



UNDER ARREST!

Related by Nipper and Nelson Lee
and set down for publication by
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CHAPTER I.

Fullwood Asks For It!

(Recorded by Nipper.)

THE head of Edward Oswald Handforth appeared round the door of Study C, in the Remove passage at St. Frank's. I looked up from my prep with an impatient frown.

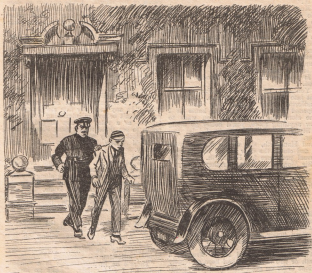
"Blow it somewhere else, Handy," I said.

"Eh? Go and blow what?" asked Handforth, entering the study.

"That fughorn-like voice of yours," I replied. "We don't want to hear it now—we're busy. Who votes for chucking Handforth out?"

Sir Montie Tregellis-West and Tommy Watson, my study chums, grinned.

"Carried unanimously, dear boy," yawned Montie. "Handforth, you're a decent chap,



It looks a clear case against Arthur Lambert, the St. Frank's Sixth-Former, when a retired sea captain, with whom the senior had quarrelled over a debt, is found stabbed to death! Is he guilty or innocent? It falls to Nelson Lee, the schoolmaster-detective, to provide the definite answer.

but we aren't capable of standin' you just now. What with verbs an'—"

Handforth glared. "You ass!" he roared. "Can't I come in for a minute? And if anybody says my voice is like a fughorn, it's only rotten jealousy. I'm jolly proud of my voice, if you want to know—"

"We don't!" said Watson cheerfully. "We only want you to buzz off."

"Well, I'm going to stay until I've said what I came for," declared Handforth with a sniff. "Rats to your beastly prep."

Edward Oswald spoke firmly, and I hid my pen down with an air of resignation. It was hopeless to argue with Handforth. Once he'd made up his mind, he was like a rock. The only possible means of getting rid of him was to allow him to jaw—or to eject him

forcibly. And I didn't feel like exertion just then.

"Go ahead," I said in a tired voice. "Get it over quickly."

"You fathead! I've come to give you a tip," exclaimed Handforth. "I suppose you know that Farman is getting mixed up with Fullwood and his rotten crowd, don't you? I understood that you'd taken Farman under your wing—"

"My dear chap, you're talking out of your hat!" I grinned. "Farman's not ass enough to play the giddy goat like that. Who's been telling you those silly yarns? I thought you had more sense, although you are such a cuckoo!"

"Don't you believe me?" bawled Handforth, glaring. "This is what comes of

doing a good turn! Fat lot of thanks I get for it!"

"Keep your hair on, old son," I said. "No need to get into a paddy. Who told you this about Farman?"

"Nobody," said Handforth tartly. "If you want to know, I saw Farman go into Study A with Fullwood and Gulliver and Bell—and they were all laughing and talking together. You can guess what that means, I suppose?"

I looked rather serious.

"Is this the straight tip, Handforth?" I asked.

"You ask! Of course it is—Farman only went into Study A a minute ago," answered Handforth, going towards the door. "I happened to see him with the knuts as I came along the passage. If you want to know anything more, you'd better go along to Study A. But I thought I'd let you know."

And Handforth, still on his dignity, went out and closed the door behind him—a most unusual procedure for Handforth. I looked at Sir Montie and Tommy rather queerly.

"More trouble, Benny, boy?" drawled Tregellis-West. "Do we go on the war-path?"

"I don't know," I replied slowly. "Let's think a minute."

I chewed my penholder absently. Handforth's words had made me quite serious. What he had said about Farman wasn't pleasant hearing. Justin B. Farman, the American junior in the Ancient House Remove, was a thoroughly decent fellow in every way.

When he had arrived at St. Frank's, a month or two before, he had been extremely anxious to be on good terms with everybody. He was the son of an American multimillionaire, and always had a great deal more money than he knew what to do with. Fullwood & Co., the scallywags of the Remove, had done their utmost to get Farman into their toils. The American junior had heaps of cash—and the unscrupulous knuts had seen no reason why they shouldn't get some of it into their own hands. Fullwood & Co. were in the habit of holding card parties in Study A; and if Farman had become a member of Fullwood's knutty circle, his cash would have found its way into other pockets very rapidly.

Farman was easy-going and weak-willed; he had shown a tendency to accept Fullwood's bait. But I had stepped in, and the cads hadn't succeeded in their blackguardly efforts. Farman had remained thoroughly decent. I hadn't thought it necessary to keep my eye on him any longer. But, as the skipper of the Remove—in the Ancient House—I considered it my duty to keep on the alert.

Now, according to Handforth's information, Justin B. Farman had side-slipped, so to speak. If he had gone into Study A with Fullwood & Co., the inference seemed fairly obvious.

The Ancient House had backed up tremendously since I had been at St. Frank's,

and I took a certain amount of pride in the result of my efforts. I was anxious to keep the tone of the House well up to the mark. Fullwood & Co. I had given up as hopeless from the start, and only saw to it that their circle wasn't enlarged.

I rose to my feet slowly, and threw the penholder down on to the table. Study C was very cosy. The electric lights gleamed brightly; the fire blazed cheerfully in the grate. Outside the evening was dark and miserable.

"We'd better go and make sure," I said abruptly.

"Do we take cricket stumps, dear boy?" asked Montie mildly.

"I don't suppose there'll be a scrap," I said. "In any case, our fists are pretty useful. I don't believe in interfering with other fellows, as a rule, but I'm hanged if I'm going to see those rotten drag Farman into their blackguardly ways."

"We'd better finish prep first," said Tommy.

"Rats! We'd better get this over."

I moved towards the door, and Tregellis-West and Watson rose and followed me.

My two chums and I strode along the Remove passage until we came to Study A, the headquarters of the knuts. It was nominally occupied by Fullwood and Gulliver and Bell. But Merrell & Co., three kindred spirits, usually congregated in Study A of an evening.

I was just about to grasp the handle of the door when I heard distinct sounds of strife. Angry voices were talking on the other side of the door.

"Trouble in the family," murmured Sir Montie, adjusting his pince-nez carefully.

"There'll be further trouble in a minute, perhaps," I said grimly. "Let's go in—we don't want to stand listening here."

I opened the door and strode in, Tommy and Montie following close behind. We were just in time to see a most interesting sight. Justin B. Farman, the American junior, was grinning joyfully; and his fist, at that precise second, was landing upon the elegant nose of Ralph Leslie Fullwood with no little force.

"Yow-ow!" roared Fullwood, staggering back.

"Say, that's just a taster," exclaimed Farman. "You wool-brained galoot! You got fancying that I should join this gambling party, didn't you? Say, I'd sooner make pals with the first hobo I met on the high road. You're just about off the rails this trip, Fullwood—you're sure bluffed!"

"You—you rotten cad!" snarled Fullwood, holding his nose tenderly. "By Jove! You'll pay for that, I can tell you! What the dickens are you rotten doing here?" he went on, glaring at me. "Get out! We don't want cads in this study!"

"I thought there might be trouble brewing," I said calmly. "If you're in need of a hand, Farman—"

"Not on your life, pard!" grinned Farman. "You'd sure smile if you'd seen how I bluffed those fool fellows! Say, it was the dandiest

racket ever. They figured that I was been on gettin' rid of my dollars—an' I figured differently. Gee, the piles o' hot air which were flyin' around fair made my hair sizzle. But, say, you interrupted; I was just flattening Fullwood's nose—"

"My dear chap," I said hastily, "don't take any notice of us. Get on with it—as soon as you like. We'll form an interested audience."

