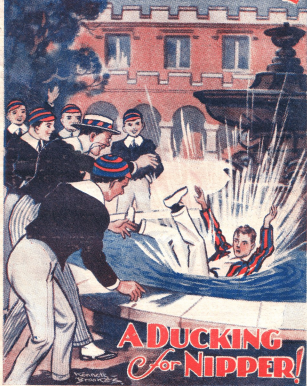


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**A DUCKING**  
*for* **NIPPER!**

New Series No. 4.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

March 18th, 1933.



# NIPPER'S TRIUMPH!

## CHAPTER I.

### Handforth Puts His Foot Down.

"THE chopper's got to come down—and it's got to come down hard!"

The fellow who made that remark was Edward Oswald Handforth, of Study D in the Ancient House at St. Frank's. And Handforth, of the Remove, when he made a remark, made it loudly.

There were quite a crowd of Removites in the Common-room. I was standing over by one of the windows with Tregellis-West and Watson, my study-chums. I'm Nipper—known at St. Frank's as Dick Bennett, of Study C.

"The chopper's got to come down!" repeated Handforth firmly.

He looked round for support, but everybody seemed to be grinning.

"Handy, old boy, you're awarin'—you are, really!" murmured Sir Lancelot Montgomery Tregellis-West.

Handforth turned round and glared.

"Who told that chap to speak?" he demanded. "He's in Coventry!"

"Dear fellow, it's a habit of mine to speak," smiled Sir Montie. "You're not bound to answer, you know. Speakin' relieves me tremendously. An' the changin' expressions of your face are really remarkable—"

—There Are Thrills Throughout This Grand Yarn Of The Chums Of St. Frouk's.



"Ha, ha, ha!"

The expression on the great Handforth's face was worth quids. Edward Oswald was a big chap for a Removite, and he had a curious idea that his physical superiority over the other fellows gave him the right to boss the Removite just as he liked. Unfortunately, the Removite never took Handforth seriously.

At the same time, there wasn't a fellow who disliked him. Handforth was one of the best-natured fellows in the Ancient House—as Church and McClure, his study-mates, were always willing to testify. They knew exactly how to deal with him; rubbed the right way, Handforth was quite docile.

He was a great chap for throwing his weight about, and offering advice to all and sundry. Needless to say, his advice wasn't always accepted. I had found him decent in most ways, but he wanted handling carefully.

"Look here!" he roared angrily as the fellows streamed out of the Common-room. "If anybody else goes out, I'll dot him on the nose! Do you hear, you idiots! Ain't you going to take any notice of me!"

Apparently not—for the juniors were still leaving.

"I say, don't be rotten!" shouted Handforth, changing his tone. "This is a jolly serious matter. It's for the honour of the House, you know! I've got a suggestion to make—for wipping up Fullwood and Co.!" Several Removites halted, and others came back from the passage.

"If it's something against Fullwood, we're with you," said Hubbard readily.

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Shunned by his chums—an outcast of the Form—Nipper's downfall is dramatic and complete! But even more dramatic comes his sudden triumph—his return to popularity! How Nipper achieves it he tells in this sparkling story, which is set down for publication by **EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.**

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"Dry up, Montie," I grinned. "Let Handforth run on. I'm anxious to hear him jaw. The great question is—who's going to get the chopper? Who's been ruffling the temper of the mighty Handforth!"

"If those chaps weren't in Coventry," said Handforth, "I'd speak to 'em, and get 'em to help me—Bennett particularly. But they're barred by the Poem. So you other fellows had better listen."

The other fellows, however, were strolling out of the Common-room.

"Hold on!" bawled Handforth wrathfully. "Where are you going, you asses!"

"Out!" grinned Owen major, of Study H. "I'm going to make a speech!" roared Handforth.

Owen major nodded.

"That's why we're going out!" he said calmly.

"I should think you ought to be!" snorted Handforth.

Tragell-West adjusted his gold-rimmed pince-nez.

"So the chopper's comin' down on the entertainer Fullwood!" he drawled.

"I'm not talking to you, West!" said Handforth acidly. "You ain't a bad sort, and I like you, personally—"

"That's awfully gratifyin', dear boy."

"But you're in Coventry, together with Bennett and Watson," went on Handforth. "I can't hold any conversation with you—'tain't the thing, you know."

"You silly ass!" yelled Griffith. "You are jawing with him!"

Handforth looked surprised.

"Well, I suppose I was," he admitted.

"It's rotten, three of the best chaps in the

Remove being barred. There's some mistake or other—"

"Hass!" snorted Hubbard. "Bennett half-killed Farman, and Tregellis-West and Watson uphold him in it. We don't stand hooliganism in the Remove. The cads are outside the pale."

"I don't exactly believe that yarn about Bennett—"

"You ass, Handforth!" shouted Griffith. "I thought you were going to make a speech about that rotter Fullwood."

"My hat! So I was!" said Handforth.

He faced the Removites with a grim expression. The juniors, on the other hand, were grinning. Even Church and McClure, Handforth's faithful echoes in all things, were smiling. Then Handforth glared at them, and they straightened their faces.

I chuckled.

"Handforth's on the warpath," I murmured. "Things are going to happen!"

"Yes — to Handforth!" murmured Tregellis-West amusedly.

Hubbard's remark about hooliganism had left me unmoved. I'd been hearing similar remarks for three days past, and I had grown accustomed to them. I was "in Coventry," and I was to stay there for a whole month. In fact, I was shunned by the Form. And Tregellis-West and Watson, being my loyal pals, had nobly elected to share my banishment.

My disgrace was due to the cunning machinations of Fullwood, of the Remove. Ralph Leslie Fullwood was a young black-guard of the first water, and he hated me. He hated me because I had licked him in a fair fight, and had ousted him from the leadership of the Fossils—as the Ancient House juniors were called.

Only three days previously an American junior in the Remove, named Justin B. Farman, had been brutally attacked by two unknown men near to the school. By an unfortunate chance, there had been no witnesses of the assault except myself. I had rushed up, and had arrived too late to avert the attack.

The men had disappeared, but had left a stout wooden cudgel behind them. I had picked this up, and then Fullwood & Co. had come into sight, in a motor-car they had hired. So, by a stroke of ill-luck, the knuts of St. Frank's saw me bending over the stricken boy with the weapon in my hand.

A farther misfortune was the fact that I had actually been out for Farman's blood. I had been searching for him to give him a licking—because I thought that Farman had committed a particularly mean trick upon Teddy Long, of the Remove. I afterwards discovered that Fullwood was the author of the trick, but he had arranged matters so that Farman should be accused.

Farman had informed Dr. Stafford, the headmaster, that I was quite innocent, but he refused to give any description of his real assailants. Thus, although I was publicly cleared of the charge by the Head himself,

Fullwood made capital out of the American boy's secrecy.

In a great meeting in the Common-room I had been put on trial. Fullwood had made himself the prosecuting counsel, and he had stated his case cunningly and cleverly. He had made the Removites believe that I had attacked Farman, and had then threatened to smash him further if he gave me away. Farman—according to Fullwood's argument—had lied to the Head because he was afraid of me.

In this way the jury had been influenced, and I had been found guilty. It was a bit of a shock to me, I'll admit. I was sentenced to Coventry for a month. And Sir Montie Tregellis-West and Tommy Watson, my chums of Study C, had gallantly decided to stick up for me through thick and thin.

Farman was still in the school hospital, for his head had been rather badly battered; but he would be out and about before many days had passed. When he did appear I knew that he would do his best to straighten matters for me. But I was anxious to discover the truth for myself.

For there was a mystery surrounding Justin B. Farman.

He was a new boy, and he hailed from California. Since his arrival at St. Frank's he had been attacked twice—and the first time he had been nearly kidnapped. And yet, for some unearthly reason, he refused to say a word. He knew quite a lot, but he kept mum.

It was, of course, owing to his secrecy that I found myself in such a rotten hole. And I was determined to thrash matters out. If Farman wouldn't say who had attacked him—well, I'd find out for myself! At least, the guv'nor and I would together.

The guv'nor—Mr. Nelson Lee, the famous crime investigator—was at St. Frank's with me. He went under the name of Mr. Alvington, and he was the Housemaster of the Ancient House. The Fu Chang Tong were seeking revenge on Nelson Lee, so he had decided to "disappear" for a time. Hence our presence at St. Frank's.

The guv'nor was a bit upset about my disgrace, but he had told me not to worry. Before the week was out, he declared, the whole trash would be revealed.

So I was calmly awaiting the march of events. If it hadn't been for this prospect of a speedy vindication, I believe I should have jibbed. The Head, of course, had cleared me, and it was only the fellows in the Ancient House Remove who believed Fullwood's lies. Bob Christine & Co., the leaders of the Monks—the College House juniors—were openly friendly with me.

At the same time, it was utterly rotten to be shunned by my own House. The Fossils, previous to my arrival at St. Frank's, had been kept down by Fullwood & Co.—Fullwood and Galliver and Bell, of Study A. Messell & Co. were Fullwood's supporters, and the two studies, combined, were known

as the knuts. They were young boasters of the worst type. They smoked and gambled and broke bonns, and generally believed themselves to be roaring blades.

The knuts had allowed the Ancient House to run to seed. Cricket and sports in general had gone stale. And I had opened my campaign by licking Fullwood and assuming the leadership of the Fossils.

But just as I had commenced to make splendid headway in the affairs of the Ancient House, Fullwood had sprung his bombshell. I was barred now, and all my plans for the bucking-up of the Ancient House were disorganised. Instead of being the junior leader, I was an outcast.

And Trogellie-West and Watson, because they were staunch, shared my fate.

Now, it seemed, Handforth was bent on taking charge of things himself. He was fired with the ambition of making himself junior leader. Of course, he'd never succeed—he was too ram-headed and obstinate. But he was going to have a shot at it, and things promised to be interesting.

It was a Wednesday, a half-holiday at St. Frank's and morning lessons were over. Dinner would be ready in about half an hour and after that—I thought of the afternoon rather bitterly. I had planned a practice cricket match for that afternoon, but it wouldn't take place now.

Handforth cleared his throat rather noisily. "The chopper's got to come down," he began.

"You said that before," interrupted Armstrong. "Try another tune, old man."

"Fullwood's going to get it in the neck!" went on Handforth firmly. "I've been thinking, and it seems to me we did a fat-headed thing when we sent Bennett to Coventry. Still, I'm going to abide by the sentence of the Form. Bennett's banned."

"The sentence ought to be rescinded," growled Watson.

Handforth looked in our direction wrathfully, but said nothing to us. Then he went on with his speech.

"Before Bennett acted the goat he was improving the House no end," he declared. "He licked Fullwood, and put the rotter in his place. But now that Fullwood's been victorious, the House ain't big enough to hold him. He thinks he's a king, and he's making everybody squirm. Are we going to stand it?" roared Handforth. "Of course we ain't! We're going to act—and, as a commencement, I'm going to put my foot down!"

"Where?" asked Hubbard innocently. "I'm going to lead a deputation to Fullwood's study, and I'm going to tell the beast a few things he won't like!" went on Hand-

forth grimly. "That's the programme! A deputation—see? Who's going to volunteer?"

"Not me!" said Hubbard promptly. "Fullwood's got Merrell and his crowd in his study. Your fatheaded deputation would get wiped out, you see!"

"Not if there were enough of us!" roared Handforth. "Look here, you're not going to be lanky, are you? I want volunteers! Who's coming to Fullwood's study with me? Three of us ain't enough."

"Three!" said Griffith. "Who's going with you?"

"Church and McClure, of course!" replied Handforth. "If they don't, they'll have to reckon with me!"

Church and McClure looked uncomfortable. But they stepped forward readily. They knew well enough that Handforth's reckon-

ing with them, if they refused to stand by him, would be far worse than a ragging from Fullwood & Co.

"Oh, well go, Handy!" said Church, with a weak grin. "We're dying to go!"

"Rather!" agreed McClure. "Back us up, you claps."

"I'm not anxious to be ragged, thanks," said Hubbard pleasantly.

"Three ain't enough," bawled Handforth. "I want a dozen!"

"I'll make another," I put in, grinning.

"Count us all in, Handforth, dear fellow," yawned Sir Montie.

"Look at that!" shouted Handforth. "These three outsiders have volunteered! Ain't you all ashamed of yourselves! I can't take Bennett & Co., of course, but they've shown the right spirit. My idea is to go to Fullwood's study and create havoc generally—"

"Oh, you'll create havoc all right!" grinned Hubbard. "You'll be used to wipe the floor with! I wish you joy, old scout!"

And Hubbard walked out of the Common-room, followed by Armstrong and Griffith and Owen major and all the rest. Edward Oswald Handforth was left in possession of the Common-room—with the exception of his two loyal followers, and the outcasts—Tommy and Montie and I.

McClure chuckled.

"Well, that's done it!" he said in tones of obvious relief. "Can't have your blessed deputation now, Handy—"

"Can't it?" bellowed Handforth hotly. "I know I jolly well can! We're going by ourselves—just us three! Understand!"

"Oh, don't be a silly idiot—"

"If you don't choose to come, Walter Church, you can put up your hands!" bawled Handforth. "And you, too, McClure! I give you ten seconds to decide! Either you

There's *Splendid News* for you on Pages 11 and 37. Turn to them and see what's coming Next Week.

come with me, or get a loking on the spot

"Oh, we'll come, old man!" said Church hastily, for the sake of peace.

And Handforth & Co. marched out of the Common-room. They were on the warpath, and trouble was certainly hanging about for somebody. I had an idea that Handforth & Co. would find that trouble!

## CHAPTER 2.

### Painful for Fullwood!

SIR MONTIE chuckled. "It'll be rather interesting—what!" he exclaimed lazily. "Seein' Handforth & Co. slaughtered will be amusing. Suppose we go along the passage, an' join the spectators!"

Tommy Watson granted. "Handforth's an ass!" he said. "Still, he's asking for trouble, and he can't grumble if he gets it! Fancy thinking he can lead the Fossils! That's your job, Benny!"

"Not at present," I said rather bitterly. "That's why Handforth's getting busy. By Jupiter! I'll be leader again before the week's out, though!"

Watson stared at me. "You're in Coventry for a month!" he said.

"I know that—but I can be taken out of Coventry, I suppose!" I replied. "Do you think I'm going to stand this rot for a month? Not me, my son! The truth about those blighters who attacked Farman has got to come out—then there'll be a change in things!"

"Oh, well, let's go and see the pambuzzin!" said Watson, with a shrug.

He didn't believe that I should succeed in getting at the truth within the week; but then, of course, he didn't know that Mr. Alvington was really the world's cleverest detective, and that I was by no means an ordinary junior schoolboy! And I couldn't explain matters.

We passed outside, mounted a few steps to the lobby, and turned into the Remove passage. Strange noises were proceeding from that direction. A buzz filled the air. Turning the corner, we discovered the cause.

Many Removites were collected in the passage, with a sprinkling of the Third and Second hovering in the background. Everybody was grinning and looking in the direction of Study A.

The door stood just ajar, and the mighty voice of Edward Oswald Handforth sounded through the crack. Handforth was evidently telling the knuts exactly what he thought of them. And the knuts, being patient, were listening to him. They couldn't very well do anything else.

"The band'll begin in about two ticks!" grinned Timothy Griffith, of Study J, as we strolled up. "Hallo!" he added, glaring at

us. "Who told you chaps to come here! You're barred!"

Sir Montie smiled urbanely.

"I believe I've heard something like that before, old boy," he murmured. "Bein' in Coventry, though, doesn't stop us mixing with the fellows. You see, this idea isn't half so bad, really. We can jaw as much as we like, and we're not bored by any replies. Coventry's fairly decent, you know!"

Griffith grinned. "You're all right, West," he said. "Pity you don't drop that cad, Bennett!"

"You're talking to those outsiders!" howled Teddy Long indignantly. "If you ain't careful, Griffith, you'll be sent to Coven— You! Ow-you!"

The sneak of the Remove made several remarks which were quite unintelligible. Griffith had pecked him up, and had dropped him suddenly.

"You beast, Griffith!" gasped Teddy, scrambling up. "I—I—"

"Want some more?" said Griffith.

Long scuttled away—and just then something happened. The fog-horn sounds of Handforth's voice ceased with great abruptness. Other sounds followed. It seemed for all the world as though a thousand cats were having a fight in Fullwood's study.

"Handforth's putting his foot down!" chuckled Hubbard.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, it's a bit rotten," I exclaimed. "We can't leave those asses in there at the mercy of Fullwood's crowd. Let's rush in and rescue 'em—"

"You keep to yourself, you lounder!" shouted Armstrong.

Several Removites barred the passage, and it was evident that no attempt at rescue was to be made. I looked on angrily. I couldn't very well start a "mill" in the Remove passage.

In fact, I expected a master, or a prefect, to appear at almost any moment. The commotion in Study A was terrific.

Yells and bumps and crashes came floating out in quick succession. Handforth & Co. were certainly paying dearly for their cheek in visiting the knuts in their own den. Any other fellow but Handforth would have known what such a visit would lead to—Church and McClure had known it, as a matter of fact, but they had feared their domineering leader.

Yells of laughter accompanied the other sounds.

"The charmin' knuts appear to be enjoyin' the show," drawled Sir Montie. "How unfeelin' of them! I'd like to have a look in, all the same. My fingers are fairly achin' to pull Fullwood's nose!"

"Can't he did, old chap," said Tommy. "We're only spectators."

"I say," I exclaimed suddenly. "What price the window?"

"Eh?" said Montie. "The window, dear fellow!"

I grinned.



The Removites roared with laughter when they saw who had been ejected from the knauts' study with such violence. It was Handforth! Soot, jam and treacle had been liberally smeared over his head and his tie stuffed into his mouth. He looked a wreck!

"Of course! We can nip out into the Triangle, and get in through the window!" I said eagerly. "We wiped up Fullwood & Co. once—when they were six strong, too—and we can do it again. Must rescue old Handforth, you know!"

"Begad! It's worth tryin'," said Montie promptly. "I'm game! I'm game for anything you like, Benny boy. You lead, an' I'll follow!"

I chuckled. The windows of the Remove studies at St. Frank's were facing the Triangle and were easily accessible from the Triangle itself. In fact, in fine weather half the juniors used the windows in preference to the doors.

But just as I was about to turn, a fearful yell sounded, then something came hurtling into the passage. Montie and Tommy and I gapsed. In a moment I saw that any idea of rescue was out of the question.

Handforth & Co. had been ejected!

At least, one of the redoubtable trio had; and he was now sprawling in the passage, with a crowd of fellows round him.

"Too late, dear boys," said Sir Montie. "What a pity, you know!"

We turned back, and I couldn't help grinning. The other Removites were roaring

with mirth. It was Handforth who had left Study A with such force and speed. He was sitting up rather dazedly.

His face was an extraordinary sight. Soot and jam and treacle and ink had been liberally smeared over every inch of his head. His collar was a wreck, and his necktie had been stuffed into his mouth.

But Handforth wasn't beaten!

He tore the necktie out of his mouth, and emitted a furious roar. Then he leapt to his feet and simply panted with excitement and wrath.

"Is that the way you put your foot down, Handy?" grinned Armstrong.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you set of funks!" bawled Handforth. "Ain't you going to help me? Just look at me—"

"That's what we are doing!" chuckled Hubbard. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth was too indignant for words. He jerked himself round, and made a dash for Fullwood's study again. The great Edward Oswald was full of bulldog grit, in spite of his hot-headed destiny.

Under ordinary circumstances, he would have entered Study A again—and then things would have happened in earnest. But just

as Handforth was rushing in, Church and McClure were hurled out.

