gurgled Handforth. "You—you mean—— Those giddy Chinese?"

"The Tong!" said Travers significantly.

"I believe he's right, you fellows!" exclaimed Fullwood, with a whistle. "It was a murder plot. An attempt to kill Nipper! He would have opened that parcel, and as

soon as he took the lid off the box that bomb would have exploded. I dare say there was a safety catch—and the opening of the lid removed it. The lid must have been smashed off in the fall, and so the bomb exploded!”

THE juniors were dumbfounded. All the St. Frank's fellows, at least, were convinced that they had hit upon the right explanation. And they felt dazed when they realised how narrowly they had escaped an awful death. The Fu Chang Tong was at the bottom of this dastardly outrage.

The Fu Chang Tong!

Of late, the lives of Nelson Lee and Nipper had been seriously menaced by the grim, relentless Chinese agents of that deadly secret society. Years earlier Nelson Lee and Nipper had incurred the enmity of the Tong, but they had believed that they were no longer in any danger. Then, suddenly, the peril had reasserted itself.

The Tong, after a period of inactivity, had burst into full life again. There was a new leader—far away, in China—and he it was who had ordered the execution of Nelson Lee and Nipper.

Mysterious Chinamen had been haunting the neighbourhood for some weeks, and there had been some exciting times. Only just recently, within a few days, the famous schoolmaster-detective and Nipper had been captured by the Tong men, and but for the sagacity of Boz, Nipper's little spaniel, both of them would have perished. Five of the Tong men had been captured, but Yen Sing, their leader, had escaped.

And since then Nelson Lee and Nipper had, by order of the police, remained indoors. Much as they hated this restriction, they knew that it was necessary. For there was no guarantee of safety from the Tong men; they were getting bold and desperate. Police officers were in constant attendance at the school; one man was always on duty at the gates, and others kept strict vigilance round the grounds.

There had been hectic meetings of the St. Frank's Board of Governors. Something, it was realised, would have to be done—and something drastic.

HAL BREWSTER was looking pale and shaky.

“We might have been killed!” he muttered, in an awed tone. “I mean, we bagged that parcel of Nipper's, and we were going to take it home with us.”

“Ye gods and little fishes!” said Kingswood. “That's true. We should have cut the string, and opened the lid—”

“Don't!” said Ascott, with a shudder. “Half the River House would have been blown up—and us with it.”

“Just because we boned an innocent-looking parcel!” said Glynn. “Oh, my hat! What a narrow squeak!”

“Those Chinamen must be devils—absolute devils!” said Handforth fiercely. “Think of it! Sending a bomb like that through the post—so that Nipper would open it and get killed! It's practically certain that lots of other fellows would have been killed, too!”

“Those Tong men don't care!” said Gresham. “As long as they kill their victim they don't mind who else suffers. I don't wonder that the school governors have been buzzing about, and that the police are on duty. Things are getting pretty hot!”

“And yet, looking at it all round, the very best thing has happened,” said Travers soberly. “Good luck to you, Brewster, for raiding that parcel from Muddy.”

“What do you mean?” asked Hal, staring.

“Can't you realise what would have happened if you hadn't bagged it?” replied Travers. “Nipper would have got it—”

“Yes, by Jove!” said Brewster. “As it is, Providence has stepped in and nobody is hurt—and no damage has been done, either. Great Scott! It's almost too good to be true!”

Suddenly, with a gulping cry, Kingswood went as white as a sheet.

“Here, steady!” said Hal quickly. “Feeling bad, old man? The after-effects, I suppose—”

“No, it's not that!” panted Kingswood. “I've—I've thought of something else! Something horrible!”

They all stared at him fascinatedly.

“What do you mean?” asked Handforth, shaking him by the arm.

“I remember now—there was another parcel on Mudford's shoulder,” said Kingswood hoarsely. “It was addressed to Mr. Lee!”

“What!” went up a horrified yell.

“I'll swear it was!” said Kingswood. “A parcel just like that one of Nipper's—only I didn't notice any label, or anything. Those Tong men want to kill Mr. Lee, too, don't they? Isn't it more than likely that they sent two bombs? One for Nipper, and one for Mr. Lee?”

“Then—then Mr. Lee may be dead by this time!” ejaculated Handforth. “Mudford's delivered the parcel long ago, and when Mr. Lee opens it—”

“He hasn't opened it yet!” broke in Travers shrewdly. “We should have heard the explosion. He's safe so far!”

“By jingo, yes!”

“Odds lightning and speed!” said Archie Glenthorne. “The sooner we can get to St. Frank's the better, laddies! If we do a certain amount of dashing, we might be in time to avert the disaster!”

CHAPTER 3.

The Governors' Decision!

THE St. Frank's and River House juniors were filled with horror at the possibilities which leapt into their minds. At any moment they half-expected to hear a dull, booming explosion from the direction of St. Frank's—a sound



The juniors heard a dull thud as the harmless-looking box hit the bottom of the gully. Next moment—boom! There came a violent, shattering, devastating explosion; the juniors were flung over as though a giant hand had struck them, and the air was filled with pungent, acrid fumes.

which would mean that Nelson Lee had been killed, together with perhaps scores of other innocent people.

Kingswood was right about that parcel; other juniors remembered having seen it. Mudford had certainly delivered it by this time, and it hardly seemed possible that the boys would be able to get to St. Frank's before the tragedy occurred!

"Come on!" said Handforth hoarsely. "We've got to move!"

"Wait a minute!" gasped Norton. "Hadn't—hadn't we better telephone?"

"Telephone!" shouted Handforth. "You idiot! There's no telephone here!"

"There's one in the village!"

"Rot!" roared Handforth. "While we're messing about going to the village and getting through on the telephone, Mr. Lee may be killed! Our duty is to rush to St. Frank's and warn Mr. Lee personally. We're wasting time now!"

The others hesitated no longer. They went tearing off along the pathway through the wood. Never in their lives before had they run so fast.

They reached the lane, and most of them took the stile in one bound. Then they went streaming up towards St. Frank's, and Handforth managed to keep the lead. He resolutely made up his mind that he would be the first to rush into Nelson Lee's study with the warning.

Other St. Frank's fellows stared in sheer amazement as the juniors came hurtling

through the gateway and into the Triangle. Two or three seniors wanted to know, "What's the giddy idea, you chumps?" but they were ignored. There was no time to bother with answering their questions.

Handforth, with Church and McClure and Travers close on his heels, charged into the Ancient House. Teddy Long, who was just coming out, was sent flying, all the breath knocked out of his body. In one of the passages, Handforth upset somebody else who was carrying a load of books. Indeed, all the way along the juniors left a trail of battered and bewildered victims.

And now that they were actually within the school, they wondered if they had come to their death. At any second that explosion might take place—and the nearer they got to Nelson Lee's study the greater was the peril!

Yet they did not hesitate—they did not attempt to hang back. They were filled with a wild hope that they would yet be in time!

Handforth reached Nelson Lee's study, and he flung himself against the door with such force that it burst open, the catch breaking away completely. He went charging in.

"Good heavens!" ejaculated a startled voice.

Handforth stood there, his eyes gleaming, his breath coming and going in gasps. Behind him the other juniors were accumulating. They beheld Nelson Lee sitting at his desk, and with him were Sir John Brent,

chairman of the St. Frank's Board of Governors, Dr. Morrison Nicholls, the headmaster, and one or two other people.

"Handforth!" exclaimed Nelson Lee sternly. "What is the meaning of this outrageous intrusion?"

"The parcel, sir!" gasped Handforth. "The parcel!"

"Oh!" said Lee.

A twinkle came into his eyes, and he reassured the boys at once. He pointed to a pail of water which stood near the fireplace. In this pail of water there was a square box, the lid of which had been prized open.

"Have no fear, boys," said Lee. "I am too old a bird to be caught by such a crude trick. The bomb is no longer dangerous."

Handforth stared, goggle-eyed, at the pail.

"Well I'm blessed!" he breathed. "Then—then we needn't have hurried so much?"

"As it happens, no," said Nelson Lee. "As soon as that parcel was delivered I suspected its contents, and I had it immersed in water before I tampered with it. Nowadays, boys, I find it necessary to be extra careful, and suspicious of almost everything."

"Thank goodness, sir!" said Travers. "We had the wind up vertical!"

Dr. Nicholls looked at the juniors curiously.

"How did you know that this—er—bomb had been sent to Mr. Lee?" he asked.

"We didn't know, sir—we guessed," replied Handforth. "There was one, just like it, sent to Nipper—"

"To me!" ejaculated Nipper, who was sitting in the study.

"One moment," said Nelson Lee sharply. "When my own parcel was delivered, I immediately made inquiries, and I was told that no parcel had been delivered for Nipper. Therefore, I was easy in mind concerning him—apart from the fact that he is here with me in this room."

"These River House chaps bagged it, sir—thinking it was a cake!" explained Handforth.

"Upon my soul!" said the Head. "What an appalling situation! They might have been killed!"

"Where is the parcel now?" demanded Lee, springing up.

"It exploded, sir!" sang out Brewster. "Didn't you hear it? We took it into Bell-ton Wood, and it fell down a gully and went off!"

"Was anybody hurt?" asked the Head.

"Nobody, sir—luckily," said Handforth. "The force of the explosion went upwards, and, although we were a bit stunned, we weren't hurt. I thought that explosion would have been heard over half the country."

"No doubt the woods muffled the sound, and, naturally, it seemed very loud to you boys, who were on the spot," said Lee. "Curiously enough, we heard nothing here. Handforth, I should like you to give me the full details of this affair."

Handforth did so, and, when he had finished, Nelson Lee and the Head looked at him approvingly—and with relief.

"You boys have had a remarkably narrow escape—and a lucky escape," said Nelson Lee. "I am not forgetting that you acted with considerable bravery, too, in running to the school to give me the warning. Thank you, boys—it was good of you. But, as you have seen, I was in no danger."

"We didn't know that, sir," said Handforth.

"And the fact that you might arrive just when the explosion took place did not deter you," said the Head warmly. "Splendid! You have all behaved very courageously, and I can do nothing but commend you in the highest possible terms. You are a credit to the school."

The juniors looked rather uncomfortable.

"It was nothing, sir!" protested Handforth awkwardly. And then, anxious to change the subject, he added: "Is—is there anything else we can do, sir?"

"I think not, Handforth," replied the Head. "You had better go now—all of you."

He dismissed them with further words of praise, and after he had made certain that none of them was injured in any way, they were glad enough to depart—all feeling highly relieved.

"YOU see," said Sir John Brent, after the boys had gone, "it is utterly impossible, Mr. Lee, for you to remain at St. Frank's. Think of the appalling possibilities! A dozen boys might have been killed, but for a great stroke of luck."

"Those Tong men are fiends," said the headmaster gravely. "Much as I hate to agree with Sir John, I can do nothing else. It is lamentable that you should be driven away in this fashion, Mr. Lee, but what alternative is there?"

"None," replied Lee quietly.

There was another man in the room—a keen-faced, square-jawed individual. He was no less a person than Chief Detective-Inspector Lennard, of Scotland Yard. He had been sent down especially to deal with this case—for it had now become a matter which had invited the attention of the Chief Commissioner of Police.

"It's hard luck on you, Lee, but these gentlemen are right," said the chief inspector. "This part of the country has got too hot for you—and for Nipper, too. We'll do the utmost we can to protect you, and there's not a doubt that when we have got you away from this district the danger will be over. But it is going to be a ticklish business."

"As chairman of the Board of Governors, I must insist upon your leaving at the earliest possible moment, Mr. Lee," said Sir John anxiously. "This latest demonstration of the Tong's devilry is sufficient in itself. Great heavens! Half the school might have

been killed this afternoon! I am positively staggered at the thought of it! Once these accursed people start sending bombs in this fashion, it is high time——"

"I agree, Sir John," interrupted Lee. "Nipper and I will go. Indeed, even if you expressed your willingness that we should remain we should still go."

"Have you any definite plan?" asked the Head, glancing at the Yard man. "Have you any safe place where Mr. Lee can find sanctuary?"

"You mean where I can hide," said Lee bitterly. "Thank you, Dr. Nicholls, for putting it so nicely."

"I had no intention of offending you, Mr. Lee——"

"Of course not," said the great detective, with a quick smile.

"But you cannot realise, gentlemen, how I detest this necessity for going into hiding. There is no reason why we should not use plain words. I was determined to fight these Tong men and to beat them, but they have adopted such grim methods—methods which involve risk to others—that I am now compelled to give in. But it is hard. It goes very much against the grain."

"We've got to use commonsense over it," said the chief inspector quietly. "And, certainly, we don't want these infernal Chinamen to win, do we? It'll be no satisfaction for you, Lee, to allow yourself to be killed. Your only sensible course is to find this—er—sanctuary that Dr. Nicholls has spoken of. I rather fancy that Scotland Yard can provide you with one."

"And the Tong?" asked Sir John. "Do you think that that vile organisation will be effectively dealt with?"

"I am glad to say that Mr. Lee's exile cannot be of long duration," replied the Scotland Yard man. "There are signs that the Fu Changs are reaching the end of their tether. They had made a most spectacular 'come-back,' but it will not last for long. The British authorities in China are making a very drastic drive, and according to the latest information to hand the Tong looks like being stamped out within the next few days."

"That, at all events, is good hearing," said the Head fervently.

"A big coup is imminent," said Lennard, with satisfaction. "And once the Tong's teeth are drawn at headquarters—in China—the various agents, in all parts of the world, will be harmless. Without any organisation behind them, without any leader, they will collapse. Personally, I do not think Mr. Lee will be away from St. Frank's for longer than a week or a fortnight."

"And when he goes, taking Hamilton with him, will the school be immune from further danger?" asked Sir John. "That is the point in which I am most interested. While I am deeply concerned for your safety, Mr. Lee, you must realise that I must also think of the school."

"That is only natural, Sir John," replied Lee. "And it is right that these schoolboys should be immune from any danger."

"We may be quite sure that the Tong men are watching," said the chief inspector grimly. "Or if they are not watching themselves, they have agents who are in touch with them. I have made some very elaborate arrangements, and our departure from St. Frank's will not escape attention. In fact, scarcely anybody in this district will fail to know that you and Nipper have gone. And after that, of course, the Tong men will leave the district and there will be no further danger for any of the schoolboys."

And so the conference continued.

It was definitely and finally settled that Nelson Lee and Nipper should be taken away from the school—taken to a place of safety. Nelson Lee loathed and detested the necessity for this move, but he knew that it was out of the question for Nipper and himself to remain. They would have to go—not because they were frightened, but because it was their duty to do so for the sake of others.

CHAPTER 4.

The Exiles!

ONE might have supposed that Nelson Lee and Nipper would quietly slip away, so that there would be no possibility of the Tong's agents tracing them.



THE TRAIN WRECK!

"There was a shattering roar, the splintering of woodwork and then the hiss of steam. Screams and cries sounded on the night air as the great engine lurched forward into the snowdrift, and lay still like a wounded monster . . ."

This thrilling incident is the start of many sensational adventures for the chums of St. Frank's. All readers of the Nelson Lee Library will thoroughly enjoy next week's stunning yarn, which is entitled:

"HANDFORTH'S GIRL CHUM!"

But this would never have done, for the Tong men, knowing nothing of their intended victims' departure, might have continued to menace St. Frank's. It was therefore necessary that Lee and Nipper should leave in the most elaborate manner—a manner that would court full publicity.

It was still only mid-afternoon when the next move was made.

Groups of juniors were standing about in the Triangle, discussing the exciting bomb incident. Tommy Watson and Sir Montie Tregellis-West stood on the Ancient House steps, looking miserable.

"They're taking him away to-day," Watson was saying. "Goodness only knows when we shall see him again!"

"It's frightfully bad, dear old boy!" sighed Sir Montie. "Poor old Nipper! He must be shockin'ly cut up—he must, really!"

"And we don't know what will happen to him after he leaves," went on Watson gloomily. "How do we know that these rotten Tong men won't throw a bomb at the car? If they can send a bomb by post, they can——"

"Rather a different thing, Tommy!" interrupted Tregellis-West. "Not much fear of discovery if they send bombs through the post; but frightfully risky to throw one from the roadside. And these Chinamen are slippery customers, and they seem to take good care of their own skins—although they're so frightfully thoughtless about other people's skins."

Handforth came up, looking flushed and excited.

"It's all rot—Nipper going away," he said indignantly. "What's the matter with the Head? And with the governors? We're ready to stand the risk, and I'm jolly certain that Mr. Lee and Nipper don't want to bolt like this!"

"They're not bolting," said Watson, with a glare.

"What do you call it, then?"

"If the Scotland Yard men and the governors want Mr. Lee and Nipper to go, what else can they do?" said Tommy. "I understand they won't be away for long. Montie and I had a word with Nipper not long ago, and he says that the Tong is pretty well smashed up."

"Didn't seem like it this afternoon," said McClure.

"Perhaps they only said that to bluff you," said Handforth suspiciously. "I don't believe the Tong is getting beaten. Anyhow, when Mr. Lee and Nipper have gone, what are we going to do for a Housemaster? And what about the Remove captain?"

"Goodness only knows!" said Watson helplessly.

"Of course, I can be temporary captain during Nipper's absence," continued Handforth. "I don't mind taking on the job——"

"But we do, dear old fellow," interrupted Travers. "We mind very much!"

"Could you find anybody better than me for a temporary skipper?" asked Handforth coldly.

"You mean, could we find anybody worse?" murmured Travers. "No offence, dear old fellow, but you weren't cut out to be a leader. If you held a Form meeting and things didn't quite go right, you would punch every nose within arm's length."

"Of course I should," nodded Handforth. "Any fellow who jibs against me is going to feel the weight of my fist!"

"Oh, dry up!" said Watson. "There's no need to talk about a temporary skipper. Nipper won't be away for long. And I dare say we shall get on all right without a Housemaster for a week or two."

"Once they are gone they might never come back!" said Harry Gresham, shaking his head.

"You mean—they might be killed?" asked Sir Montie. "Begad! What a frightful thought!"

"No, I don't mean that," said Gresham. "But if these Tong men are still after them, and there's any risk of further outrages, the school governors might not allow them to come back. The whole thing's rotten!"

"Hallo! What the dickens is this?" asked Nick Trotwood, staring at the main gateway. "Well, I'm blessed! Look what's just arrived!"

They all stared. A powerful armoured car had just driven into the Triangle. It was an imposing-looking vehicle, with an entirely enclosed body—of steel. It came gliding towards the Ancient House, sweeping round in a great curve.

As it came to a halt, Chief Detective-Inspector Lennard came down the Ancient House steps and walked briskly up to it. The driver, who could be seen in his little cubby-hole, saluted.