"You—you cheeky rotters!" shouted Fullwood, red in the face with fury. "If you don't clear out of this study in two seconds, you'll get chucked out on your necks! You'd better look sharp!"

Sir Montie leisurely took out his superb gold watch and consulted it.

"One—two—time's up, Fullwood!" he said blandly. "We're waitin', dear fellow. It would be wonderfully entertainin' to be chucked out—by you! Begad! You seem to be gettin' rather red in the face for some reason—"

"Punch the cad's nose, Fullwood!" growled Gulliver, from the other side of the table.

Fullwood turned round furiously.

"Why the dickens don't you come and do somethin'!" he snarled. "All the lot of you—we're six to four—"

"Oh, rot!" interrupted Merrell unasily.

"Rather stiff odds—what?" grinned Tregellis-West. "Better not do anything rash, dear boys. If you'd had Farman alone, you might have hurled him out by sheer weight of numbers. But you don't seem anxious to do anythin' now—except work your jaws. We're still waitin', you know."

"Get out of this study!" said Fullwood sullenly.

"I don't want to spoil the pantomime," I remarked. "If you've got business with Fullwood, get on with it, Farman. We'll stand by and see fair play. That punch of yours was a beauty."

"Say, it's up to Fullwood, I guess," smiled the American junior. "I ain't exactly hankers' after bloodshed, but I reckon I'm ready to fight any cad in this room."

"Clear out, you illiterate cowboy!" snapped Fullwood savagely. "I'm going to write to my pater complainin'. St. Frank's is comin' to a pretty pass when they let cads like you into it! This is a school for the sons of gentlemen—"

"I don't want to say anythin' against your pater, Fullwood, but if he's anything like you, that remark of yours about 'sons of gentlemen' is rather wise of the mark," I said calmly. "I'm jolly glad to find that Farman was punching your nose. He can go ahead on the rest of your features as soon as he likes. By the look of the table, and by the blue condition of the atmosphere in this study, I can see that you were blagging, as usual. I give you the straight tip to ease down a bit. If you don't there'll be trouble—big trouble."

"What's it got to do with you, you beast!" roared Gulliver.

"I've got to think of the House," I replied curtly. "You fellows have been doing your best to disgrace the Ancient House for months past. Just recently you've been breaking bounds at night two or three times a week. That's got to stop—"

"Who's going to stop it?" snarled Fullwood furiously.

"The whole Form," I replied. "We're just about getting fed up with you, Fullwood—with you and your pals. I didn't come here to jaw, but I'm doing it! You'd better understand there's a limit. You've been beyond that limit a lot too much. The fellows are getting sick of it. It's a House affair. You'll bring dishonour on the whole Remove—"

"What the deuce do I care about the Remove!" shouted Fullwood, with blazing eyes. "I'm going to do as I like! I'm not going to be dictated to by you or by anybody else. What do you fellows say?" he added, turning to his companions.

"The same as you!"

"We're going our own road!"

"The same as you!"

These two last remarks were from Gulliver and Merrell. They were both as furious as Fullwood. All the knuts, in fact, were looking red with wrath. I'd told them some plain truths, and I was a bit heated myself. I had been intending to talk to Fullwood, straight from the shoulder, for a week or two—and now I'd spoken my mind.

"You're going your own road?" I said grimly. "That's just where you're mistaken, my bucks! What you've got to do is to understand that the Form is fed up with all this blackguardism. Study A is the talk of the whole junior school—and I've been



Dr. Stafford, the reverend headmaster, a personality held in awe and respected by nearly all the boys of St. Frank's.

chipped for allowing you to go on. Well, I'm going to put my foot down, but I'll give you a chance first. If I see that you're improving—"

Ralph Leslie Fullwood laughed sneeringly. "I suppose you think this is going to have effect!" he said roughly. "You preaching cad, you can get out of this study as soon as you like. We shall do exactly what we please—and, if it interests you, I'll just say that we're all going down to the White Harp after lights out-to-night. Understand? Be hanged to you!"

All the knuts were on their feet, and, for a moment, it seemed as though a free fight would ensue. We were quite ready, in any case.

"That sort of talk is sheer bluff——" I began.

"You can call it what you like," out in Fullwood. "The six of us are goin' down to the White Harp to-night. You can go and take your orders to somebody who'll listen to 'em!"

"You'd better not break bounds to-night," I said quietly.

"Thanks. I don't want your advice!" "I've said all I mean to say," I went on. "I've given you fair warning, Fullwood. If you don't take any notice of it, you'll have to take the consequences instead. That's all."

"Sermon over!" sneered Gulliver. I didn't reply, but left the study. Tommy and Montie and Farman came out after me, and we went along to Study C. I knew quite well that Ralph Leslie Fullwood had meant what he said.

Well, there was going to be—trouble.

CHAPTER 2.

Not Funny for the Knuts!

MONTIE was smiling serenely as we entered Study C.

"Dear fellows, it was bluff," he remarked. "Fullwood's rather addicted to bluffin'. That was all rot about goin' out on the razzle——"

"Say, don't you get foolin' yourself that way," interjected Justin B. Farman quickly. "Fullwood sure meant what he said. Why, pard, he was tryin' to get me to join the little party! Say, it was real funny. I made the hull crowd believe that I was hankerin' after joinin' them. They jest swallowed everythin' as it came out of my mouth. I flourished a wad of banknotes before them, and they went green with envy. An' then I told them straight what I thought of 'em."

"So it wasn't simply jaw!" I said seriously. "Look here, you chaps, Fullwood & Co. are getting out of hand. If we don't put a stop to it, the masters will smell a rat, and then the whole Form will have to suffer. It'll end in a month's gating—or, perhaps, something worse. It's not going to be stood. But why did you go into Fullwood's study, Farman?"

The American boy grinned.

"Waal, say, I was jest feelin' lonesome," he explained cheerfully. "I allowed that a little amusement would be kinder welcome. An' Fullwood got busy askin' me to join the party. So I went along—— Say, Bennett, you needn't look at me like that. I guess I've learned boss-sense since I've been around this lay-out. Fullwood doesn't appeal to me none. He and his pals sure thought I was comin' round. Say, I'd smile! He was huggin' himself with delight—an' then I started in."

"Dear boy, proceed," said Sir Montie. "I'm surprisin'ly interested. What a pity you didn't call us in to witness the pullin' of Fullwood's noble leg!"

"I guess I was kinder anxious to see how far them hoboes would go with their all-fired racket," smiled Farman. "I'll allow they out-lined a dandy programme—but, say, it don't appeal to me at all. There's a meeting of bookmakers and cardsharps at the White Harp to-night, and Fullwood & Co. are sure going to get around. Fullwood fooled himself that I was goin' with him. That's all. I reckoned I wasn't. I jest told him that he and his pals could go to the dickens in their own way. They weren't going to take Justin B. with 'em. I guess you fellows came along good and smart. The knuts were jest about to yank me into the passage. But I guessed that I'd get in one punch first, anyways. Fullwood's nose looked temptin'—now I guess it's tender."

We grinned.

"Handfoeth told us you'd gone into Fullwood's study, laughing and chatting with them," I explained. "Well, it looked a bit queer, Farman. I'm sorry we nearly misjudged you. I ought to have known that you'd got more sense."

"I ain't worryin' any—so why should you?" said Farman, good-naturedly. "But, say, them coyotes sure mean to bring this House into disgrace. If the hull crowd gets gay to-night, these might be ructions."