A collision was unavoidable.

Crash! Handforth butted into his two noble chums. They were in a similar state of jamminess and inkiness and sootiness. Church's annotated head rammed Handforth in the tummy, and Handforth staggered backwards.

The next second the three heroes of Study D were sprawling on the floor of the passage in a writhing mass. Gurgles and groans and gasps floated upwards. The Remorvitees were shrieking with laughter.

"Oh, my hat!" howled Hubbard. "Ain't it funny?"

"Blessed if I can see anything funny in it!" I said sharply, striding forward. "I don't mind a bit of a rag, but Fullwood's been treating these asses altogether too severely. They might be hurt—"

"Shut up, you outsider!" roared Griffith.

"Hallo! Here's Bennett!" shouted Fullwood, from the door of Study A. "What's he doing here, the cad? Let's give him a taste of the same medicine—only worse! Collar him!"

Ralph Leslie Fullwood was grinning maliciously. He was dressed as showily as ever, and his monocle was jammed into his eye. Behind him were Bell and Gulliver and Merrell and the others.

They rushed out before I was prepared for them, and grabbed me.

"Bring the giddy mixture!" grinned Fullwood.

I struggled fiercely, but four of the knuts had grabbed me, and I was helpless. Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West had been pushed up the passage by the excited juniors and they were out of reach.

"Bogad! Let me pass, dear boys!" I heard Sir Montie gasp.

"Rats!" said Armstrong. "Let Bennett have a taste!"

"Tell you what," yelled Fullwood, "let's smear that treacle all over his rotten clobber! That'll give him a job—"

"Cave!" came a furious hiss from the end of the passage.

The juniors looked round in alarm, and Fullwood & Co. released me as though I had become red-hot. Then they attempted to back into the study. But they were just a shade too late!

Mr. Alvington—the gov'nor—appeared!

He strode along the passage with a cane in his hand.

"Every boy here will remain still!" he exclaimed sharply. "Fullwood, you and your companions were about to drag this boy into your study, I believe?"

Fullwood was quite calm.

"Oh, no, sir," he said glibly. "We were just having a word with Bennett!"

"I heard some mention of treacle and clothing," went on Nelson Lee sternly. "Were you proposing to smother Bennett?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Good gracious!" ejaculated the gov'nor suddenly. "What is the meaning of this?"

Boys! Get up at once! Upon my soul, I am shocked!"

Mr. Alvington had just spotted Handforth & Co. The three wretched juniors had managed to sort themselves out, and they were now sitting up. Handforth was quite winded, and in considerable pain. The passage floor was smeared with soot and jam.

"Groooh!" gasped Handforth. "Just—just an accident, sir!"

"An accident!" roared the Housemaster. "Tell me your name, boy!"

"Handforth, sir."

"I should never have recognised you in that disgusting state," said Nelson Lee angrily.

"And your companions?"

"Church and McClure, sir!"

"Go to the bath-rooms and clean yourselves at once!" ordered the gov'nor. "I shall not punish you, because you appear to have received punishment enough. But the authors of this outrage shall be caned severely!"

Handforth & Co., greatly relieved to get away without punishment, staggered away down the passage. Fullwood still lounged in his doorway, and the rest of the knuts remained in the study.

"I presume it was you, Fullwood, who treated those three boys so disgracefully!" asked the gov'nor quietly.

"No, sir," said Fullwood calmly.

"You deny touching them?"

"Of course, sir!"

The juniors in the passage gasped. Such bare-faced lying was a little beyond them. They fondly thought that Fullwood was going to escape. They didn't know Nelson Lee!

"You have told me, Fullwood, that you had no hand in this disgraceful scene," said the Housemaster smoothly. "Perhaps you will explain why your hands are showing visible signs of soot and treacle. Perhaps you will explain why your study table is smeared with similar substances?"

Fullwood scowled sullenly.

"They—they came in, sir," he replied.

"You have been lying to me, Fullwood," said Nelson Lee sharply, "in the most shameless manner. No, don't dare to utter another denial! You were about to treat Bennett in a similar fashion. Gulliver, Bell, Merrell—come out at once!"

The knuts emerged with scared faces.

"I presume you all took part in this disgraceful scene?" asked Lee curtly.

"Ye-es, sir!" muttered Gulliver. "It—it was Fullwood's idea, sir!"

"You sneaking rotter!" hissed Fullwood fiercely.

"Every boy who took part in this affair, with the exception of Fullwood, will take five hundred lines," said Mr. Alvington quietly.

"Is Fullwood going to be let off, sir?" asked Bell amazedly.

"No. Fullwood was obviously the ringleader, and he will be punished in a more severe manner—"

"Mr. Thorne wouldn't have done anything to us, sir," put in Fullwood boldly, naming



the Housemaster who had been at St. Frank's previous to the gov'nor's arrival. "Mr. Thorne didn't interfere in our little affairs—"

"Are you suggesting, Fullwood, that I am interfering?"

Nelson Lee's tone was very ominous; I knew the sign well, and I knew that unless Fullwood was very careful he would find himself lugged before the Head for a flogging. And Fullwood himself recognised the danger signal.

"No, sir," he growled. "I—I didn't mean that."

"It is just as well that you did not," said Nelson Lee grimly. "Please understand, Fullwood, that any further bootlegging of this sort will be punished by the headmaster. In this instance I shall punish you myself. You have lied to me, and that makes your offence all the more serious. Hold out your hand!"

"Are you going to cane me?" asked Fullwood thickly.

"Hold out your hand!" repeated Mr. Alvington with deadly calmness.

Fullwood held it out.

Swish!

"Now the other!"

Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish!

Six cuts Fullwood received, and they were delivered with considerable force. He didn't howl, though; he just gasped, and looked white with anger. For all his faults, Fullwood was plucky.

"That will do," panted the gov'nor. "I do not take much notice of a boyish prank, and any mild disturbance in this part of the House does not attract me. But I shall deal severely with all cases of deliberate viciousness. It is evident, Fullwood, that you treated Handforth and his companions with malicious violence, and you were on the point of taking a mean advantage of Bennett."

Fullwood, with set lips, went into his study and slammed the door.

Nelson Lee's eyes gleamed for a moment, but he didn't say anything further on the subject. He turned to me with a smile.

"Bennett," he ordered, "you will follow me to my study."

"Ye-e-ee, sir," I said meekly.

And we went along the Remove passage, leaving the juniors in a haze of low-voiced conversation. Handforth & Co. had failed in their genial object, but Fullwood and his fellow knuts had certainly not achieved a triumph!

### CHAPTER 3.

#### Trouble Ahead.

MR. ALVINGTON, to call the gov'nor by his school name, led the way into his study. I was wondering why he had told me to follow him, but I wasn't at all sorry for the opportunity of having a private word with him.

The door closed, and he laid his cane down.

"Now, Nipper, what was the meaning of that disgraceful scene?" he asked sternly.

"My hat! You're not going to blame me, are you, gov'nor?" I asked. "It's all very well to keep up the master and pupil business before the other fellows, but we're ourselves here."

Nelson Lee smiled.

"You young rascal!" he exclaimed. "You're taking advantage of me!"

"Oh, come off it!" I grinned. "You're the gov'nor now—Nelson Lee! Rats to eod Alvy—that's what we call you in the Remove!"

"Oh, it is!" said Nelson Lee, with twinkling eyes. "Old Alvy! Well, it might be worse. I don't suppose the boys mean any disrespect."

"Of course not. The bulk of the fellows think you're a ripping Housemaster," I replied. "Only Fullwood and that crowd sneer at you, and say you're a rot— But that's sneaking, isn't it?"

"Anything you say here, Nipper, is strictly private," smiled Lee. "But I know all about Fullwood. He is an unmitigated young rascal, and I mean to keep a sharp eye on him. He was responsible for your being sent to Coventry, wasn't he?"

"Yes, he was, the cad!" I growled. "Got the chape to believe that I smashed poor old Farman—"

"Yes, I know. Well, that will soon be altered," interjected the gov'nor. "In fact, Nipper, I mean to take an important step towards the unravelling of the mystery which surrounds Farman this very afternoon."

"Oh! What's on?" I asked eagerly.

"I think I told you something about it the other day," said Lee, sitting down and filling his briar. "Our old friend, Detective-Inspector Morley, of Scotland Yard, is at present staying at Bannington—the town three miles from St. Frank's. Morley has been investigating some case or other which the local people found a little too tough for them."

I nodded. Old Morley was about the only outsider who knew our little secret. He had helped me to get the gov'nor out of the clutches of the Fu Chang Tong on one occasion, so Lee thought it only right that he should be let into the game.

He and Dr. Stafford, the headmaster of St. Frank's, and one of the governors, were the only people who knew the truth. Nelson Lee had told me, a day or two before, that the inspector was in Bannington, and I was quite anxious to see him. Morley would bring a breath of the outside world to us—our own particular world, I mean. The world of crime and crime detection.

"Well, what's the programme, sir?" I asked.

"It is a half-holiday this afternoon, Nipper, and you will have an opportunity of slipping off for a bicycle ride. Make an excuse to

your friends, and then ride into Bannington."

"What am I to do?" I asked.

"Just on the outskirts of the town, on the Hellton road, there is a charming little inn—a very respectable place—named the King's Arms," said Lee. "You are to go there, Niccor."

"A giddy pub?" I grinned. "This is a fine thing, and no mistake! Telling a junior schoolboy to go pub-haunting. I'm surprised at you, guv'nor."

"But there is really nothing dreadful in your visiting the parlour of the King's Arms," smiled the great detective. "Mr. Morley will be there, and so shall I. We are going to devise a plan of action."

"For getting at the truth of this Farman mystery?"

"Exactly."

"I suppose you've got some wheeze in your noddle?"

"I certainly have got a wheeze in my noddle, as you elegantly term it," said the guv'nor, "but I have no intention of enlarging upon it now. Be at the inn at three o'clock precisely—that's all you have to do. And don't let any of the other boys know. That's all."

I nodded.

"And what have you had me here for?" I asked. "The fellows will ask why you wanted me in your study."

"Oh, yes." Nelson Lee rubbed his chin. "Tell them that I lectured you, as captain of the Ancient House Remove, on the subject of keeping order in the junior quarters. I look to you to keep that young rascal, Fullwood, in hand. I can't be constantly interfering—I should make myself frightfully unpopular. Understand? I've just given you a lecture."

"Short and sweet," I grinned. "But I needs't say that!" I moved over to the door, and then looked back. "Three o'clock, at the King's Arms? Right you are, guv'nor. I'll be there. Fancy meeting old Morley again; it'll be like old times again, at Gray's Inn Road!"

"Cut along, young 'un."

I left the study, looking very solemn, in case there were any fellows outside in the passage. As it happened, Tommy Watson and Sir Montie were waiting for me at the end, just against the lobby. As I approached them, the bell sounded for dinner.

"Just in time," I said cheerfully.

"We thought you'd gone to sleep on Alvy's sofa," said Watson. "Has he been lammng into you for anything?"

"Lecturing me," I said lightly.

"Oh, dear! How frightfully borin'," groaned Sir Montie. "Lectures, from a master, are awfully tiresome. How did you stand it, Benny boy? An' what's he been lecturin' you on?"

"Keeping order in the junior quarters," I grinned. "That row in the passage brought it on, I suppose. Wait until this cloud's rolled by—then I'll keep order. We shan't

be in Coventry next half-holiday, my sons!"

"Wish I could believe it!" grunted Tommy. "Come on—dinner's ready."

After dinner I changed into flannels. I was anxious to slip away without being questioned by Montie and Tommy. I couldn't tell them where I was going, of course. That made it rather awkward, and I didn't want to tell any whoopers. I didn't mean to.

When I came down from the dormitory, however, I found them waiting for me.

"What's the programme this afternoon?" asked Watson. "Lovely day, and I suggest a boat on the river. Cricket's off, owing to our being in Coventry. The Monks are playing Redlands to-day, but we don't want to watch them."

"I thought about a bike-spin," I said carelessly.

"In this heat, dear boy?" yawned Sir Montie. "Not me!"

"Well, I'm going, anyhow!"

"Dear fellow, don't be an ass!" implored Montie. "Bikin' is off to-day. Tommy's suggestion is A-1. You chaps can row, an' I'll steer. Bootin' suits me down to the ground."

"That's all right, then," I said. "You and Tommy go out in your fathered boat, and I'll go for a spin. I'm anxious to see the country a bit, you know. Caistowe Bay's only three miles off, isn't it?"

I passed out of the House before either of them could speak, and hurried to the bicycle shed. It was rotten, leaving them like that, but it had to be done. They'd think me a pretty sort of boulder, going out on my own—but I was compelled to act that way, under the circumstances.

Two minutes later I rode swiftly across the Triangle, and went through the gateway. I was conscious of a yell from Tommy, and I saw him waving his arms. But I pretended not to see and not to hear.

For the first five minutes I was miserable. What would they think of me? When I got back, though, I could easily smooth over the troubled waters. And the prospect of meeting Detective-Inspector Morley, and talking over old times, was very attractive.

I had plenty of time to spare, and I made a long detour, leaving St. Frank's in the opposite direction from the way I was really taking. I didn't want anybody to spot me making for Bannington.

After a long, roundabout ride, I struck the Bannington road, and then ambled along leisurely. The afternoon was hot and sunny, and the roads were smothered with dust. When I came in sight of the King's Arms, I glanced at my watch. It was just one minute to three.

I had stuffed my school cap into my pocket, and there was nothing to show that I was a St. Frank's junior. The little inn was a lovely little place—really outside Bannington itself, but it was, nevertheless, out of bounds.

Outside the porch I dismounted, and pushed my bike behind a clump of bushes. Then I walked into the private entrance. Evidently

Nelson Lee had been watching for me; the gov'nor had arrived half an hour ago. For he came out and led me straight into the fresh-smelling parlour.

Detective-Inspector Morley was there, loling on a sofa, smoking a cigar.

"Why, hallo!" he cried, gripping my hand. "You're looking healthier than ever—and a heap cheekier!"

"How are you, Mr. Morley?" I grinned. "And how's London—and Scotland Yard—and Gray's Inn Road? I've nearly forgotten all about it."

The inspector chuckled. "No, you haven't," he said. "It's all right," he added, as I looked round. "We're quite private here. 'Pon my soul, Nipper, this is a queer state of affairs! Fancy you and Mr. Lee being at a public school! It fairly beats me, you know. Still, I reckon

Detective-Inspector Morley nodded.

"There's a connection, certainly," he remarked.

"Well, Farman, the American boy has been attacked on two separate and distinct occasions," continued Nelson Lee. "Undoubtedly, the object of those attacks was to kidnap the boy and take him away. On the first occasion, indeed, the unknown assailants succeeded in carrying their victim through Belton Wood to a motor-car which was waiting on the moor. Now, Morley, there's a rather curious aspect about the whole affair."

"What's that?"

"Farman has refused to make any statement," replied the gov'nor. "He will give no description of the men who attacked him on the second occasion. This happened about four days ago. I am anxious to get to the

## LAUGHS! LAUGHS!! LAUGHS!!!

Full-of-fun series of cartoons starts in *Next Wednesday's Star Issue*. You'll split your sides over the comical capers of TRACKETT GRIM, detective, and SPLINTER, his assistant.

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### ORDER YOUR NELSON LEE NOW!

you're as safe as eggs down in this sleepy hole."

"You haven't seen anything more of the Fu Changs, I suppose?"

"Not a thing, youngster," replied Detective-Inspector Morley. "Oh, you've given the Chinks the slip all right! Now what about this mystery concerning a school-boy? Your gov'nor seems to think it's important."

"So it is," I said. "Hasn't he told you?"

"Not yet," I said. "I'm going to now, however," smiled Nelson Lee. "Look here, Morley, it's this way. Before I came to St. Francis' College, the master of the Ancient House, a Mr. Thorne, disappeared under rather mysterious circumstances—"

"I thought you said a boy?"

"Exactly—this affair leads to the other," went on the gov'nor. "I'm not going to tell you the full details—now. Just a brief outline. Well, Mr. Thorne was taken down to a cave in Caistowe Bay, and left there for the best part of a week without food or drink. As a consequence, he was delirious when rescued, and is, at the present moment, in a nursing home suffering from brain fever. He was only able to mutter the words 'Justin Farman'; and, a few days later, a boy named Justin Farman arrived at the school from California."

bottom of the affair, and I want you to help me."

"Why, what can I do?" asked the inspector.

"Well, you are a representative of the official detective force—I am merely a school-master," smiled the gov'nor. "I can't openly reveal myself. Nipper is similarly handicapped. You will quite understand this, my dear fellow. So we want you to take part in our little scheme."

"You've got a plan of action fixed up, of course?"

"Exactly," replied Nelson Lee. "And I want your opinion on it, too."

Well, we held a fairly long confab., and the gov'nor told us exactly what he proposed to do. I'm not going into details here; I'll describe the upshot of our little jaw in its proper sequence.

It seemed like old times, chatting with old Morley. I was feeling very elated, and I was pretty sure that the truth would be revealed before the end of the week. If Justin B. Farman didn't choose to tell us his secret, we were going to find out for ourselves!

Of course, once it was proved that a couple of men attacked Farman, it would be clear to the whole Remove that I hadn't done the deed. And so Fullwood's little plot would fall to the ground, and his victory would be short-lived. Fullwood, in fact, would be

humiliated, and I should resume my old place in the Remove.

That was a cheering thought.

It was decided that I should leave the inn half an hour before Nelson Lee did so—this was only a wise precaution. But, as it turned out, an uncomfortable incident was to occur.

I bade Detective-Inspector Morley good-bye, and then strolled out to my jigger. The afternoon was hot and sultry, and there wasn't a soul about. I hadn't any fear of seeing a St. Frank's chap, for this spot was quite out of bounds; the whole Bannington road was, in fact.

But, as I was emerging from the porch of the inn, I got a shock.

Three boys were shooting past the King's Arms on bicycles. They glanced at me as I came out, and I heard an amazed gasp. At the same second I recognised the fellows as Ralph Leslie Fullwood and Albert Gulliver and George Bell!

They whizzed on, and I quickly jumped on to my machine and shot off towards St. Frank's. I was frowning angrily. Fullwood and Co. had seen me leave the inn!

I knew, in a second, that a whole pile of trouble lay in store for me.

#### CHAPTER 4.

##### Facing the Music!

AS I rode along I wondered what the dickens I should do.

It was impossible for me to give any explanation of my presence at the King's Arms, and the fellows would undoubtedly put a wrong construction on the whole affair.

Public-houses of any sort were out of bounds at all times. Any St. Frank's boy visiting an inn was in considerable danger under ordinary circumstances. Discovery meant a public flogging, at least.

I couldn't explain to the chaps that Mr. Alvington had accompanied me! I couldn't explain anything. I had been so sure of my safety that I was now a little bit startled.

Confound Fullwood & Co.!

But I was angry with myself, too; I ought to have made sure that the road was clear before leaving the inn. But I hadn't done so, and Fullwood had seen me! It was a rotten piece of ill-luck.

I returned to St. Frank's by a roundabout route, coming in, at last, from the opposite direction of Bannington.

Fullwood & Co. had already arrived! I had taken a fairly long while in my roundabout course, and the knuts, presumably, had turned back after spotting me and come straight to the school.

They were there in force, in the Triangle, and a crowd of fellows were standing round them. I set my lips as I rode in. The storm was going to burst! I was quite sure of that!

The knuts were pastmasters at the art of pub-haunting—everybody knew that. But I had always expressed severe views on the subject, and for me to be exposed as a pub-haunter myself was pretty serious. And I couldn't explain!