"You're here in good time, Parker," said the Yard man.

"Yes, sir."

"We're nearly ready, and we'll be out within five minutes," went on Lennard. "You can stop your engine if you like, and you can stretch your legs—but be ready to start at any minute."

"Right you are, sir!" said the driver, saluting again.

Lennard went indoors, and the juniors glanced at one another again—this time more excitedly than before.

"It's for Mr. Lee and Nipper—to take them away!" said Handforth blankly.

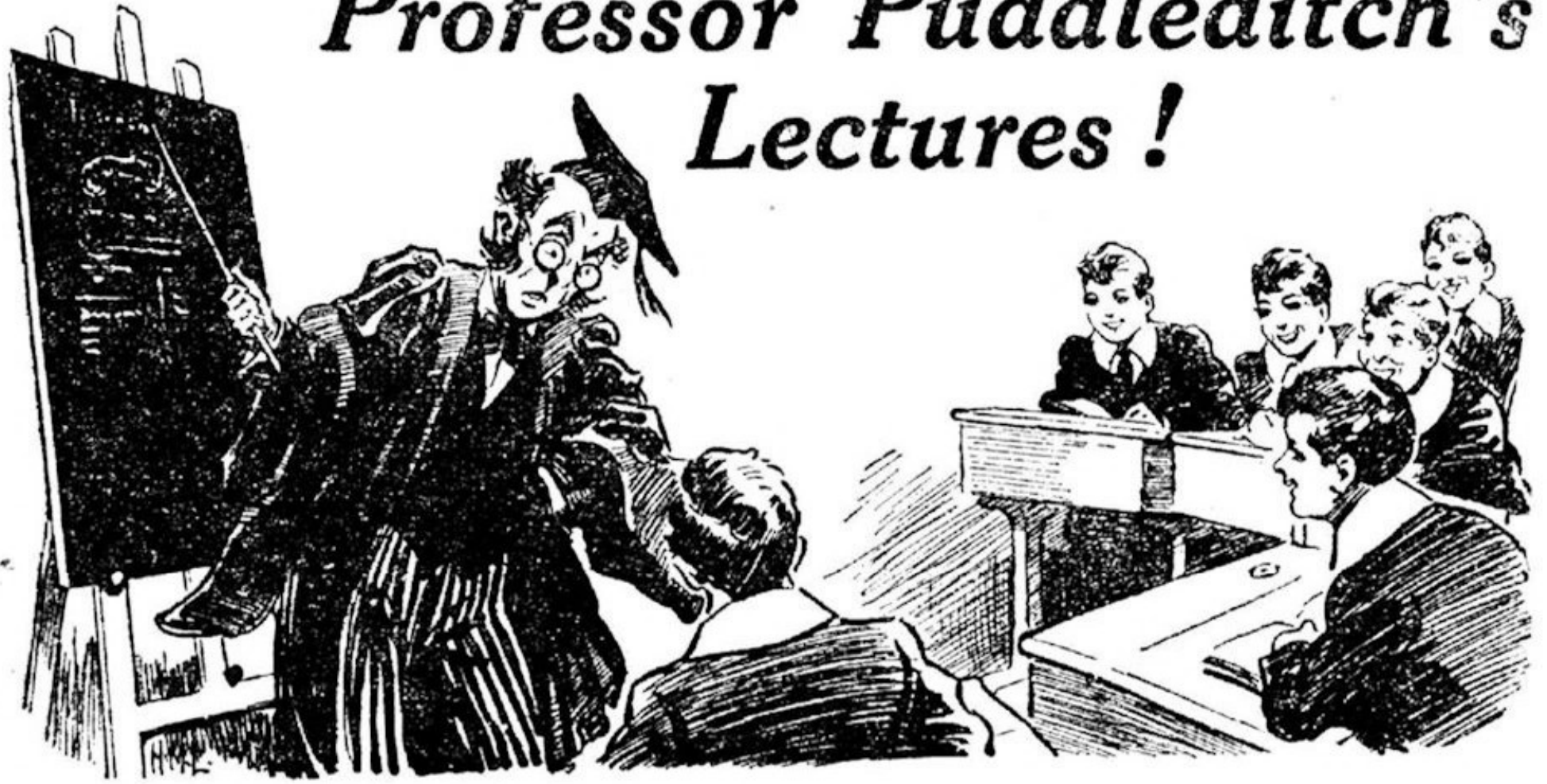
"An armoured car, by jingo!"

"Well, well! There's nothing like being on the safe side, dear old fellows."

"It shows how much the police think of those rotten Tong men," said Gresham, with a whistle. "They probably think that Mr. Lee and Nipper might be shot at if they went in an ordinary car. It makes you feel sort of all hot inside. Fancy things like this happening down here, in Sussex!"

(Continued on page 14.)

Professor Puddleditch's Lectures!



You've never heard of that remarkable animal known as the womba-womba, have you? But Professor Puddleditch has—and he tells you all about it in this week's uproariously amusing lecture!

By Reggie Pitt

LECTURE 7—THE WOMBA-WOMBA

PUNCTUALLY as the school clock struck eleven, Professor Puddleditch, preceded by his tremendous dictionary which was clasped to his chest, entered the Hall of St. Sycamore's College somewhat unsteadily, and staggered up the steps to the dais. He greeted the Form with a breathless smile, and then dumped his dictionary with a thud on to the table.

"This week, gentlemen," he warbled, "I have chosen to speak to you of a strange beast called the womba-womba. Now, the womba-womba is an animal which is unfortunately almost non-existent, there being, I understand, only one or two or three left.

"It is, however, the possessor of many uncommon features (and by that I do not mean it has four eyes and several noses), but that its characteristics are such as make it a fit study for our present investigation of the lesser-known creatures which inhabit this earth."

The professor cleared his throat, threw out his chest—what there was of it—and settled down to his subject.

"The home of the few remaining specimens that are still living is in Inkistan, situated as you are aware—or should be—in the extreme top right-hand corner of the African Continent, longitude ten degrees in the wet, latitude about plus fours.

"One of the many—or several—remarkable curiosities of this beast is that it has a fur

collar, which has developed through the ages until it is now quite detachable.

"You can appreciate the importance of this asset in a country of great heat by day, and intense cold by night. It allows the womba-womba to put on its fur collar when going to bed, and so keep warm and comfy, and take it off again upon rising, when the heat of the day would be likely to cause it much inconvenience.

"The collar, when not worn around the neck, is hung upon the creature's tail, which curls upwards. Thus, the collar is carried about from place to place—and back again—and is always at hand (or should I say—*at tail?* He, he, he!), is then—we will compromise—always handy by nightfall, in readiness for use as nature intended it to be.

"Another characteristic of the womba-womba, not found in many other animals, is its ability to move forwards, and then to reverse gear and walk backwards.

"Its feet revolve for this purpose, so that it does not get corns when using alternate methods of locomotion.

"I need not stress how useful this trait is, when in the pursuit of its prey. It can approach gradually, while all the time the prey thinks it is walking away. It lives mostly on flies, which are attracted by the red glow of its proboscis, or nose.

"To safeguard it when running in reverse, the womba-womba has two flat, highly-

(Continued on page 44.)

The Peril of the Yellow Men!

(Continued from page 12.)

"Anybody might think that we were in Chicago!" said Handforth, with a sniff.

THE chief inspector examined his automatic pistol, and tucked it back into his pocket.

"Well, we're ready," he said briskly.

Nelson Lee and Nipper were in their overcoats, and they had just shaken hands with Sir John Brent and Dr. Morrison Nicholls. These latter two gentlemen were looking both relieved and regretful.

"We hate to lose you, Mr. Lee," said the Head earnestly. "There is no need for me to repeat, I am sure, that it is in the best interests of yourselves and the school that you should go elsewhere for a period."

Nelson Lee smiled.

"Considering what has happened to-day, it would be impossible for us to remain," he replied. "And you must not think, Dr. Nicholls, that I intend to hide myself in some secure corner. My plan is to take the battle into the enemy's camp. I am going to work hand in hand with Scotland Yard, and we shall, if possible, locate the Tong's headquarters in London and get our hands on Yen Sing."

"You must be careful, Mr. Lee," said Sir John Brent anxiously. "We are not prepared to obtain the services of another Housemaster. We shall expect you to return."

"It's no good, gentlemen—Mr. Lee isn't the kind of man we can keep locked up," said Lennard dryly. "He's a born fighter, and nothing will keep him out of this scrap. And if we're not better than these infernal Chinamen—dangerous and ruthless as they are—you can call me a nigger!"

"Yes, I think we'll heat them," said Lee.

"The car's outside, and I want you to hustle as soon as you show your faces in the open," continued the chief inspector. "I don't think for a minute that there's any danger—but you can't be too sure."

Nipper was not feeling so cut up about going. If Nelson Lee was actually going to fight the Fu Chang Tong in London, then leaving St. Frank's for a period would not be so bad. If there was detective work to be done, Nipper was determined to join in. And he was as keen on pitting his wits and energies against these Tong men as Nelson Lee was.

Sir John Brent and the Head did not come out with them. It was Lennard's sug-

gestion. And the Yard man made another.

A prefect was sent for, and within a short time he and a few more prefects went into the Triangle and hustled everybody into their respective Houses.

"What's the idea of this?" asked Buster Boots of the Fourth.

"Never mind what the idea is—cut in-doors!" said Biggleswade of the Sixth.

"You're not one of our prefects!" protested Boots.

"It's the Head's orders, and unless you look sharp you'll get into trouble!" retorted Biggleswade. "Now then—all of you!"

Before five minutes had elapsed the Triangle was clear. And, to make matters worse from the point of view of the juniors, all the main doors were closed, and nobody was allowed to go to the windows.

"Never heard of such rot!" said Handforth, who was in the Ancient House lobby. "Bottling us up like this!"

"Merely a precautionary measure, dear old fellow," said Travers. "I

take it that Mr. Lee and Nipper are about to come out. There might be some snipers on the watch, and it would be a shocking tragedy if some of us chaps got potted by mistake, wouldn't it?"

"Snipers?" repeated Handforth, staring. "What rot!"

"Well, you never know," said Travers, solemnly. "These Tong men are dangerous brutes. They might be perched up on the roof somewhere, or in one of the trees."

Travers was pleased to be slightly sarcastic—although it was quite lost upon Handforth. These elaborate precautions made the St. Frank's juniors realise that the danger was indeed acute, and everybody was excitedly discussing the dramatic situation.

Mr. Lennard strode into the Ancient House lobby with Nelson Lee and Nipper. There was an immediate shout from the crowd of juniors, and some of them attempted to press round.

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Mr. Lee!"

"Don't be away from us for long, sir!"

Tregellis-West and Watson grabbed hold of Nipper, and pulled him aside.

"This is rotten, you know," said Watson.

"We've hardly had a minute with you, Nipper! Where are you going to? How long will you be away? When shall we see you again?"

"You won't fail to let us know how things are going, will you, dear old boy?" asked Sir Montie.

"Cheese it, you asses!" chuckled Nipper. "You're making too much fuss about it."

CHRISTMAS

*will soon be here
—and so will the*

ENLARGED XMAS NUMBER

of the

NELSON LEE LIBRARY!

It's Scotland Yard's idea to take all these precautions—not Mr. Lee's. He can't very well help himself, because the School Governors called in the aid of Scotland Yard."

"Blow Scotland Yard!" put in Handforth, coming up. "Why can't Mr. Lee go his own road?"

"Because, if he ignored the Yard's help, and if anything happened—anything serious, I mean—he'd be to blame," replied Nipper. "And the gov'nor knows that it isn't fair to expose the school to any sort of peril. We've just got to go, my sons!"

"Beastly hard cheese," said Handforth sympathetically. "I suppose they'll keep you locked up somewhere?"

"Let them try to keep the gov'nor locked up," retorted Nipper. "My dear ass, as soon as we get to London we're going to start active work—detective work. The gov'nor's plan is to locate the headquarters of the Tong, and to get to grips with Yen Sing."

Handforth started.

"Then—then you're not going into hiding?" he asked blankly.

"Not in the way you mean," replied Nipper. "We might disguise ourselves, and take different names, but we shall be active enough."

"By George!" said Edward Oswald, his eyes gleaming. "You'll need me with you, then!"

"Eh?"

"If there's any detective work to be done, I'm the chap for the job!" said Handforth. "Where's Mr. Lee? I'll put it to him—"

"I shouldn't bother, old man," said Nipper gently. "Much as the gov'nor would—ahem!

—be delighted to have your services, I'm afraid this obstinate, hard-headed Scotland Yard man would put the veto on your suggestion."

"I'll have a word with him!" said Handforth promptly.

"Hold him back, you chaps!" said Nipper appealingly.

"Leave him to us!" replied Church.

"Let go, you fatheads!" said Handforth, as Church and McClure seized him. "What's the idea of this? I'm going to talk to that Scotland Yard man. He's a pal of mine. If I ask him nicely—"

"I want you fellows to go along to the Moor View School," said Nipper, interrupting Handforth's indignant flow. "Say good-bye to Mary Summers for me, will you?"

"The pleasure will be all ours," said Travers.

"I haven't had a chance of seeing her—I couldn't go out, and I didn't want to ask her to come here," said Nipper. "It would have looked so funny. She doesn't know that I'm in any real danger—and perhaps

I'm not. Anyhow, she'll understand if you explain to her."

"Leave it to us, old son," said Tommy Watson. "And don't forget to be back soon. We shall be skipperless until—"

"Now then—now then!" said Chief-Inspector Lennard, bustling up. "You boys will have to let Nipper go now. We're waiting to start."

"Hallo! The very man I want to see!" said Handforth. "I'm coming with you, Inspector Lennard!"

"No, you're not!" said the Yard man. "I'd rather face a dozen Tong men than travel up to London with you!"

He seized Nipper's arm before Handforth could reply, and a moment later Nelson Lee and Nipper slipped through the half-opened door, with Lennard just in front of them—Lennard now carrying his automatic in his hand.

The door closed, and Nelson Lee and Nipper had gone!

CHAPTER 5.

The Tong Men!

CLANG!

The door of the armoured car closed, the engine purred, and the powerful vehicle went gliding out of the Triangle. There had been no need for the chief inspector's elaborate precautions; for the whole vicinity of St. Frank's was as peaceful as ever. The sky had become overcast now, and the afternoon was becoming dull with a trace of mist.

It was comfortable in the armoured car. Nelson Lee and Nipper sat at the back, whilst Lennard took his seat beside the driver.

"Go pretty slow until we get to Bannington, Parker," he said, as they turned out of the gateway. "We want everybody to see us, you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

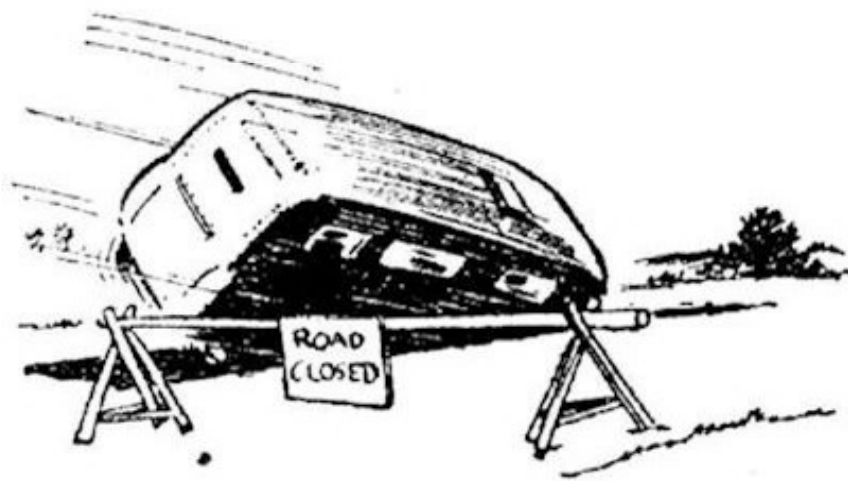
"If any of these infernal Chinks are about, we'll let them have a good view of us," continued the chief inspector.

He turned round and glanced at the passengers.

"You'd better show yourself as clearly as possible at the window, Lee—and you, too, young 'un," he said. "We want our Tong friends to know that you're aboard. It's special bullet-proof glass in those windows, so there's no danger of you being potted."

"Bullet-proof glass?" asked Nipper in wonder. "It looks ordinary enough."

"Something new—something special," said the Yard man. "I fancy we're going to have our Flying Squad cars fitted with it. Nothing like being on the safe side."



They dawdled on their way to the village, and they passed through Bellton slowly and sedately—much to the astonishment of a few local inhabitants and shopkeepers who saw them. Armoured cars of this type were an unusual sight in this quiet Sussex village.

"You can speed up a bit now, Parker," said Lennard, as they got on to the Bannington road. "Let her out to about thirty along here—and you can go as fast as you like after we get through Bannington."

"All right, sir," said the driver.

They gathered speed, and Parker veered to the off-side of the road. For, just ahead, there were some repairs in progress. Being a Saturday there were no men at work now, and half the road was barricaded off. Trestles and scaffold-poles were used for this purpose.

"That's funny," said the driver in a puzzled voice. "I could have sworn that it was the other side of the road that was up. I seem to remember——"

"Look out!" shouted the chief inspector suddenly.

The armoured car was just entering the half-section of road, and at that second Parker saw the thing which Lennard had seen. Right in front of them was a deep, yawning excavation!

There wasn't time to pull up, and even when the driver tried to swerve it was too late. The off-side wheels plunged into that excavation; the car veered over, rocked madly for a second, and then toppled over on its side.

There was a rush of feet. An arm snaked through the open window next the chief inspector, and a heavy chunk of iron came into violent contact with Lennard's head—just as that unfortunate individual was trying to scramble into an upright position. He sagged over, and remained still.

The driver was jammed between the steering-wheel and the off-side door, and, although he wasn't injured, he was unable to get out. Lee and Nipper, in the back, had received a severe shaking. Both of them had been flung violently over, and Nipper was partially stunned. Lee's right arm was bruised and numbed, and when he attempted to reach for his revolver-pocket he found that he was temporarily paralysed. Everything, in fact, was going in favour of the attackers.

In a flash, Lee knew exactly what had happened.

Just before the armoured car had come along, somebody had shifted some of the trestles and the scaffolding. Thus it had seemed to Parker that it was the off-side of the road which was open, and he had consequently driven straight on. Not until it was too late did he find out that there had been treachery.

A simple trick, but a very effective one.

That deep trench in the road had done its work, and the armoured car was helpless. Its very weight had been against it, and its armour-plating was now no protection whatsoever.