"I'll think about it, Farman," I said, frowning. "Something's got to be done—and it wouldn't be a bad idea to start right at once. If I think of a wheeze, I'll let all the fellows into it."

Farman nodded, and passed out into the passage. I turned and looked into the fire thoughtfully. Sir Montie and Tommy sat down to their prep, once more, and continued work.

"Dear Benny, it isn't worth it," remarked Tregellis-West.

"Eh, what's that?" I asked absently.

"It isn't worth all that terrific brain fag, old fellow," said Sir Montie. "It's surprisin' to me why you worry yourself over those cads. Let 'em rip. Let 'em play their own game. They'll be brought to their senses in the end."

I shook my head.

"You know as well as I do that we can't let things go on like this. It's all very well

to talk about Fullwood & Co. being brought to their senses in the end," I said. "When's that end going to be? Unless we shove the brake on, those idiots will get themselves the sack."

"Well, don't they deserve it, dear man?"

"Of course they do—but we don't deserve to be disgraced like that. And I'm going to assert my authority as skipper of the Remove—"

"Eight o'clock," said Tommy Watson abruptly.

"Suppose it is eight o'clock—"

"My dear chap, didn't Mr. Alvington give you lines this afternoon?" grinned Tommy.

"I suppose I'd better take 'em along," I said, getting up. "It's a good thing I did them immediately after tea."

I left the study with my impot. and went along to the lobby. During the afternoon I'd been with Handforth & Co.,—chatting with them in the Triangle. There had been a little argument, and Handforth, who never considered odds, and who never admitted himself wrong, foolishly attempted to punch my nose.

He didn't succeed, but Nelson Lee had come upon the scene just at that second. He found Handforth and I scrapping on the Ancient House steps, and calmly gave us a hundred lines apiece.

I arrived at the Housemaster's study, and tapped.

"Come in!" said a deep, pleasant voice.

I entered, and grinned. Nelson Lee—otherwise Mr. Peter Alvington—was lolling in an easy-chair before the fire. A book was in his hands, and a cigar burned lazily between his lips.

"Is that the way you work, sir?" I asked cheerfully.

The gov'nor laid his book down.

"You have brought those lines, Bennett?" he said sternly. "Handforth has already been here. I am not sure that you don't deserve a caning. Fighting on the House steps is a serious offence—"

"You do it well, gov'nor!" I grinned.

Nelson Lee frowned.

"Just because of our former relations, Nipper, you appear to have an idea that you are granted unlimited licence to be as impertinent as you like. You must remember, however, that you are now a junior schoolboy—and, as such, it is your duty to be respectful to your Housemaster—"

"Oh, lor!" I groaned. "Don't keep it up, sir!"

The gov'nor's eyes twinkled, and then he smiled.

"You young rascal!" he chuckled. "Well, where are those lines? I shall never teach you to treat me with the respect which is my due. Seriously, young 'un, it was wrong of you to fight Handforth outside the Ancient House."

"I didn't fight him—it was only a bit of an argument," I replied, sitting on the arm of Lee's chair. "Handforth tried to punch my nose—and I wouldn't let him. Handy's a

decent chap, but he's hot-headed. Here are the lines—a hundred of 'em. The next time you see me scrapping, turn your head the other way. Be sporty, gov'nor!"

Nelson Lee laughed good-naturedly.

"I should have turned my head on this occasion, but it was too late," he said.

"You'd better not be so incautious, Nipper. How are your friends, Tregellis-West and Watson? I suppose they helped you with these lines?"

I grinned.

"That's telling," I replied. "You needn't look at 'em very closely, gov'nor. They're done—and that's the main thing. Anything doing lately? Have you heard from Lord Dorrinore, or Miss Eileen?"

"My dear Nipper, I don't receive letters from my friends every day," smiled Nelson Lee. "Lord Dorrinore, I believe, is out in New Guinea, or some such wild spot. When our sojourn at St. Frank's is over, we shall have full liberty again. I must confess, however, that this change is doing us both good. Your education is being improved, and I am enjoying a complete holiday. This evening—very shortly, in fact—I am going down to Dr. Brett's for a quiet game of billiards. I shall return late, so you had better bid me good-night—"

"You'll return late, sir?" I put in quickly.

"About what time?"

"I don't know, exactly—in the neighbourhood of midnight, probably," said Nelson Lee. "It might be earlier, or it might be later. Why?"

"Oh, nothing, gov'nor," I replied. "Nothing much, anyhow. I'll be running now. Good-night, sir!"

Lee glanced at me rather curiously, but I didn't stop to explain anything. In a couple of minutes I entered Study C. My face was set determinedly, and Tommy Watson and Sir Montie saw that something was amiss.

"Begad! Not a canin', surely?" asked Tregellis-West, gazing at me through his piece-net with pained surprise.

"Caning? No, you ass!" I replied. "I'm thinking of Fullwood & Co.—"

"Oh, crumbs! Give the rotters a rest!" growled Watson.

"Look here, we've got to prevent them leaving the dormitory to-night," I said grimly. "I've just heard a piece of news."

"Begad!" murmured Sir Montie. "How interestin'!"

"How are we going to stop the knuts?" asked Tommy blantly.

"Well, I've got a scheme," I replied. "It'll work beautifully, I believe."

"Dear fellow, your schemes are always successful," yawned Sir Montie. "They're of the gilt-edged, Al quality, begad! I'm dyin' to hear—"

"You'll have to wait a few minutes, old scout," I interrupted briskly. "We want some other fellows in this business—nine others, in fact. Handforth and Church and McClure, of Study D; Farman and Owen and

Canham, and two or three others. I'll buzz round, and bring them along."

Accordingly, I hastened out of Study C, and rounded up the fellows I wanted. I found them in their respective studies mostly, and in less than five minutes the whole crowd invaded Study C.

They comprised Handforth & Co., Farman and his two chums, and Hubbard, Armstrong, and Griffith. There were twelve of us in the study, and the walls were in danger of being squeezed outwards.

"What's the idea?" asked Handforth.

"Some new wheeze or other, I suppose," said Owen major. "What is it, Bennett? A jape on the Monks? Christine & Co. need waking up—"

"Rats to Christine & Co." I interrupted crisply. "This is a House affair. Look here, you chaps! Fullwood & Co. are going the right way to work to bring the Ancient House into serious disgrace. We've got to stop it. See? I want you fellows to help me in a little scheme to-night."

I explained about the projected trip to the White Harp. Handforth snorted, and said that we should be asses to interfere. But I didn't take that view, and said so.

"If the knuts are collared," I explained, "it'll mean the sack for the lot, I reckon. Six fellows being expelled! My dear chaps, we couldn't stand it. We should all share the disgrace indirectly. This night trip has got to be stopped."

And I explained how it was going to be done. My listeners smiled as I started, grinned as I proceeded, and roared when I'd done.

"It's easy," I said, "and Fullwood and his precious pals will be helpless."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's great, Benny!" grinned Owen major. "I'm with you."

"Rely on all of us," said Handforth, waving his hand. "It's as good as done. Fullwood & Co. need checking, and they'll feel bound to remain in bed to-night—very much bound, in fact!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The party broke up, after I had warned them to keep the project quiet. I wanted the knuts to receive a surprise when the time came. Teddy Long, the sneak of the Remove, had ears like a donkey, and if he got hold of the idea Fullwood & Co. would learn of it in next to no time.

The conspirators, however, kept mum, and the rest of the Remove knew nothing. Ralph Leslie Fullwood swaggered about, his monocle in his eye, obviously glorying in the prospect of visiting the disreputable White Harp. Fullwood made no secret of his "doggyish" ways. He boasted of them.