"Hallo! Here he comes!"

"The rotten hypocrite!"

"Duck him in the fountain!"

I was surrounded by a mob of angry-faced Removites, and forced to dismount from my jigger. The fellows forgot, for the moment, that I was in Coventry. They meant to get at the truth!

All the fellows were Fossils—Handforth and Church and McClure and Hubbard and Griffith, and a crowd of others. Fullwood & Co. were present in full strength. And they were grinning with huge enjoyment.

"He isn't boozed!" remarked Merrell sneeringly. "That's surprisin'!"

I looked round calmly.

"What's the row?" I asked. "I thought you asses wouldn't speak to me? Is this a meeting to tell me that I'm released from Coventry—?"

"You ass! You're going to get scragged!" roared Hubbard.

Sir Montie and Watson were not there; I gathered that they were still on the river, for it wasn't tea-time yet.

"Hold on!" shouted Handforth, pushing his way forward. "I don't believe this rot of Fullwood's, for one! Fullwood's a lying beast, anyhow. I don't believe Bennett's been pub-haunting! Let's give him a chance to explain."

"That's fair enough," said Armstrong.

"Oh, he'll deny it, of course!" sneered Fullwood. "He'll deny that he was at the King's Arms, in Bannington, this afternoon!"

"I suppose I'm not obliged to ask you where I'm to go?" I said fiercely.

"So you admit you went to Bannington!" bawled Handforth.

"I don't admit anything."

"That means you did go pub-haunting, then?"

"No, it doesn't," I said calmly. "I haven't haunted any pub."

"There you are!" exclaimed Handforth triumphantly. "What did I say? I knew those chads were lying!"

Fullwood & Co. pressed forward.

"Bennett's a liar himself!" declared Fullwood. "Bell an' Gulliver an' I all saw him comin' out of the King's Arms. If he denies it—"

"I don't deny it," I interjected. "I don't deny anything, and I don't admit anything. In fact, I'm not going to make any statement at all. You eat, all go and eat coke!"

Under the circumstances, I thought it best to assume a lofty air.

But it didn't work.

"You rotter!" shouted Handforth angrily.

"I thought you were down on the knuts visiting public-houses? And here you've been discovered doing the same thing yourself! Breaking bounds, too!"

"The cad!"

"Collar him!"

"Give him the frog's-march!"

The fellows were very angry, and I knew that action was to follow. But I kept quite calm, and smiled.

"Look here, you don't understand the position," I said easily. "Fullwood's been telling you that I visited the King's Arms, in Bannington, hasn't he? Well, I can't explain my movements just now—"

"Of course not!" sneered Fullwood.

"But I can in a day or two—"

I was interrupted by a roar.

"In a day or two!" howled Griffith.

"What's the good of that? You're just trying to sneak out of it—that's all! What Fullwood said was the truth! You've been breaking bounds, and visiting a pub!"

"Meetin' boozemakers, I suppose!" jested Marriot. "And gamblin', as likely as not!"

"After incitin' the fellows against us, too!" shouted Gulliver. "Of all the rank hypocrites! I vote we rag him till he can't stand!"

"You ain't the chap to talk of a ragging!" put in Handforth sharply. "If it comes to that, you and your coddish pals need a ragging, too! If Bennett's going to be punished for pub-haunting, I know half a dozen other rotters who need a lesson—"

"Hold on!" roared Fullwood. "Our case is different!"

"How do you make that out?"

"We don't pretend to be goody-goody, anyhow," sneered Fullwood. "We like a little flutter now and again, and we are not afraid to let the other chaps know. But Bennett's a rank hypocrite; he's been rannin' us down, an' doin' the same thing himself all the giddy time! He's worse than us!"

"That's right enough," said McClure. "I thought Bennett was a good chap, too! We live and learn, you know. Let's give him a ducking in the fountain!"

"What about perfects—"

"Rats on 'em!" yelled Handforth. "Now, altogether!"

I looked round desperately.

"Half a minute—" I began.

But I was swept off my feet, and my bicycle went flying. Then I was carried bodily across the Triangle. About a dozen fellows were grabbing me, and I couldn't do a thing to help myself.

Right up to the big fountain I was carried. This piece of ornamentation stood in the centre of the Triangle, and it wasn't working at present. In fact, it was only set going on special occasions. But there was a big pool of water all round it, about four feet deep. I was swung up with a will.

Splash!

The spray went flying in every direction as I plunged in. A yell of laughter went up as I floundered about, trying to get my balance. To tell the honest truth, I didn't mind that ducking in the least.

I had been cycling hard, and I was perspiring freely. The afternoon was close, and a cold bath was just what I required. I was

only wearing white flannels, and it wouldn't hurt them in the least!

That plunge was delightful. I enjoyed it immensely, and actually stayed in the water longer than was necessary. When I stepped out I was grinning cheerfully, and felt beautifully cool.

"Thanks!" I said. "That was just what I needed!"

"Well, my hat! What a giddy nerve!" gasped Handforth. "I say, let's give him another—"

"Hold on! Morrow's comin' along!" said Gulliver hurriedly.

The crowd melted, and I scuttled into the Ancient House. And when Morrow, the prefect, arrived on the spot, everything was calm and peaceful.

## CHAPTER 5.

### Parted Chums!

ALTHOUGH I had accepted the ducking so cheerfully, I was not cheerful in the least, really.

Already in disgrace, this fresh affair just about finished me, as far as the Remove was concerned. All the decent fellows had turned against me more than ever. I wondered how Montie and Tommy would take the news.

It didn't take me long to change. When I came down I was in Etons, and I made my way straight to Study C, in the Remove passage. I spotted several fellows on the way, and they all avoided me.

Owen minor and Henth, of the Third, gave me a derisive jeer as I turned into the passage, and then scuttled off. But I only smiled rather grimly, and went on. The fags weren't to blame; my reputation wasn't very savoury in the House just then.

In Study C I found Tregellis-West and Watson.

They hadn't attempted to get tea ready, but were standing before the window, in the sunlight, talking. They looked round as I came in.

"Hallo, no tea?" I said cheerfully.

"We've been waitin' for you, dear fellow," said Sir Montie languidly.

"Short of tin?" I asked. "That's something fresh for you, isn't it, Montie? Still, I've got a good supply. I'll pop down to the tuck-shop—"

"Hold on," interrupted Watson quietly. "We want to ask you something."

The ordinal was at hand.

"Well ask away," I said lightly. "Anything important?"

"Very important," said Tommy. "Just after dinner I suggested that we should all go for a row on the river. You refused. You said you wanted to go out on a bike-ride. Where did you go to?"

"Oh, just round about," I replied, thinking rapidly.

"That's no answer," said Watson. "Montie and I decided to go with you, but

you were in such a hurry that we didn't have a chance to tell you. When you whizzed out of the gates I yelled, but you took no notice. You heard me, of course!"

"I didn't make any reply."

"You wanted to go alone, I suppose?" Tommy went on bitterly.

"Well, I'm not going to fake up a yarn to you chaps," I said. "I did want to go alone, I had a very good reason—"

"Of course you had!" he interjected. "You wanted to go blagging!"

"I suppose Fullwood's been jawing to you?"

"We haven't seen Fullwood, dear boy," said Sir Montie. "But all the fellows are talkin' about you. The whole Remove is interestin' itself in your shady doin's. But, bless your life, we're ready to hear the little explanation. You're the right sort, Benny—we know that."

"Thanks," I said quietly. "You seem to have a better opinion of me than Tommy has. Tommy seems to believe all he hears."

Tommy flushed hotly.

"Hang it all!" he said. "I'm going by your own actions, Bennett! You deliberately gave Montie and me the slip this afternoon. Was that a chummy action? Why did you want to go off on your own?"

"I had a reason—"

"But you're not going to tell us?"

"I can't—just at present."

Tommy Watson compressed his lips.

"The fellows are saying that you went to

a public-house on the outskirts of Hannington," he said. "Fullwood & Co. saw you coming out. Is that true? Is that where you went this afternoon?"

"Yes," I said quietly.

"You admit it—openly?"

"I told you I'd tell you the truth."

"Begad!" murmured Tregellis-West with a troubled look in his eyes. "I don't like to think rotten things, Benny, dear fellow; but you're makin' it frightfully hard for me to believe in you. You are, really?"

I looked at the pair of them, very seriously.

"You don't believe I assaulted Farman, do you?" I asked.

"We know you didn't," replied Montie.

"Well, why can't you believe in me now? I tell you, truthfully, that I haven't done a thing I need be ashamed of—"

"Visiting a pub, for instance?" asked Watson grimly.

"I'm not ashamed of it," I said. "I went there for a good purpose."

"I can't see any good purpose in going to a low-down public-house in Bannington," said Watson sharply. "I didn't think you were that sort of chap, Bennett."

"You can think what you like!" I retorted, losing my temper a bit. "And the King's Arms isn't a low-down pub, either. It's a very respectable country inn; a place that any decent fellow could enter. It's out of bounds, that's all. But the place itself is a charming establishment. It's not like the

## "Smilers"

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

### POETIC SYMPATHY.

An American boy at college wrote home to his father: "No mon., no fun, your son."

The father answered: "How sad, too bad, your dad!"

A penknife has been awarded to E. Laporte, 92, Carysfort Road, London, N.16.

### THE ONLY OPENING.

College Student (applying for a job): "Have you an opening for a bright, energetic college graduate?"

Manager: "Yes—and don't slum it as you go out!"

A pocket wallet has been awarded to B. Cummings, 73, Neilston Road, Paisley, Scotland.

### TOUGH ON THE 'TECS.

Thief: "I hope you will be lenient with me. I have a good many dependent upon me for their living."

Magistrate: "Children!"

Thief: "No; detectives!"

A penknife has been awarded to M. McEvoy, 33, Woodstock Street, Athy, Co. Kildare, Ireland.

### HALF-TIME.

"Write me an essay on a football match," said the teacher. "Twenty lines will do."

Tommy wrote industriously for a while and then put his pen down. The teacher examined what he had done.

"But you have only done ten lines," he said.

"Yes, sir," said Tommy: "It's half-time!"

A pocket wallet has been awarded to D. Rosebourne, 31, St. Andrews Road, Golders Green, N.W.11.

### FULL OF GO!

Boss: "What I want is a smart boy who is alert and intelligent. Are you quick to take notice?"

Boy: "Yes, sir; 'ad it three times in three weeks!"

A penknife has been awarded to H. Gowen, 53, Clifton Street, Swindon.

White Harp, in Bolton, where a lot of drinking gamblers congregate."

Watson shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm not so well acquainted with pubs as you are," he said. "You seem to know them by heart. But I know that any decent chap wouldn't skip off on his own, and go to a public-house, for any honourable purpose."

There was a short silence.

"Dear fellow, tell us the truth," said Tregellis-West, at last.

"I've told you all I can," I replied. "I went to the King's Arms, and I deliberately gave you chaps the slip so that I could do so. What's the good of denying it? I know it looks absolutely rotten, but I can't help that. It's up to you to say what you're going to do."

"There's only one course open to us," remarked Watson.

"To cut me dead, you mean?" I asked curly. "I give you my word that I didn't do anything shady—and, in a day or two, I shall be able to give you a perfect explanation. Can't you wait?"

"Why can't you tell us now?"

"I can't—that's all."

"You mean you won't?"

"Put it that way if it pleases you."

"Beard! You're making it hard for us, Benny," said Tregellis-West, in a pained voice. "Do you think you're playin' the game? You were sent to Coventry by the Form, an' Tommy an' I stuck to you. We

were sent to Coventry, too—for your sake. We ain't complainin'; but you might give us a chance to believe in you. You say you've got a perfect explanation? Dear boy, let's have it—now!"

I shifted impatiently.

"I can't say any more than I have said,"

I replied.

"Why can't you? Because you know thundering well that we should think worse of you than ever!" said Watson hotly. "My hat! You must think we're duffers! I know your game, you rotter. You want two or three days to pass, so that we shall cool down, and then overlook your blackguardism! But it won't work—you've either got to explain now, or we'll drop-you!"

I turned to the door with set lips.

"Then I shall have to be—dropped!" I said quietly.

"You want to finish with us?"

"No, I don't," I replied quickly. "It's you who want to finish with me."

"Dear Benny, this is frightful," complained Montie. "I'd like to believe in you, but how can I? You went to a pub, and you broke bounds. You won't say what you did there, or why you went. What's the obvious conclusion? Why, that you're afraid to—"

"Oh, rats!" I interjected gruffly. "Don't go over it all again, for goodness' sake! I'm not afraid, as you'll find out in a day or two. I dare say you'll be sorry later on. But I don't blame you in the least."

#### SETTING AN EXAMPLE.

"This boat tips a great deal, doesn't it?" asked the timid old lady of the steward.

"The vessel, ma'am," replied the steward blandly, "is trying to set a good example to the passengers!"

A pocket wallet has been awarded to K. W. Robinson, 37, Sinclair Grove, London, N.W.11.

#### PAY ON DELIVERY.

Father: "Did you put a three-halfpenny stamp on that letter you posted for me, Jim?"

Son: "No; I slipped it into the pillar-box while nobody was looking!"

A penknife has been awarded to E. Payton, 71, Northover, Dovenham, Kent.

#### DONKEY.

A man advertised a donkey for sale, and a prospective buyer called. The front door was opened by the son of the house.

"I have come to inquire about a donkey that is for sale," said the caller.

Shouted the son:

"Father, you're wanted!"

A pocket wallet has been awarded to D. Long, 1, Bolton Road, Edmonton, N.18.

#### LUCKY.

Teacher: "What did Sir Isaac Newton think when the apple fell on his head?"

Boy: "I expect he thought it was a good thing it wasn't a brick!"

A penknife has been awarded to J. Mason, 7, Booth Street, Burley-in-Wharfedale, Yorks.

#### OVER THE TOP.

Buglesnife Rangers were being beaten 1-0. Time and again their forward line broke through, only for their centre-forward to shoot over the bar. At last, the skipper, thoroughly exasperated, said to the centre:

"Look here, Brown, over the top may have won us the War, but it won't win us this match!"

A pocket wallet has been awarded to G. McCormick, 21, Prospect Road, Bangor, Ireland.

#### LAZY.

Smith: "Jones always strikes me as being a lazy chap."

Brown: "Lazy! Why, that chap is so lazy he runs his car over a bump to knock the ash off his cigar!"

A penknife has been awarded to R. McDonough, 16, Westmorland Street, Darlington.

Watson snorted.

"You're sent to Coventry by the Form," he said, "and you're sent to Coventry by Montie and I. Understand? We don't want to have anything to do with cads!"

"That's plain enough, anyhow," I said quietly.

And I passed out into the passage. Hubbard and Owen major were passing. They sneered away from me as though they might be contaminated. The same thing happened in the lobby.

I walked out into the Triangle, and my feelings were bitter.

Things had come to a pass, indeed!

I was utterly and absolutely barred—I was alone!

## CHAPTER 6.

### The Kidnappers Again.

IT was the afternoon of the day following. Lessons had started, and the whole school was quiet.

During the previous evening, and all that morning, I had led a pretty miserable existence. Shunned by everybody, my own chums included, I hadn't spoken a word to a soul, except to Mr. Crossell in class, and the gov'nor just after breakfast.

As I had told Tregellis-West and Watson, I didn't blame them. If I had been in their place, I might have acted in the same way. They had every reason to "cut" me. And my only consolation was that the whole truth would come out in a day or two. At least, I hoped so. If it didn't—

But I didn't care to think of that prospect.

What I'm going to do now, is to describe the happenings of that particular afternoon—and the adventures of Justin B. Farman.

The American boy was a good-natured junior; an easy-going fellow in every way. He spoke excellent English when he liked; but he preferred to talk in the free-and-easy manner of Western America, as a rule.

He had been in the school hospital for several days, owing to his injury. This wasn't very serious. But his forehead had been badly bruised, and the skin had been cut. His nose, too, was a little the worse for wear.

As I wasn't with Farman during the afternoon—lessons were on—I shall have to tell of the events as they happened.

Well, Farman had been in the hospital all the morning. And when he appeared downstairs afternoon lessons were started. Of course, he wasn't taking any part in school work, and wouldn't do for some time.

He presented a curious spectacle.

His head was bandaged, the white linen-stuff smothering his forehead. And his nose was plastered on one side. But his eyes were twinkling, and he walked with a confident stride.

In one of the deserted passages of the Ancient House he met the Head.

"Ah, you have managed to get down, then, Farman?" asked the worthy old gentleman genially. "How do you feel now, my boy?"

Justin B. Farman grinned rather twistedly—it's a bit of a job to grin when your nose is plastered up.

"Say, I'm just feeling good, sir," said Farman. "Guess I've been a guy to remain in bed so long. Say, I'm fit for anything, sir."

"I am glad to hear you speak so light-heartedly, Farman," smiled the Head. "But you must not attend lessons for some days yet. You're going out now for a walk? It will do you good."

"That's sure how I figgered, sir," said Farman. "I guess it's a lovely day—reminds me of my home state—California. Say, do I look a boob?"

"A what, Farman?"

"A guy, sir," grinned the American boy. "These bits of plaster—"

"My dear lad, you look quite all right," said the Head. "Quite all right! Have a quiet walk, and you will come back with a splendid appetite for tea. Excellent—excellent!"

Dr. Stafford passed on, and Farman left the House.

Out in the Triangle he chuckled to himself.

"Waal, this is surely fine," he murmured. "I'm feelin' gay. Say, Justin, boy, you'd best tote around and get your lungs filled up with fresh air. Guess you're needin' a heap of it after days in that hospital."

He went out through the big gateway, and wandered leisurely in the direction of Belton Wood. All the fellows being in their classrooms, the lane was quite deserted and empty. The country people round about didn't use that road much. Farman had the place to himself.

Arriving at a stile, he sat upon it for some time.

He seemed to be thinking deeply, and now and again he would take out his gold watch and look at it.

Was he waiting for somebody?

Certainly, Farman was pre-occupied, and at times would look up and peer into the wood. At last, however, he rose, and walked along the little footpath which led through the wood in the direction of Bannington Moor.

He walked almost through the wood, and then sat down on a log. He remained there for half an hour. Then, again, he rose, and went to the end of the lane. The great stretch of the moor lay before him.

Farman turned away, and then strolled back in the direction of the school.

The wood was very peaceful, and very cool. A more delightful scene for a walk could scarcely have been found, and Farman enjoyed himself immensely. He was in no hurry, and seemed to have forgotten all about tea.

For it was already past tea-time, and the sun was beginning to settle low in the sky. The shadows lengthened in the wood, and the



air became slightly chilly, and a soft breeze sprang up.

Farman lounged along, occasionally touching his plastered nose with tender care. Obviously he was waiting for somebody—but whom could it be?

About half-way through the belt of woodland a surprising thing happened.

Farman was just negotiating a stretch of rough ground at the foot of a deep hollow. He was still deep in thought, and his head was bent. He walked mechanically, and hammed some American air or other.

"Say, what's the game, anyway?" asked Farman.

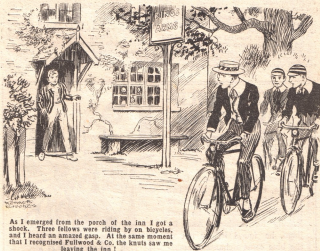
"I think you know it as well as I do," said the other. "I guess you're beyond help in this spot. You've walked just where we wanted you to walk."

"That was kinder thoughtful of me."

"Sure. Now, youngster, we shan't hurt you if—"

"You didn't hurt me last time, did you?" asked Farman tartly. "Guess you can see the damage."