AN extraordinary scene, this.

The quiet country road was filled with motley figures. One or two of them were Chinese. Others were "dagoes." All of them were dressed roughly, and they seemed to be a tough crowd.

The spot was singularly suitable for such a hold-up. It was right on a bend, and it was because of this bend, indeed, that Parker had had no time to realise the nature of the trap.

This bend had another advantage—for the attackers. The spot was hidden from view, and the driver of any approaching vehicle could see nothing until he was actually on the spot. And there were two special men on duty here—members of this gang. One stood at the Bellton end of the bend, and his companion stood at the other. They were there to stop all traffic that should happen to come along. But, as it chanced, there was no traffic whatever.

These were the Tong men!

Nelson Lee knew it in a moment, and he half-expected that his last second had come. He believed that these desperate men would either shoot him down—Nipper, too—or else hurl a bomb at the armoured car which would completely wreck it, killing all its occupants.

"Guv'nor!" panted Nipper dazedly. "What—what's happened?"

"They've got us, young 'un!" muttered Lee. "I've never felt so helpless! My arm——"

He broke off. The front side door was being pulled open. As the car had toppled over on its side, this door was therefore practically over Nelson Lee's head. A small object was quickly thrust in and the door was slammed to. At the same instant a heavy cloth was flung over the upper part of the door, which was open.

Nelson Lee caught a glimpse of the little object sliding down behind the unconscious Lennard's back. Lee struggled up, and attempted to reach over. He had no doubt that the thing was a bomb. Like rats in a trap, he and his companion were to be annihilated!

There came a sharp hiss, and then a loud puff.

Instantly the interior of the car was filled with choking, pungent vapour. Something seemed to clutch at Nelson Lee's throat, and he fought for breath. Everything swam in front of his eyes. Poison-gas occurred to him—just before consciousness left him. In his last remaining moments of sensibility he heard a gasping cry from Nipper, and another from Parker, the driver.

Then came oblivion.

Chief-inspector Lennard had considered it a very smart move to use this vehicle for conveying Nelson Lee and Nipper to London. Yet, actually, it was the worst type of car that he could have employed. If it had been an open automobile, of the ordinary kind, Lee and Nipper would have been flung out, unhurt, and they could have put up a good

fight. As it was, they had been hopelessly trapped.

Two minutes elapsed, and then the door of the car was wrenched open, and the fumes quickly billowed out into the open air, to be dissipated by the breeze.

In the meantime, an ancient Ford van had rattled out of an adjacent meadow, and it now stood on the sound section of the road, alongside the derelict. There was a neatness and precision about the whole proceedings which indicated that there were brains at the back of the affair.

The men swarmed over the armoured car. One of them jumped inside, and almost immediately Nelson Lee's inert form was hoisted up. Strong hands gripped it and hauled it out. Swiftly Lee was transferred to the Ford van. Then came Nipper. The chief inspector and his assistant were left in the derelict. These raiders, apparently, had no interest in the representatives of Scotland Yard.

Nipper was placed beside Lee in the old van; the engine roared, and the vehicle started off—conveying its curiously assorted gang with it.

Round the bend there was a brief pause. A man on the road quickly shifted some scaffolding and placed it right across the highway from hedge to hedge. He pulled a board out of the ditch, and placed it in position. On it were the words, "Road Closed."

By this time the scaffolding had been arranged in exactly the same way farther along, round the other bend—and there was another board there, too. The Ford car picked up its final passenger, the flaps at the back closed to, and the whole dramatic episode was over—having occupied less than four minutes from first to last.



"Hallo! What the dickens is this?" asked Nick Trotwood, staring in amazement. For coming through the main gateway of St. Frank's was a powerful car, the body of which was enclosed in a covering of steel.

The Ford took the Caistowe road, and one or two people who were standing about at the end of the village only gave it a casual glance. A dilapidated commercial van—just that, and nothing more. What was there to arouse anybody's suspicions? The van vanished into the gathering dusk of the short November afternoon.

And there, on the Bannington road, were those two boards in front of the scaffolding. Traffic passing in either direction would encounter the barrier, and would naturally turn back, seeking some detour.

The derelict armoured car was invisible from both ends of the closed section—and even if it hadn't been invisible, not many motorists were likely to take much notice of it. They would assume that there had been an accident, and that the road was closed in consequence.

There was only the chance that a pedestrian would climb over the scaffolding and walk on. Yet, notwithstanding this, it might well happen that an hour would pass before anything sensational was suspected.

And already Nelson Lee and Nipper were being carried off. They had been kidnapped by the agents of the Fu Chang Tong in broad daylight, within half a mile of Bellton Village—and not a soul, it seemed, had the slightest inkling!

CHAPTER 6.

The One Who Saw!

“**S**INK my rum rations!” ejaculated Captain Phineas Boom.

He was in what he called the “Crow’s Nest,” and rigged up in front of him was his favourite telescope on a kind of swivelling holder. He had one eye held steadily to the telescope, and he was gazing with frank curiosity.

Captain Boom was the one man in the whole district who had obtained a view of the exciting incidents on the Bannington road.

He was a man of about sixty, but he was as active as any youngster. His appearance was striking, for his ruddy, weather-beaten face was adorned with an aggressive tuft of beard at the end of his chin. His hair was curly and red, and only partially concealed by the peaked cap which he wore at a rakish angle.

Captain Phineas Boom was an old merchant skipper, and there were not many parts of the world which he did not know almost as well as he knew England. But now he was living in retirement, and it was one of his favourite pastimes to go up into the “Crow’s Nest” and to take a general look at the surrounding scenery.

At the moment, Captain Boom was watching an interesting and intriguing operation. An old Ford van was backing into a meadow. It was at least a mile away, and, with the naked eye, nothing much could have been seen—particularly as the atmosphere was inclined to be misty.

But through that powerful telescope Captain Boom could see every little detail. It brought the spot close to him. And he watched the manoeuvres of the van merely because it was the only piece of activity within range of his telescope.

But it wasn’t the van which had induced Captain Boom to utter that ejaculation. It was something else. Two men had jumped from the van, and they were hastily shifting some trestles and scaffolding—so that the open section of the road should now be closed. It was such an unusual proceeding that Captain Boom could hardly believe the evidence of his eyes.

He saw that deep trench in the road, and he knew that if any vehicle came along now it would stand a good chance of plunging

into that excavation before the driver could realise his peril.

And while Captain Boom could see these things so clearly it is doubtful if the Tong men could see Captain Boom. He had a telescope to assist him, and they had none. Moreover, how could they suspect that somebody was watching them from a spot far aloft?

Captain Boom and an old friend of his—Peter Jiggs—had recently purchased Bellton Chase, a quiet, picturesque old house on the Caistowe road. They had retired, and they intended spending their days in this peaceful little haven. Both of them had been employed for many years by Commander Sampson Rudd, late R.N.; but upon Commander Rudd’s death, they had decided that a life of retirement was clearly indicated.

One of the features of Bellton Chase—the chief feature which had induced Captain Boom to buy it—was a high turret which reached upwards well above the normal roof.

The turret was surrounded by any amount of ornamental stonework. It was reached from inside by means of a steep stairway, and there was a trapdoor in the roof. Up there, with his telescope, Captain Boom would spend many an hour. And, owing to the ornamental stonework, he was practically invisible from the ground. Yet he, himself, could see everything.

From that high elevation, he could watch the ships out at sea, beyond the Shingle Head lighthouse. Indeed, if the sea had not been in full view he would never have bought Bellton Chase at all.

“Monkey business!” muttered the old skipper, frowning. “That’s what it is, by grog! Monkey business, if ever I see any!”

He heard the powerful purring of a motor vehicle, and, taking his eye from the telescope for a moment, he looked right down into the village street—which was in clear view from that high turret. He saw a strange car gliding off towards the Bannington road. It was an armoured car. It was making straight for that trap farther round the bend.

Until this moment, Captain Boom had had no definite idea of what was in the wind. He guessed that the road barrier had been moved for some tricky purpose, but it was only now that he received a real clue to the nature of the situation.

An armoured car! And it was coming from the direction of St. Frank’s!

Captain Boom was no fool, and he shrewdly put two and two together.

Nelson Lee and Nipper—going away from St. Frank’s, probably in the car of the military authorities, or the police! And those men at the bend, monkeying with the barrier, were agents of the Fu Chang Tong!

“Sink my anchor!” ejaculated Captain Boom fiercely.

He could do nothing, and his helplessness filled him with alarm and exasperation. Shouting would be quite useless. Nobody would hear him from this elevated position of his. Besides, what could be done? The

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armoured car was already going rapidly towards that fatal spot!

Captain Boom, like everybody else in the village, knew about the Tong men. The recent events were the talk of the whole neighbourhood—and small wonder. Boom, however, knew more.

It was he who had helped Nelson Lee and Nipper some days ago. Lee had requested the old captain to remain indoors whilst Lee went abroad in Boom's personality. It had been a precautionary measure, in order to deceive the Tong agents.

Not that this subterfuge had really helped Nelson Lee much, for Yen Sing and his men had captured Lee—and Nipper, too—in spite of all these precautions.

There had been some fear that Captain Boom would have incurred the enmity of the Tong, and that he himself would be menaced. But nothing had happened. Yen Sing was confining all his attentions to Lee and Nipper.

And now, as Captain Boom watched, his heart beat far more rapidly than usual. He

suspected a trap—and, what was more, a death trap.

He knew of the explosion in Bellton Wood, an hour or two since—news of that kind travels rapidly in a small country community. Were these Tong men going to bomb that armoured car, after it had got stuck in the trench?

Boom saw the whole thing. He saw the car enter the wrong section of road, and he saw it topple over on its side. Then he saw a number of men sweep out from the hedges and climb over the car like a swarm of insects.

"By hurricanes!" growled the old skipper. "There's foul weather down there, or I'm a barnacle! The craft's capsized, and them durned pirates are murderin' the crew! An' here am I, stuck up in the crow's nest, too far away to do anything!"

He was about to leave his telescope, and to hurry downstairs, when he beheld the inert figures of Nelson Lee and Nipper being lifted out of the car. They were quickly

transferred to the waiting Ford van; and then, shortly afterwards, the van moved off.

"I'm a barrel o' rum if that ain't queer!" muttered the captain, puzzled. "What's the idea o' takin' 'em away? I thought they'd be killed out o' hand. But these slab-sided swabs have taken the prisoners aboard their own craft, an' they're settin' off under full sail!"

His common sense told him that the Tong men would never have taken Lee and Nipper away if they had been killed outright. The very fact that the famous detective and his schoolboy assistant had been seized proved that they still lived.

There could be only one possible explanation.

Sudden death was too good for them! Yen Sing had something else in mind—something more fiendish. He was taking his prisoners away so that he could torture them at his leisure!

The whole thing had happened so quickly that Captain Boom was still breathing hard with excitement when he beheld the Ford van turning into the Caistowe road. And then it came rattling and rumbling past his very front door.

There was no reason why he should not now give the alarm—and do his utmost to have the van stopped, and the kidnapped pair rescued. Yet, if possible, he wanted to keep his eye on that van. He could see a good deal of the Caistowe road, and it would be some little time before the van was out of sight.

He left the telescope, ran to the trapdoor, and jerked it up.

"Jiggs!" he thundered. "Jiggs, ye wizened lump o' tarpaulin!"

"Ahoy, there, cap'n!" came a voice from somewhere below.

"Come 'ere, durn ye!" roared the skipper.

He soon beheld the face of a wizened little man. Mr. Peter Jiggs was a mild individual, and he had a real liking for Captain Boom. He never took any notice of the old skipper's insulting form of address.

"What's wrong, cap'n?" called Jiggs.

"Makin' enough noise up there, ain't ye?"

"Don't talk so much, ye old land crab, an' listen to me!"

"I'll bet the whole village is listenin'!" retorted Mr. Jiggs. "'Tain't often I've seen ye so excited, cap'n. No use sayin' I 'ave."

"It's them Tong men!" shouted Captain Boom. "They've scuttled Mr. Lee's craft, an' they've grabbed Mr. Lee an' Nipper, an' sailed off with 'em!"

"Well, I'll be darned!" ejaculated Mr. Jiggs.

"You go to the telephone an' ring up the school!" commanded the skipper. "Tell 'em that Mr. Lee an' Nipper 'ave been colared, and get 'em to come down 'ere. I'll 'ave more information for 'em by the time they arrive. I can still get a good view o' that craft through my telescope."

"You're real 'andy with that telescope, cap'n—no good sayin' you ain't!" declared

Mr. Jiggs breathlessly. "Right ye are! Leave it to me!"

"Avast there!" said the skipper. "You'd best telephone the p'lice, too— Durn his hide! He's gone!"

Mr. Jiggs hadn't heard the captain's final instructions, and the captain himself was too anxious to get back to his telescope. When he did so he made another discovery, and he was glad enough that he had not gone down from his lofty perch.

The Ford van, instead of keeping to the Caistowe road, had turned off and was now ploughing along an open track across the downs. It was evidently making for the cliffs.

"Looks ugly!" muttered Boom uneasily. "Looks like they're going to throw 'em over the cliff. Yet that don't seem sensible, some'ow. Maybe there's some deeper game. No tellin' with them lop-eared, yellow skunks!"

IN the meantime, Mr. Jiggs was at the telephone downstairs. Either he asked for the wrong number, or the operator connected him up with the Ancient House Common-room by mistake. At all events, it was this telephone which rang at St. Frank's.

There was a number of 'phones at the great school. Each Junior Common-room had its own telephone-box—and there were instruments in the Senior Day-rooms, too, and in the Housemasters' studies. The school, in fact, had its own private exchange.

Handforth happened to be in the Ancient House Junior Common-room when the telephone-bell rang, and he made a run for the box, arriving just before Travers.

"It's a call for me, I expect," said Handforth briskly.

"Well, well!" said Travers. "Why the panic, dear old fellow? Are you afraid that I might recognise her voice?"

"Whose voice, ass?"

"I dare say she is the sweet young thing in the cashier's desk at the Japanese Café," nodded Travers. "Naughty, naughty! I'm surprised at you, Handy! What would Irene say?"

"You howling chump!" roared Handforth. "I'm expecting a telephone call from one of the big London magazines!"

"By Samson!"

"I sent a short story up two or three days ago," explained Handforth casually. "I gave the editor our 'phone number, and I asked him to give me a ring—just to tell me when the story is likely to be published."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nothing like being optimistic," said Travers approvingly.

"Handy isn't optimistic—he's crazy!" growled Church. "That story he sent up was the most awful drivel—"

"It was what?" demanded Handforth aggressively.

THE ST. FRANK'S QUESTIONNAIRE!

Here are twelve testers for you, chums—questions which refer to St. Frank's and its members. Give them the "once-over," jot down the answers to those which you know, and then compare them with the correct list which will be given, together with another set of questions, next week.

- 1.—Who is Ezra Quirke, and where does he live?
- 2.—Which St. Frank's Removite swam the Channel?
- 3.—Who is the headmaster of the River House School?
- 4.—What is the telephone number of the Grapes Hotel in Bannington?
- 5.—What is the name of Archie's friend who lives at Helmford Hall?
- 6.—Who are the occupants of Study No. 4 in the Modern House?
- 7.—Who is the Chief of the St. Frank's Fire Brigade?
- 8.—What is the name of the Fourth-Former who has boxed in the professional ring?
- 9.—Why are the rotters of the River House School known as "The Honourables"?
- 10.—Who is the foreman of Holt's Farm?
- 11.—What was the Modern House called in former days?
- 12.—Where are the Priory ruins situated?

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S QUESTIONS:

1. Mrs. Tracey. 2. Private house called the Mount. 3. Mr. Spence. 4. Moat Hollow, an old empty house near Bellton Bridge, facing the River Stowe. 5. Bob Christine, Roderick Yorke and Charles Talmadge. 6. Llewellyn Rees. 7. Radiators and coal fires. 8. Ferdinand. 9. Tom Burton. 10. Dick Goodwin. 11. Mr. Alfred Simpson. 12. On a rock jutting out beyond Shingle Head.

"The bell's still ringing," said Church, backing hastily away.

Handforth went into the box, lifted the receiver, and took a deep breath.

"Hallo!" he said. "This is Handforth, and——"

"You're one of the boys, ain't you?" came a voice. "Well, it don't matter—you'll do as well as anybody else. I'm Jiggs."

"Jiggs!" ejaculated Handforth. "Who do you think I am, then—Dinty Moore?"

"It don't matter who you are, young gent," came Jiggs' urgent voice. "Mr. Lee an' Master Nipper are in trouble, an' it's no good sayin' they ain't! Both of 'em just bin kidnapped by them Chinese swabs!"

"What!" gasped Handforth. "Kidnapped! Mr. Lee and Nipper?"

"Somebody trying to pull Handy's leg!" said Travers, as there was an immediate buzz following Handforth's ejaculation.

"Dry up, you asses!" shouted Handforth. "What's that?" he added, into the telephone. "You say that Mr. Lee's been kidnapped—and Nipper, too?"

"Not five minutes ago," replied Jiggs. "Just on the Bannington road. Cap'n Boom saw it all—he's up in the turret, with 'is telescope. There ain't any time to lose, young gent, an' it's no good sayin' there is. You'd best 'urry!"

"But what's happened?" demanded Handforth frantically. "How? I mean, where?"

"All the cap'n says was to ring up the school an' let ye know," replied Jiggs. "The cap'n wants you to come down, seein' as there's a chance that you might be able to 'elp a bit. If you come to the Chase, the cap'n will tell you all the details. I don't

know 'em myself yet, an' it's no good sayin' I do."

"Is this true?" asked Handforth, a dark suspicion crossing his mind. "Look here, you're not trying to pull my leg, are you?"

"It's as true as I'm a mortal sinner, young gent," came Jiggs' earnest voice. "I wouldn't try to deceive ye on such a matter!"

"All right—we'll come down!" promised Handforth.

He hung up the receiver, dashed out of the box, and found himself surrounded by a crowd of other Removites. They were all looking excited—and many of them were sceptical.

"Mr. Lee and Nipper have been kidnapped!" panted Handforth. "Something happened to them on the Bannington road! Captain Boom saw it through his telescope!"

"Great Scott!"

"My only sainted aunt!"

"Half a minute, Handy!" said Reggie Pitt, of the West House. "How do you know that this is authentic?"