At bedtime the knuts were very excited. Gulliver sat on his bed, openly counting a bundle of ten-shilling and pound currency notes. Noye and Marriot were discussing certain bets they had made the previous day. Fullwood and Merrell and Bell were conjeer-

turing as to how much they would win during the visit to the inn.

"Dear fellows," murmured Tregellis-West from his bed, "if you go to the White Harp—which I doubt, somehow—you'll lose all that amazing wealth. It's very sad. I don't like to see good money thrown away."

"We're not asking your advice, West," said Fullwood sourly.

"We're not babies!" sneered Gulliver.

"We don't mind takin' a little risk."

"You won't take much risk to-night,"

grinned Handforth. "Very little, in fact."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Several fellows roared, and the knuts looked rather uneasy. I believe they guessed that something was on. But no more was said regarding the projected expedition, and very shortly Morrow, the prefect, came and saw lights out.

Most of the Removites settled down to sleep. The doings of Fullwood & Co. didn't interest them.

After about fifteen minutes I heard the regular breathing of the majority of the fellows. I sat up in bed.

"You chaps awake!" I asked softly.

"Dear boy, we're waitin' the word of command," came Montie's voice.

"Hallo! What are you idiots up to!" growled Fullwood, sitting up.

"Just a little jape," I said softly. "Rats to you!"

Gulliver's voice came through the darkness. "Kid's game!" he sneered. "Raidin' those College House asses, I suppose!"

"You can suppose what you like—nobody'll stop you," I murmured, getting out of bed and taking something from under my pillow. I bumped against Sir Montie, and he nudged me.

"Right, dear fellow!" he murmured. "Give the signal!"

I waited just a moment or two, and then Tregellis-West and I crept over to Fullwood's bed.

"Right!" I exclaimed sharply.

Montie and I sprang forward, and we heard the other fellows getting equally busy. In a moment Fullwood was grasped by Montie and me, and before he could even guess what we were up to, his two hands were gripped. Montie took one, and I took the other. In a second I had a piece of string looped over his wrist. It had been looped in readiness, and it was only necessary for me to slip it over. Then I wrapped the string round several times, and drew Fullwood's hand up until it was near the bed-rail. And then I proceeded to bind the rest of the string round the rail itself.

"You—you bowlin' rotters!" gasped Fullwood savagely.

"Dear boy, you mustn't speak too loudly!" murmured Sir Montie softly. "You wouldn't like a prefect or a master to come an' see you in this state, would you? It would be necessary to explain why it's been done, begad! An' that would be shockin', wouldn't it?"



In a moment Fullwood and his fellow knuts were grasped by the chaps in my scheme. Each knut had his arms pulled back and tied to the bed-rail. Shouts of anger rose in a chorus as they were made helpless—but we were determined to put a stop to their trip to the White Harp Inn!

"You silly idiots!" panted Fullwood hotly. "Unfasten these cords! Let my hands go, you rotters!"

Several echoes came from other beds, in a kind of chorus.

"You silly fathead, Farman! Untie my hands!"

"If you use those cords on me, Hand-forth—"

"You—you howlin' cads!"

All the knuts had something to say, but it made no difference. My little plan had succeeded completely. It had been very simple. The twelve of us had each had a length of cord, looped beforehand. Thus, when the signal was given, every fellow knew exactly what to do. There were two of us for each bed, and we all grabbed at once. The result was very satisfactory.

In less than a minute Fullwood & Co. were all completely helpless. Their hands were tied to the bed-rails, and no amount of struggling would have any effect. They would be compelled to lie in bed until we chose to release them.

Practically every fellow in the dormitory was awake by now, and there was huge amusement.

"What do you think you're foolin' at?" scolded Fullwood furiously.

I grinned.

"We leave fooling to you, my buck," I replied. "This is just a little lesson. You told me that you and your goey pals were off to the White Harp to-night. Well, I've

got an idea in my napper that you're going to stay in bed."

There was a gasp from all the knuts.

"Do—do you think you're goin' to keep us here?" hissed Fullwood chokingly.

"I've got that idea," I replied calmly. "What do you other fellows think? Do you think Fullwood & Co. will visit the White Harp to-night, or not?"

"Not!" said a dozen chuckling voices.

"When naughty boys get up to bad tricks they're locked in cupboards, eh?" murmured Sir Montie. "We haven't got any cupboards, an' so we're bein' extra kind. You're nice and comfy in bed, Fullwood—an' that's where you'll stop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites grinned delightedly.

"There's nothin' to laugh at, you cads!" snarled Gulliver.

"Isn't there?" chuckled Tommy Watson. "I'm going to laugh, anyhow!"

But Fullwood & Co., in spite of the humorous situation, didn't see anything funny in it whatever. They lay in bed, fuming.

CHAPTER 3.

The Arrest of Lambert!

RALPH LESLIE FULLWOOD struggled furiously in his bed.

He lashed his legs about, and wrenched at his hands, but only succeeded in hurting himself. At last he lay still, panting heavily.

"Better take it quietly, old son," I chuckled. "You're going to be kept like that until one o'clock. It'll be too late then to go out on the ran-dan. If you don't struggle you won't be hurt a bit."

"Let me go, you—you beast!" panted Fullwood hoarsely.

"Certainly—at one o'clock!"

"By George, you'll pay for this, you interferin' rutter!" snarled Fullwood. "By George, you will!"

"We'll half-kill you for this!" gasped Gulliver.

"We'll have you sacked!" muttered Bell with suppressed fury.

I grinned.

"Not much good having me sacked after I'm half-killed," I chuckled. "You lie there and think over your past sins. If you think of 'em all, you'll get no sleep to-night!"

After a while the knuts changed their tactics. Knowing that they couldn't release themselves, they tried threats first. Threats being useless, they attempted bribery. Fullwood offered Teddy Long five bob if he'd cut the ropes.

Long didn't think it worth while, and stayed in his bed. Several threatening growls from various beds had caused him to come to this decision. Several other fellows were offered similar inducements, but rescuers there was none.

Finally, growing hoarse, the knuts resigned themselves to the inevitable. They were rarely compelled to do this, for the other Removites were getting rather fed-up. They wanted to sleep, and Fullwood & Co.'s constant growls were not conducive to slumber.

Several pillows had already been thrown, followed up by an occasional boot, and the knuts decided that it would be less painful to lie quiet.

"We'll make you jolly well sit up for this, Bennett, you beast!" growled Fullwood at last. "Who the thunder's goin' to cut these rotten ropes? You'll all go to sleep an' leave us like this!"

"That's all right!" I interrupted cheerfully. "Give me a hail when you hear the school clock strike one, I'll cut the ropes myself then. It'll be a bit too late for any trip to the precious White Harp. If you call me before one o'clock, you'll wish you hadn't!"

And I calmly turned over and went to sleep. The other fellows were nearly all in that delightful state; but if the knuts managed to get free and moved about, I should awaken instantly. That's just a habit of mine. It doesn't need a jug of cold water to bring me out of the land of dreams.

Fullwood & Co. didn't interrupt, as I had half-expected. In all probability, they had fallen asleep themselves. Although their hands were bound, they suffered no discomfort. Their hands were a trifle cold, perhaps, but nothing more; and at one o'clock I awoke with the sound of Ralph Leslie's sweet tones in my ears.

"Rouse up, you interferin' bounder!" came

a growl through the darkness. "Do you think we want to stay like this all night!"