The white man nodded.



As I emerged from the porch of the inn I got a shock. Three fellows were riding by on bicycles, and I heard an amazed gasp. At the same moment that I recognised Fullwood & Co. the knuts saw me leaving the inn!

Then, abruptly, two men appeared.

They stepped from behind some bushes, and stood tight in Farman's path.

"Waal, gee whiz!" gasped the American boy.

He stared at the two men with startled eyes. They were, indeed, of formidable aspect. The taller of the two was a white man—an American, presumably, for his clothes were trans-Atlantic in their cut. His hair was crisp and grizzled, and his clean-shaven face, lined and wrinkled, was set grimly.

The other man, also dressed in American clothing, was a Chinaman!

"I advise you to submitt quietly, my lad," said the white man curtly. "You escaped us last time—"

"I'm sorry, boy," he said, with genuine regret. "That wasn't my doing. I guess you're real hurt—or you were. You've mended now. This infernal brute of a Wu Ling got his cudgel mixed up, and he hit you before I could stop him. I guess that he's had to pay for that mistake, too!" added the man grimly.

"Waal, there ain't goin' to be any more —mistakes!"

"Of course not. I am going to take you away, but you must not resist—"

Quite suddenly Justin B. Farman acted.

He acted in the most astonishing manner. From his right-hand trousers pocket he produced a small glittering revolver. With a swift movement he pointed the weapon

upwards, towards the tree-tops, and pulled the trigger twice, in quick succession.

Crack! Crack!

The reports rang out sharply and keenly "By thunder!" snarled the man. "You infernal young dog! Quick, Wu, catch hold of him! I'll make him suffer for this!"

In a flash the two men were upon Farman. They bore him to the ground before he could step back.

The little revolver went flying, and the American boy went flying, too. But, having fired the shots, he didn't seem to have any fight in him. He just allowed his assailants to overpower him.

Then came a different sound,

A crashing of twigs, and the swaying of leaves! Somebody was approaching—no, there was more than one!

Two forms burst from the undergrowth, and hurled themselves upon the Chinaman and his companion. In a second a fierce battle was progressing. Farman wriggled his way out, and then he helped in the attack.

He saw that one of the newcomers was a burly man, and the other elderly and refined-looking. In fact, the pair were none other than Detective-inspector Moeley and Mr. Alvington—in other words, Nelson Lee!

How did it come about that they were in the wood just at this time?

It seemed extraordinary.

But it wasn't—not a bit!

And you'll see why, in a minute!

## CHAPTER 7.

### Trapped!

NELSON LEE was fighting fiercely. For that matter, so was Detective-inspector Moeley, and so was Justin B. Farman. In fact, a most terrific "mill" was in progress.

Farman seemed to forget all about his injuries. He just entered the fray with all his might. He helped Nelson Lee with the

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big white man, while Morley tackled the Chinese.

Such a fierce fight couldn't last long.

The odds were all in favour of the trio. The American, big as he was, couldn't possibly get the better of Nelson Lee and Farman together. And Morley was miles better than the Chinaman.

In less than three minutes there sounded a sharp click above the gasps and pants of the combatants. A pair of handcuffs had been fastened over the wrists of the struggling Wu Ling, and he was rendered helpless.

"By George!" gasped the inspector. "This is hot work!"

But it was over. The other kidnapper lay still, and the "bracelets" were snapped on without difficulty. Then, to make absolutely certain, Morley tied his handkerchief round a pair of ankles—an odd pair, for one belonged to the Chinese and the other belonged to the white man. They were unable to make any sudden dash for liberty.

"That's done the trick!" went on Morley. "My word, Mr. Alvington, you put up a good fight, too! But we've finished the brutes all right!"

"What is the meaning of this dastardly outrage?" scolded the white man. "I am an American citizen. My name is Cyrus Butler, and this lad here was having a few friendly words with me—"

The man stopped suddenly.

He was staring at Justin B. Farman with amazed eyes.

For a change had come about—a startling, extraordinary change.

The American boy was rather mauled about. His collar was hanging by one stud-fastening, his tie had disappeared, his jacket was torn, and the plaster had been knocked completely off his injured nose.

Moreover, he was grinning cheerfully, and his whole expression had altered. His hair seemed to be on one side, and the bandage had dropped from his forehead, revealing the fact that he was absolutely uninjured!

What could it mean?

Cyrus Butler's eyes nearly goggled from his head.

"That—that boy!" he panted. "He—he is not young Farman!"

"I never said I was!" said the boy coolly. "You went and made a silly mistake, that's all. I'm Dick Bennett—of the St. Frank's Remove. You've been dished!"

It was little me all the time!

You see, the whole business was a neatly prepared trap, concerted by old Morley and the gu'nor, and worked out by the three of us together.

Nelson Lee looked down at Butler sternly.

"It may interest you to know that this gentleman is Detective-Inspector Morley, of Scotland Yard, London," he said. "The game is up, my friend."

"On whose authority am I arrested—"

"Now, Mr. Butler, that tone won't do," interjected Morley pleasantly. "I'll answer for what I've done. Don't worry about that.

You are my prisoner, and if you take my advice you'll admit defeat. And I'd better warn you that anything you say may be used in evidence against you."

Butler didn't answer; he looked completely subdued.

Nelson Lee and Morley and I sorted ourselves out. It was a bit of a job, for the tussle had upset us somewhat. The gu'nor, of course, was Mr. Alvington—it was necessary for him to maintain his school identity. He couldn't be himself.

And I, of course, had to remain Dick Bennett. We were just a master and a scholar of St. Frank's, helping the police detective in a capture—that's all. Nelson Lee and Nipper didn't appear in the affair at all.

It was natural that we should help, too, because the case was directly connected with the school and one of its scholars.

The trap was as simple as A B C.

As to the confab. at the King's Arms, Nelson Lee had expressed the opinion that Farman's unknown assailants were still hanging about the neighbourhood. Everything went to prove that.

It was quite clear that Mr. Thorne had been attacked by these men, and Farman had received their attention on two different occasions. Both times the rotters had failed in their object—which was to carry Farman off.

Therefore, it was safe to conclude that they were in the district still—awaiting another opportunity to kidnap their victim. Possibly, Butler had been making plans for the trapping of the American boy.

Well, the gu'nor saw no reason why the kidnapers shouldn't be trapped themselves. Hence our little plan.

Actually, of course, we couldn't get Farman to do it—he didn't know anything about the affair, in fact. But I had disguised myself as the American junior, and I had taken his place for the time being.

Naturally, I hadn't been in the Form-room that afternoon. Just after lessons had started the Head had come in, and had taken me away with him. The fellows, of course, had been left wondering. The fact that I had vanished would cause much comment.

It had been as easy as winking for me to impersonate Farman. Any real disguise hadn't been necessary. The bandage and plaster hid my real features—especially as it was quite gloomy under the trees of the wood. And the American talk had been child's play. I'd had a few words practice with the Head before leaving the school, it may be remembered.

Anyhow, the trick was done—and that was what mattered.

The strangers had been in the wood, awaiting their chance—and I had provided the chance. Through the whole affair Nelson Lee and Inspector Morley had been shadowing me. They had kept me in sight, and had been on the look-out.

Those two revolver shots had been the signal—and the gu'nor and Mr. Morley had come to the rescue just at the right time.

It couldn't have been worked better if we'd rehearsed it a dozen times.

But who were our prisoners?

And why were they so anxious to collar Justin B. Farman?

We were still in the dark as to those all-important points. But we meant to get at the truth. If Butler didn't choose to speak, Farman would—when he knew that the men were in the hands of the police. Why Farman had maintained a silence about the whole matter puzzled me.

"What is to be done, Mr. Morley?" asked Lee, in a feigned, helpless kind of way. "I am merely a schoolmaster, you know. Do you intend to take these men to the police-station straight away?"

Morley scratched his left ear.

"Well, I don't know, Mr. Alvington," he replied. "It all depends upon the prisoners themselves. If Mr. Butler wishes to make a statement, he had better be taken to the school. We can deal with him afterwards. But if he refuses to speak, he'll be lodged in the cells at Bannington straight away."

Cyrus Butler looked up sullenly.

"What am I charged with?" he asked.

"With kidnapping a certain Mr. Thorne, and conveying him to a cave at Caistowe Bay," replied the inspector grimly. "Also, with treating Mr. Thorne with such brutality that he is even now in a nursing home—"

"That was an accident!" exclaimed Butler huskily.

"You admit the charge, then?"

"I guess denial is pretty useless," growled the other. "You know all about it."

"In addition, you are charged with unlawfully molesting a junior schoolboy of St. Francis' College," went on Morley. "You see, Mr. Butler, I know all about it. You can't slip out of the noose."

Cyrus Butler nodded gloomily.

"I guess my game's failed," he said.

"Say, take me to the school. I want to make a plain statement of the whole affair."

"And your companion?"

"Wu Ling? I guess he's only my paid man," Butler smiled weakly. "He's been living in this wood for weeks past—unknown to a soul. He's been on the look-out, and I have visited him every evening. I've come by car to the wood, across the moor. Say, you tricked me cleverly. I admit it."

"Where's he been living?" asked Morley.

"In a little ramshackle hut, down in one of the hollows," replied the prisoner. "It was used, years ago, I heard, by some wandering gipsies. Wu Ling is a hardy beggar—and I've paid him well. He's done things a white man wouldn't have put up with. That's why I brought him."

Butler and the Chinaman rose to their feet, and the inspector's handkerchief was removed. They couldn't escape, for they were handcuffed. The shadows were growing deep, and it was gloomy under the trees.

As we walked off, Morley leading, I adjusted myself as much as possible, and removed the traces of my disguise.

"This is fine, sir,"—I remarked to the gov'nor. "This means that my term of Coventry is at an end."

"Yes, Bennett," replied Lee. "I am glad the matter is settled."

Very soon we left the footpath, and made our way to the little hut Butler had referred to. Morley wanted to see it. We understood, now, how the game had been worked. Wu Ling remained on guard, and Butler visited him once daily, with food and drink, probably. And to-day the Chinese had at once reported that Farman was wandering about alone in the wood.

Butler had eagerly seized his opportunity, and had obligingly walked into the gov'nor's little trap.

The hut proved to be a very rough place. The roof was full of holes, and the wooden walls were gaping in many places. But there was one dry corner, with a pile of dead leaves in it.

Morley found nothing of value in the old hut, and we proceeded on our way to the school. Cyrus Butler was resigned to his fate, and he had recovered his spirits. He seemed to be almost amused. He had failed, and so he was making the best of a bad job.

"I took a big chance, and lost—I guess that's all," he said once.

Wu Ling hadn't uttered a word during the whole proceedings. I wondered if he was dumb. Anyhow, he looked pretty badly scared now. Once or twice I caught him eyeing the gov'nor and me rather closely.

At last we emerged from the wood, and the lane was fairly light in comparison to the gloom of the trees.

"We'd better enter the school grounds by the masters' private gateway," remarked Nelson Lee. "The boys will make a rare commotion if we enter by the main gates. They'll know all about it later on."

"Have you got a telephone at the school, Mr. Alvington?" asked Morley.

Nelson Lee smiled.

"Why, yes, two or three," he replied.

"There is one in Dr. Stafford's study."

"That's good. I'll be able to ring up the Bannington police," said the inspector easily.

"They'll send along a motor-car with a couple of men. If Mr. Butler is sensible, he won't conceal a thing. He'll get off all the lighter."

Butler smiled at us all.

"I'm not the man to croak," he said. "I've failed, and I know it. The best thing I can do is to be straightforward."

We came to the masters' gate, and passed through. We found ourselves in the Head's private garden, and we were screened from the school grounds by high hedges. Yells and laughter told us that there were boys in the Triangle, and it was just as well to leave them in ignorance of this little drama.

The Head himself saw us from his study window, and he came to the side-door quickly.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed. "You have captured the rascals, then?"

**Step Right In For—**

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CHEERS, CHUMS!—Well, the cat's out of the bag!—or, rather, you have all seen on other pages of this number about the two new treats in store for you next week. And what treats they are! I am very enthusiastic about the Wild West series and the Trackett Grim cartoons. They're grand! They're great!—absolutely certain winners. Knowing what NELSON LEE chums like best, which is essentially an Editor's first consideration, I am assured that they will make an instantaneous appeal.

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"That's what I went for, sir," replied Detective-Inspector Morley. "Mr. Alvington and this youngster helped me well, too. The prisoners want to make a statement, and so I have brought them along."

"Ah, I understand," said the Head. "Will they be—safe? Do you think it will be—ahem!—advisable to bring them into my study?"

Morley grinned.

"I'll be answerable for them, sir," he said easily.

And so we passed inside. The inspector, at Lee's express request, was making out that he had engineered the whole capture. The gov'nor didn't want to appear at all. It was safer that way, under the circumstances.

Dr. Stafford was looking stern, and just a little flustered. His experience of crooks was very limited, and he felt nervous. This

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Chums, next Wednesday's record-breaking number is going to mark a new and outstandingly successful chapter in the history of the NELSON LEE, which is going unflinchingly from success to success. I don't want a single member of my loyal band of readers to miss a copy of the NELSON LEE from now on. Take heed, chums, and place a standing order for the Old Paper with your messenger right away. It's the safest way as, in future, the demand for the NELSON LEE will be greater than it has ever been before. Don't forget, also, that if you have a pal who is a non-reader, just let him know the good news.

**THE BUSY BEE.**

Receiving recently a letter in which a reader asked me a problem, I am prompted to invite readers to send in to me any questions that they cannot solve or about which information is required. If it is purely personal I will reply by letter. If the subject is sufficiently interesting, I will reply in my chat. Don't hesitate, chums.

A "Regular Reader" asks if I can tell him how far a bee travels, going from flower to flower, to produce a pound of honey. It's a question that "stumped" me at first hand, but I have discovered the answer—or as near enough as it is possible for experts to estimate—and it's amazing.

If any of my chums had to go one mile to get a pound of honey, he would no doubt consider it a bit of a "fig." But how far do you think the bee travels to get that amount of honey?—no less than 50,000 miles! Phew! Now we know why it's the "busy bee"!

Well, chums, that brings me to the end of another chat. "See" you in next Wednesday's magnificent number. Cheers!

was probably the first time he'd ever had a brace of criminals in his study.

In a short time we were seated. The Head sat at his desk, and the two captives occupied a couch. Wu Ling seemed almost indifferent to his surroundings, but Butler was quite the opposite. There was a twinkle in his eye—a twinkle of bravado. He was quite resigned.

The gov'nor and I sat near the window, and Morley drew a chair up to the desk and fished out his notebook. Before doing this, though, he removed Butler's handcuffs. Morley didn't want to be harsh with the man. And Butler appreciated the little concession.

The inspector looked up.

"Now, Mr. Butler, I'm ready," he said crisply. "Go ahead as fast as you like."

"Well, to begin with, I'm going to make one point clear to you, gentlemen," began Mr. Cyrus Butler quietly. "I have been attempting, vainly, to get Master Justin B.

Farman away from this school. I am related to him—I am, in fact, his uncle."  
And that explained—much.

## CHAPTER 8.

### The End of the Mystery!

**A**MONG other things, the prisoner's statement explained why Farman had been so secretive. The kidnapper was his uncle! Of course, Farman had refused to give any information which would have led to his uncle's arrest—even though that rascally gentleman was attempting to abduct him.

"Oh!" said the inspector. "You are Farman's uncle? Well, go on."

"I should like to ask if he took any part in this betrayal—"

"The boy knows nothing," interjected Morley. "And it wasn't a betrayal, Mr. Butler. You were fairly caught. Farman has never said a single word which could have led to your capture."

The man smiled.

"Bully!" he said. "I guessed Justin was all right. Waal, sir, that boy don't exactly love me. I dare say he considers I'm a scoundrel, but he wouldn't give me away. I've treated him roughly, but I never meant the slightest harm."

"No!" remarked the inspector drily.

"That's surely the truth," said Cyrus Butler. "To get to the root of this matter, I guess I'll acquaint you with the facts of a little family quarrel. Say, way back in California, I've had a heap of trouble with my brother-in-law—Mr. Justin Duke Farman, the railroad millionaire."

"You are the black sheep of the family, I presume!" smiled Morley.

"Put it that way if you like," was the reply. "I guess I never hit it off well with my people, and Farman kind of played it mean with me. You see, it was this way. My brother-in-law is the President of the Kingwood, Lawson, and Pacific Railroad—one of the biggest systems out that way. There was a big scheme suggested for the running of a branch line through a certain section of Arizona, forming a kind of loop, adjoining the main track farther north. Waal, that proposition caused real trouble all around. I figured that the new track would run through the township of Long Gulch, where I was located, running a real estate office. Y'see, I ain't never made piles like Farman, but I was open to any chance. And I saw one right there.

"If the new loop came through Long Gulch I stood to make a whole pile of dollars. I guess my town-plots in the Gulch represented about half the ground of the whole township. With the railroad along there'd be a mighty fine boom going. Long Gulch would just about break records in the boom line. And, say, my town-sites would sell at such figures that I'd make a cool million

dollars at the least. As you'll see, gentlemen, it was some proposition."

"Indeed it was!" murmured the Head interestedly.

Butler cleared his throat and lit a cigar. We were all a little surprised at his attitude. We had certainly never imagined that Farman's would-be kidnapper was such a close relative—or, in fact, a relative at all.

"That was the position of things three months ago," said Butler. "I guess I was



As Farman strolled through the wood, two men abruptly appeared from behind some bushes and stepped right in the junior's path. They were the kidnapers! "Waal, gee whis!" gasped the American boy.

just hugging myself with sheer delight. I was just waiting for the boom to get around. Waal, say, that boom didn't just happen along!"

"So I imagined," remarked the gov'nor smilingly.

"Say, it was a mean trick!" went on the prisoner, bending forward. "Just when Long Gulch was getting ready for the big boom I heard a rumour that the new loop was to be carried through a one-horse village farther south—Red Creek—and that the Gulch was to be kind of slipped. Say, there were ructions! I went right along to the big city.

and managed to get an interview with the railroad's president—my brother-in-law. He was real polite. He just smiled at me and told me to go to blazes. He reckoned that he was going to run his railroad proposition just as he liked. Red Creek suited him better, and so Long Gulch was wiped off the map, as far as he was concerned. Say, I argued for a whole hour; I pleaded with him; I reasoned every way possible. But Farman wouldn't budge."



"That was awkward," said the inspector, looking up from his notes.

"Sure. It was that awkward, I got riled," replied Butler grimly. "Waal, for two weeks I kept bothering the railroad, but they wouldn't take any notice of me, or of the deputation of Long Gulch citizens who went along. But I was the most interested party. The whole thing's dead clear. If the loop came through Long Gulch, I became a millionaire; if it went through Red Creek I was ruined. Do you get me? I sort of saw red when I realised that the whole thing was slipping through my fingers. And maybe I

acted against the law. But I don't reckon as any court would give me much of a sentence. You see, it was a family affair. The notion got buzzing around my head that if I could work some kind of lever I could force my mule-headed brother-in-law to be reasonable. It didn't matter a cuss to him which way the railroad went; he'd thwarted me just out of spite, because of a little squabble we'd had a month or two before."

"I can quite understand your feelings, Mr. Butler," said Morley.

"I am real glad of that," smiled the captive. "Say, this ain't a fake yarn I'm telling you. I don't hanker after blowing out hot air. It's just the truth, on my honour. Waal, the idea that I conceived was to get hold of my nephew. Billie was located around a scholastic layout in Southern California—Billie is the young feller who's now in this school. To cut it short, I got the boy away in a motor-car, and carried him along to an outlying ranch. It was just a trick—say, there was nothing criminal in that, was there?"