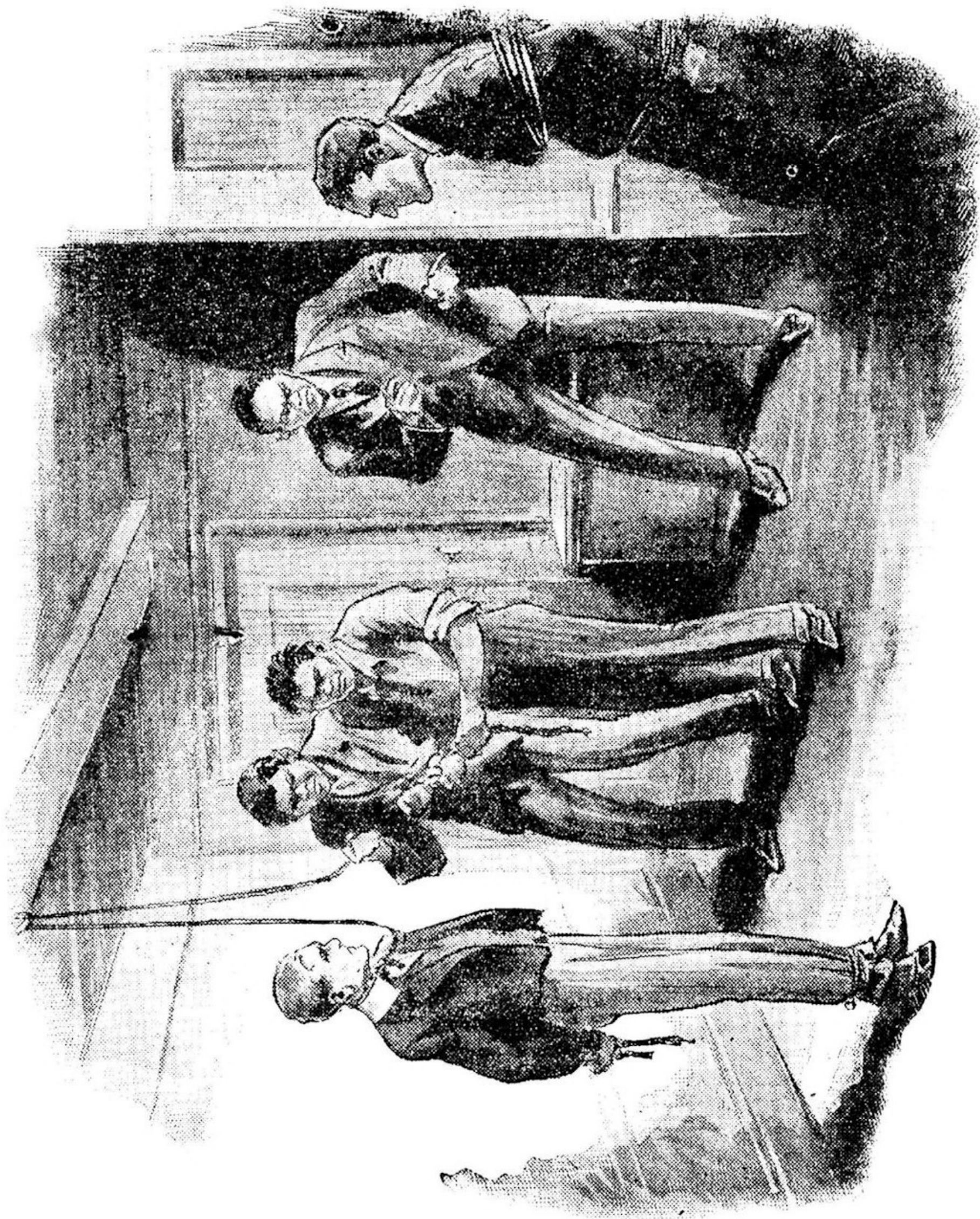
"How do I know it's what?"

"How do you know that the information is true?" said Reggie. "Somebody may have been playing a joke!"

"That's what I thought at first, but Jiggs swore that it's true," replied Edward Oswald. "He told us to go down to the Chase, and Captain Boom will then give us all the details."

"We'd better tell the Head!" said Tommy Watson. "And somebody had better ring up the police——"

"Steady!" put in Travers. "Before we do anything like that, dear old fellow, hadn't



The rope was passed round Nipper's neck and jerked tight; then the Chinamen grasped hold of the rope and pulled on it significantly. Yen Sing looked at Nelson Lee mockingly. "Pay me twenty thousand pounds and your friend shall live," he said. "If you don't—then he shall die!"

we better verify it? Handforth says that it was Jiggs who telephoned, but how do we know? Some ill-natured blighter might have rang up just to fool us."

"Well, it's easily proved," said Pitt. "We can ring up the Chase——"

"Why waste time like that?" broke in Handforth. "We'd better get down to the Chase at once—and if the yarn is true, Captain Boom will soon let us know."

There was more excitement. It was generally agreed that it would be better not to tell Dr. Nicholls or any of the other masters anything about it yet. Far better go to the Chase and get to know the details. Besides, it was more than likely that Captain Boom would have telephoned to the police himself. There was nothing to be gained—and much to be lost—by wasting a lot of time.

HANDFORTH & CO. rushed for their Austin Seven, and Travers got his motor-bike out. In the Triangle, Reggie Pitt and some of the other juniors ran into William Napoleon Browne, of the Fifth. And Reggie seized hold of Browne's arm.

"Are you game for something exciting?" he asked quickly.

"I am game for anything, brother," replied Browne. "It is a well-known fact that we Brownes have never flinched——"

"Never mind that!" interrupted Pitt. "I want you to get your Morris-Oxford out, and to drive a crowd of us down to the village—to the Chase!"

"I must confess," said Browne, pained, "that I had not anticipated any such request as this. Greatly as I admire the peppy methods of you juniors, I must nevertheless point out that my Morris-Oxford is no charabanc——"

"It's urgent, Browne!" said Pitt earnestly. "There's a rumour that Mr. Lee and Nipper have been kidnapped by the Tong men! We want to rush down to the rescue!"

"Good enough!" said the lanky Fifth Form skipper.

He dashed off to get his Morris-Oxford, and he had it out just as soon as Handforth was ready with the Austin Seven. There were at least eight juniors packed into the Austin, and it spoke volumes for the stability of that little car that it never flinched.

Not that the Morris-Oxford flinched, either. Over a dozen juniors squeezed themselves into it, somehow or other. And



The rope was passed round Nipper's neck and significantly. Yen Sing looked at Nelson Lee he said

Browne, at the wheel, raised no objection.

In addition to these carloads and the two motor-cyclists, a number of other juniors—all told, nearly half the Remove and the Fourth—got out their pedal-cycles. Then there was a great exodus from St. Frank's. They all arrived at Bellton Chase in the dusk, and they found Captain Phineas Boom and Mr. Peter Jiggs waiting outside.

"Smart work, lads—smart work!" sang out the old skipper. "Sink me for a shark! You've got a full cargo, ain't you? How do I get aboard?"

"No good carryin' on like that, my lad," said the old skipper. "We'd best be movin'. By all that I can see, there ain't any time to lose!"

"No good sayin' there is!" muttered Mr. Jiggs.

CHAPTER 7.

The Cunning of Yen Sing!

THE dusk was growing deeper, and the mist was increasing, as the two cars and the cycles went along the Caistowe road. In the general excitement nobody had thought of the unfortunate Chief Detective-inspector Lennard and his companion. Nelson Lee and Nipper had been kidnapped, and had been carried off, and the juniors concentrated their energies upon giving chase.

There would be time, perhaps, to set other machinery in motion after the Ford van had been located. It was significant that this van had—according to Captain Boom—left the road and taken to a side-track which led only to the cliff top.

At all events, it narrowed the chase—it clearly indicated that the pursuit would not be a long one. Within a few minutes, at the most, something definite would be known.

It was this fact which caused Handforth and Travers and all the other boys to dash off without the loss of a second.

The ground was rough on that side-track, and neither of the cars could make any speed. Consequently, the pedal-cyclists found that they could keep up with comparative ease. The whole crowd went over the downs as a united body, there being only one or two stragglers.

"By George!" said Handforth tensely. "There's the van—look! Standing on the top of the cliff!"

"I've seen it already!" said Church breathlessly. "I wonder

what it means? We'd better go easy, hadn't we? Those rotten Tong men might have set a trap for us!"

"That's not very probable," replied Tommy Watson, who was also in the Austin Seven. "The very fact that the van is here proves that something drastic must have been done with Nipper and Mr. Lee. I'm horribly afraid that we shall be too late! Perhaps they've been chucked down the cliff!"

"Cheese it!" growled Church. "There's no sense in meeting trouble half-way, Watson."

the Chinamen grasped hold of the rope and pulled on it
ay me twenty thousand pounds and your friend shall live,"
then he shall die!"

"Is it true, Captain Boom?" asked Handforth breathlessly. "Some of the chaps think that it's only a practical joke! You haven't been fooling us, have you?"

"I wish I could say I had," replied the skipper. "But it's as true as old Jiggs is a dried-up chunk of seaweed! Saw it with me own eyes! That armoured car was cap-sized, an' Mr. Lee an' Nipper were transferred on to another craft."

"Where are they?" asked Tommy Watson in anguish. "Oh! This is awful! After all those precautions, too!"





Edward Oswald Handforth undertakes to answer, in his own unique fashion, any question "N.L." readers care to submit to him. But, although of a certainty the results will be amusing and entertaining, the Editor takes no responsibility for their veracity. Write to Handforth, c/o the NELSON LEE LIBRARY, to-day.

S. H. OCKED (Islington). It's very good of you to tell me that I'm a chap with plenty of brains, but you could have saved yourself the trouble. I'm quite aware of the fact, old man. This is what you ought to do to that fellow who raided some tuck from your locker: grab hold of him by the scruff of the neck, put his head in chancery and then proceed to dot him one in the left eye with your right, biff him in the right with your left, then tap his nose with a handy mallet. After that, duck him in the nearest trough of water and then collar some of your mother's clothes pegs, hook him on the clothes line and leave him there to dry. Then tell him that if he does such a thing again you'll get rough with him.

J. C. LIPSCOMBE (Staines). This bright lad signs himself "Yours admirably," and proves his words by starting his letter, "Dear Fathead Handy," and by informing me that I ought to have been born on the First of April, and before twelve o'clock! He further shows his admiration of me by saying that my face should be fried. Here's my answer to you, old man: Go and chase marbles!

"**BASHER BILL**" (Oldham) asked me to meet him at the Oldham Town Hall on October the 19th. Sorry I couldn't get there, Basher—by the way, I think that's a topping name—but the fact is, I've got a bone in my leg.

E. J. A. U. L. Brough (Thames Ditton). I'm glad you didn't put your Christian names in full, old chap, otherwise I'm afraid there wouldn't be space for any more replies this week. So you took Irene to the pictures the other day, did you? That's funny, because I took her to the pictures myself that day. One of us must be wrong—and I'm jolly sure it isn't me. I have wonderful memories of that glorious night; that night of supreme, sublime happiness—(Whoa back, Handy! Don't give away all your secrets!—Ed.)

ERNEST S. HOLMAN (Leyton). Sorry I disappointed you by not entering for the Schneider Trophy. Yes, it *was* very thoughtless of me. I'll see what I can do about it next year, perhaps. Your riddles are so easy—ahem!—that I shall not trouble to bore other readers with them here.

"**STOUT-HEARTED**" (Enfield) informs me that he weighs a mere sixteen stone—then why have you called yourself "stout-hearted"?—and wants me to tell him how to reduce. Something drastic is obviously required, and I suggest that my correspondent should rise every morning at five o'clock and go for a brisk trot—say, fifteen miles. A good idea would be to take a chum with him, the said chum to carry a long hairpin which he would use in the case of the other showing signs of lagging. Arriving home once more, "Stout-hearted" should then have a bath in cold water, making sure to step into the water with care, so as to avoid causing a miniature tidal wave. After that a brisk rub down, followed by three hours of strenuous exercise. Do this three times a day for a few weeks and my chum will soon be a more or less normal human being. (Less than more, I'm afraid.—Ed.)

F. B. L. (Braintree) writes telling me he wants to be an author, and asks me to give him a few tips. Well, it all depends. The art of writing is born in some people; and from your letter I have a feeling that you were not one of the lucky ones. However, don't be downhearted. Follow my advice and you'll soon be as notorious as I am in the writing world. You can't do better than read the works of authors who had already made their name. Have you ever heard of those stories which feature Trackett Grim and Splinter? Of course you have. Well, read those and you'll be on the right track towards fame.

EDWARD OSWALD.

The Peril of the Yellow Men!

(Continued from page 24.)

had no option. Had I failed to capture you then, you would have passed completely out of my reach."

"Where are we, gov'nor?" asked Nipper dazedly. "What's happened? I—I don't seem to remember much."

"We are apparently aboard a steamer, Nipper," replied Lee. "Mr. Yen Sing has given me no details, but I gather that we were both gassed in that armoured car. I must confess that my last conscious thoughts were to the effect that we should never open our eyes to this world again."

"It's a pity we have, gov'nor," said Nipper, as memory came flooding back to him. "These devils mean to torture us! That's the only reason they've made prisoners of us like this! On this ship we're at their mercy, and when they've finished their filthy work they'll drop us overboard!"

Yen Sing shrugged his shoulders.

"You must not get such melodramatic ideas into your head, my young friend," he said in perfect English. "There is to be no torture—neither are you to be killed. Certain circumstances have arisen which materially affect the situation."

There was something confident about Yen Sing's tone; he seemed to be complete master of this new situation he talked of. And there was that note of supreme confidence in his voice.

He had no fear of Nelson Lee or of Nipper making a sudden attack upon him, or making a bid for liberty. Outside this cabin were two or three of his men—all of them armed. The ship, moreover, was on the move, making out into the open Channel.

But, more important than anything else, was the fact that Lee and Nipper were feeling weak and listless from the effects of the drug which had permeated their systems. They were conscious, and their brains were normal; but as yet they had little or no strength.

"We must have a little business conference, Mr. Lee," said Yen Sing softly, as he sat down next to the schoolmaster-detective. "I am happy to tell you that there is no longer any need for you to be executed. I have a proposition to put before you."

"You can save your breath," said Lee. "I shall make no terms with you."

"No?" purred Yen Sing. "We shall see, my friend—we shall see! If you will compensate me adequately, I will report to the Tong leaders that their orders have been duly executed, and that you and your young friend have been dealt with according to instructions. It will be quite easy—quite simple. Do you understand? I am giving you a chance of life."

Nelson Lee made no reply.

"My word will be accepted," continued Yen Sing. "If I say that you are dead, there will be none to disprove the statement. Here is your choice. You will compensate me in

the manner I name, and you will voyage in this ship to a certain foreign port. There you will land, you will assume new names and identities. Nelson Lee and Nipper must die, so far as the world is concerned."

"And the alternative?"

"Is—death," replied Yen Sing gently. "An ugly death, my friends. But why die, when you may so easily live?"

Nelson Lee thought rapidly. It was evident that the cunning Yen Sing was bent upon lining his own pockets. Perhaps he had heard rumours of the Tong's approaching collapse. No doubt this present scheme was a mere try-on. Yen Sing was fleeing from England, and he was hopeful that he would get back to his own native land with a fortune in his hands. He was using Nelson Lee as a stepping-stone to gain that fortune. Lee was frankly curious.

"What do you regard as—ample compensation?" he asked, looking straight at the Chinaman.

"Shall we say—twenty thousand pounds?" asked Yen Sing. "Ah, it is a large sum, but not too large. I am aware, Mr. Lee, that you have a considerable private fortune. You are not the ordinary schoolmaster. You have much wealth in war bonds—in stocks and shares—and in actual cash. Twenty thousand pounds will reduce your wealth, no doubt, but you will still have ample to live comfortably. And surely it is better to live than to die? And if you refuse this proposition of mine, it will be your young friend who will die first. He will die, I may add, in this very cabin, and before your own eyes. Think well—think deeply—before you make your decision. I am a patient man, and I will wait."

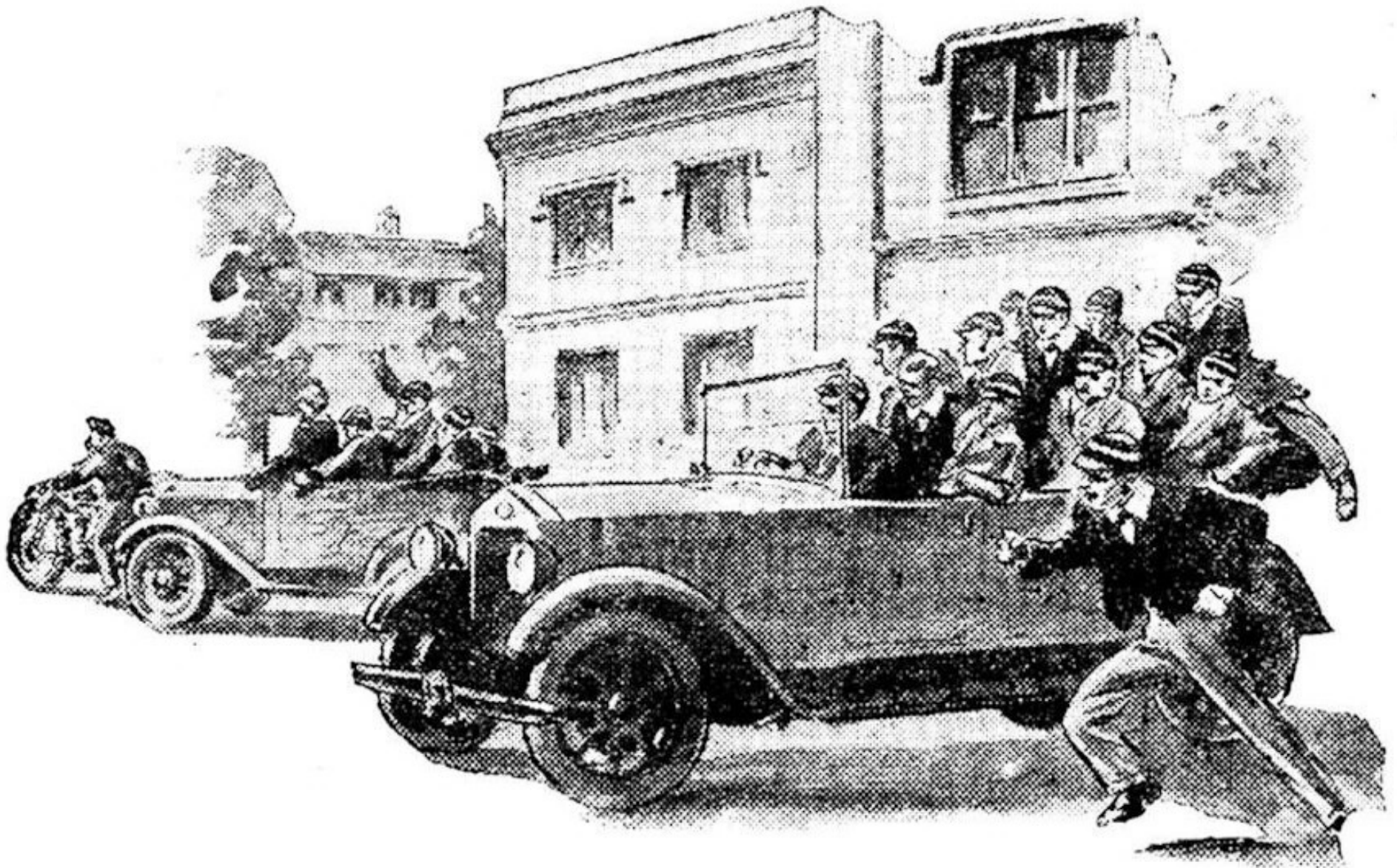
"I would not presume to keep you in a state of suspense," said Lee grimly. "I will have nothing to do with your proposition, Yen Sing. Not one solitary penny will you squeeze out of me. I refuse to deal with you in any way."