I yawned, sat up, and then had a look at my watch. This possessed a luminous dial, and I saw that the time was two minutes past one.

I got out of bed and fished my pocket-knife from my trousers. Then I went to the end of the dormitory, where the knuts' beds were situated, and cut through the cords. Except for being a little stiff, not one of them had suffered. Curiously enough, they didn't appear to be at all grateful for my services. Not one of them uttered a word of thanks.

"You can go down to the White Harp now, if you like," I yawned. "If you try these tricks on again, Fullwood, you'll get the same medicine."

"What business is it of yours, you cad?" snapped Gulliver.

"I'm captain of the Remove, and I choose to make it my business," I replied grimly. "That's good enough for you! You seem to be set upon dragging the name of the Ancient House into the mud—"

"My hat, there's somebody comin'!" exclaimed Bell nervously.

Bell's bed was nearest the door, and he had apparently heard something—or fancied he had. I stopped speaking, and everybody listened. The Ancient House was completely silent.

"Your fatheaded nerves!" I murmured. "That's the worst of being a gay dog, Bell. Still, I'll just have a squint outside and make sure."

I slipped to the door, turned the handle, and looked out into the corridor. The passage was deserted, but from the lower end of the passage, where a window allowed a shaft of moonlight to enter, I heard a faint sound.

Just as I was about to back into the dormitory—a mere precautionary measure—I saw a dim form rise into view from the staircase. The face of the unknown came just abreast of the moonbeam, and was, for a moment, illuminated.

"Lambert!" I murmured to myself in surprise.

I didn't back in then, for Lambert, although a Sixth-Former, was not a prefect. He hadn't any right to be out of his bedroom at this time of night. And that one glance at his face had rather shocked me.

It was deathly white—the paleness was, perhaps, accentuated by the moonlight—and a dazed kind of expression glowed dully in his eyes.

I couldn't understand it. What on earth was Lambert doing out in the corridor at one o'clock in the morning? He was fully dressed, and had apparently just come indoors. He wasn't walking in his sleep—I knew that well enough. He seemed to be suffering from the effects of some tremendous shock.

He came along the passage, and I didn't move. I expected him to speak to me, but he passed right by without even noticing that I stood there.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" I murmured.

I started up the passage, and saw him turn the corner. Then I re-entered the dormitory and closed the door. Fullwood & Co. hadn't troubled to get out of bed, and I didn't feel inclined to tell them what I had seen.

"The passage is empty, you see!" I said quite truthfully.

Then I went along to my own bed, and slipped between the sheets. I was thinking of Lambert of the Sixth. His face had given me a start, and I couldn't quite get it out of my mind. The knuts made no attempt to dress themselves, but dropped off to sleep after conversing together for a few minutes.

I slept myself, then, and didn't awaken until the rising bell rang. Curiously enough, the first thing I thought of was Lambert's face. I was quite convinced that the Sixth-Former had received a huge shock. Perhaps he had been down to the White Harp himself, and had lost all his money. If that was the cause of his paleness it served him right.

Although I had been the last to sleep, I tumbled out of bed first. There were two rising bells at St. Frank's, and most of the fellows, of course, waited until the second was sounded—which was five minutes later.

But I always made a practice of getting up at once. I was half-dressed before anybody else thought of rising, and strolled to the window, fastening my braces and whistling cheerfully.

It was a fine, crisp morning. The Triangle looked inviting, and I meant to get down there as soon as possible. Just then a motor-car turned in at the gates, and I saw the figure of a police-inspector seated within.

I stopped dressing and leaned out of the window. The inspector had apparently come from Bannington, the neighbouring town, and the car drew up outside the Head's doorway. I saw the police-officer get out and enter the House.

"That's queer!" I thought amusingly.

I continued with my dressing, and about ten minutes later I took another look out of the window. Just as I did so the Head's door opened, and out stepped the police-officer, with his hand on the shoulder of Lambert, who I had seen returning in the night in a dazed state. What had he done to be arrested?

Lambert and the police-officer entered the car, which then drove off. Nobody else had seen the amazing incident, and I decided not to say anything until I had seen Nelson Lee—a decision which afterwards proved fortunate.

After completing my dressing, I hurried downstairs.

I thought it would be a good opportunity of having a word with the gov'nor before the others turned out.

To confess the truth right away, I was very curious. I thought that Nelson Lee might know something about the arrest of Lambert.

He did.

When I tapped at his door and entered, I found him pacing the study in a way which reminded me of old times. He was absolutely

himself, and his brows were knitted anxiously.

"Oh, it's you, Nipper!" he exclaimed, after turning his head.

"What's wrong, gov'nor?" I asked quietly. "What's Lambert been arrested for?"

"Tut-tut! I thought the inspector's visit had escaped observation!" interjected Lee impatiently. "Who else saw the inspector take him away, my lad?"

"Nobody else, sir," I replied. "But what's happened?"

"I will tell you, my lad," said Lee quietly. "This morning, an elderly man—a retired sea-captain—named Roger Garwood, was found murdered at his house, on the outskirts of Bellton—an old-fashioned dwelling known as 'The Cabin.'"

"Phew! Murdered, eh!" I said. "By gum! It's a case for you, gov'nor. But why did the inspector come here for Lambert?"

"Because, Nipper, Arthur Lambert of the Sixth Form has been arrested—charged with the crime!"

I started abruptly.

"Lambert!" I repeated dazedly. "Lambert of the Sixth arrested for that crime! When—when did the murder happen, sir?"

"Just after midnight, I believe. I have heard no details—"

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed suddenly.

I stared at the gov'nor blankly, and I believe I went somewhat pale.

"Don't disturb yourself, Nipper—"

"But—but I saw Lambert at one o'clock," I gasped. "He'd just come in, and I thought he'd been down to the White Harp—he's one of those silly idiots. He was looking as pale as a ghost—"

"Good gracious! Is this the truth, Nipper?" broke in Lee sharply. "Tell me what you saw!"

I did so, but went into no details regarding my reason for looking out of the dormitory at such an unearthly hour.

Nelson Lee listened intently, softly drumming his fingers upon the desk meanwhile.

"You saw Lambert coming in just after one?" he murmured tensely. His face was pale, and there was a dazed expression in his eyes. "Upon my soul, it's terribly convincing evidence, Nipper. It is a good thing you spoke to me about it. This information of yours is of vital importance—and it may even be necessary for you to give evidence in a criminal court—"

"But—but Lambert can't be tried for murder!" I gasped.

"If he committed the crime, he will have to be tried," replied the gov'nor grimly. "But no more for the present, my boy. I am in total ignorance of details, and it would be futile to discuss the affair. Inspector Jamieson declared that his own evidence was conclusive—that Lambert had almost been proved guilty. But, of course, time alone will settle that point. It's a horrible business, Nipper—St. Frank's will be the talk of the whole country."

"A Sixth-Former arrested for murder!" I muttered. "I—I can hardly believe it, sir. Does anybody else know?"

"Not yet. He left unseem, except by you, after making some statement, I believe—and, of course, he protested his innocence," replied the gov'nor. "That was to be expected. But you'd better be getting along, my lad. And don't breathe a word to a soul, except to your own two chums. And warn them against—"

"That's all right, gov'nor," I put in. "If I tell Montie and Tommy, they'll be as mum as oysters. My hat! What a surprise—what a shock! I hope to goodness Lambert didn't kill the man. We don't want publicity, do we?"

I left the study after another minute or two, and walked slowly down the passage towards the lobby. Again, the picture of Lambert's white, drawn face appeared before my eyes.

Could it be possible?