"Farman, senior, had no idea when his son had got to—until he received an anonymous communication telling him that as soon as the railroad corporation decided to run the new loop through Long Gulch, Billie would be restored to him. Farman guessed that I was the culprit, but there wasn't an atom of proof. He couldn't do anything to me. I had him good and proper."

Nelson Lee smiled.

"So far, Mr. Butler, your actions were only those of a keen business man—judged from an American standpoint," he said. "It is your action in this country which requires a very close explanation."

"And I guess I'll give it," said Butler quickly. "Say, I don't reckon to be a saint. I'm not. I've done things in desperation, that I'm real ashamed of. But don't lose sight of the fact that a million was at stake. Waal, Farman realised that he was the under-dog. He wanted his son back, and so he signed the contracts and gave the orders for the running of the new track through Long Gulch."

"It was a real triumph for me—until disaster came along," said Butler bitterly. "Have you ever been so riled that you can't see a yard in front of you? Guess I was fixed that way—sure! Right at the last moment some blamed detective-agency got on the track. They found Billie and took him back to his father. Waal, that just put the hat on things. The new contracts were torn up and Long Gulch was told to go to blazes."

"That was, indeed, a disaster," said old Morley, looking up.

"I should think it was!" I put in with real feeling.

"To make matters worse Farman sent his son straight off East—bound for Europe," went on the prisoner. "I got to know that his destination was St. Francis' College, Sussex, England. By this time I was raving with fury, and I began to get ideas that no honest man would have contemplated. But, gentlemen, don't you think I was justified?"

My brother-in-law had acted shamefully to me, and I just meant to get my own back. Farman's a good man, really, but he's prejudiced. Waal, I knew the loop line wasn't due to be built until the Fall—I guess you call it autumn over here. I had time to get busy. I'm a stickler, and I didn't mean to knuckle under. I followed Farman junior to New York, taking this yellow beauty with me. Wu Ling's a faithful sort of fellow, and he obeyed my orders without question. We managed to get on a faster boat than the one Billie was taking, and so we arrived first—two days before the boy."

"I'm beginning to understand a little," said the gov'nor softly.

"Billie was to be met by some lawyer feller, and taken to London for a time; then he was to come here," went on Cyrus Butler. "It was my plan to get around first, and look out the lie of the land. For, to be candid, I meant to get hold of Billie just as I had done before. I'd made arrangements with the skipper of a sailing ship, and, once the boy was away from the school, everything would have been dead easy. Mind you, I didn't mean to harm him in the least degree. I was acting on the crook, I know, but I didn't mean to do a thing that could be termed violent or brutal.

"The first day was spent in scouting, and Wu Ling took up his quarters in Belton Wood—as you know. I stayed in Bannington, and I had an automobile with me—I'd hired it in London. The idea was to skip to the coast in the car as soon as I'd got hold of the boy. And then I did the first fool thing of the whole game. I acted like a real criminal—and I guess I'm so sorry I don't know how to say it. But I didn't do it intentionally. It was kind of forced on me.

"Say, Dr. Stafford, you had a master here—a hobo named Thorne?"

"Mr. Thorne was a Housemaster here, as you say," agreed the Head. "So we are getting to the bottom of that mystery, too? I am glad—very glad."

Cyrus Butler sighed.

"Say, that was a chapter of accidents," he exclaimed, jerking the ash from his cigar. "I heard from several quarters that Mr. Thorne was a real wrong 'un. I heard that he was so hated that he was on the point of being fired."

"Fired?" repeated the Head mildly.

"Sure. Sacked—dismissed," said Butler. "I gathered that Thorne was a regular rascal, and I made a heap big miscalculation. One night Wu Ling and I got around, and entered Thorne's study by the window—this was two days before Billie arrived in this country—"

"One moment," interrupted the gov'nor. "Previous to that visit, did you go to the seashore, Mr. Butler?"

"Waal, say that's queer," declared the other. "Ling and I had just come up from a cave. But how did you know about it?"

"Some particles of seaweed were found in Mr. Thorne's study—that's all," replied Nelson Lee smilingly. "Some of the boys and myself, more by chance than anything else, found Mr. Thorne in the cave. He was in a very bad way."

"That's what I want to explain," said Butler quietly. "My idea was that Thorne would fall in with my plans immediately—he being a scallywag. We got him down to the cave without difficulty, and then I told him my proposition. I put it to him good and plain. All he had to do was to give Billie a harmless dope on his first night at the school, and bring him out to me beyond the gates. For this I offered to give Thorne a hundred pounds. You see, I had realized the impracticability of getting hold of Billie by daylight. This little scheme with Thorne made everything easy."

"He didn't agree, did he?" asked the Head in a shocked tone.

"That's just where I made a big mistake," admitted Butler. "I'd got hold of Thorne's character all wrong. As a schoolmaster he was certainly slack and had all round. But he had a high sense of honour. And he point-blank refused to have anything to do with my scheme."

"Ah," said the Head with relief. "I thought so—I thought so!"

"I was angry—furious," went on our captive. "And so I left him in the cave, helpless, to think matters over. I thought, by the next day, that he would have been terrified into agreeing. That was foolish of me. My brains had got sort of messed-up. Waal, Wu Ling went to his hut in the wood, and I decided on a trip to London. Just as I was passing through a suburb a fool omnibus got gay, and there was a pretty little mix-up. Not much damage done, but the wind-screen of my car was smashed, and I got badly cut in the neck. See." He lifted his head, and showed us a recently healed, jagged cut. "I was taken into a hospital, and they wouldn't let me out for a whole week. It seems that my ankle was sprained as well."

"And Mr. Thorne was in the cave the whole time?" asked Morley.

"Sure. I hadn't given Ling instructions, and I couldn't act myself," replied Butler. "Say, I was that worried I nearly went mad. But at last I got out, and came straight down here again. I fetched Ling, and we carried food and water down to the cave. But Mr. Thorne was real bad, and we left, meaning to bring him medicine the next day. I was just desperate. And when we entered the cave again Mr. Thorne had gone. I tell you, gentlemen, I was glad—so glad that I breathed with relief. The poor man was in a bad way, I afterwards learned, and I was the cause of it. But it wasn't done deliberately. I'll prove that to you; the hospital people will bear out my statement."

We were all regarding the prisoner with a certain degree of sympathy. After all, he wasn't such a scoundrel as we had imagined. I clearly remembered that the gov'nor and

(Continued on page 25.)



# PEN PALS

Gordon S. Priddle, Heathfield, Harsley Hill, Whitehurst, nr. **Bristol**, wants to hear from readers who are keen on the old yarns.

Louis L. Levitt, 19, Cunney Street, Doornfontein, Johannesburg, **South Africa**, wants stamp collecting correspondents in Australia and Canada.

Harold Humphrey, 89, Adelaide Street, S. London, Ontario, **Canada**, wants correspondents; ages 16-17.

A. M. Read, Lark Hill, **Worcester**, wants to hear from readers interested in detective work.

Fred W. Allen, 105, Walkers Street, Round Oak, Brierley Hill, **Staffs**, wants members for his correspondence club.

B. Le Cocq, Huret House, Alderney, Channel Islands, wants correspondents in East and West Indies and South America.

Chas. B. Ramsay, 24, Leasowes Road, Capworth Street, Leyton, **Essex**, wants correspondents.

L. A. Wharfdall, 6, Light Terrace, Southwash, Adelaide, **South Australia**, wants to get in touch with readers keen on the old stories.

Edward W. Dicks, 9, George Street, Grahamestown, **South Africa**, wants correspondents; age 17 upwards. Subjects: drawing, stamp collecting, etc.

Roger Smith, 528, Hoan Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, **Canada**, wants correspondents interested in stamps and journalism.

Harold Elvin, Woodlands, Church Lane, Immingham, **Lincs**, wants correspondents in France, Germany, Estonia and Belgium.

Dyson Noble, 22, Greenhill Road, Longwood, Huddersfield, **Yorks**, wants correspondents in Scotland, Australia and China.

C. Lancaster, 14, Cromwell Road, Queen's Park, **Bedford**, wants correspondents.

Miss Mabel Trull, Barava Road, Onehunga, Auckland, **New Zealand**, wants girl correspondents.

Miss Winnie Barwell, 52, Burton Villa, Wigstone Lane, Aylestone, **Leicester**, wants girl correspondents.

Miss Valerie Dudley, 23, Loyola Avenue, E. Brunswick, N.10, Melbourne, **Victoria, Australia**, wants correspondents.

Kenneth C. Hall, 46, Wrayby Street, Brigg, **Lincs**, wants correspondents overseas interested in stamps.

Jack Bown, 4, Arthur Street, Ashfield, Sydney, N.S.W., **Australia**, wants to exchange stamps.

Frank R. Jones, 424, Hooton Street, London, Ontario, **Canada**, wants members for his correspondence club. Letters from Europe, England, U.S.A., etc., would be welcome.

Charles Tawa, 12, Rouchay Pacha, Bulke-

ley, Ramleh, Alexandria, **Egypt**, wants to exchange stamps.

John Kelly, 10, Halstead Street, Choctham Hill, **Manchester**, wants a pen friend in Canada.

R. Cawse, 55, Talgarth Mansions, Barons Court, **London, W.14**, is starting a band and needs players.

M. Culmer, 226, Dundas Street, W., Toronto, Ontario, **Canada**, wants stamp-collecting correspondents.

Licéol Lanyon, 8, Cubitt Street, Richmond, E.1, Melbourne, **Victoria, Australia**, wants correspondents in France, Germany and Russia.

H. Martin, 15, Concediffe Road, Darlington, Co. **Durham**, wants correspondents.

Tom Inch, 119, Bartholomew Street, Newbury, **Berks**, wants stamp correspondents in Australia and South Africa.

E. J. Gilligan and O. B. Gilligan, both of Princes Highway, Sutherland, Sydney, N.S.W., **Australia**, want correspondents in U.S.A., France, Spain and England.

O. B. Gilligan (same address) wants correspondents in Dominions, India, etc.

Victor Edward Colby, East Anglia, 16, Gore Street, Arncliffe, Sydney, N.S.W., **Australia**, wants correspondents in England and France.

Bob McDerriott, 53, Brook Street, Coogee, Sydney, N.S.W., **Australia**, wants correspondents anywhere.

Arthur Court, Manly, c/o P.O., via Brisbane, Queensland, **Australia**, wants correspondents interested in cricket and radio.

Bruce H. Dalton, Toledo, 7, Lansdowne Street, Concord, N.S.W., **Australia**, wants correspondents interested in cycling and radio.

Merlyn Dudley, Victoria Road, Tallygaroopta, Victoria, **Australia**, wants correspondents anywhere; interested in sport, reading, etc.

Miss Valerie Dudley, Victoria Road, Tallygaroopta, Victoria, **Australia**, wants girl correspondents in England, Canada, etc.

Donald J. Thomson, Gledhow, Wellington Walk, Southmead, Bristol, **Glos**, wants new members for the Phoenix Hobby Club, especially those interested in films, journalism and reading.

P. Haywood, 110, Dudley Street, Bedford, wants correspondents in England; ages 14-15.

Cyril Wright, Commercial Hotel, 8c, Hellers, Jersey, Channel Islands, wants correspondents ages 16-18.

J. Masters, 227, George Road, Erdington, **Birmingham**, wants correspondents in Africa and Canada.

G. Webb, 42, Walford Avenue, Biches Barn Estate, **Wolverhampton**, wants correspondents especially overseas.

Miss Sylvia Bye, Beacon Hill Hospital, Buckland, nr. Faversham, **Kent**, wants girl correspondent in France, Germany and Australia.

L. See Siang, 8, Wilkinson Street, Seremban, N.S. **Federated Malay States**, wants stamp-collecting correspondents; also snapshots.

## NIPPER'S TRIUMPH!

(Continued from page 24.)

I had visited the cliffs at Caistowe Bay one eventful night. We had seen the pair enter the cave; and the next day Mr. Thorne had been ransomed. We now knew why he had been placed in that cave.

"After that I felt miserable and unsettled," continued Cyrus Butler. "I didn't exactly know how to get to work. But one night we came upon Farnan by accident. He was going down the lane with some other boys, and we sprang upon them and took Billie through the woods. But, owing to this gentleman's promptitude"—and Butler nodded to Nelson Lee—"I was foiled. The next chance I had was when Billie was left on the edge of the wood by two of his chums. Say, that was another bad affair. He resisted; he said he wasn't going to be taken away, and he struggled. This fool of a Chink, acting without my orders, hit poor Billie with a cudgel before I could stop him. Then, as a motor-car was coming along, we had to skip. I guess that's all, gentlemen. You know the rest. Nothing further happened until this evening, when I thought I had got Billie properly. Say, it was cute, and I'm done. My scheme's passed out bad. Waal, I'm not sorry! I didn't hanker after crooked dealings, anyway."

Butler sat back, and regarded us quietly.

"And that's all!" asked Detective-Inspector Morley, closing his notebook.

"Sure."

"Well, my opinion of you, Mr. Butler, is higher than it was before you started talking," said Morley smilingly. "If your statements are true—and I believe they are—you won't come to much harm. But you'll have to stand your trial in the usual order of things. If it hadn't been for that affair of Mr. Thorne, I dare say you would have gone free. But I can't let you go. You will have to make your defence in a criminal court. And, frankly, I believe you'll get off with a fine, unless, of course, Mr. Thorne's relatives like to be nasty."

Cyrus Butler stood up.

"I'm ready," he said calmly. "I took a chance and lost. A million dollars have gone clean—but I'm not sorry. I'd rather lose the money than get up to any more tricks of this sort."

Twenty minutes later Mr. Cyrus Butler and Wu Lang left St. Frank's in a closed motor-car. Previous to his departure, Butler had a few words with his nephew.

Farnan was awfully cut-up, and he told his uncle that he would move heaven and earth to get him off lightly. He'd cable to his father, and would do heaps of other things.

And then, after that, I was allowed to go.

I changed, washed myself, and strolled down into the Common-room.

## CHAPTER 9.

## My Triumph!

SIR MONTIE and Tommy Watson were in the Common-room with a crowd of other fellows. But they didn't come near me. I knew they were curious, however. Everybody was curious.

They were eager to know why I had been called out of the Form-room that afternoon, and what I had been doing since. It was nearly dark now, and I hadn't been seen for hours.

But I was joyful.

In less than half an hour I should be completely and absolutely vindicated. The Head, in fact, was going to make a short speech to the whole school. So far, the boys knew nothing whatever.

There was a general glare as I entered the Common-room. I had expected a studied avoidance. But the fellows regarded me angrily.

"That chap ought to be barred from the Common-room," said Hubbard. "We don't want pub-haunters here!"

"You'd better bar Fullwood & Co., then!" I said pleasantly.

Ralph Leslie Fullwood strode forward.

"Do you want a raggin'?" he asked fiercely.

"I'm not going to get one," I retorted. "Fullwood, old dear, you're going to have a very sudden fall in about twenty minutes. The fellows are going to learn the truth."

"You cheeky rooster!" roared Fullwood.

"Don't speak to him," said Handforth, glaring. "He's in Coventry, anyhow!"

"I shan't be soon."

"What's happened, you cad?" piped Teddy Long eagerly.

I grinned. Long, I knew, had been on the jumps for hours past. He was the "Peeping Tom" of the Ancient House, and he was fearfully cut-up because he couldn't find out what was in the wind.

His curiosity was such that he was even willing to ask me for information.

"A lot's happened, my son," I said cheerfully.

"Yes, but what—?"

"You're not going to speak to the cad!" interrupted Armstrong, giving Long a cuff. "Clear out!"

"The Head's going to call the school together in a minute or two," I remarked.

Nobody replied for a moment; then Tregellie-West adjusted his pince-nez, and lounged across to me. He was looking very grave, but there was a twinkle of hope in his eyes.

"Bennett, dear fellow, I believe you're hiding something up your sleeve," he said serenely. "Are you?"

"Do you still think I'm a cad?" I asked, looking him straight in the eyes.

Sir Montie took a deep breath.

## OUR NEXT ALL-STAR NUMBER!



## "THE HOUSEMASTER'S PERIL!"

Nelson Lee has faced danger not once but many times in his adventurous career. Never, however, has he been in such a perilous plight as in this nerve-tangling St. Frank's yarn.

## "THE PRAIRIE SHOWMEN!"

By STANLEY AUSTIN.

Welcome next week three new pairs to the pages of the Old Paper. You'll like Buck Malone, Billy Baxter, and Bandy, the bear, the boxing partners. The adventures of this trio among the "bad-hats" of the Wild West will thrill you as you've never been thrilled before!

In addition, you'll get the laugh of a life-time from the first set of six cartoons featuring Trackett Grim, detective, and Splinter, his assistant. And with another stirring instalment of "Open Throttle!" and more "Smilers," this all-star number of the "Nelson Lee" is unbeatable—

THE BEST ON THE BOOKSTALLS FOR 2s.

"By the Lord Harry—no!" he declared. "I'm your pal, Benny! Give us your fist, old boy! Tommy, you ruffian, come back to the fold! Benny's all right! Benny's been playin' us up!"

"Don't be an ass, Montie!" protested Tommy uncomfortably.

"I'm not. I have been an ass—but I'm not now," said Tregellis-West. "Bead! Don't you see the glint in Benny's eye? What does it mean? He's goin' to surprise us all soon!"

"That's true enough," I grinned; "I am!"

Something in my manner—the calm assurance and cheerfulness, perhaps—must have had an effect upon Tommy and Montie. Probably they saw that I was true blue. They were both keen judges of character.

"Hang it all, Benny, there's my fist!" said Tommy impulsively.

I took it warmly, and gripped Montie's arm. I felt very happy at that moment. Both my chums had come back to me before they heard the news. It was splendid. I hadn't hoped for it.

The other fellows looked on angrily.

"Well, that's settled it!" said Merrell. "Those three cads are barred completely now, I vote we give them all a Form zagger!"

"Rats!" bawled Edward Oswald Handforth. "There's something queer about this. Blessed if I am not beginning to believe Bennett's a good 'un, after all! Look at him! He's grin-

ning like a door-knocker! He ain't a chap who's been doing rotten things!"

"Good for you, Handy!" roared Watson. "Come and join us!"

Handforth hesitated.

"If Bennett'll give an explanation—"

"The Head's going to do that," I interrupted. "Handy, old chap, you're an ass, but you're a jolly good ass! You won't regret it if you show these fellows that you believe in me."

"I've been thinking hard," said Handforth. "I can't believe that Bennett's a rotter. I'm going to join him—and if I'm sent to Coventry I don't care a tuppenny dash!"

McClure glared.

"Don't be an idiot, Handforth!" he shouted.

"You're going to join the party, too—and so is Church!" said Handforth decidedly. "We'll form the 'Bennett Party.' And we'll send the rest of the chaps to Coventry! How's that? That'll take a spoke out of their wheel—what?"

Handforth strode across the Common-room, and thumped me on the back. He did so with a condescending air which I couldn't possibly resent. Church and McClure followed him.

I was very pleasantly surprised, but Fullwood & Co. were bubbling with fury.

"This is all rot!" shouted Fullwood. "Bennett's in disgrace—"

The door opened, and Conroy major looked in. Conroy major was a prefect.

"You're wanted in the Big Hall," he said shortly. "Cut along!"

"Is the school being called together?" asked Watson.

"Yes. The Head's going to make a speech or something."

"What about?" asked a dozen voices.