A glitter came into Yen Sing's eyes.

"You are rash, my friend," he said gently. "You are indeed foolish! I am in a position of power—you are helpless. The advantage is all with me. A simple little draft is all I require—a document which can be presented to your London bankers. This ship is calling for additional cargo at another port, and it will be easy for me to send one of my men to London. If he returns with the necessary money, then your peril will be over. It can all be so simply arranged. I merely require your draft—and your word that there will be no treachery. You are a man of honour, and your word will satisfy me."

"Don't have anything to do with it, gov'nor!" urged Nipper hotly. "We're in the hands of the Tong, and we shall be killed, anyway! Don't give this fiend the chance of robbing you—"

"Have no fear, Nipper," broke in Lee, his voice hard and cold. "I have already told Mr. Yen Sing that I will have nothing to do



At least eight juniors packed into Handforth's Austin Seven ; about a dozen fellows squeezed into Browne's Morris-Oxford, while other chaps mounted their motor-cycles and bicycles. And then there was a big exodus from the school. The St. Frank's party was on its way to the rescue of Nelson Lee and Nipper !

with his proposal. It is not my way to make terms with murderers!"

Yen Sing did not move a hair, but that glitter in his eyes became more venomous. He shrugged his shoulders. Perhaps he recognised the note of finality in Lee's tone.

"Very well," he purred. "We will see, my friend!"

He clapped his hands, and three other Chinamen immediately came into the cabin.

CHAPTER 8.

Forced to Surrender!

YEN SING spoke to them in his own language, and they immediately came forward.

Two of them seized Lee and bound his hands and ankles. Another rope was passed round his waist and tied securely to a heavy metal catch which projected from the wall of the cabin.

There had been no possibility of Lee or Nipper putting up any fight. In the first place, they were feeling weakened, and in the second place their enemies were too numerous.

"Now the boy!" said Yen Sing, in English.

Nipper's hands were tied behind his back, and his ankles, too, were secured.

"Think you can scare us, eh?" he said contemptuously. "Well, let me tell you this, Yen Sing. You won't be able to frighten Mr. Lee!"

"I am sure you are right," agreed Yen Sing. "I may not frighten him—but I have

a conviction that I shall induce him to change his mind."

To Nipper's horror, a rope was placed over a hook overhead. There was a loop in this rope, and the loop was slipped over Nipper's head and drawn fairly tight.

"There is no occasion for us to mince matters, Mr. Lee," said Yen Sing politely. "I am not a man who believes in wasting time. I present an interesting alternative to you. Either you will agree to my proposition, or you will see your young friend hanged in front of your eyes!"

Nipper laughed.

"It's only bluff, gov'nor!" he said, trying to keep his voice steady. "Don't agree to anything!"

"It is such a simple matter," said Yen Sing, looking at Lee. "A draft on your bankers—a mere matter of twenty thousand pounds. I am offering you your lives. You are in the hands of the Fu Chang Tong, and I am prepared to ignore my orders and to let you live. And yet you hesitate. I do not think you will hesitate much longer."

He clapped his hands, and the other Chinamen immediately pulled on the rope.

"Gently—gently!" said Yen Sing. "Do not break his neck. It is better that Mr. Lee should witness his death struggles!"

Lee gripped himself. He gazed at Nipper in absolute horror. There was nothing of the bluff about this. Yen Sing was in deadly earnest.

For already Nipper's feet were clear of the floor, and he was hanging there, that rope tightly around his neck. Already the unfortunate youngster's face was becoming ominously red, and his gurgles were horrifying to hear. Exactly as Yen Sing had said, Nipper was being hanged in front of Nelson Lee's eyes!

"You devil!" shouted Nelson Lee hoarsely. "Let him down!"

"Ah! You are alarmed at last, eh?" murmured Yen Sing. "But have no fear—it will be some minutes before the breath is completely choked out of him. His present struggles are as nothing to what they will be very shortly. Death by this means is slow—and, I have been told, painful."

Nelson Lee was caught in a trap.

Against such methods as these he was helpless. For it was utterly impossible for him to sit there and to see Nipper murdered in this way. The cunning Chinaman had played a trump card.

If Lee himself had been in danger he would have resolutely ignored his tormentor's threats. But it was different with Nipper.

"You hound! You devil! Lower that boy!" shouted Lee.

"He shall be lowered after you have agreed to my proposal," replied Yen Sing coolly. "The choice is with you, Mr. Lee. You have, perhaps, one full minute left. Will you see him die—or will you sign the draft that—"

"Lower that boy, and I will sign!" broke in Nelson Lee hotly.

"And you will give me your word that there shall be no treachery?" asked Yen Sing, a light of triumph entering his eyes. "You will promise that—"

"You have won!" panted Lee. "I will agree to anything—if you will lower Nipper before he is dead!"

Nelson Lee was frantic. Nipper's face was now nearly black, and his struggles were becoming feeble. Yen Sing had allowed Lee no time to turn the matter over in his mind—no time to think of any alternative suggestion. And Lee, in consequence, was absolutely forced to give in. Resolute and iron-willed as he was, he could never have seen Nipper killed in this fashion.

"You are wise, my friend," said Yen Sing silkily.

He clapped his hands again, and Nipper was immediately lowered to the floor. He sagged at the knees, then collapsed. The rope was loosened, and he was carried to one of the big seats and laid upon it.

Water was forced down his throat—and then a little brandy. Gradually he began to recover.

"The boy is unharmed," said Yen Sing, drawing a chair to the table. "Now, Mr. Lee, we will get down to business."

ACCORDING to all appearances, Yen Sing had won the battle.

He had gained Nelson Lee's promise, and he knew that that promise would be kept.

The steamer was now out into the Channel, and any idea of pursuit never entered Yen Sing's mind. How could there be any pursuit, indeed? The police were probably scouring the countryside, of course, searching for the missing pair. They would find the abandoned Ford van, but that would not tell them much. There was nothing to prove that Lee and Nipper had been brought aboard this Portuguese steamer.

Yen Sing—unfortunately for himself—knew nothing of Captain Phineas Boom and his telescope!

Events had been moving rapidly, and Captain Boom had once again proved his sterling worth. Through his telescope, he had seen the rowing-boat deliver its passengers on to that tramp steamer. And the fact that the steamer immediately got under way was significant.

Caistowe was the next objective.

The Austin Seven and the Morris-Oxford and the host of cycles sped into Caistowe without delay. The police were informed, St. Frank's was rung up, and a regular hue and cry was started.

But there was an annoying delay with the police—a delay which exasperated the St. Frank's fellows so much that they could hardly contain themselves.

Night was coming on, but the police were unwilling to take any immediate action. They wanted positive proof that Nelson Lee and Nipper had been taken aboard the old tramp. Captain Boom's evidence, after all, was not conclusive. Although he had seen that boat approaching the steamer, he had certainly not recognised Nelson Lee and Nipper.

The police had found that the vessel was due to call at another port, and they were inclined to leave matters until then. They would board the vessel when she docked, and would search her.

But what was the good of this?

"They're mad!" said Handforth frantically. "By the time that ship gets into port, Mr. Lee and Nipper will have been killed! There'll be no evidence at all! They'll have been dropped overboard somewhere in the Channel, after being tortured!"

"Why can't the police give chase?" asked Tommy Watson. "What's the matter with them?"

"Red tape, I suppose, dear old fellow," said Travers with a sigh. "You know what it is. Before they can do anything they've got to get a warrant signed. It's probably necessary to get hold of the Chief Constable of the County."

"And, in the meantime, Mr. Lee and Nipper are to be killed?" asked Sir Montie in anguish. "Begad! It's all frightfully worryin', dear old boys! They ought to get the Navy out for a thing like this—they ought, really!"

"By George, yes!" said Handforth, his eyes gleaming. "What's wrong with ordering a destroyer to chase that rotten tramp steamer?"

"Might as well hope for a tidal wave to swamp her!" said Travers. "Before the Navy could move, an Admiralty Order would be necessary."

However, Captain Boom had not been idle. He believed in taking unofficial action, and there was nobody to stop him.

By this stime, Mr. Beverley Stokes, the Housemaster of the West House, had arrived on the scene, and he and Captain Boom and Mr. Jiggs were busy for some time in Caistowe Harbour.

Then the news spread to the boys that two tugs were being got ready. Their owners were friends of Captain Boom's, and their grizzled skippers were only too willing to lend a hand. There were plenty of volunteers, too—fishermen and all kinds of local inhabitants.

Captain Boom was popular, and if he called for volunteers they came in large numbers.

It really did seem that something definite was to be done at last!

CHAPTER 9.

The Chase!

WITHIN half an hour everything was ready.

Mr. Stokes had thought, at first, of sending all the juniors back to St. Frank's, but he hadn't the heart to do it. He was very much of a boy himself, and he knew how these fellows were burning with anxiety to join in the chase. He offered no objections when Handforth and Travers and Watson and all the others crowded on to the waiting tugs.

"Well, it's about time that something was done!" said Handforth breathlessly. "That rotten tramp steamer's got a good start. Goodness only knows when we shall overtake her!"

"Captain Boom is very optimistic," said Reggie Pitt. "That dago tramp is a rotten old tub, and she can't get up much speed. These tugs are nippy, and they'll soon overtake her."

"Well, I hope we get off before any of these port officials stop us," said Handforth anxiously. "You know what they are—they might say that we mustn't sail."

Amid a great deal of cheering and shouting, the tugs set off. They were big vessels, and their decks were crowded with a mixed throng. Large numbers of St. Frank's seniors had turned up by now, and many of these had joined in the chase.

Then, too, there were many of the sturdy men of Caistowe. Nelson Lee and Nipper had been kidnapped, and carried off by that dago tramp steamer! The crowd of rescuers that set off in those two tugs was a grim, determined one.

Such a head of steam had been raised on the tugs that sparks belched out of their funnels as they ploughed across Caistowe Bay. Their engines thudded and their propellers churned.

The tramp steamer's next port was known, so there was no doubt regarding the course she would take. To chase her was a simple matter.

Once outside the bay, the tugs began to feel the swell of the Channel. They dug their bows deeply into the waves, and the spray came tearing across the decks in great masses of smother. And on that cold November night there was a chill nip in the wind, too.

But nobody cared. The excitement of the chase had gripped them all, and they were ready for anything.

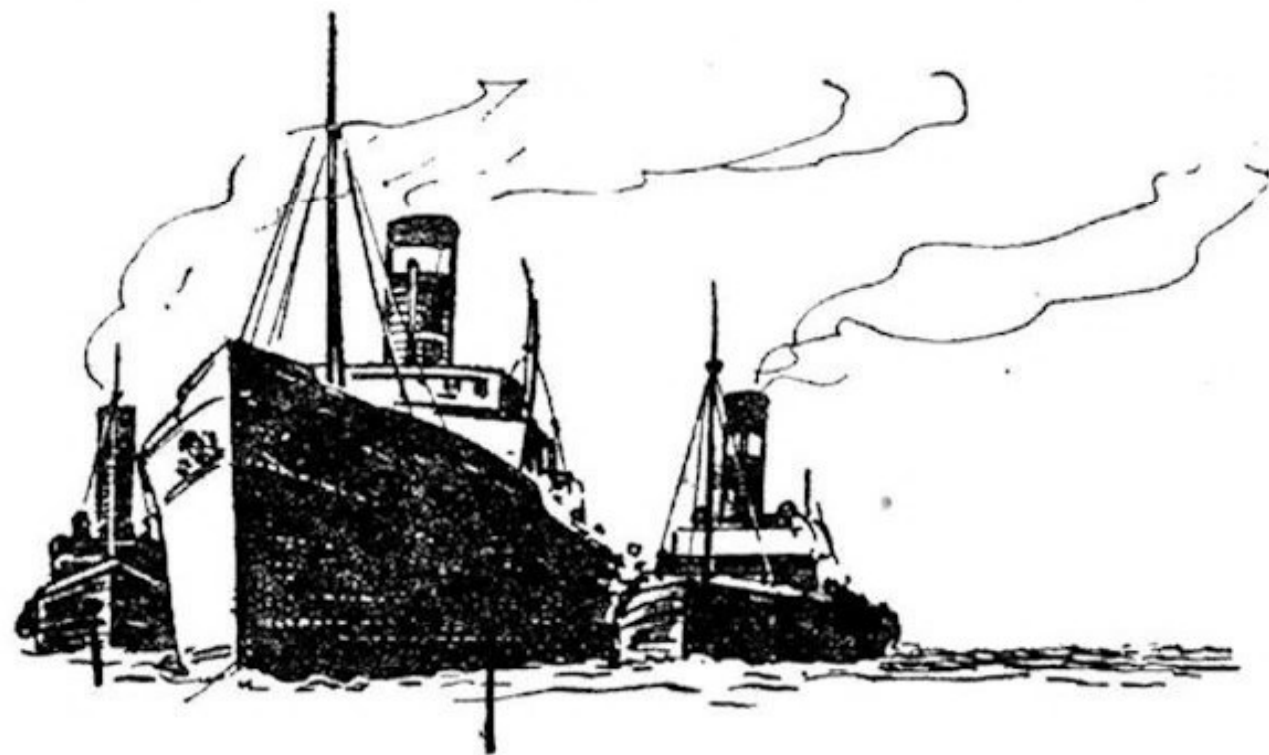
"How long will this last?" asked Handforth, as he stood amidships on the deck of one of the tugs. "Shall we overtake that tramp before midnight?"

One of the tug's crew grinned.

"She ain't far out, young gent," he replied. "If we don't come up with 'er within the hour I shall be surprised!"

"An hour!" said Handforth excitedly. "By George! That's good hearing! I thought we should take half the night!"

"These tugs may not look very rakish, but



they're pretty fast-movin'," replied the man. "And that rotten tub of a tramp is as slow as a hearse."

"I mean to say, the chase won't be so long as we thought, what?" asked Archie Glenthorne. "Odds spume and spray! I got an absolute neckful that time, dash it!"

Not that anybody cared about getting a bit damp. In fact, the majority of the St. Frank's fellows were fairly bewildered with all this excitement. It had come as a shock to know that Nelson Lee and Nipper had been captured by the Tong, after all—and

this chase, following on the top of that disclosure, had not allowed the boys any time to think much. They were having a big thrill—and they liked it.

There was something rather fine about the whole adventure. As one man, they had set out upon this chase. There had been no hesitation—no drawing back. Nelson Lee and Nipper were in peril—and that was enough. There was only one cry—"St. Frank's to the rescue!"

The excitement grew to fever pitch when the lights of a steamer were discerned in the far distance. Other lights had been seen, but they were obviously not those of the quarry.

The two tugs were ploughing along, side by side, a matter of two or three hundred feet separating them. Captain Boom stood on the tiny bridge of one of the tugs, next to the skipper. It was this craft which really led the chase. The other tug was ready to stand by, to take any orders that Captain Boom would give.

"It seems that we'll never overtake her!" said Watson, as he clung to the rocking vessel's side and stared ahead. "I wonder what's happening? By this time, perhaps, Nipper is dead!"

"It's no good talking like that, old boy," said Sir Montie gently. "We've got to hope for the best!"

These two juniors were naturally more anxious than any of the others—since Nipper

was their own particular chum. They were both in a state of acute mental tension. Knowing, as they did, how the Tong men had nearly succeeded in murdering Nelson Lee and Nipper on that earlier occasion, they could not quieten the apprehensive thudding of their hearts. They were haunted continuously by the awful thought that they would be too late.

It was an exhilarating experience, nevertheless—this grim chase out into the Channel. And it seemed that the captain of the tramp steamer gathered that something big was afoot. For as the tugs closed up with their quarry, it was noticed that the old tramp was increasing her speed. Great volumes of smoke belched forth from her rusty funnel. Her engines were evidently being worked to their utmost capacity. Not that the tramp had the slightest chance of outdistancing her pursuers.

"We'll soon be on her now!" said Handforth, instinctively clenching his fists. "By George! I'm just ready for a scrap! If I can only get my hands on those rotten Chinks, I'll—"

"Better go easy, Handy!" warned Gresham. "You know what those Chinks are—they'd as soon stick a knife into your ribs as look at you!"

"Let 'em try it on!" retorted Handforth aggressively. "Think I'm afraid of 'em?"



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"It's all to the good to be bold and determined, dear old fellow—but a spot of caution is advisable, all the same," said Vivian Travers. "I rather think we'd better let Captain Boom do most of the directing."

"He can do all the directing he likes—but I want to do some fighting!" said Handforth. "And if Mr. Lee and Nipper have been hurt, then there's going to be slaughter!"

"We're closing up with her pretty rapidly," remarked Gresham. "Hallo! We're veering off to her starboard side. The other tug is making for the port side."

"Reminds me of one of those exciting films at the Palladium," muttered Reggie Pitt.

There were, indeed, some elements in this situation which were very reminiscent of a film drama—only in this case the excitement was genuine.

Now that they were at such close quarters, the excited boys could see that the tugs were overtaking the old tramp at a remarkable speed. She seemed to be almost stationary as they closed in on her, sandwiching her between them.

She was an ugly, misshapen sort of craft, with a high stern and a high forecastle. Amidships she was low down, a fact which Captain Boom had already noted. The tugs, creeping nearer, would have little or no difficulty in discharging their human cargo.

"Ahoy, there!" bellowed Captain Boom's voice, magnified into a veritable roar by means of a megaphone. "Hard astern, durn ye! Heave to!"

In spite of the gloom of the night, a figure could be seen leaning over the end of the tramp's bridge. He cupped his hands over his mouth.