The whole thing seemed unreal—seemed to be something apart from the life at St. Frank's. It reminded me of old times—and I wondered how it would end. I certainly didn't guess, at that moment, that the gov'nor and I would shortly be plunged into a case as mysterious and dramatic as any we had ever investigated!

CHAPTER 4.

Interviewing Lambert.

(Related by Nelson Lee.)

AFTER Nipper had taken his departure from my study, I sat down at my desk and lit a cigarette, and leaned back in my chair, thinking hard.

This startling news, and the startling arrest of a schoolboy, had given me something of a turn, and Nipper's own evidence had added to my perturbation. For, although I showed no sign outwardly, I was very seriously concerned.

Before I could think for long, however, the door of my study opened, and the headmaster appeared. Dr. Stafford was looking completely haggard. The change which had come over him within the last fifteen minutes was almost startling.

I had only spoken to him for a few minutes—after Lambert had been taken away—and was rather glad that he had come. The Head, of course, knew my real identity. And, when in private with me, he kept up no pretence.

"Mr. Lee, I am almost stunned," he said huskily, as he sat down. "I cannot believe it—I cannot believe such a ghastly thing! Yet the evidence— Oh, it is altogether too preposterous—too unthinkable!"

Dr. Stafford wiped his high forehead nervously, and looked at me appealingly.

"Cannot you see a ray of hope, Mr. Lee?" he asked. "You are experienced in these matters—it is your real profession—"

"I have had no details of the crime, Dr. Stafford," I interrupted gently. "If you can

give me any information I might, possibly, be able to form an opinion. But the police would never have acted as they have done unless they had obtained very positive evidence—"

"The facts are simple—too simple. I am afraid," said the headmaster, his voice shaking with emotion and anxiety. "Yes, although the facts are all too plain, I cannot bring myself to believe that a boy of Lambert's age could commit such an appalling crime—"

"I am afraid there are several precedents," I put in gently. "In my own experience, Dr. Stafford, I have met with criminals of the most abandoned type no older than sixteen or seventeen. There are several cases on record of brutal murders being committed by lads in their teens. If Lambert killed this man, he did so, I should judge, under great provocation, or in the excitement of a quarrel. I have reason to know that Lambert is hot-tempered—"

"But to kill a man—no, no!" said the Head, tapping the desk concernedly. "It is impossible, Mr. Lee—impossible. It appears that Lambert broke bounds last night, for the purpose of visiting this man, Garwood—he owed Garwood a sum of money."

"Is this Lambert's own statement?" I asked.

"Yes."

"I am afraid he has done himself a lot of harm," I said thoughtfully. "He should have reserved any statement until later on. He admits visiting Garwood—the police will make the most of that, Dr. Stafford. But please go on."

"Lambert went to this captain for the purpose of gaining time," said the Head. "Of course, the boy has been acting dishonestly. In any case, he will have to be expelled from the school. This debt, amounting to fifty pounds, was incurred mainly at the inn known as the White Harp, where Lambert was in the habit of gambling with Captain Garwood and others. The boy declares that he went to Garwood's boss for the sole purpose of pleading for an extension of time in which to pay the debt. Garwood refused, and Lambert came back to the school."

"That is the lad's own story?"

"Yes—so far as it went," replied the Head. "It was very brief and disjointed. He was too staggered to say much. As for the facts of the crime, Garwood was found in his sitting-room stabbed to the heart."

"There is no possibility of suicide, I presume?"

"According to Inspector Jameson, none," answered Dr. Stafford. "The knife was thrust into the old man's heart from behind; it is quite evident that he was sitting in his chair at the time, and the blow had been a sudden one."

"How did Lambert take his arrest?"

"He appeared to be dazed, and I must confess that his whole attitude was condemning in itself," said the headmaster. "Regarding the closer details, I am as much in

ignorance of them as you yourself. But, Mr. Lee, I cannot—I will not—believe that Lambert killed this man. It is too horrible."

"I hardly think it is wise to take that view," I said gravely. "It would be better, in my opinion, to weigh the evidence carefully, and form your opinion accordingly. If Lambert committed this deed, he must suffer for it. If he did not, then he will be set at liberty."

"But when—when?" asked the Head nervously. "Mr. Lee, you are exceptionally clever at this work—I am aware of that. I beg of you—I implore you—to look into the whole case—to do your utmost to find out the actual truth before the whole dreadful affair becomes public property."

"But my position here—"

"You will be quite safe—quite safe!" declared the headmaster. "Is it not natural that one of the schoolmasters should inquire into everything? You are acting under my orders, of course, and your real identity will never be suspected. I want you to probe the matter to the bottom."

"I'm not sure that the police will allow me to do that," I replied with a smile. "They will not be willing to give Mr. Alvington the facilities which they would unquestionably extend to Nelson Lee. However, I will do my best, Dr. Stafford. I will go over to Bannington immediately after breakfast, to try, if possible, to interview the boy himself."

Dr. Stafford was much relieved, and seemed to rely upon my accomplishing much. I was not sure, however. Nipper's evidence—of which I had not spoken—was rather black. But I must admit that I was intensely eager to commence my inquiries. This astonishing affair seemed to take me back to my chosen profession all in a moment.

After breakfast was over, and the boys had gone into their various Form-rooms, I set out on my bicycle for Bannington. Upon arrival at the police-station, I at once introduced myself to Inspector Jameson—who appeared to be a capable officer, but somewhat narrow-minded.

"Yes, the prisoner is here," he exclaimed, in answer to a query of mine. "We have made no mistake. Mr. Alvington; it was Lambert who committed the crime. I went to the school quite prepared to find that the boy

had fled—and was, indeed, astonished and pleased to find that he was there. Of course, he was too stunned by this terrible act to make any move at all. Or, possibly, he imagined that he would not be suspected."

"Dr. Stafford has requested me to inquire into the whole grave affair," I explained. "Naturally, he is extremely anxious. Would it be possible for me to have a few words with Lambert?"

The inspector chewed his moustache thoughtfully.

"Well, I don't know," he said. "I suppose it would be possible— But why do you wish to see him?"

"I merely want to obtain his own story."

"H'm! I don't suppose he'll say much to you," granted the inspector. "He made some sort of statement to me, but it was very much against himself. I advised the boy to say nothing until it was absolutely necessary. But, if you wish, you may have five minutes with him, Mr. Alvington."

I thanked Inspector Jameson offensively, in keeping with my character, making him know that I fully realised the

great value of his favour. And, a few minutes later, I was ushered into the little cell which was occupied by Lambert.

The boy was sitting down with his face in his hands. He looked up at me dully after a few seconds, and then an eager light entered his eyes.

"Mr. Alvington!" exclaimed Lambert huskily. "Have you—have you brought any news? I can't bear this, sir. It's horrible. Have they found the murderer? Are they going to set me free?"

"Not just yet, Lambert," I interrupted gently. "I came here because I want you to tell me, frankly, exactly what happened. Tell me the truth, my boy; it will be much better for you in the end. You have admitted, I believe, that you visited Garwood last night?"

"Of course I did, sir," said Lambert, without hesitation. "I've been a fool, Mr. Alvington. I—I owed Garwood over fifty pounds, and he kept worrying me for the money. I couldn't pay it, sir—I hadn't got it."

"And you went to see him?"

"Yes—after lights out last night, sir. I—I suppose I incriminated myself by telling the



Arthur Lambert, the Sixth-Former who plays a prominent, if unhappy, part in this dramatic story.

inspector that, didn't it?" asked Lambert anxiously. "The police will believe that I had a motive for killing— Oh, it sounds awful! I didn't touch Garwood, sir—I didn't harm a hair of his head!"