"I don't know," said Conroy. "You'll find out."

The Remorites were excited, and they felt that something unusual was in the wind. I left the Common-room in the midst of my new friends. I was tremendously happy. The very change I liked the best had shown their faith in me.

In the Big Hall all the Forms were soon in their places.

The Head was talking with Mr. Alvington and two other masters. And when Dr. Stafford turned to the great sea of faces, he was smiling. There was a flash of expectancy.

"My boys, I have something to say to you which, I believe, will be welcome," he began, in his pleasant, deep voice. "One of your schoolfellows, Farman, of the Remove Form, was brutally attacked several days ago."

"Yes—by Bennett!" I heard Fullwood murmur.

"The rascals who were responsible for that attack have now been arrested, and are even now in Bannington Police-station," went on the Head. "The chief culprit has confessed everything, and Farman is no longer in danger."

There was an excited buzz.

"Then Bennett didn't do it, sir!" shouted Handforth excitedly.

Dr. Stafford smiled—and then frowned.

"I will not ask for the name of the boy who interrupted me," he said; "but I shall at once make a very necessary statement. It hits close to my ears that certain malicious stories have been circulated among the juniors—particularly those of the Ancients House. It has been said that Bennett, of the Remove Form, committed the assault. I publicly vindicated Bennett several days ago—but some boys apparently considered that my statement was untrue. If I had the names of those boys I should punish them severely. Bennett is absolutely innocent. The arrest and the confession of the real culprits proves that up to the hilt."

There was another buzz; and I saw that scores of faces were turned in my direction. Fullwood & Co. were scowling and looking scared. The other fellows were rather shamefaced.

"Furthermore," went on the Head, "Bennett played a very active part in the capture of the rascals. This very evening Bennett impersonated Farman, and pluckily invited an attack. He was accompanied on his expedition by a detective-inspector from Scotland Yard."

"Phew!"

The whole school gasped.

"Bennett led Farman's enemies into a trap, and they were captured," went on Dr.

Stafford. "Needless to say, Bennett laid himself open to an attack which might well have proved serious. Throughout the whole affair Bennett has acted in the most courageous manner, and I now publicly thank him for his services. In order to prepare this trap, Bennett, at my express wish, visited the King's Arms Inn, on the Bannington Road, for the purpose of meeting Detective-inspector Morley. Public-houses are, of course, out of bounds, but this was a very special occasion. Moreover, I trusted Bennett implicitly. He arranged matters with the Scotland Yard detective, and to-day's capture is the result. I have made those statements publicly because I think that Bennett is deserving of the highest praise. I have reason to believe that he has been shunned and avoided, owing to the false rumours which have been circulated. That injustice must not continue—"

The Head was interrupted at this point. Tommy Watson, having thumped me on the back, was yelling for cheers.

And the cheers were given, too! They nearly lifted the roof off, and the Head waited until the commotion had subsided. Fullwood & Co. didn't cheer; they stood still, and looked sheepish.

"I cannot explain the inner facts of the case to you, my boys," concluded the Head, at last. "Farman wishes the whole affair to be hushed up, and I must respect his wishes. Certain facts will be made known at the police-court inquiry, but that will not be for some weeks. And it is no business of mine. I need only say that Farman is now well on the road to recovery, and that he will be amongst you by to-morrow evening. And he is no longer in any danger. Owing to Bennett's courage and cleverness, the unfortunate episode is satisfactorily closed."

Not a word was said about the gu'nor. Nelson Lee had expressly requested the Head to make no mention of his part in the affair. He did not want to appear at all.

I was literally carried out of the Big Hall.

The fellows cheered and shouted and shook my hand until it ached. They wanted to know what I had been doing, and I had to explain the impersonation and the capture a dozen times over. But I didn't say who the attackers had been, and I didn't go into details.

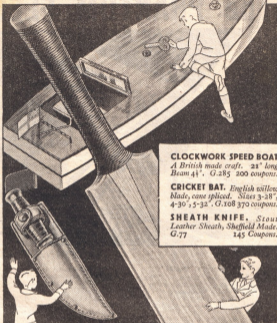
A terrific feed was held in my honour in Study C, and the guests overflowed out into the passage. Fullwood & Co. were ragged unmercifully by the angry Remorites, and they slunk away and hid their diminished heads.

Fullwood was beaten; his victory had been sheet lived; and my own popularity was now ten times greater. It was my triumph!

#### THE END.

[Next Wednesday's magnificent long complete story of St. Frank's is entitled "The Housemaster's Peril!" It abounds in thrills, mystery, and nerve-tingling adventure. Tell all your pals, but don't forget to order your own copy.]

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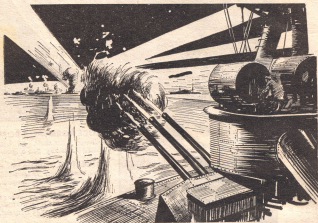
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*A Super Thrill-Story Of A 1943 Peril!*

# The PHANTOM FLEET!



By STANTON HOPE

"**S**HAKE a leg, skipper! There's the devil's own trouble brewing!" The booming voice of old Mike O'Hara brought Val Crichton leaping from his bunk aboard the *Banshee*. It even roused Pompey, the coloured boy cook, who descended on the metal deck with a thud—and, luckily, on his thick skull!

"Great sea-snakes!" Val gasped. "What's up?"

"The lid off that dented volcano, sor!" Mike panted. "It's gone sky-high, and the sky's so full av sparks, bedad, you can't see the stars!"

Within a few seconds Val, in khaki shorts and a singlet, was up on deck gazing shoreward, with Mike and Pompey standing awe-stricken beside him.

"The Pali!" he muttered. "So the old mountain has cut loose at last!"

The oily swells of the Pacific were running

longer than usual, but this and the brilliant reflection of orange light on the water were the only symptoms at sea of the terrific upheaval ashore.

The Pali, ancient and venerated mountain of the Hawaiians, was belching flame and smoke which obliterated the tropical stars. In intervals between the rumbling roar of the eruption signalled the British and American cruiser squadrons anchored at Pearl Harbor, Honolulu, farther round the coast.

"Ut came on very sudden-loike, skipper," Mike mumbled in his beard. "I'm thinkin' there must be many poor spalpeens in the danger area."

"G-golly!" gasped Pompey, mopping his black brow. "Dat old volcano-trash sure makes de air mos' powerful warm!"

"And it'll be warmer yet for us, young 'un," Val snapped. "We're going ashore." His crew made a dive below.

---

**The Allied Fleets and the Mongolian phantom navy get to grips! The final fight between the white and yellow races for the supremacy of the Pacific is full of thrills, brave deeds and high-speed adventure.**

---

"Thin I'm wearin' me lucky four-leafed shamrock," Mike muttered.

"Just a jiffy, cap'n," breathed Pompey, "till I pockey dat rabbit's foot."

Val needed a few moments' thought to decide his best course of action.

The Banshee, an amazing craft designed by his late uncle, was lying in a cove beyond Waikiki. Built of a strange metal named aldurien, it was almost invisible, and could be used in the manner of a seaplane, speed-boat, light-armoured land tank, or submarine.

In short, the Banshee was the most marvellous craft built in the year 1943, and as such was coveted by Mosaki, the unscrupulous Mongolian statesman, the chums' arch-enemy, who was endeavouring to establish an empire in the Pacific, seizing British and American possessions to do so.

"We've got to help in the rescue work," Val decided. "Can't fly the old kite into that furnace, so we'd better go ashore on wheels."

His crew reappeared, Pompey wearing a number of white "witch-rags" in his black, woolly hair for additional charms to ward off evil.

Val barked to issue his orders, and suddenly stiffened.

"Phwat's biting you, skipper?" inquired Mike anxiously. "Faith, for the moment you looked as if you'd been the Mongolian phantom fleet."

"Wish I could see 'em," Val exclaimed. "There'd be less danger of the yellow men snaffling our Pacific islands if their ships could be seen—but they're made of similar metal to the Banshee. Now take a peek over there!"

The old Irish seaman and the darker boy followed the direction of his pointing finger. And, for the first time, they saw one of the Banshee's extended wings clearly defined in a shimmering blue light against the water!

"Sallee me!" gurgled Mike. "The old invisible ship can be seen plain as Pompey's face in a snowfield!"

The full significance only dawned on Mike and Pompey by degrees.

Except from close quarters, the Banshee had been invisible at night-time, and secure because of that very fact. To-night the aldurien-built craft plainly announced its presence in the cove as though it had been painted over with phosphorus!

"There's only one explanation," Val said. "That wing and some of the other parts of the craft are directly in the orange glow from the volcano."

The accidental discovery that aldurien shone with a blue-coloured sheen in an orange light was disturbing in no small degree!

"Stations!" Val ordered brusquely.

He took his position at the controls in the forward cockpit, and Mike went below to the pump-engine and Pompey to the moorings.

To a touch of a lever the metal wings

slowly folded back and automatically clipped. To the movement of another lever the wheels lowered deeper in the water below the floats.

Directly the Banshee was free from her moorings, Val Crichton, who formerly had been a lieutenant in the Royal Navy, signalled "slow ahead" to the Irishman.

A scarcely audible drone announced the movement of the pump-engine, which compressed the vapour generated from pure alcohol and ejected it from tubes which extended fore-and-aft at the rear of the ghostly craft.

The Banshee glided through the water, leaving a faint phosphorescent wake upon the sea.

Farther down the coast was a shelving beach between high cliffs, and Val kept the nose of his metal craft towards the shore and felt the slight lift as the wheels touched coral sand. Then the Banshee rose like some prehistoric monster from the surf and steadily climbed the beach. The Banshee had transformed herself from a giant speed-boat to an armoured land-cart!

Flames leaped aloft from the Pali like fiery spears flung by an infuriated giant from within the crater. The subterranean thunder shook the earth, but fortunately the breeze was sweeping the sulphuric smoke and dust toward the far side of the island.

At increased speed the Banshee moved along a wide track bordered by flowering hedges. The heat grew greater with every passing minute, for the floods of lava, in appearance like molten brass, were rolling down the cone-shaped mountain.

"Steer hard-a-port, ar," advised Mike. "Over that way is a village, and I can see many poor spalpeens tryin' to beat ut."

Several native refugees came hurrying down the roadway, and Val swung the Banshee along the edge of a pineapple plantation.

"Say, boss," called out Pompey, "by de firelight I can see dat de 'Merican Marines am helping dose niggers to escape."

"Niggers!" ejaculated Mike indignantly. "Bad cess to the bhoy! Faith, compared wid himself, the Kanakas look like a pot o' honey set alongside a jar o' black treacle."

Nevertheless, the negro boy was correct about the Marines being on the job already. By their efficient help, the inhabitants of the only big village directly under the Pali slopes had every chance to escape with their lives and most of their property.

"We'll steer a course westward," Val announced.

The Banshee snaked along a track past fields of sugar-cane. Grey volcanic dust whipped up from the speeding wheels, and the heat grew more intense as the ghostly craft sped onward.

The earth trembled to the roar of subterranean thunder; a large fissure opened through a field as though hacked out by invisible axes. Two palm-trees bowed before the terror; their fronds, withered by the heat, toppled slowly downward, and the

harsh splintering of wood accompanied the breaking of the stems.

The molten lava, rolling downward towards the valleys, fascinated Mike and Pompey beyond anything else in that awe-inspiring display.

"Honey o' death!" the Irishman muttered. "Honey o' death! 'Tis the kind o' red-hot honey, young 'un, that wiped out Pompey and What's-ur-Name and—and all the ither places too numerous to mention."

"G-golly!" Pompey gulped.

Val shaded his eyes against the volcano's glare. A shower of white-hot cinders shot three hundred feet high above the crater and were swept away, together with the accompanying smoke, by the wind.

But supposing the wind veered?

The young skipper was under no illusion about that peril. He, Mike and Pompey had come too near to escape the consequences of any sudden change of wind. As it was, the heat had begun to singe Val's eyebrows.

Not only was he taking the Banshee nearer to the mountain, but some of the lava streams were rolling down to meet the craft. Should the wind veer and bring the fiery cinders and suffocating, sulphuric smoke to this part of the island, all life within the radius of two or three miles of the mountain base must be destroyed within a matter of minutes!

"See here," Val panted, "I don't see anyone, and there's a mighty good chance we won't get out of this place alive if we go much farther. I'll leave it to you fellows to say whether we go on or turn back."

Mike and Pompey sat crouched in the cockpit, their faces bathed in perspiration, and something approaching despair in their eyes.

"Stick wt, skipper!" Mike said.

"Sure t'ing!" Pompey gasped. "Go right ahead, boss."

To the chums it began to seem that the very metal of which the Banshee was built was becoming red-hot.

The queer amphibian craft swung round the last bend of the track, and a number of human figures, black and grotesque in the fiery glow, were revealed ahead. They consisted of two Kanaka families.

Three pretty Hawaiian girls were helping some elderly relations who showed signs of being overcome by the heat. A number of household articles had been abandoned by the roadside, and the entire belongings still in the possession of the refugees were carried in reed matting on the backs of two lithe-limbed youths.

Val swung the Banshee round on the scorched grass by the track-side, and the Kanakas paused and gazed in renewed terror at the monster shimmering with a blue phosphorescence in the weird, volcanic light.

Pompey clambered down, followed by Mike.

A white-haired Kanaka, who had been assisted by the girls, collapsed; the girls themselves screamed, imagining that the Pal's own fiend had come in a ghostly

chariot to whirl them all to the nethermost depths of the pit!

"D-dis way, I-folks! Don't yo' be afraid!" stammered Pompey, his knees knocking together. "My boss invites yo' to hab a lift."

The Kanakas were too terrified to run, and some of the party were physically incapable of further flight.

The "honey of death" was rolling relentlessly towards their doomed dwellings, and they knew that they could never have escaped on foot. Yet it took them precious moments to understand that the coal-black negro boy and the red-bearded white man were actually in the service of a young Englishman who had heaved the island terror in a strange "motor-car" to save them.

One by one the hapless refugees were hauled aboard the Banshee, their gear collected and slung in after them.

"Stay below with 'em, Mike," Val rasped, "and see they don't nose round the pump-engine or other machinery."

"Aye, aye, sor!"

Once more the engine began to pump the compressed vapour from the stern-tubes. The Banshee circled round upon the track and rocked suddenly to an earthquake tremor that opened another great fissure that engulfed one of the thatched huts.

Crash! One of the folded wings of the craft struck against the trunk of a fig-tree by the track-side, and seriously damaged the mechanism for extending the wings ready for flying. The jolt, however, prevented the craft from toppling over, and Val hurried cautiously down the dust-strewn track.

A glance back showed the sizzling lava cascading over rocks and reaching out fiery tongues through every ditch and gully.

Streamlets evaporated to hissing steam before the advance of the molten flood. A stone viaduct crashed before its onslaught; canes and pineapples shrivelled to the blast of its fiery breath; lofty palms and flowering trees flamed like giant torches before the devil's honey razed them and obliterated them for eternity!

The acrid odour of scorching rubber mingled in Val's nostrils with sulphurous fumes. The heat appeared to have evaporated most of the strength out of his body; but he opened the throttle wider, chancing the condition of the track ahead. To save the terrified girls and the other refugees, he must quickly widen the distance between the Banshee and that flaming mountain!

The lava poured down the cliffs of a ravine as though in a frenzied eleven-hour attempt to prevent the escape.

Part of the track ahead had subsided, and a four-foot crack cut zigzag across the path.

Val's brain functioned clearly, despite the heat, and, resisting the impulse to slow down, he opened out the throttle wider. The Banshee slashed through the volcanic





Val heard an ape-like jabbering of voices and Mike's yell of fury. He swung his left and heard a guttural groan of pain. Then a crowd of Mengolians descended upon him, and he was gripped on all sides.

fast, the wheels whirred unchecked through the air, and the craft alighted and bounced onward on the track below the yawning fissure!

But for the damaged wing mechanism, Val would have taken off and flown the Banshee out to sea. When he tried to operate the lever he found the wings immovable, and so sped on through the fiery haze toward the coast.

Three miles farther on, he halted the Banshee before two motor-cars belonging to the U.S. Naval Department. In the first of them was Admiral Deight, who had come ashore to superintend personally the rescue work.

Val rapidly explained to the famous American in whose service he had come to Hawaii, and the admiral received the refugees and set off back for Honolulu.

On his advice, Val took the Banshee back to the coast, ran the craft down the slope into the sea and moored alongside a ledge of rock in a deserted cove. From the centre of the island the Pali rumbled in savage discontent.

"Begorra!" puffed Mike, whose sailor's slacks showed signs of sootching. "The next time, Pompey, that we're told to go ashore to rescue spalpeens from a volcano, I'm askin' the skipper for a pair o' asbestos trousers!"

Pompey said nothing, nor did he seem to hear.

Temporarily, work was done, and he had his teeth in the middle of a melon slice, the ends of which were draped closely about his ears.

#### Captured!

IN the cove the Banshee was sheltered from an ugly cross-swell which was breaking in thunderous surf on the outer coral reefs. The fiery glow from the Pali was less, and the shocks not so severe and prolonged.

"Things are packing up," Val commented. "Bazz ashore, Pompey, and draw a couple of cans of water from the spring half-way up the cliff. The little we had left in the tank has almost evaporated."

"And put your black suit on, me bhoy," Mike advised. "Phwat wid that and your face, no one will see you in the darkness."

When Pompey had gone ashore, Val and Mike examined the damage.

"H'm, we can't do anything till to-morrow," Val decided. "The best thing would be to take the Banshee out to sea and set to work well out of sight of land."

A sharp, metallic sound rang out from the direction of the darkened cliffs.

"What's that?" Val gulped.

In considering the Banshee's damage, he had forgotten Pompey's excursion ashore.

"'Tis only young Boot Polish, sor," Mike answered. "'Tis lucky our tin wather-cans aren't made o' cut-glass, or w'd a small fortune you'd be spending for breakages."

Clear-cut above the last rumblings of the volcano rose a shrill voice from the cliffs.

"Ow! Help! Maasas—maasas!"

Val took a flying leap ashore, and Mike jumped after him.

"The young 'un's landed in a scrape of some kind!" Val exclaimed. "Got your pistol?"

"In me pocket, sor!"

Neither of them had parted company from their pistols since they had arrived in Hawaii, and Val had ordered Pompey also to keep an automatic handy.

Enemies abounded in the island. Instinctively Val thought of Mosaki as he ran up a gully towards the spring. More than once he and his chums had frustrated the sinister Asiatic, who was the prime mover in the astounding plot of the yellow races to gain an empire in the Pacific. And it was Mosaki's boast that no man had ever foiled him and afterwards lived for longer than three months to voice his triumph!

"Careful!" Val warned breathlessly. "Keep that gun handy, Mike."

A muffled roar like that of a hungry lion brought Mike to a standstill, and he nudged Val in the back with the muzzle of his automatic.

"Hould your voice, skipper," he muttered hoarsely. "Sure, I distinctly heard 'somethin'."

"A deaf mute might have heard the Pali in action again," Val retorted. "And if you mind in future calling my attention by something else than that giddy gun of yours!"

They advanced farther toward the spring in growing anxiety, yet taking every precaution against a trap.

Tropic vegetation and volcanic rocks offered sufficient screen for a battalion, but there was no evidence of a single soul in the gully—not even Pompey, whose cry had alarmed them.

At short intervals they paused to listen, but heard nothing except the deep-toned volcanic rumblings and the harsh roar of surf on the coral reefs.

"'Tis a fair mystery," Mike muttered. "Shall we give a hail, and if the bhoy is anywhere within earshot, maybe—"

His remarks tailed into a gurgling cry which mingled with Val's agonised gasp.