"What you want?" he shouted in broken English. "Me Santa Maria, of Lisbon——"

"I don't care if you're Santa Claus!" bellowed Captain Boom. "Heave to! You've got passengers aboard——"

"There he is!" yelled Handforth suddenly. "Look! It's Yen Sing!"

There was an immediate roar of excitement.

"The captain was right, then," said Mr. Stokes grimly. "Get ready, everybody! This is going to be hot work!"

A figure had appeared near one of the deck lights, having emerged from an iron doorway. It was Yen Sing, and he had come on deck to find out what all the noise was about—never having the faintest suspicion of the real truth. By the time he drew back it was too late. He had been recognised by the St. Frank's fellows.

The Chinaman raced up to the bridge and seized the skipper by the arm.

"You keep these people off!" he said intensely. "You understand? Keep them off!"

"Not easy," said the captain, in alarm. "Many of them——"

"Keep them off and I pay you well—I pay you double!" interrupted Yen Sing. "You turn your ship suddenly—see?"

The Portuguese captain shook his head. "Sink the English tug-boat?" he said. "You want me spend many year in English prison? I not do it!"

Exactly what Yen Sing would have done



next was never known—but he looked very dangerous. There were indications that he intended bringing force to bear on the captain of the Santa Maria.

But he did not do so. For just then one of the tugs bumped against the tramp's side, and she was held there by the skilful work of her skipper. There was a shout of triumph, and numbers of Caistowe fishermen and crowds of St. Frank's fellows jumped aboard.

Then came another bump from the port side, and a similar flood of invaders arrived. As Mr. Stokes had said, things were getting hot!

CHAPTER 10.

St. Frank's to the Rescue!

"COME on, St. Frank's!"

"Hurrah!"

"Down with these rotters!"

"Buck up, the Remove!"

There was a confusion of shouts and cries as the invaders swarmed over the midship decks of the Santa Maria. And now, unexpectedly, there was a new development.

A rush of feet sounded, and over a dozen men came charging at the fishermen and the schoolboys. They were foreigners for the most part, and they were armed with belaying pins and crowbars and similar weapons. Mr. Stokes had hardly expected the tramp's crew to put up any sort of resistance.

"You boys keep back!" he shouted warningly. "This is going to be ugly! It's a job for men!"

By this time the captain had signalled to the engine-room, and the tramp's engines were silent. She was merely drifting along under her own way. The tugs had secured themselves, and were drifting with her.

The captain ran to the middle of the bridge, and stood looking down into the well of the ship.

"Stop!" he shouted, waving his arms in his excitement. "What are you—pirates? You board my ship, and where is your permit? Why you stop me on high seas?"

There was a lull in the preparations. The fight hadn't properly started yet; the attackers and the defenders had not yet actually clashed.

"You are the captain of this ship?" demanded Captain Boom.

"Si! Yes, I captain," replied the other hotly. "What you mean?"

"You've got some Chinamen aboard this craft," went on Boom ominously. "A lopped son of a barnacle named Yen Sing, and a crowd of his pals. You've got two Englishmen, haven't you? Leastways, an Englishman and an English boy. Hand them over, and we'll leave you alone."

The Portuguese skipper fairly danced.

"No English!" he replied. "Not any English aboard. No passengers."

"That's a lie!" yelled Handforth. "We've already seen Yen Sing!"

"Yes, you'd better come out with the truth!" said Mr. Stokes, striding forward. "We give you fair warning, captain. Either you give us permission to search this ship of yours or we'll search it without permission. Which is it to be?"

"You—you search my ship?" shrieked the Portuguese.

He rushed frantically from one side of the bridge to the other. He shouted to his officers, and then he gave some orders to the men on the deck below. Instantly they charged to the attack. Evidently the captain did not relish having his ship searched.

"That's done it!" muttered Tommy Watson. "Oh, my hat!"

Mr. Stokes turned swiftly to the boys.

"If you want to help, young 'uns, get down below—search the ship!" he snapped. "We'll deal with these men. Find Mr. Lee and Nipper if you can. And look out for those Chinamen!"

Mr. Stokes had quickly revolved the matter in his mind, and he almost regretted—now—that he had allowed the boys to come. He had not anticipated any such resistance as this. And it occurred to him that it would be safer for the schoolboys to get below, and to search the ship, than it would be for them to join in this desperate battle on the deck.

The boys themselves quickly and eagerly jumped at the chance.

Why there should be a battle puzzled both Mr. Stokes and Captain Boom. They had been certain that the Portuguese skipper would be only too glad to hand over the kidnapped pair—and the Chinamen, too. But by resisting in this fashion the skipper of the *Santa Maria* was laying himself open to grave trouble. He obviously knew that he was in the wrong, and he was now making matters worse.

Handforth, as might have been expected, was one of the first to get below. He found

an iron stairway leading downwards, and he dived headlong into the bowels of the ship, closely followed by Church and McClure—who were far more concerned about their leader's safety than the actual search for Nelson Lee and Nipper. They had an instinctive knowledge that Handforth would only get himself into trouble.

The rest of the fellows broke up into groups, and the search of the ship commenced in real earnest. On the deck there was a tremendous shouting and clattering and yelling as the fight commenced.

Down below, in the cabin, Nelson Lee and Nipper were listening with eager ears. They had heard certain mysterious sounds—they had even felt the bumping as the tug-boats had slid alongside the tramp steamer. Then had come the shouts and the commotion.

"I'll swear I heard Handy's voice, sir!" said Nipper eagerly. "I believe we're going to be rescued!"

NIPPER'S throat was paining him badly—it was bruised and grazed—but he had forgotten all about it now. He and Lee were still bound up, and there was no escape for them—unless they obtained assistance.

The door suddenly opened and Yen Sing came in, followed by his Chinese allies.

"The ropes—take them off!" said Yen Sing, pointing to Lee.

His men sprang to obey.

"Your friends have arrived, Mr. Lee," said Yen Sing, his eyes gleaming with evil. "They are clever, these friends of yours. Always they come in time to save you. But this time they are too clever!"

Lee said nothing. The ropes had been removed from him by now, and Yen Sing pointed to Nipper. The other Chinese released him, and started to hustle him out of the cabin.

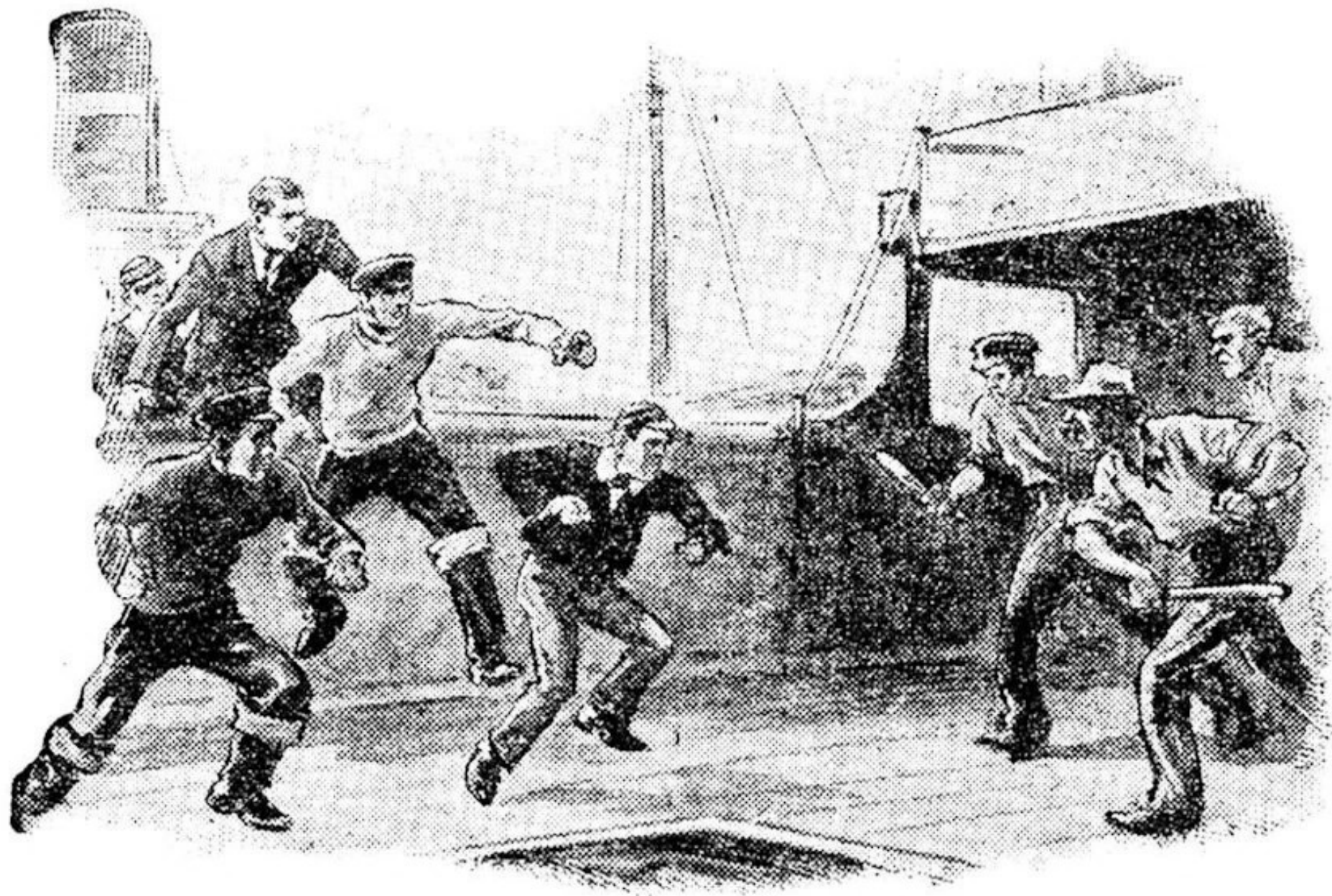
"What are you doing with that boy?" demanded Lee sharply.

"You will come with me, my friend," replied Yen Sing. "You will come up on the bridge—and you will address these fellow-countrymen of yours. You will tell them to get back on to their own vessels and to leave!"

"Indeed! What makes you think that I shall tell them to do that?"

"If they have not left within precisely fifteen minutes, your young friend will perish," replied Yen Sing softly. "You understand? It is to your advantage, therefore, to carry out my instructions. This boy is to be taken far below—where he will be locked in a steel-doored store-room. There is no ventilation. It is but a mere cupboard. To remain locked in that tiny space for fifteen minutes will mean death. So, if you want him to live, you must persuade your friends to leave this ship."

Yen Sing waved his hand, and his men carried Nipper out.



Led by Edward Oswald Handforth, the St. Frank's boys and their companions swarmed on to the tramp steamer in a surging crowd. "St. Frank's to the rescue!" went up a shout, and the next moment they had charged at the crew, who were armed with belaying pins, crowbars and similar weapons.

"Come!" went on Yen Sing. "We go to the bridge. You know by this time, Mr. Lee, that I am a man who does not bluff."

Outside, Nipper was carried bodily, and he was whirled round a dark corner of the evil-smelling corridor.

Thud!

Something crashed into the face of one of the leading Chinamen, and he gave a grunting cry and slithered to the floor.

Thud!

The same thing struck another Chinaman on the point of the nose, and he, too, gave a howl of agony and released his hold. Nipper fell, and the other Chinamen were confused.

"Come on!" roared a voice. "We've got 'em! Down with these rotten Chinks!"

Handforth and Church and McClure and Travers and Gresham and seven or eight other Removites swarmed upon the startled Chinamen like ants. They had been waiting round the corner—they had heard the approaching footsteps, and had waited. And Handforth's fist, famous for its forcefulness, had already done excellent work. He had got in two glorious rights.

"Hurrah!" gurgled Nipper. "Good old St. Frank's! Guv'nor! The chaps are here!"

The door of the cabin stood half-open, and Nelson Lee heard the words distinctly—as he had already heard the sounds of fighting.

Yen Sing was standing near the doorway, his yellow face alight with ferocity.

"So!" he snarled. "You think you can beat me?"

Lee leapt forward, clutching at the Tong man. In a flash, Yen Sing turned, ran to the doorway and vanished through it. But Nelson Lee was after him—one glance had showed Lee that he was not needed in the fight that was taking place in the dimly-lit corridor.

Yen Sing had gone in the opposite direction, and Lee followed. He was just in time to see the Chinaman slithering down an iron ladder which led into the depths of the old tramp steamer.

Without hesitation, Lee followed.

And while he was engaged on this task, Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West and a number of other fellows, attracted by the noise, swept into that corridor. They arrived in time to find all the Chinamen prisoners—with the breath knocked out of their bodies. Five or six juniors were sitting on each man. They had had no chance of using their knives or other deadly weapons.

"Nipper!" gurgled Tommy Watson, running up and pushing through the crowd.

"Begad! Nipper, boy!" said Sir Montie breathlessly.

They pushed through, and they were the first to untie Nipper's bonds. He looked at them with relief and contentment.

"I had an idea that you would come, my sons!" he said happily. "By Jove! It's been a pretty nasty business, though. How in the world did you get on my track?"

"You've got to thank Captain Boom for that," said Watson, hugging Nipper's arm. "He spotted everything through his telescope—from the turret at the top of the Chase. Old Captain Boom is a brick! It was he who arranged for these two tugs to come in chase."

"Well, we've settled these beastly Chinks, anyhow!" said Handforth, breathing hard. "What are we going to do with them? Hadn't we better rope them all up?"

"Somebody had better take Nipper on deck—so that he can get a breath of fresh air," suggested Travers. "We'll look after these Chinks!"

Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West went with Nipper into the open air, and by the time they reached the deck they found that the battle was practically over. One or two of the Caistowe fishermen had received ugly knocks, but there had been no serious casualties. The crew of the Santa Maria had found that they were no match for their opponents, and in the end they had surrendered.

The dago captain, furious but helpless, had been handed into the charge of a number of Caistowe men, and he was taken below.

Captain Phineas Boom assumed command of the tramp steamer.

"By all the sharks!" he said. "There's money business afoot on this craft. She's steaming back to Caistowe under my orders, and I'm not giving up the command until she's in the hands of the Port Authorities."

It might as well be explained at once that Captain Boom expected that there was contraband aboard this disreputable steamer. He was right, too—as a search afterwards proved. It was for this reason that the Portuguese skipper had been so enraged when he had heard that the vessel was to be searched by this boarding party. Incidentally, there was to be a serious charge preferred against the ship's captain by the customs people—but that has nothing to do with Nelson Lee's fight against the Fu Chang Tong.

When Nelson Lee came on deck, he was looking grim and sombre. A number of St. Frank's fellows immediately surrounded him.

"What about Yen Sing, sir?" asked a chorus.

"I am glad, boys, that none of you came with me," replied Nelson Lee. "Yen Sing is dead!"

Something warned them not to ask any further questions, but Mr. Stokes took Lee aside.

"What happened?" he asked quietly.

"It was horrible, Barry," replied Nelson Lee. "Yen Sing fled into the engine-room. He tripped—and fell into the machinery. He gave one scream——"

"I am glad I wasn't there!" interrupted Mr. Stokes huskily.

SOME hours later, the Santa Maria, with her attendant tugs, steamed into Caistowe Bay. The Port Authorities were not long in coming aboard, and the steamer was formally handed over into their care. The captain, the officers and the crew were all placed under arrest.

Chief Detective-Inspector Lennard came aboard, too. His head was bandaged, but otherwise he was looking none the worse for his adventure. And on his face there was an expression of complete satisfaction.

"It was the last kick of those Tong brutes," he declared, as he shook Nelson Lee's hand. "I've been in touch with the Yard, and I hear that the Fu Changs are definitely and finally smashed."

"You—you mean that the gov'nor and I are in no further danger?" asked Nipper eagerly.

"You haven't been in any real danger for two or three days," replied Lennard. "The Tong was broken at the beginning of this week."

"Yen Sing was a cunning fellow," said Lee quietly. "He knew that the Tong was broken, and this whole scheme of his was an attempt to extort money out of me. I dare say the news came to him—the news that the Tong was disorganised—after he had dispatched those bombs through the post. And when he found that they had been ineffective, he played his last card. No doubt he had already made arrangements for his flight."

"That's about it," said the chief inspector. "Knowing that the tramp steamer was sailing this evening, he thought he would risk it. Well, he's failed—thanks, largely, to these schoolboys of yours. Lee, they're a crowd of young sportsmen, believe me!"

AND so the schoolboys went back to St. Frank's, taking Nelson Lee and Nipper triumphantly with them. The danger was over. There was nothing to fear now, and it was unnecessary for Nelson Lee and Nipper to go away from the old school.

Everything, in fact, was all serene. And, without doubt, the most popular pair in the whole of the St. Frank's district just then was Captain Phineas Boom and Mr. Peter Jiggs!

THE END.

THE FIRST OF A GRAND NEW SERIES NEXT WEEK:—

"HANDFORTH'S GIRL CHUM!"

ORDER YOUR COPY IN ADVANCE!

GOSSIP ABOUT ST. FRANK'S



Things Heard and Seen By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

I KNEW it. As soon as I mention some feature about St. Frank's which has not been prominent in the stories, some reader or other writes and asks questions. Here's Reg Gauge, of Catford, who tells me that he's been reading the Old Paper for over nine years. He's very surprised to hear that St. Frank's has a swimming bath. Why? All big Public Schools have swimming baths. It simply hasn't been necessary for me to make a feature of the one at St. Frank's. Our Catford reader declares that there has never been a swimming gala at St. Frank's. That's all he knows! Within my own knowledge, there have been eight or nine. But I'll admit I haven't described any of them in the stories.

* * *

I WONDER why so many readers have acquired an extraordinary affection for Dr. Stafford since he has left the old school? While he was in charge of St. Frank's I never got any letters about him. I suppose he was taken for granted. Now that he has gone readers tick me off for having him replaced by Dr. Nicholls. As if it's my doing! I'm sorry to say I have no voice whatever where the St. Frank's governors are concerned. My job is to record the doings at St. Frank's, and if the governors decided to shove a Hottentot into the school as headmaster, I shall have to chronicle what happens when he gets there. George Seaman Hunnable, of Mistley, is very anxious to know what has happened to Dr. Stafford since his retirement. As a matter of fact, he is living very comfortably at Lake Como at the present moment.