"But what actually happened, Lambert?"

"Nothing much, sir. I went into his little room, and spoke to him there. It was nearly midnight—or just after. I'm not quite sure. Garwood was furious when I said that I couldn't pay the money—and told me that he would write to my father to-day. That's all, Mr. Alvington."

"You left the house immediately after that?"

"I was only there a few minutes, sir," said Lambert dully. "When Garwood said that he would write to my father, I begged of him to give me more time. But he wouldn't. He swore that he would write to-day. And I went back to the school nearly mad with misery and fright. I knew what it would mean—the exposure of the whole wretched business, and the sack for me."

"Can't you prove, Lambert, that you left Garwood alive?"

"I've been thinking, sir—thinking till it seems as though my brain's on fire!" muttered the boy brokenly. "I can't prove anything. Garwood and I were by ourselves—his housekeeper had gone to bed—and he let me out of the house himself. He came to the gate with me, sir—and that's all I know. I didn't kill him—I swear that I didn't! Can't you believe me, sir?"

Lambert looked into my face eagerly and with wild anxiety. But there was not the slightest trace of guilt in his expression.

I believe—not without reason—that I am something of a judge of character. And, try as I would, I could not bring myself to believe that this boy had brutally stabbed an old man to death. There was not the least sign of a guilty conscience in this foolish boy's appealing and steady gaze.

"Can't you believe me, sir?" he repeated huskily. "When I left Garwood he was alive—as much alive as we are. I swear it, on my oath—on my oath before Heaven! I didn't touch him—I didn't touch him—"

"Steady, Lambert—steady," I said gently. "I do believe you, my boy. You have been foolish and wicked, but I am quite sure that you did not commit the crime with which you are charged."

"Thank Heaven!" muttered Lambert, his eyes filling with moisture. "What am I to do, sir?"

"You must remain here for the time being, I am afraid," I replied. "But you may rely upon me doing my utmost to get at the truth. I must go now, Lambert, for I have only been allowed five minutes. Don't get into a panic."

"I—I won't, sir," muttered Lambert hoarsely. "I knew it would all come out, and I'm punished. It's all my own mad fault. But, once I started, I couldn't stop, sir. It'll mean expulsion, in any case—but that's nothing compared to—to—"

"Without a doubt, Lambert, you must leave St. Frank's," I said quietly. "For the time being, however, we are not thinking of your misdoings—you are in a terrible position, and I am determined to do my utmost to secure your release."

"Thank heaven, sir!" muttered Lambert, with shining eyes.

I left the boy a minute later, and returned with Inspector Jameson to his office.

"Perhaps you were justified in placing Lambert under arrest, but I am convinced that the boy is innocent," I said quietly.

"His story is quite straightforward, and, although the evidence is somewhat black—"

"My dear sir, you do not understand these matters!" interrupted the inspector importantly. "You have had no experience, and, naturally, you cannot judge as I can."

"Perhaps not," I replied drily. "At the same time, inspector, if I may so presume, I should advise you to act with extreme care. Lambert is innocent of this charge—"

"Innocent? Tush!" exclaimed Inspector Jameson sharply. "You don't understand. He condemns himself—and, before long, he will confess. The case is so plain—so exceedingly obvious—that any investigation is almost needless."

"May I be allowed to hear the simple facts of the murder?"

"There is very little to hear," replied the inspector. "Early this morning old Captain Garwood's housekeeper—an aged lady named Mrs. Lennan—descended as usual to attend to her duties. She was shocked and frightened to find her master in his sitting-room, stabbed to the heart. His body was reclining half in a chair and half upon the table. He had been stabbed as he sat—from behind. Naturally the old lady was nearly mad with fright, and she rushed from the house screaming. She still had presence of mind enough, however, to go to the cottage of a local constable. She told this man what had occurred, and he investigated. After that he wired to me, and I went over."

"But how is Lambert implicated?"

"I am coming to that. When I reached Bellton, Mr. Alvington, I found that Mrs. Lennan had recovered sufficiently to be questioned," went on the inspector. "Her story caused me to go to St. Frank's without a second's delay. Late last night—towards midnight—she was lying in bed, quite awake. Captain Garwood was in his little den alone. Mrs. Lennan heard the bell ring, and then recognised the voice of Arthur Lambert—the boy had been there many times before. The captain's room was just below hers, and she had heard the man and boy talking heatedly and excitedly. It is quite obvious that a quarrel was in progress. The old lady fell asleep, however, and knew nothing more until the morning."

"H'm! It's rather flimsy, isn't it?" I said musingly.

"Flimsy!" The inspector glared. "It is not flimsy, sir—it is decidedly strong! Without the slightest doubt, Lambert killed Gar-

wood in the heat of the quarrel. It is obvious—palpably so. And his very attitude when arrested condemned him. The fact that he admitted visiting Garwood is very conclusive in itself."

"I can't quite see that," I objected. "The boy did visit Garwood—so why should he deny it? Surely, if he had been guilty, he would have told another story? He would have declared that he hadn't been near Garwood's house—"

"Tut-tut! The boy lost his head," interjected the inspector curtly.

"At the same time, the evidence is quite circumstantial, isn't it?"

"Well, in a way, I suppose it is," admitted Jameson. "But that is of little importance, my dear sir. Before the day is out Lambert will confess—I'm quite sure of that. Who else could have committed the crime? Have you asked yourself that? Garwood hadn't an enemy in the world; he was a peaceful old sea-captain, retired from active life. Lambert must have been stung to fury, and struck the blow on the spur of the moment. The whole thing is as simple as A B C. The boy was so terrified that he even made no attempt to flee. He just went back to the school. And this morning, when I arrested him, his whole attitude was one of guilt."

I nodded slowly.

"I should like, if possible, to interview Mrs. Lennan myself," I said. "I should like to have a look at the body—"

"There's no reason why you shouldn't, Mr. Alvington," said the inspector. "I realise that you and Dr. Stafford are keenly anxious. It may be somewhat out of order for you to mix yourself in the business, but the result is foregone. When Lambert is brought before the magistrate to-morrow, he will almost certainly be sent for trial. Or, possibly, we shall ask for a remand."

Jameson was rather good-natured; I easily obtained from him a written permit which would give me access to Captain Garwood's house. My position was somewhat difficult, for I was a mere schoolmaster. If I had revealed my true identity to the inspector, he would have granted me every possible facility. But, considering how matters stood, I got round him very nicely.

Then I rode back to Bellton, thinking over Lambert's story, and the facts which Jameson had supplied me with. It was a grim business—and puzzling. The police did not think it worth while to probe deeper into the matter. I did. Lambert's story was true—he had left Garwood alive and well. Who, then, had committed the crime?

The inspector's statement had eased my mind, for he had shown me that there was no actual proof against Lambert. The whole case relied upon the somewhat hazy evidence of the old housekeeper. It was weak—and that is why I had hopes of success. This country inspector had merely looked on the face of the affair. But it was necessary to investigate closely.

I was quite elated as I rode into Bellton. There was the prospect of some interesting work ahead of me. In the village street I met Nipper and Sir Montie—and I realised that morning lessons were over.

"Hallo, sir!" said Nipper, as I dismounted. "Have you heard anything?"

"I have heard sufficient to make me believe that Lambert is quite innocent," I replied. "I am now going along to the murdered man's house, with the object of making a few inquiries."

Of course, though Sir Montie was unaware of my real identity, it did not seem in the least odd to him that I should be making investigations.