From among a natural hedge of the common Hawaiian plant known as the night-blooming cerebus stabbed a white ray of light. It struck full into the faces of the two chums, the young skipper and his Irish mate, with a sizzling, white-hot glare. It seemed to shrivel the pupils of their eyes, to burn through to the back of their skulls, so that for a space their brain-cells were paralysed.

Shuffling feet sounded from all sides.

Pouf! Pouf! Pouf!

Val's silent-pattern automatic spat a stream of hot lead down that lane of light! At least, he fired in the general direction of the lamp responsible for the peculiarly blinding glare. He heard an ape-like jabbering of voices and Mike's yell of fury. The intense light was switched off, but his eyes had been seared by its glare, and his powers of vision were engulfed in a blood-red haze, and he could distinguish no object in the night.

An upward blow on the wrist sent the automatic spinning from his hand. He swung his left and heard a guttural groan of pain. Then a crowd descended on him; he heard Mongolian voices, and felt the grip of powerful hands upon his shoulders, arms and legs.

For a space Mike's weird battle-cries rang out, and he knew his old chum was valiantly fighting for life.

The whole ambush had been laid with a diabolical cunning worthy of Mosaki himself, probably the inspirer of the attack. Neither Val nor Mike had a dog's chance from the first. That high-powered light had temporarily blinded them to their surroundings and enabled their attackers to approach unseen and in comparative safety.

Val's shouts were muffled by a scarf twisted quickly over his mouth, and he felt himself carried onward for several yards by that human avalanche. His arms were wrenched behind him, and a pair of handcuffs clicked metallically on his wrists.

How had Mike fared? No better than himself, he felt sure. Nor did he doubt that young Pompey had fallen into the hands of the enemy.

Helplessly he was forced upward through the gully, and the effects of the powerful lamp began to wear off. Gradually his vision became normal again, and he could distinguish the captives of himself and Mike, who was handcuffed and gagged near him. To his consternation, the men were none of the Asiatics of the island, but armed blue-jackets of the great battle fleet built up in secrecy by the Mongolians!

Gradually Val's mind cleared, although his eyes still ached from the effects of what appeared to be some scientific signal-lamp which one of the sailors carried.

There was little likelihood that the Mongolians had the foggiest idea of where to look for the Banshee, the craft which Mosaki would have given his right arm to possess.

Behind Mike walked Pompey, with arms and legs free, and only a gag between his thick lips.

The expression on the boy's face told Val a great deal. There was no doubt that young Pompey had made yet another of the "bloomers" for which he was notorious. By dropping one of the water-tins he had attracted the attention of a band of Mongolian sailors who probably had been landed secretly to rescue some of their compatriots.

The eruption had provided a fine chance. Pompey had attracted one of the armed squad to the gully. Then, recognising him as one of the members of the Banshee's crew, they

had lain in wait and had been rewarded by making a capture which would earn Mosaki's personal gratitude and bring every one of them quick promotion!

A stocky lieutenant in charge, with the high cheek-bones of the Asiatic races, tanned and rasped a contemptuous order in the direction of the bluejackets escorting the negro boy. Immediately, to the horror of Val and Mike, the sailors frog-marched Pompey to the edge of the thousand-foot cliff along which they were passing. They heard cookie's muffled gasp and saw his feeble struggles. Their own muscles swelled in the effort to break free and go to his rescue, but they were utterly helpless, surrounded by their armed guard.

One of the Mongolians whipped the scarf from Pompey's head and a shrill cry of despair rose from the hapless boy. Next moment his small body went hurtling outward over the edge of the cliff and was swallowed in the darkness of that thousand-foot abyss vibrant with the song of the surf!

**Doomed to Die!**

THE admiral's day-cabin on the Mongolian battle-cruiser, *Karna*, had one splash of colour to relieve the drab greyness of the deck, furniture and bulkheads, or walls. Opposite the door the flaming orange-and-white flag of the new Mongolian Republic extended across the bulkhead, symbolic of the risen sun and the dawn of their new empire ambitions.

A group of officers stood in the cabin. Five, including the admiral himself, sat at the plain metal table with documents, blotters and pens and ink before them.

Facing that table, under a strong guard of armed bluejackets, were two prisoners on trial for their lives—Val Crichton and Mike O'Hara.

The faces of the two chums were haggard and blood-stained. They showed signs of the rough treatment of the night before, and of the worse treatment since they had been held prisoners in this battle-cruiser, the flagship of the secret Mongolian fleet slowly manoeuvring within striking distance of the Hawaiian Islands.

Their eyes were fixed on one figure at the right hand of the admiral—a stocky man whose smouldering brown eyes held theirs with hypnotic spell. None other than Mosaki, the so-called Napoleon of the Asiatic race, was their prosecutor in this farce called a court martial!

The glazed look of despair was in their eyes, and only the jut of their chins revealed their obstinacy in the face of the Mongolian's threats.

For Mosaki was speaking.

"My friends, I give you the last chance," he said gutturally, in the English tongue. "I have heard that means have been taken unofficially to loosen your tongues, but they remain tied."

Val swallowed hard.

"Aye!" he granted. "Unofficially you gave orders to have us beaten-up in our cells, but your beastly ruffians got nothing from us."

"Nor will you, you dirty spalpeen!" growled Mike.

"I do not understand the foreign language of this red-bearded person," Mosaki remarked calmly to Val. "Time is passing, my friends, and soon the dusk will come. I can stay the sentence of the court if you will speak. You see, I intend to deal fairly with you."

Val gritted his teeth.

"Like you did with young Pompey?" he rasped. "Heaved over the cliffs by your murderous swabs and—"

"It was an unfortunate mistake," admitted Mosaki severely. "The men have no respect for black persons—how do you call them?—niggers. No doubt, had they understood that you would be distressed, they would have brought him off to the ship. To them he seemed—superfluous."

"Loike your blather seems to us, mister," retorted Mike. "Cut the cackle, ould rooster, and let the admiral say phwat his rotten court have decided, entirely."

Only by the gleam in Mosaki's eyes was revealed the fury that inwardly consumed him. Ignoring Mike, and again addressing himself to Val, he gave his final ultimatum.

"Sooner or later my men will find your vessel," he said; "but now that the disturbance ashore has ceased, I do not wish to land men when there is no real need. A search may take some time, and you can tell me now where this secret vessel, which rides the seas, the air and the land, may be found. Say the word, and both you and the red-beard shall be flown safely to America, or to the Philippines, if you prefer. Refuse, and I can no longer stay the sentence of the court."

The brief silence was broken only by the ticking of an electrically driven clock.

"I refuse to speak," Val said.

"Ditto," said Mike. "Now, ring down the curtain on this farce, ould Yellow Peril, for I've seen enough of your map to-day to last me the rest of me life."

"Which will not be unduly prolonged," murmured Mosaki, with a slight inclination of his head.

The officers of the court consulted together in the Mongolian tongue, and the sentence was translated into English.

"For enemy action against the new Mongolian Navy, the two prisoners shall be put to death."

Neither Val nor Mike made any comment. That the death sentence would be passed on them had been a foregone conclusion, and the expressions on their faces showed their contempt.

Back in their cell on the lower deck of the battle-cruiser, they waited in anger and despair.

They were helpless, doomed to die—and the Mongolian battle-fleet, built in secret of the nearly invisible metal called aldarion, was at sea off the Hawaiian Islands!

"If only we could let our pals know, skipper," growled Mike.

By which he meant the British and American naval authorities, for obviously the phantom fleet, with Mosaki himself aboard the flagship, was not cruising off Hawaii without some sinister purpose.

Val and Mike believed they could die happy if only they could give warning. They saw no ray of hope; Mosaki, in his venom, would wipe them from his path, and the secret fleet would launch a swift surprise attack on the available warships of Britain and America with every chance of success. To the flash and thunder of the heavy guns the Mongolians would hammer their way through to their long-dreamed-of Pacific empire!

For an hour Val and Mike were left to themselves, neither knowing the time nor manner of their death. Then the cell door was opened and a squad of armed bluejackets came for them, and, overpowered by weight of numbers, their wrists and ankles were shackled.

By rifle-butts they were driven up to the quarter-deck, and found that the Karma had bow-to and that the accommodation ladder had been lowered on the starboard side.

A group of officers, among them Mosaki, stood clear-cut against the hazy grey metal of which the ship was built.

The end had come! Val and the old Irishman knew that by the looks in the slant eyes of the Mongolians.

There was a pause; then someone gave an order and the armed bluejackets urged the chums down the companion ladder to where a long, shadowy shape obliterated part of the sea.

The craft was rague in the red dusk, but Val and Mike judged it to be a high-powered motor-launch with a long, lean prow of racing design.

"Looks like they're going to give us a ride, skipper," Mike mumbled, "and I've a feelin' ut's going to be a mighty long one!"

This, indeed, was a motor-launch of some kind, and the prisoners were put in a sort of cockpit abaft an engine and shackled securely to a metal rail. While mystified by what it all meant, they were positive that the impending trip in this weird craft was intended to have a tragic ending for themselves!

Gazing swiftly round him, Val viewed the mystic bulk of the battle-cruiser, the bows of which were curiously indistinct although there was no haze over the sea.

Some miles across the ocean he saw the contours of Oahu Island and the smoke of shipping at Honolulu, the principal port.

A Mongolian engineer from the Karma stepped aboard the lean power-boat and opened a hatch of the metal fore-deck.

Sitting up to the limit that his shackles permitted, Val gazed into the hatch and saw a number of valves and indicators, and a bulkhead marked by two Mongolian characters painted in red.

It was the sign he had noticed at Fusan and elsewhere—the sign by which live-gan

shells, torpedoes and depth-charges were marked. And instantly Val, and Mike, too, realised the truth. This motor-launch was nothing but a deadly torpedo, the fore part of which was packed with high-explosive!

Mosaki had come to the foot of the companion ladder and leaned toward the prisoners. His swarthy face wore a gloating leer.

"You ride, my friends," he said, "with a cargo of death. This electric motor-boat carries five thousand pounds in weight of high-explosive—enough to blow the entire fleet of Honolulu out of the water. I bid you—farewell."

The engineer made quick adjustments to the motor-launch, set the electric engine running, and leaped to the foot of the accommodation ladder.

Released from its moorings, the boat glided swiftly away from the battle-cruiser's side and ran on a true course for Pearl Harbour, the naval base at Honolulu!

For a space the chums were paralysed by the sheer dastardly treachery of the Mongolian enemy. Gradually they realised the full terror of this strange voyage through the smooth swells of the Pacific.

By the latest scientific naval devices of 1945, the motor-launch would be steered into Pearl Harbour, where scows were loading ammunition into the anchored fleet.

By one devastating explosion the fleet would be destroyed and probably half the buildings of Honolulu! It seemed to the agonised captives that it mattered nothing that they themselves would be blown sky-high in that tremendous holocaust.

#### The Final Fight!

**T**HE deathcraft ran on at an easy speed, not to leave too conspicuous a wake.

The ships of the secret Mongolian fleet faded like phantoms in the dusk, and Honolulu showed more clearly ahead.

Mike O'Hara mumbled incoherently, and Val fully understood his feelings. If only they could get free, could stop this devilish engine which, besides destroying thousands of lives, might alter the whole history of the Pacific races!

Once the assembled warships of Britain and America were destroyed, Mosaki could go right ahead with his plan for planting the orange flag of Mongolia on every Pacific isle.

The veins knotted on his forehead as Val strained at his shackles in an agony of despair. His staring eyes surveyed the bows of the craft, and he dimly saw that a small fan was slowly turning and unwinding from a horizontal metal belt not unlike a sheet bowsprit.

This, he rightly judged, was a safety-fan such as was fitted to the warhead of a naval torpedo. Until that fan unscrewed and dropped off, the high-explosive could not detonate—a safety device to prevent a premature explosion near the Mongolian ships.

Fascinated, he watched the safety-fan slowly unwinding.

Cleanly the death-craft cut its way through the ocean swells toward its objective. The Mongolian fleet were a mile or two astern and no other ships were near.

Something stirred on the water ahead, and wisps of spray shot up and fell like shimmering rain in the sunset glow.

"Flying-fish," Val thought. But then, to his amazement, the shape of a craft of some kind took form above the spray.

"Bedad!" Mike gasped. "D'you see that, skipper? Looks to me loike a flying-boat belonging to those yellow devils on the water ahead."

The craft, whatever it was, manoeuvred awkwardly, and Val and Mike suddenly felt the cold chill of death itself.

The other craft came round in a half-circle directly before the bows of the electric launch laden with death!

Crash!

For the fraction of a second, Val and Mike

craft remained together, the deadly cargo of high-explosive could not be detonated.

"Pompey, you black imp!" he whooped. "Shut off your engine!"

He could see the outline of the Banshee, with the wings folded flush to the fuselage, or hull, and the negro boy staring from the cockpit, bewildered about what to do now that the collision had occurred.

At his young skipper's order he closed down the throttle, and the Mongolian craft, by the power of its electric engine, slowly forged ahead, pushing the Banshee before it.

At this distance from the enemy fleet neither craft could be seen, and the only real danger now was that some Mongolian aircraft might come over to observe what was happening. No seaplane appeared, however, nor was there the sound of one in the dusky sky. With every passing moment the chums were being taken nearer and nearer to Pearl Harbour.

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PLACE A REGULAR ORDER FOR THE OLD PAPER

imagined themselves scattered over a mile radius of the Pacific Ocean! But no devastating explosion followed the impact of collision, and the electric launch slowly threshed forward with its snout wedged firmly in the hull of the other craft athwart its bows.

Both the chums had closed their eyes, but now they opened them and almost dislocated their shackled wrists at the sound of a wailing voice.

"Bery sorry, boss! Jest my li'l bloomer—I turned de wheel de wrong way round."

Val gasped the salty air into his lungs.

"Pompey!" he whooped.

"Snakes alive!" Mike gasped. "Either 'tis the black spalpeen himself or else his angel!"

There was no time in which to demand explanations! Val was the first to realise that the miracle had happened—the death-craft had run full-till into the Banshee, and the safety-fan was jammed within the stricken hull of his wonder-vessel! So long as the two

"Come aboard here, Pompey," Val ordered, "and bring a good file with you!"

The negro boy obeyed and began the task of releasing Val from his shackles, the while he breathlessly explained how he had escaped what seemed like certain death after being hurled over the cliff by the Mongolian blue-jackets.

By a stroke of luck, he had struck a ledge in the cliff and had clawed on to some tough roots growing in the soil, and so, unknown to his intended assassins, had remained only twenty feet below the cliff-top instead of lying mangled amid the surf-washed coral rocks a thousand feet below!

He had been attacked, as Val had supposed, after carelessly dropping one of the water-tins, and, finding himself still possessed of life after being thrown over the cliff, had made his way back to the Banshee, and had shadowed the boat which had taken his skipper and Mike to the battle-cruiser Karma.

Thereafter Pompey had suffered a breakdown with the Banshee's engine, and after many hours of pottering about, had found the simple cause and righted it.

"You've made some bloomers in your short life, young 'un," Val grinned, "but this is the best ever! This craft is packed with something a few thousand times more dangerous than dynamite, and that bloomer of yours has prevented the stuff from exploding and destroying all the shipping in Pearl Harbour!"

An hour later Val, Mike and Pompey were in the day-cabin of Admiral Dwyght, senior officer of the Allied Fleet at Honolulu. Naval mechanics had finished Pompey's half-performed work of taking the shackles from the captives. And the two strange craft which had drifted harmlessly into Pearl Harbour were now safely in the dockyard under a strong guard of U.S. Marines.

"The whole thing is stupefying," the admiral gasped, after Val had explained at length. "You say the Mongolian fleet is lurking out there at sea? That Mosaki himself is aboard the flagship?"

"I do, sir," Val said. "And, knowing by this time that their plot to destroy Pearl Harbour has come unstuck, they'll not delay to attack."

The admiral paced his cabin.

"Guess there's no object in going out to look for them," he mumbled. "Better to go to sea, though, where we can manoeuvre, than stay here in harbour as stationary targets for the Mongolian guns."

"Shure, that's the ticket, sor," Mike exclaimed, "and bejaysus, you can hand them a real surprise packet!"

"O'Hara means, sir," Val hastened to explain, "that we made an extraordinary discovery with regard to the Banshee. This metal, abdurien, is invisible in darkness and almost invisible in the glare of a white light. But in an orange-coloured light it has a sort of phosphorescent sheen. The stunt is to fix orange lenses to your searchlights."

"By heck!" the admiral exclaimed. "That won't take half an hour, and we'll put to sea to look for these yellow sea-devils!"

Within the hour the whole Allied Fleet steamed from Pearl Harbour, with the battleships and battle-cruisers in line ahead, and the destroyers forming a screen to port and starboard of the main fleet.

The chums had been transferred to the British flagship *Thunder*, and the concession to allow them to go to sea with the fleet had been made willingly in view of their services.

No one slept that night. Double watches were kept in the fleet, which steamed on a course southward of the island for fifty miles before altering two points to the west.

There was no moon, and the dim illumination of the tropic stars failed to reveal anything upon the ocean save the steaming fleet of the Allies.

Four bells struck with muffled beat—two a.m.—and still there was no sign of the enemy.

Had the Mongolian Fleet steamed away? Tired by the events of the day, Val began to think of his bunk, when there came a sharp awakening. From a range of less than eight miles salvos of guns flashed over the dark Pacific, and shells screamed, splashed and detonated about the Allied ships.

Those were ranging shots, and second salvos fell short as the whole fleet, to the admiral's signal, turned a point from its course. Not a single Mongolian ship could be seen, and they used no searchlights to give away their position. Only the flash of guns gave momentary indication of the whereabouts of those abdurien-built warships.

Whereas the small-arms were mostly of silent pattern, the big guns belched flame and steel with a voice of thunder. The night rocketed to the crash of high-explosive; shrapnel swept the warships' decks; columns of foam like volcanic peysers leaped two hundred feet from the sea? The British and American ships braved the inferno, and, with every minute, closed the distance between themselves and the phantom fleet!

Then suddenly the eyes of the fleet were turned on the Mongolians. A hundred great searchlights with orange-coloured beams raked the darkness—and the enemy fleet were revealed a few miles distant, clearly, as if adorned with luminous blue paint!

Crash! Crash! Crash!

The mighty guns of the Allied Fleet thundered defiance of the treacherous foe!

The Mongolians, utterly astounded that the rival fleet possessed the secret of the yellow light, blinked in the dazzling glare that illuminated their doomed ships.

Twenty tons of steel hurtled from the *Thunder's* heavy guns into the Mongolian flagship. The armour-piercing shells detonated together with one gigantic explosion that was followed almost instantly by a second terrific eruption as the enemy's magazine blew sky-high.

Caught in an inferno of shells, the Mongolians vainly strove to escape. Ship after ship which had been built in guile and secrecy blew up out of the water or lurched, hissing with steam, into the ocean depths. The British and American destroyers steamed in line abreast, turned to starboard and launched a flight of torpedoes among the surviving vessels—a shoal of death-fish which left more destruction and wreckage in their wake!

In the grey dawn a few Mongolian survivors were rescued, but Mosaki was never found. In one terrible night the dream of a Yellow empire in the Pacific had been shattered!

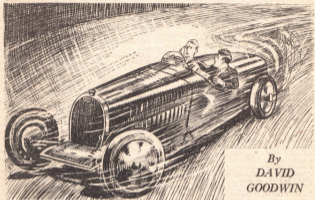
Honours fell thick and fast upon Val, Mike and Pompey, but their one ambition was to get the *Banshee* ready for sea and fade out of port for a quiet holiday cruise!