HERE'S a New Zealand reader—R. James Smith, of Wellington—who wants to know what subjects are taught in the Remove. I could, of course, give a full list of them, but is it really necessary? Would the majority of readers be interested in learning such dry-as-dust information? The Remove is taught in very much the same way as the Forms at any other Public School. If I have occasion to record any incident during lesson-time, I generally stick to the one subject that is being hammered into the brains of the fellows at that particular period. And with some of the juniors Mr. Crowell needs not only a hammer, but a sledge-hammer. I am, of course, speaking metaphorically. I don't want readers to get the impression that the Remove Form-room is like a blacksmith's shop. Our New Zealand reader also wants to know who occupies Study B in the Ancient House, but this information has already been given in the Questionnaire. But I can tell him that all the Remove studies in the Ancient House follow on—from A to J. They continue in the West House from K to T. In the Modern House the Fourth Form studies are numbered from 1 to 10, and in the East House from 11 to 20.

OUR READERS' PORTRAIT GALLERY



Arthur G. Jones

* * *

OUR photo this week is of Arthur G. Jones, of Lower Edmonton. He has "ticked me off" because his photo hasn't appeared before. He tells me he sent it about a year ago. Sorry, Arthur—but there are other photos besides yours, you know. Anyway, here it is—and now I hope you're feeling happy and contented.

DORA CANTOR, of Krugersdorp, tells me of a remarkable coincidence. At the very time the stories concerning the gold hunt in Arizona were appearing, she just began the subject of Arizona in geography at school. I'm awfully pleased to know that Dora got a good many tips from my stories. All I hope is that her school-mistress recognised my Arizona local colour as the real thing. Having been to Arizona myself, I don't think I made very many mistakes.

* * *

ENTHUSIASTIC," of Natal, South Africa, writes to say that he is a comparatively new reader of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY—but heartily wishes he could call himself an old reader. Glad to hear you say that, old man. Both the Editor and I feel very bucked. Naturally, this reader is very curious to know whether the chums of St. Frank's have ever visited his country. They have. They didn't visit your part of the landscape, however, but went to the Congo, where they met with all sorts of thrilling adventures. This series of yarns, I have good reason to believe, is one of the most popular that has ever appeared in the Old Paper, and as other new readers besides "Enthusiastic" may be interested, I will give the details of when it appeared. The opening yarn was published in N.L.L. No. 61, new series, week-ending July 2nd, 1927, and the series finished in No. 67, week-ending August 13th.

* * *

AS I have said before, there is no compulsion at St. Frank's for the House-masters to be married, and Reg. T. Staples, of Walworth—who raised this question—can take it from me that it's a fact. Nelson Lee hasn't got a wife knocking about in the Ancient House, and both Mr. Goole and Mr. Stockdale are confirmed old bachelors. With regard to Nipper's dog, "Boz," I'd like to tell Reg. that Nipper acquired the little spaniel since coming to St. Frank's. I really forget the circumstances at the moment, but next time I have a chat with Nipper I'll ask him to give me Boz's history.

* * *

IHAVE been going over St. Frank's asking the chaps if they can tell me if anybody's birthday falls on the 24th of February or the 4th of October. Phil H. Opas, of Caulfield, Melbourne, has asked me to do this, and I'm an obliging chap. Browne, of the Fifth, tells me that his birthday falls on the 31st of February, but I don't believe him. I have discovered that an insignificant youth in the Third, named Billy Dale, was born on the 24th of February, and Hulbert, of the Fifth, whose Christian name is Stanley, was born on the 4th of October. I hope our Australian reader is gratified—though I can't possibly see why he should be. Perhaps he'd like to write me and let me know why he wants these dates.

WINIFRED JOHNSON, of South Shields, is quite right when she says that such people as Mr. Pycraft and Bernard Forrest are annoyed when they read about themselves in my stories. The other day Mr. Pycraft came for me baldheaded, and even threatened to bring an action for libel against me. I told him, as politely as possible, that I only recorded an actual incident in which he had figured, and that there were plenty of witnesses to prove it. So where did the libel come in? It would be a different thing if I invented these incidents deliberately to show Mr. Pycraft up in a bad light. I told him that the remedy was in his own hands. He hummed and hawed a good deal, and finally went off in a huff. But I don't think there'll be any action for libel.

* * *

IHAVE been accused of being "flopish" (I don't know what it means) by Sidney Willis, of Durham. This is what he says: "Why do you term fellows so flopishly as viz., Juicy Lemon, Chubby Heath, Enoch Snipe, the Onions brothers, Timothy Tucker, and others?" Now, what exactly does this Durham reader mean? What is there wrong with these names? Take Lemon, for example. His full name is Christopher Lemon. Isn't it natural that he should be dubbed "Juicy" within two minutes of his arrival at St. Frank's? Lemon is quite an ordinary name. As for Joseph Heath, he happens to be very chubby-featured, and it wasn't long before his chums knew him as "Chubby." Enoch Snipe, I will grant, is a queer name, but there are far queerer names to be found in any telephone directory—and Enoch can't help it, anyhow. Onions, too, is a good enough name. Who hasn't heard of the famous engineering firm of Alldays & Onions, Limited? And what about Mr. Oliver Onions, the well-known writer? But some readers seem to think that because some of the St. Frank's boys have uncommon names I'm to blame.

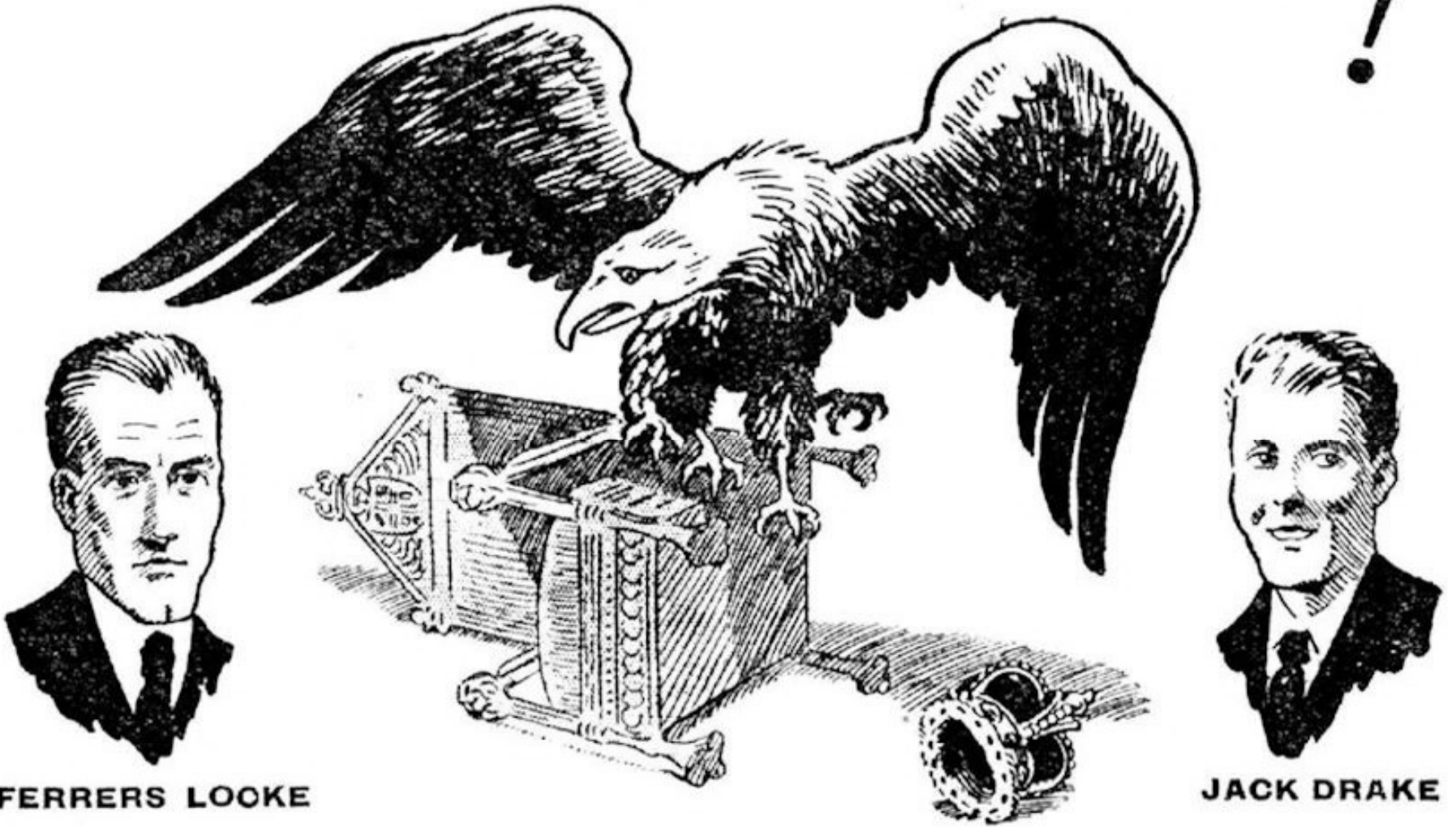
* * *

FRANK R. DAYMAN, of Wellington, New Zealand, suggests that we should have a Question Service. What about the Questionnaire? Readers may have to wait some time before they get their own particular questions answered, but the Questionnaire is really the only satisfactory way of avoiding repetitions. Sometimes I get twenty letters in one week, all asking me the same question—among dozens of others. I couldn't possibly answer all these in one go. My aim is to make this Gossip entertaining to all and sundry. If I confined it to answering questions the interest would be confined to a certain limited number of readers, and the majority would naturally be bored stiff. I'll take this opportunity of thanking Mr. Dayman for some pictorial papers he sent me some months ago, and which proved very interesting.

EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

Here's the Opening Instalment of Our Amazing New Detective Serial, Chums!

The FOUR-LEGGED EAGLE!



FERRERS LOCKE

JACK DRAKE

CHAPTER 1.

The Underground Crime!

"WHAT with one-way traffic and jambs a mile long, I think the Tube will be quicker, Jack," said Ferrers Locke.

The world-famous detective walked out of Scotland Yard. The policeman on duty at the door smartly saluted, and the next moment Locke and Jack Drake, his boy assistant, were out on the Embankment. The detective turned left and walked at his usual brisk pace to Charing Cross. He was well satisfied with himself, for he had just brought a big case to a highly successful conclusion, and, having nothing more to attend to immediately, he was looking forward to a little relaxation.

"We'll do a show to-night, Jack," he said.

"Jolly fine idea!" answered Jack. "Make it a bright one, gov'nor. None of your symphony concerts."

"All right," grinned the detective. "A revue or a musical comedy, then. We'll grab some tea, and change afterwards."

They turned in at Charing Cross Tube Station, and, having obtained tickets from a machine for Baker Street, headed for the escalators.

It was afternoon, and there were not a great many people about. Most of the shoppers had either left for their homes in the suburbs or were still having tea in the West End, while the business rush for home had yet to begin.

Ferrers Locke and his assistant were preceded on to the escalator by a swarthy, thick-set man of an obviously foreign aspect. It was probable that his unusual appearance drew the attention of the two. Unlike them, however, he seemed to be in a violent hurry, and kept looking over his

Two foreigners on an escalator; one of them foully murdered—and thus Ferrers Locke, the world-famous 'tec, and his boy assistant, Jack Drake, find themselves involved in a series of amazingly thrilling adventures the like of which they've never experienced before!

shoulder in a half-fearful way, as if apprehensive of that which followed.

The object of his terror soon manifested itself, for even as Locke reached the head of the escalator a second foreigner appeared, and, having pushed the detective to one side, raced in pursuit of his compatriot, disregarding everything in his effort to reach the fleeing man, and yelling the while in an un-

usual tongue. He reached his objective before they were three quarters of the way down, and it seemed that he jostled him. Thereafter the action became more evolved. The first of the two seemed to hit at the other and miss him, then he threw up his arms and, with a horrible gurgle, collapsed on the creaking, moving stairway.

It seemed that the other man did not halt in his stride. He leaped from the foot of the escalator, and, without looking back, raced up the winding passage that led to the "north bound" platform.

At such times Ferrers Locke was at his best. The glance that he took as he plunged downwards towards the huddled figure was comprehensive. He had sensed that it was murder, even before he saw the slender dagger that protruded from the motionless man's side.

Locke waved his arm to Jack, and indicated the fleeing foreigner.

"After him!" he ordered crisply.

Jack obeyed. All thoughts of revues and musical comedies were gone from his mind. He was on duty. He leapt from the escalator as he reached the bottom and raced after the foreigner, getting a brief glimpse of the man as he swung round the corner at the top of the last short flight of steps that led to the platform.

Jack was close on his heels, but already the thunderous roar of a train was awakening deafening echoes. It stopped and the gates clanged. Men shouted: "Cross! Charing Cross!" And just as Jack came out on to the platform the gates were reclosed. He leapt, but a porter, realising his danger, hauled him back. The train was moving, and the foreigner had caught it by the skin of his teeth.

"Young idiot!" rasped the porter. "Asking for sudden death, aren't you?"

Jack made no answer. He shook himself free from the porter's grasp, spun round on his heel, and raced back the way he had come. He found Ferrers Locke close to the foot of the escalator. He had dragged the stricken man from the staircase, and was carefully examining the contents of his pockets.

Already a fair-sized crowd had collected. Underground officials were busy, rushing here and there, trying to disperse the curious people, and telephoning for the police.

"Lost him, gov'nor," said Jack apologetically, shouldering his way through the throng. "He got the train and I didn't. Any use 'phoning along the line?"

"Too late," replied Locke. "He may have got out at Trafalgar Square. The train will be there by now. Look at this, Jack."

Locke held up the dead man's right hand. Engraved on the heavy gold signet-ring, which the man wore on his little finger, was the figure of a four-legged eagle.

"That's the crest of the royal house of Abronia, my lad," he whispered. "It may mean anything, or it may mean nothing, but it would be as well to remember it."

"Who is this poor fellow?" asked Jack.

"Nothing to tell us," answered the detective. "Plenty of money, but no notebook or wallet. Nothing, except this."

He showed Jack a slip of paper. An address was written down upon it in indelible pencil, but no name was mentioned—just the address—24, Hinton Terrace, Lambeth.

Ferrers Locke had long since taught Jack the advisability of having a good and quick memory, so that the lad had no need to jot the address down in his notebook. He memorised it on the spot, and it was just as well that he did so, for at that moment the police arrived.

Locke told them exactly what he had seen and found, and, after giving his own name and address, and assurances that he was willing to be called as a witness, he went up the escalator to the District Railway, and headed for the stairs that led to the street.

"Show's off, I suppose?" mentioned Jack.

"It is," said Locke curtly.

"Going to Lambeth?"

"Yes, while the trail is warm."

The detective lapsed into silence, and Jack knew better than to disturb him. This amazing murder on the Tube might be a simple case, or it might not. Apparently, Ferrers Locke thought it worth while looking into, and all Jack had to do was to await developments and obey instructions.

"Taxi!" rasped Locke. Jack stepped into the roadway and signalled to a passing vehicle. Two minutes later they were speeding over Westminster Bridge.

CHAPTER 2.

Another Eagle!

HINTON TERRACE was easily found. The detective and his assistant dismissed the taxi at the end of the road, and walked along the long, dismal terrace. The houses were all alike—great, gloomy, dingy, barrack-like places—and number twenty-four was as bad as any; worse, in fact, for, although there were curtains at the lower windows, the upper floors seemed to be untenanted altogether.

Locke did not hesitate. He boldly approached the front door and pulled the bell. It jangled eerily inside, and echoed in a way that proved there was not much furniture in the place, but no one answered the summons.

Jack banged on the knocker again and again, arousing a host of echoes, but to no effect—and finally Locke and Drake left the front door and descended into the area, to ring and knock down there.

The result was the same.

Locke tried the handle of the door, and found that it turned easily. The door opened.

Silently, cautiously, they entered the gloomy house. There was no carpet nor lino on the floors; moreover, the rooms downstairs were bare of furniture except for two chairs and a dirty table in the kitchen. The remains of a meal still lay on the table, and on the gas stove a kettle was singing

cheerily—a fact which interested Ferrers Locke. People aren't in the habit of leaving the gas alight under the kettle if they're not actually in the house.

But downstairs was blank, devoid of life and clues, so Locke and Drake ascended to the first floor. Upstairs the rooms were furnished with more approach to comfort. There was a sitting-room, scattered with the day's newspapers, and a bed-room where the bed had not yet been made.

Ferrers Locke picked up a cigarette-end from the grate. It was of a foreign, and probably expensive make. He placed it in his wallet and continued his examination of the room.

Over the back of a chair was flung a faded

The detective was plainly puzzled, and Jack admitted himself beaten. They left that room for the back bed-room. Cautiously they opened the door and looked in. A man was standing gazing out of the window with his back towards them. He was broad and hefty, and his hair was closely cropped in pre-war German fashion, sticking up like spikes on his bullet-shaped head. He did not turn round. He merely beckoned with one hand.

"Come in," he said.

Only two words, but if the English was good he could not disguise the fact that he was foreign.

Locke entered the room, but he did not venture more than half-way across to the



With an ear-splitting roar the bomb exploded and in a few moments the house was an inferno. Jack Drake clapped a handkerchief to his mouth and rushed up the flaming staircase. Would he be in time to save Ferrers Locke, who was entrapped in one of the rooms?

blue tunic, strangely like the R.A.F. tunic, but far more elaborate. The epaulettes were of tarnished gold braid, and on the breast was affixed a gold star, bearing in the centre the figure of a four-legged eagle!

Locke picked up the tunic and drew Jack's attention to the decoration which it held. Then, without speaking, he replaced the garment as he had found it, and, frowning heavily, went up to the next floor. The front bed-room contained three single beds and a chair; other furniture there was none. Even the window boasted no curtain, and the venetian blind that took its place hung untidily and unevenly askew. The chair held three suits of silk pyjamas—pyjamas such as are only possible to the wealthy—but other than these there were no clothes in the room.

window, and he was careful to leave the door wide open behind him. The room was absolutely devoid of carpet or furniture.

The man at the window slipped both hands into his jacket-pockets, then spun round to face them.

"You have no right in here!" he snapped.

Locke smiled grimly.

"Perhaps you're right," he said. "We knocked and rang at both doors but obtained no answer, so we took the liberty of entering. Somebody forgot to lock the area door."

"But you have no right to enter," snarled the man.

His face was swarthy, his black eyes flashed venom. He was sturdily built, erect, probably a soldier of some sort. His dark face looked

cruel and vicious, and was not improved by the bristling military moustache that adorned his upper lip.

Locke studied him shrewdly. He knew he had no search warrant, and that, strictly speaking, he was in the wrong, but he reckoned that the deliberate murder of an unknown man warranted his illegal act.

"I'll admit I have exceeded my right," he vouchsafed. "But before long the police will be here."

The stranger started perceptibly.

"For why?" he cried. "I have done no wrong."

"A man has been murdered at Charing Cross Tube Station," explained Locke. "A corpulent, dark man. He wore a ring engraved with an eagle of some sort."

"Ah!" The man seemed to sigh with peculiar satisfaction. "But what has this to do with me, m'sieur?"

"I don't know," rasped Locke. "Only the murdered man had a slip of paper in his pocket bearing this address, so I wondered if I should find anyone here who could, at least, tell me who—"

"I know nothing about it," snapped the stranger. "It is nothing to do with me. We are leaving here shortly and the house is for sale. In all probability, m'sieur, this other man—"

His voice trailed away into silence. Downstairs, the front door had opened and closed. Someone was coming upstairs, and in a hurry, too. Jack Drake spun round, his face set grimly. The man at the window had suddenly whipped his hands out of his jacket-pockets, and in each hand was a revolver.

"Stand still!" he hissed. "Don't move! No—put your hands up. Quickly! I am a dead shot."

Ferrers Locke was caught. He had expected revolvers when he first entered that room and had seen the man standing at the window; but as the man had produced no weapon, he had come to the conclusion that the other was unarmed. It was plain that Locke was up against a clever man.

And as there was nothing else to be done at the moment, Locke raised his hands above his head, and Jack Drake followed suit. The man with the guns calmly walked towards them, walked past them to the door, still covering them with both guns. If he had had only one gun Jack might have chanced a wild leap, but a gun in each fist was a different proposition altogether.

Locke and Jack slowly turned towards the door. On the threshold another man had appeared. He was middle-aged, swarthy of complexion, obviously a foreigner. But Jack Drake added to that description. As he stared at the newcomer, that scene on the platform of Charing Cross Tube Station flashed back into his mind—the train just gathering speed out of the station, the clanging gate, the bellowing porter, and the escaped quarry looking back, with a triumphant grin on his face.

Jack never forgot a face.

"That's the murderer, gov'nor!" he said hoarsely. "Take a good look at him."

Locke made no reply, but he certainly subjected the newcomer to a careful scrutiny.

The first foreigner spoke to his companion.

"So. You killed him?" he said.

"I had to, to stop him," replied the other.

"Before he reached Scotland Yard?"

"He never went there," said the man who had just entered the room, puzzled.

"Then where was he going?"

"I do not know, and no one will ever know—now. What does it matter, your Excellency? The important thing is to get away—"

"Exactly!" said his Excellency. "But these meddlers—is it to be another murder—two more—ah, keep still, m'sieur! One more move like that will be your last—I promise you that. I do not approve of murder, count, if it can be avoided."

"It is not murder," rasped the count. "It is war—civil war, if you like—and if these two canailles—"

"Too dangerous!" observed his Excellency. "To remove a compatriot, that is one thing. To kill an Englishman, quite another, my dear count. I fancy the best thing we can do is—"

And with amazing celerity he did it! That calm discussion had been a deliberate blind. All the time he had been talking he had been slowly retreating, and with one last, mad backward leap, he was out of the room in a flash, and had slammed the door. Even as Locke hurled himself at the panels, the key grated in the lock.

As a rule, Ferrers Locke could open any door, but these foreigners, whoever they were, gave him small chance. Jack and the detective immediately set to work to smash the panels, but since there was not so much as a stick of firewood in the room to aid them in their endeavour, they soon realised the futility of their task.

Moreover, their opponents were tying that door on the outside. Locke could hear a coil of rope slithering on the bare boards, and the rattle of the door-knob as they secured one end to the handle. The door opened inwards, but if it were tied on the outside to something substantial, nothing short of wrenching the handle off would get them out of the room.

And, like the doors of many old houses, it was of a massive design, resisting even the ceaseless tattoo of hefty kicks which Jack Drake kept up on the lower panels.

With a gesture Locke stopped him. The detective had heard something.

Men were struggling down the stairs from the attic. As they passed the door there came to the listening detective the sound of voices. His Excellency was talking, angrily.

"Why struggle, Ferdinand?" he queried, in English. Then, as if realising his mistake, he rattled off a tirade in some foreign language. Someone else answered him, haughtily, proudly.

The men passed downstairs out of earshot. Ferrers Locke, who had had his ear to the panels of the door, now straightened up. His face wore a puzzled frown.

"Spanish or French?" ventured Jack.

"Neither," answered Locke; "and yet a mixture of both. Some words I caught sounded familiar to me, and others I've never heard before. As far as I can make out, one of those men we heard coming down the stairs just now is a prisoner and the others are his gaolers, and they all have French sounding titles. But let's get out of this, Jack. What about the window?"

In a trice Jack had opened the window. He saw that a drain-pipe was within reach, and he was quickly out on the window-sill. Ferrers Locke snapped out instructions.

"Get in the house again and unbarricade the door. By the time you get here I'll have that lock picked. Keep your eyes open."

"Righ-ho, gov'nor!" said Jack tersely, shinning down the pipe.

It was easy enough to reach the back garden that way, but impossible to do it unseen. There were plenty of people in that drab quarter of London, and the unusual spectacle caused considerable excitement. Women screamed, and men gaped with amazement, but before anything could be done about it, Jack Drake was in the back garden of 24, Hinton Terrace, seeking to re-enter the house.

Not that it was difficult. Jack merely stood on a lower window-sill and kicked a pane of glass to fragments. He found himself in the kitchen, where the remains of the meal still lay on the dirty table.

He did not waste time there, however. He raced out into the passage and along to the foot of the stairs. Then he stopped dead in his tracks, suddenly crouched down against the wall and covered his face with his hands. He had seen bombs more than once in his work with Ferrers Locke, and he knew that one was about to—

With a blinding flash of fire, and an ear-splitting roar, the thing exploded. For a couple of seconds Jack hardly knew what was happening. He was hurled backwards down the passage, in a welter of flame and choking fumes. Half-stunned by the shock of the explosion, he cannoned into the door of a cupboard, and if the impact bruised him badly, it also served to arouse him from the stupefied state into which he was falling.

He picked himself up, and found, with some amazement, that not a bone was broken. Had he not been below the level of the bomb he must inevitably have been killed, for it had exploded upwards. In placing the bomb on the fourth stair the foreigners had made a mistake that had saved Jack's life.

But the house was flaring rapidly, for the woodwork was rotten. There was no time to hesitate. If the staircase collapsed all chances of releasing Ferrers Locke were gone. Already the ceiling in the passage was down, great holes appeared in the walls, and the

rickety banister rails were flaring like torches.

Jack clapped his handkerchief over his mouth and went up the flaming staircase with a mad rush. The whole structure seemed to reel beneath the slight weight of his body, and as he reached the landing outside the room where the detective was locked in, the staircase below him collapsed in a fiery heap.

Jack saw that a rope had been tied to the handle of the door, carried across to the landing, and securely tied to that of another door. It was an age-old trick, for if Locke managed to pick the lock and turn the key he would still be a prisoner in the room. Jack was never without his claspknife, and he cut that rope with two vicious slashes. Ferrers Locke came out.

"Good lad!" he said grimly. "But we're trapped by the fire. Try the roof."

They went up the last flight of stairs, which were already beginning to crackle. In the attic, destitute of furniture, were a few more cigarette-ends of that expensive foreign variety, but what interested Jack more was the skylight.

The sloping ceiling brought the fanlight within reach, and the detective and his assistant scrambled out on to the roof. From below came the sounds of the first fire-engines to arrive, the shrilling of police-whistles, and the excited jabber of the ever-widening crowd. Some distance away could be heard the clanging of yet another engine as it rushed to Hinton Terrace.

Locke glanced round. It was possible, by careful climbing, to reach the skylight of the house next door, and, followed by Jack Drake, he set out towards it.

Their objective was not locked, and with the help of Jack's knife was soon open. The two detectives slipped through and descended to the street.

Here the noise was even greater. The police were experiencing great difficulty in preventing the excited people from getting in the way of the firemen, and the neighbours were already removing their more valuable furniture into the street.

At the moment when Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake reached the road level, a sumptuous Daimler swung into Hinton Terrace. It appeared utterly incongruous in such surroundings. Locke would have liked to examine it, scrutinize its occupants, but the work on hand was urgent, and he could not spare the time. He caught hold of a nearby boy and spun him round.

"Did you see anybody leave this house before the explosion?" he snapped out.

"What's it got to do with you?" retorted the urchin.

Jack Drake leaned forward.

"Steady, son, this is Ferrers Locke," he said.

"Crumbs!" gasped the urchin. "How was I to know. Yes, sir, there was a car. Four dark blokes got in. One of 'em didn't seem to want to go. They went that way, and

turned to the right like they were going to the Embankment. Been a murder, sir?" he asked hopefully.

"Albert Embankment!" mused Locke. "What sort of car?"

"Brown Buick, sir. Been here every day since them darkies took that house."

"How long is that?"

"Three weeks, sir."

"Happen to know the number of the car?"

And to Locke's amazement the boy told him the registration letters and number of the brown Buick. But Jack Drake was not surprised. He was not so old, but he could still remember the days when he used to jot down in a grimy notebook the numbers of the motor-cars he saw.

Locke rewarded the boy liberally, then stepped up to the inspector of police and made a report of all that he knew. Seeing that a murder had been committed, it was his duty to do all he could to help the police. He saw, plainly enough, many unusual features connected with the underground crime, and although he had not been invited to handle the case, he was itching for the opportunity. He had already made up his mind to continue his investigations unofficially.

The luxurious Daimler had come to a standstill midway between the corner of Hinton Terrace and the burning house.

Ferrers Locke was far more interested in the occupants of that car than in the fire. He walked slowly up Hinton Terrace so that he could get a good view of the Daimler as he passed. The car contained two people—a lady and a gentleman, both, to all appearances, foreign. It seemed to Locke that the case was devoid of Britishers. The man, except for the fact that he was lithe, bearded, and of military aspect, did not

greatly interest the detective. It was the woman who attracted his attention.

She was staring at the upper windows of number twenty-four, and it seemed that the sight of the burning house terrified her. Her dark brown eyes were aghast and her sunburnt complexion was strangely colourless. There was something Spanish in her face, which gave her a strange fascination and made her beautiful.

Locke made to continue on his way, taking a good look at the car's number plate, when he saw the lady lean forward, clasping her hands in evident distress. He saw that there were tears on her cheeks. As he passed, she exclaimed:

"Ferdinand! My poor Ferdinand!"

Ferrers Locke did not hesitate. He spun round sharply. His hand came up, and even before Jack Drake realised what had happened, he had flung open the door of the car.

"Excuse me, madam," he said. "I think——"

He broke off sharply, for the lean, bearded man had whipped into action. His hand came round smartly. There was a flash of steel, and a long stiletto appeared in his hand, the keen point already boring a hole in Ferrers Locke's waistcoat.

"Better go—away!" faltered the foreigner in awkward English.

Locke smiled shrewdly. He knew he was on the trail. He eyed the gleaming blade of the stiletto, and he studied the brown hand that held it so steadily. On the little finger was a ring—a gold signet ring—bearing the engraved figure of the four-legged eagle!

(Jolly fine serial, isn't it chums? But wait until you read next week's enthralling instalment. Ferrers Locke and Jack Drake are hot on the trail, and their hair-raising adventures will leave you breathless from sheer excitement!)

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED

Alfred Wyatt, Beck Street, Henley Beach, South Australia, wants correspondents interested in cigarette cards.

Rory J. Gleeson, 7, Laurel Villas, South Circular Road, Limerick, Ireland, offers 200 copies of the N.L.L.

Fred Broadfield, 123, Ashton New Road, Beswick, Manchester, wants correspondents in Australia and New Zealand interested in sport.

Ronald E. Mabbett, 5, Vines Cottage, Fairford, Cirencester, Glos., would like correspondents—preferably in Glos.—ages 16—17; also wants N.L.L. Nos. 119 and 168, new series.

M. Rawlinson, 27, Crosland Road, Thornton Lodge, Huddersfield, Yorks., wants correspondents.

H. J. Rogers, 82, Hunton Road, Erdington, Birmingham, wants correspondents.

Miss Dorothy J. Smith, c/o Mrs. Mitchell, 10, Hillside Street, Edinburgh, would like girl correspondents anywhere.

Jack Miles, Castlerigg, 59, Springfield Road, St. Leonard's-on-Sea, Sussex, wants correspondents in Canada and Australia; ages 15—17.

John McMullen, 28, River Street, Richmond,

E.I. Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, desires correspondents, especially stamp collectors.

Wm. Faulkner, 2, Malthouse Square, Church Street, Bromsgrove, Wores., wants correspondents in the United States, West Indies, Malta, Egypt, etc.

R. W. Gledhill, 42, North Street, Keighley, Yorks., wants correspondents interested in stamps in England, Australia, China, U.S.A., and France.

Charles Edmunds, 82, Dagenham Avenue, Dagenham, Essex, wishes to correspond with readers.

Frederick W. Rayner, 78, Clinton Avenue, Wilbraham Estate, Moss Side, Manchester, wants correspondents, especially in China, Singapore, and Germany.

Albert Crowley, 105, Kent Street, Ascot Vale, W.2, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, wants correspondents anywhere outside Australia; age 14.

Frank Bradley (aged 15), 41, Cowper Street, Goulburn, N.S.W., Australia, wants correspondents.

Arthur Smith, 10, Trafalgar Place, Stoke, Devonport, desires correspondents anywhere; offers 1d. each for N.L.L. Nos. 529—541, old series.

Ronald Chippendale, 72, Montague Street, Goulburn, N.S.W., Australia, wants correspondents.

George W. N. Nicoll, South Esk, 20, Tamar Street, West Murrickville, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia, would like stamp-collecting correspondents.

The ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE CORNER!



*The Chief Officer Chats
with his Chums.*

*Here's his address if you want to
write to him: The Chief Officer, "The
Nelson Lee Library," Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.*

Smoking!

"COULD you give me a little advice on how to keep away from smoking."

Thus writes a Wellington, New Zealand, chum. Apparently he is keen to take up Rugby, and other sports in general, and he fully realises that to do so he must be perfectly fit, and that perfect physical fitness is not obtained by smoking. So wants to drop the habit altogether.

A sound scheme!

Yet I am afraid that I shall be able to give my correspondent precious little advice. There is very little to give, indeed. It is entirely up to the person in question. Providing he has sufficient will power, it should be no difficult task for him to give up smoking. If he hasn't sufficient will power then I'm afraid there's nothing that can be done; certainly I can do nothing to help, unless it is to advise him to try and reduce his daily consumption of cigarettes gradually until, having got it down to only two or three per day, he should then be able to drop the habit altogether.

Concerning C. Barnard!

LAST week this reader had a notice inserted in the "Correspondents Wanted" column to the effect that he would be pleased to hear from anybody interested in stamp collecting. The address given was: "The Downs Hospital for Children, Sutton."

Will all readers who intend writing, or who have already written, to C. Barnard, please note that his address now is: 5, Collingwood Street, Chelsea; London, S.W.3, where all correspondence should be sent. Unfortunately last week's issue of the Old Paper had already gone to press when my chum asked me to make this correction.

Match Box Collecting!

THIS is the unusual hobby of George D. Laws, of 87, Calton Avenue, Dulwich village, London, S.E.21. He tells me

he has succeeded in collecting 640 brands of match-box labels. George wishes to exchange duplicates with other hobbyists, and will also be pleased to hear from any readers who are interested.

THE CHIEF OFFICER.

THIS WEEK'S WINNING LETTER

DEAR CHIEF OFFICER.—As you will see from my membership number, I am not an old, established member of the St. Frank's League; yet, on the other hand, I do not consider myself a new one. It may interest you to know that at one time I was one of those foolish chaps who thought the NELSON LEE was rubbish. Then I bought it occasionally, and I began to take an interest in the characters. To my surprise, I soon found myself counting the days till the following Wednesday came round. I began to enjoy, with relish, the clean, wholesome literature for which the Old Paper is famed. Nowadays, I wouldn't miss my copy for anything.

I have taken advantage of the excellent facilities which the League offers. I have some splendid correspondents—five in England, one in Canada, one in Australia, and another in America. I have been fortunate in introducing six new readers to the Old Paper, for which I received my bronze medal, and of which I am justly proud.

With best wishes to you, Mr. Brooks and the NELSON LEE LIBRARY, and, of course, the St. Frank's League.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) J. McLAUGHLAN, Jun.,
S.F.L. No. 8372.

(For this interesting letter, J. McLaughlan, jun., of Glasgow, has been awarded a useful penknife.)

All members of the St. Frank's League are invited to send to the Chief Officer letters of interest concerning the League. The most interesting will be published week by week, and the senders will receive pocket wallets or penknives. If you don't belong to the League look out for the entry form which appears from time to time and then join immediately.

Professor Puddleditch's Lectures!

(Continued from page 13.)

polished horns, one on either side of its nose. These horns are capable of reflecting images, like a mirror, and all the beast has to do when it wants to know what is happening behind it is to look at its horns.

"I have here a little book, written by Tino Spaghetti, a famous Italian explorer, and I will read to you a passage bearing on the habits of the animal we are discussing. It goes as follows: 'Two shirts, fourpence each; one pair of socks—' Good gracious!" stuttered the professor, with some embarrassment. "This is my laundry book!"

Fishing about amongst his papers, he finally unearthed the required text-book, and, after carefully scanning the title, he commenced to read:

"We were trekking across the Great Desert (Spaghetti states) called by the natives 'Nottonthemapp,' and were approaching the boundaries of Lukistan after an unbroken journey of twelve years and three

hours—summer time—when we caught our first glimpse of the womba-womba.

"We were immediately much struck by the fact that the more it walked away from us the nearer it got, so to speak, and we decided to make a closer investigation.

"My head black boy, Face-and-half, was a few paces ahead of the column, when he suddenly became very animated, and gesticulated wildly to me, uttering in his pidgin English, 'Massa whatto come along never mind quick!' I spurred forward, and saw there in the scrub, to my surprise and amusement, a nest of newly-born wombi-wombi (plural) cutting the most weird capers.

"There they were, moving first forward and then backward, oscillating like the dickens!"

The professor, greatly tickled at the description of the animal as set forth by the writer, tittered immoderately.

"Unfortunately," concluded the professor, wiping his eyes, "there is no specimen of the womba-womba at the Zoo, the only one ever brought to this country having died before it got here. This was through the carelessness of its keeper in losing its fur collar, thus causing the poor creature to perish from a frozen neck."



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BE TALLER! Increased my own height 3 1/2 in. STAMP brings FREE DETAILS.—ROSS, Height Specialist, Scarborough.