THE END.

*(Don't miss the first thrilling story of the grand new Wild West series starting next Wednesday. See your newsagent to-day about your copy.)*

*Bud's Answer To A Rascal's Bribe Is A Straight Left!*

# OPEN THROTTLE!



By  
**DAVID  
GOODWIN**

## The Bribe!

"MY nephew won't have you as his chauffeur, Cleugh," said Hotham, under his breath. "So there's no use waiting. We can't shilly-shally any longer. We've decided the job's got to be done to-night."

"And you'll never have a fairer chance, governor," said Cleugh approvingly. "No use makin' two bites of a cherry. I'll go down at once. I may have to hang about till two or three in the morning before I can get into the place safely. Got the key?"

"We've had one made specially," said Barney, producing a long brass key with steel guards. "This'll fit the garage door."

"I'll take my fifty now," replied Cleugh, pocketing the key.

Hotham Finch handed him fifty pounds in banknotes.

"It's clearly understood, ain't it?" said Joe Cleugh. "Five hundred pounds more, paid down to me to-morrow night, if the job comes off. I ain't afraid of your not payin' it," he added grimly. "I'll collect it all right."

"Five hundred pounds," agreed Bar-

ney. "It's a lot of money, Cleugh. But we shan't grudge it."

"Lot o' money!" growled Cleugh. "Dirt cheap, I call it. Why, it's a swinging job for me if I'm caught!"

"No, no," whispered Mr. Finch nervously. "Don't say such things, Cleugh. They could never prove it against you. And you can't be caught. You'll be as safe as the bank!"

"Well, I'll be pretty safe, certainly," said Joe Cleugh, "or I wouldn't touch it. You've got to trust me, and I've got to trust you. An' now I'll be off and get busy. Meantime, I've just one word to say to you. That kid who came up from Wellstead with your nephew to-day—"

"What about him?"

"You watch him, sir. That's a fly kid, that is. I've seen him at work. He did a funny job at Wellstead. He's only a boy, o' course; but I mistrust boys, I do. They're a race of sneaks, an' some of 'em see more than they're meant to." He buttoned up his jacket. "Well, I've got to get into that place to-night. See you at Brooklands in the morning, governors both. There'll

## THE OPENING CHAPTERS.

Bud Kelly, a clever young motor mechanic, gets a job as chauffeur-valet to Cyril Babbitt, a youthful millionaire. He has a suspicion that Hotham Finch and Barney Finch, Babbitt's uncle and cousin respectively, and Joe Cleugh, a rascally chauffeur, are in league "to get rid" of Cyril. The three scoundrels discuss their plans on the eve of a big race at Brooklands, in which Cyril is driving.

be something to put in the papers at Brooklands to-morrow," he added with an ugly smile.

"All ready, sir!" said Bud, as Cyril Babbit came down the steps of No. 100, Eaton Terrace next morning and found the car waiting for him. In another minute they were away, threading through the traffic, Pincher, Bud's dog, sitting on the rear seat of the car.

"Now, my lad," said Cyril, "I'll tell you what the game is to-day. I've barked myself to beat the five-miles flying-start record against five other cars, and I'm going to be at the wheel myself. It's a hair-raiser! I'm going to touch 120 to the hour!"

"What, in this box?" said the surprised Bud.

"Great Scott, no! In my 90 h.p. racing Bugatti. I tell you, she's a hummer!"

He told Bud all about the car as they drove. Bud could talk about cars and engines till the cows came home, and Cyril was just as keen. Before they had finished, London was left far behind.

"Brooklands!" said Cyril, pointing ahead. Bud felt a thrill as he saw for the first time the great racing-track lying like a coiled snake among the pine trees in the valley. It was still some way off, and he could see a team of cars whizzing round it like mechanical toys. Cyril pulled up at a handsome private garage on the main road, half a mile from the course.

"This is my place," he said, jumping down. "I keep the rice locked up here. Ever since she was tuned up to the nines last week she hasn't been touched. We've only got to run her along the road to the track."

There was a caretaker in charge of the garage, and two assistants. They were greeted cheerily by Babbit. The large shed was open, with two cars in it; but there was a smaller building, standing by itself behind the fence, and Cyril unlocked the door of this with his own keys. The big Bugatti was inside.

"Jupiter!" said Bud, licking his lips. "Some car!"

He looked with longing eyes at the great grey racing car, gaunt and bare, stripped like a boxer ready for the ring. He inspected her carefully and examined the engine with Cyril, while Pincher sniffed around the garage and cocked his ears approvingly.

Bud primed the engine, and Cyril tried to crank her up. But the Bugatti had been there for days, and the engine was cold and gummy. He tugged at the starting-handle in vain.

"Here, let me!" said Bud.

Cyril was too impatient to heed him and gave a couple of vicious jerks.

Hang!

The engine back-fired, and the crank-handle kicked like a horse.

"You! Yah-hah! Wow!" yelped Cyril, skipping round the garage with his wrist clasped under his left arm-pit.

"My eye, you mustn't handle a racer's crank that way! I wonder she didn't break

your arm, sir!" exclaimed the astonished Bud.

"She precious nearly did!" said Cyril, massaging his wrist tenderly. "Nerer mind, no harm done! Get her going! It's 10 o'clock, and we're due to start at 10.45. We'll have to give her a run first."

Bud soon had the engine running. He thought privately that it was a crazy thing to start on such a race with so little time to prepare in, but he clambered in as Cyril took the driving-seat and brought the car out into the road, steering with his left hand.

Cyril ran dead slow on low gear till he was near the entrance to Brooklands. He screwed his eyeglass fiercely into his eye and drove through, pausing abreast the repair sheds near the track. There was a shout of welcome and laughter from the crowd.

"Here's Tin-Eye, the Terror! Come on, Babbit, my buck—we're giving four to one against you!"

Cyril waved his hand and called to one of the officials of the course.

"Mr. Chestey! Can I take a run now?"

"All right, if you go at once! Truck must be all clear in ten minutes!" said the official. "So mind you're off it before then! Bithering young fool!" he added under his breath.

"Just time for a buzz round!" said Cyril cheerfully, and slid through on to the racing-track.

Cyril pressed the accelerator. The big Bugatti shot ahead. He took both hands to the wheel, and as speed increased the car began to swerve wildly. Cyril turned white. "Oh, great Jupiter!" he groaned, and pressed down the clutch pedal.

The car slid to a standstill. Bud thought his master had suddenly got the wind-up. But he saw that Cyril's face was white with pain.

"My beastly wrist!" he said. "It hurts like fat—and I can't steer her round the track with only one hand. What the dickens am I to do? Here, Bud, you take her and see if you can warm her up. Maybe I'll be better presently. I've got to, anyhow! Don't give her too much gas, or she'll run you off the map before you can wink!"

He changed places with Bud, who felt rather doubtful as he started off. He had handled a big racer or two, but never anything like this one, and nobody but Babbit would have asked him to do such a thing, considering he didn't know the car.

But he felt her and coaxed her, just as a jockey would feel the mouth of a racehorse; in five minutes he had got full confidence, and was buzzing along the magnificent track at seventy miles an hour.

"Good!" said Cyril. "She's running like an angel's dream. But don't let her touch more than ninety. She'll do much more than that in the race, but we mustn't heat her up too much yet."

Push swung round the track skilfully, taking full advantage of the banking, like an old hand. It was easier than the rough Wexfield course, which was the only one he had known. He had made the complete



circuit, and when he slowed down Cyril gave him a mighty thump on the back.

"Kid," he exclaimed, "you'll have to drive her in this race for me! Are you game?"

"Me!" cried Bud.

"Yes! It's play or pay. I have to drive the car myself, or put one of my own men to do it. I can't hire one of these Brooklands racing drivers. And my mechanics at the garage haven't got nerve enough for a big race. I tried one of 'em before, and he got cold feet before he was half-way round. By gaw, it's a rotten fix I'm in!" said Cyril. "I think I'll try it myself, after all!"

"Look here, sir!" exclaimed Bud. "It's just straight suicide for you to drive this car all out with a crippled wrist! I tell you,

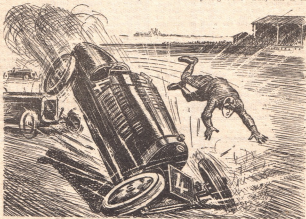
and his father, both looking anxious and worried.

"I say, Cyril," cried Barney, "you oughtn't to have buzzed her round like that on the trial! You ought to have nursed her along slow!"

"Teach your grandmother!" retorted Cyril. "Hallo, here's old McTaggart!" he added as a keen-looking elderly man with grey side-whiskers came forward. "He's the expert. What do you say about it, Mac?"

"Well, Mr. Babbitt, I agree with your cousin," said McTaggart, smiling. "I'd have run her slow. Still, she isn't too hot, and there's no harm done. You're always a bit impatient."

"Hate anything slow. Bud, this is Mr.



The finishing line was only a hundred yards ahead when suddenly the racer bucked. The two front wheels swung together, and the car made a nose-dive, catapulting Bud clean out of his seat like a bullet from a gun.

you'll crash and break your neck to an absolute certainty. You'll very likely kill some of the other chaps, too!"

"I suppose you're right. I can hardly lift my arm. Well, will you take it over for me? You'll have to do it on your own!"

For the first time in his life Bud hesitated. "Suppose I muck it, sir? What if I let you down?"

"I've got faith in you, kid! You're lucky!"

"I'm on, Mr. Babbitt!" cried Bud.

"Good egg!" cried Cyril delightedly, as they slid back to the sheds. "You'll pull it off, my lad! You're a mascot!"

As they left the track and came in among the crowd they caught sight of Barney Finch

McTaggart, head engineer of the firm that tunes my engines. Mac, I've hurt my wrist, and I'm out of it. But the flag's got to be kept flying, and here's my driver; he's in my pay, and he fills the bill!"

McTaggart stared with blank astonishment at Bud and shrugged his shoulders. But Hot-ham Finch, who came up just then and overheard what was said, seemed more than astonished—he looked like a man who had received a shock. His face changed colour; he was quite horrified.

"Cyril!" he said, taking his nephew aside, "put the whole thing off! My dear boy, don't let the car go out at all to-day. It will do just as well next week. Put it off!"

"It won't do next week," said Cyril

obstinately, "and I never put anything off, uncle. The car must run without me, and the start's in five minutes."

"Wash it out!" urged Hotham. "Don't let that boy drive. I implore you, Cyril—"

"What the dickens is the fuss about, uncle?" interrupted Cyril. "I promised the kid he should go, and I'm not going to disappoint him. Bud, go and get ready."

Bud left them arguing, and asked McTaggart where he could leave his dog.

"Put him in my shed there at the back of the repair shop," said McTaggart.

Bud took his four-footed partner to the shed, and tethered him to a bench, bidding him stay quiet. Fincher was not so obedient as usual.

He seemed upset; he whined and barked, and tried to break the leather leash that his master had tied him up with. Bud was on his way back to the car when he ran into Barney Finch.

"I say, you!" exclaimed Barney. "I want to speak to you. You're not going to drive that car, are you? Take my tip, and leave it alone. The race will do just as well another day."

Bud glanced at him with surprise and a touch of suspicion.

"Sure thing she starts now!" said he abruptly. "My governor can't drive her, and he wants me to. I've got my orders."

"I know, I know!" said Barney. "But

Mr. Babbit isn't always as wise as he thinks himself. And, believe me, he'll thank you afterwards if the Bugatti doesn't start. For she can't win—"

"What you mean is you don't want her to win!" said Bud curtly.

"All right, put it that way if you like!" said Barney, lowering his voice. He was rather pale, and seemed very agitated.

"What then? You're no fool, young Kelly. You can easily make an excuse, and get out of it, and you'll be doing your master a good turn. Will you cut it out, my lad? Look here, you shan't lose by it!"

He allowed Bud to see what he was holding in his hand. And Bud saw three crisp ten-pound notes.

Bud's eyes began to blaze.

"Well, that's mighty generous, Mr. Barney Finch," he said very quietly. "Thirty quid's pretty useful. But won't you look rather a fool if I tell my boss that you've tried to bribe me?"

"No, it's you that'll look a fool," answered Barney, "for there are no witnesses, and he won't take your word against mine. I should just tell him you're a liar. You're pushing me up to spring a bit more—eh? Well, I'll make it fifty pounds down!"

And then Bud saw red. He had been holding himself in until he was nearly bursting. He drew back his left, and hit Barney Finch under the angle of the jaw.



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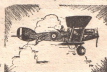
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## The Crash.

"WHUPP!" gasped Barney, and sailed over backwards, extending himself full-length upon the turf. Two mechanics came round the side of the shed, just in time to see him go down.

"Here! What's this game?" they exclaimed, hastening to the spot.

Bud did not want to make explanations. He left the mechanics to pick Barney up if they wanted to, and made his way back to the starting-place, where the crowd was increasing, and two or three big racing cars were already sliding over on to the track. Cyril was waving to him excitedly.

"Hurry up, Bud—hurry up!" he called. "You're due out now."

Bud climbed into the Bugatti, and, amid a chorus of advice, encouragements, and protests, he got going, and shot away on to the course, where the five other cars were lining up for the flying start. Cyril was nearly dancing with delight.

"I'll take six to four she busts the record!" he cried. "Hallo, Barney, old thing! What's been stinging you? You look as if you'd stopped the Scotch Express with your face!"

Barney arrived, white to the temples with rage, his collar broken and his coat muddily all up the back.

"That driver of yours!" he stammered. "He—

—he—"

"What about him? He's the winner to-day!"

Barney choked and turned away. His father took his arm and led him aside.

"Couldn't you stop him?" whispered Hotham.

"No!" muttered Barney furiously. "He wouldn't take fifty pounds!"

"Confound it, this is dreadful!" said Hotham under his breath. "It was the only thing to do—I couldn't get Cyril to put the thing off! He was as obstinate as a mule about it. Why, Barney, the whole job is wasted! I never dreamed that Cyril was not going to drive himself! We don't want the car to crash now; we can never dare try this game again, you know! It's too dangerous. I can only hope now that it doesn't come off at all. It mightn't, you know, it mightn't!"

"I'm quite satisfied!" snarled Barney through his teeth. "I know it will come off, and I want to see it! I'd rather that kid got it now than Cyril himself! He knocked me down, the young brute, before I knew what he was going to do! The trap's laid for Cyril, but if that beastly little greaser falls into it, all the better. I tell you that fellow is dangerous. He smells a rat already, and I hope this race will be his finish! If he gets that car going at a hot enough pace, he'll never drive another! Come up to the grandstand and see!"

Down at the starting-place, Bud had taken his place. The six cars were all numbered, and the Bugatti carried a huge figure 4. The engine was humming gently, like a baby

breathing in its sleep. Bud fixed the crash-helmet firmer on his head.

The signal was given, and away went the cars. It was a flying start; the actual commencing line was three hundred yards ahead, so as to give the competitors time to get up speed before the real race began. They swept over the line, all abreast.

"They're off!"

Bud, for the first time in his life, felt the thrill of a real big race. He gave the Bugatti more throttle, and more yet, deftly and with judgment. He heard the wind scream past him, and felt the car throbbing like a giant heart. The roar of the engine was deafening—a battery of pom-poms could not have made much more noise.

"No. 2 leads!"

The racers swept by the stand, the first time round. As they passed, something small and white shot out on to the track. It was a dog, with a piece of leather thong trailing behind him. He took one look at the cars, and sprinted after them, yapping frantically. There was a roar of laughter from the crowd.

Pincher had chewed through the leather cord with which Bud had tied him up, and was after his master. But poor Pincher was a bad seventh in the race. He was beaten at the start, and left nowhere—the cars were nearly out of sight before he knew what was happening, and Pincher returned, whining.

In the big stand, which gave a view of the whole course, the spectators were eagerly following the flying cars with their glasses. Rabbit was dancing up and down with excitement, as the racers came round again. Bud had lost a little ground, and was third, but he took the turns with fine judgment and a splendid nerve. He was coming to the front fast. He had got the Bugatti's measure, and then, at the most critical time in the last lap, he came right through with a lead of sixty yards.

"By George, that kid can handle her!" exclaimed an engineer. "He's a wonder!"

"Mine's done it!" yelled Cyril.

"No. 4 wins! No. 4!"

The pace was frightful. The finishing-line was barely a hundred yards ahead, and the crowd shouted with excitement.

Suddenly the Bugatti locked and swerved. The two front wheels seemed to swing together. The car made a nose-dive, flinging Bud clear out and shooting him along the track like a bullet, as the car turned over and over, only just missed by the racer behind.

There was a groan of horror from the grandstand. And as the other five cars swept over the finishing-line the body of Bud was left behind, lying like a little limp bunch of rags on the cement of the track.

"Ah," said Barney Finch very quietly, as he saw the car crash, "that's that!"

Hotham's big, fat face turned a sickly white. He took hold of his son by the arm.

"Here, let's get out of this Barney!" he muttered. "It makes me feel queer—"

Out on the course, a crowd of people were

swarming towards the little, prostrate figure. Among them was Cyril Babbit, horrified and aghast.

"Poor little beggar!" murmured a friend at his side. "Cyril, you're the luckiest chap on earth! But for your wrist being done in just before the race, it would have been you!"

"Yes; it'd have been me!" said Babbit in a straggled voice. "And I—I wish it had been! I feel as if I'd murdered the poor chap!"

"Stand back—get right back!" exclaimed a doctor to the crowd, as he bent over Bud. "Clear a way for the ambulance, there!"

The kerfifer on wheels, with the first-aid men, was already arriving. Fatal accidents are nothing new at Brooklands. But the doctor, laying a hand over Bud's heart, stifled an exclamation.

"He's living, anyhow!" Helmet's saved him from confusion, "mistaken the doctor, feeling the boy gently. "If only his spine isn't injured—"

"An' arstho!"

There was a sudden, violent sneeze from Bud. He sat up slowly. His coat was torn all up the back, and his helmet was cocked over one eye. He blinked round him dizzily at the crowd.

"What's all the fuss about?" said Bud.

"Lie still, my boy!" exclaimed the doctor, putting an arm round him. "Keep quite quiet!"

"Whaffer!"

"There's best like that," said the doctor,

supporting Bud gently and running a hand along his back. "How do you feel?"

Bud spat out a mouthful of dirt.

"Bit giddy," said he.

The doctor finished his examination.

"Why, the boy hasn't as much as a collar-bone broken!" he said in a dazed voice, for once astonished out of his professional gravity. "Are you a boy, or a miracle?"

"Dunno," said Bud; "but my coat's all ripped up, and there's a funny feeling in me thumb, and my teeth feel a bit gritty. He caught the eye of Cyril, who was staring open-mouthed and speechless with relief.

"Hallo! Mr. Babbit! Did I do it?"

"Do what?" gasped Cyril.

"Why, win the old race! Was I over the line before the best?"

"Happ' the race!" exclaimed Cyril, almost in tears. "My dear old kid, I was afraid you were done in! Oh, my goodness, it was awful! And wonderful!—Thank Heaven! To think a fellow could hit the ground at a hundred and twenty miles an hour—"

The news went round like wildfire that the boy was not hurt, and the crowd began to cheer. They cheered wildly, to Bud's astonishment. He did not realise that he was the hero of the day, and had made history by being crushed by a car at record speed and escaping scot-free.

(That was a lucky escape for Bud. But you can be sure he'll not rest until he's found why the axle suddenly snapped. There are amazing developments in next week's splendid instalment. Don't miss it.)

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