"Begad!" said Sir Montie. "May we come, sir?"

"Oh, you'll let us go along with you, won't you, sir?" asked Nipper eagerly.

I smiled.

"Well, I suppose I shall have to be good-natured," I replied. "Perhaps, on the whole, it will be better if we go together. But you must behave yourselves, boys, and refrain from talking. Where is Watson?"

"Oh, he didn't come down!" replied Nipper. "Let's hear the news, sir."

We walked along towards the end of the village, and I briefly told my young companions of my doings in Bannington. And, just as I had finished, we came in sight of a small, neat-looking house, surrounded by a wide garden. All the blinds were drawn, and a police-constable stood at the door.

CHAPTER 5.

Important Clues.

ONE or two villagers were standing about the gateway of "The Cabin," and they looked at the boys and me curiously as we entered the front garden. I took no notice of them, but approached the constable.

This officer was well known to me; he was the village policeman, and an excellent example of a burly, thick-headed provincial constable. He touched his cap as I went up to him.

"This 'ere's a bad business, sir," he said heavily. "I reckon you gentlemen up at the school are fair worried over it. Just fancy that good-for-nothing boy a'stabbin' old Cap'n Garwood. It beats me, sir."

"It's a tragic affair altogether, Sparrow," I said gravely. "The body is lying upstairs. I presume? Is Mrs. Lennan here?"

"Indoes, sir," replied P. c. Sparrow, with a jerk of his thumb. "Fair knocked up, she is, poor old gal. Ain't the inspector comin' over again?"

"I don't know—I dare say he will be along later on," I replied. "At present, I am rather curious to question the old housekeeper, and to look at the body—"

"I dunoos whether I can let ye go inside, sir," said the constable doubtfully. "I've had orders to admit nobody."

I produced the permit, and Sparrow was quite satisfied and relieved.

He opened the door and preceded us into the house. In the little hall everything was gloomy.

"Mrs. Lennan," called out the constable, "you're wanted!"

A door opened, and in another moment or two we were ushered into a little kitchen-sitting-room. Mrs. Lennan stood before us. It was easy to see that she was terribly upset by the great shock. She had obviously been crying, and I mentally decided that I would not question her too severely. She was an old lady of quite sixty-five, with almost white hair and an angular figure.

"The boy didn't do it on purpose—I know he didn't!" she exclaimed tearfully. "But the poor master and he were havin' high words. Oh, it's dreadful—dreadful! What will become of me? I've got nowhere to go—nowhere!"

"Don't give way, Mrs. Lennan," I said gently, leading her to a chair. "The great shock of this tragedy will soon pass. I am Mr. Alvington, from St. Frank's, and I am naturally greatly concerned regarding the fate of my pupil. If there has been a mistake, as I fear, I want to set matters right."

"It wasn't a mistake, sir—it was the boy who did it!" said the old woman shakily. "The inspector said that the case is quite plain, and he ought to know. Oh, I'll be thankful when I hear from my son! I've asked him to come and take me away—"

"Quite so—quite so," I said softly.

With the constable, I went upstairs into the little front bed-room to have a look at the body, leaving the boys below. A very brief examination was sufficient. Captain Garwood had been a grizzled, bent old man. His death had been caused instantly, I judged. A stiletto, or a narrow-bladed knife, had been plunged into his heart from behind. It was clearly a case of murder. No man could have inflicted such a wound himself. Only a strong man could have delivered that deadly thrust. I doubted even if Lambert could have struck such a blow.

"Where is the knife?" I asked, turning to Sparrow.

"The inspector took it, sir," replied the constable, who was looking extremely uncomfortable in the room of death. "It was a long thing, sir; summat like a skewer, to my thinkin'."

"A stiletto, Sparrow—a most deadly weapon!" I explained.

We went downstairs, and found Mrs. Lennan rocking to and fro in her chair, muttering half hysterically to herself. Nipper and Tregellis-West were by the window.

"I have seen the body of your late master, Mrs. Lennan," I said quietly. "The wound which killed him was caused by a stiletto, so far as I can see. Have you even seen such a weapon about the house? I can't quite believe that Lambert owned—"

"It was the master's, sir," said the old lady, looking up. "He's used it for years

as a paper-knife. It always used to lie on his table. The boy must have picked it up in a fury."

"May I enter the captain's room?"

Mrs. Lennan hesitated a moment, and then rose, muttering that the police were enough bother without anybody else. However, she led the way into the late captain's room, which I saw at a glance had been tidied up. This was rather a drawback. The apartment was furnished in such a way that it closely resembled a ship's cabin.

The table at which Garwood had sat was fixed to one wall, and it would have been an easy matter for anybody to have stabbed him in the back as he sat before it. The whole room was provided with a great number of trophies of all descriptions—articles from almost every part of the world.

I could see that a prolonged search was unnecessary. There was very little to be discovered. But one particular curio interested me. Standing upon a corner of the mantelpiece, as though it had been recently placed there, I saw a small ornamental casket. It was made of polished brass, and was quite unique.

"One of the captain's Oriental trophies, I presume?" I asked casually.

"That, sir!" Mrs. Lennan looked at the casket wonderingly. "I've never seen it before," she added.

Inwardly, I felt a thrill run through me.

"You have never seen it before?" I repeated, picking the thing up. "That is rather curious, isn't it? Didn't it belong to Captain Garwood?"

"Not—not that I know of, sir."

Mrs. Lennan stood on the other side of the room, her tears forgotten for a moment. There was nothing remarkable in the fact that she hadn't seen the casket before, and now that she had learned of it for the first time she was naturally astonished.

Something rattled inside the little brass box.

"I don't know what's inside, sir," said the old lady. "Maybe it belonged to the captain. It must have done. Master Lambert wouldn't have brought it here, would he? It looks like one of them Indian things."

I forced the lid back, Nipper and Montie looking on interestedly, and within the casket found a small image. It was made of metal—polished copper—and shaped into the form of a frog. I picked it up by the head and glanced at it curiously.

Almost the first thing I saw was a clearly defined thumb-print upon the polished under-surface of the frog. Every line of the thumb-mark stood out distinctly and clearly.

"H'm! This may prove of great value," I said thoughtfully. "Do you see, boys? There is a clear mark of a thumb just here. I judge that the image was removed from the box quite recently—within the last few hours. If we can discover whose thumb-print that is, we may accomplish something."

I replaced the curio into the casket and pocketed both—without asking permission.

"I don't think it will be necessary for us to bother you any longer, Mrs. Lennan," I said, turning to her with a smile. "And it is very improbable that my amateur efforts will bear any fruit."

"It was the boy who killed the master," said the old woman, wringing her hands. "It couldn't have been nobody else. Oh, I'm terribly upset! They'll be thinkin' that I did it!"

whiskers. "Cloos! This ain't one o' them cases, sir. It's all plain. There ain't no cloos, not what I knows of. Inspector Jameson sez that it's all clear an' simple."

I was rapidly becoming convinced that Inspector Jameson was an incapable officer, and P.-c. Sparrow had a head like a turnip.

With the boys, I passed round the house until I reached the window of the apartment we had just left. Outside, it was an ordinary lattice, but within it resembled the porthole of a ship.



As I was feeling my way down the dark hall, I heard a rustle behind me. Before I could turn, something terribly hard descended upon my head with brutal force, and I pitched forward on my face, unconscious.

"No, no! You musn't get such absurd ideas into your head, Mrs. Lennan," I protested gently. "The blow which killed your master was delivered by a man—a strong man, too. There's no fear of your being implicated in the least. You musn't get alarmed."

"I won't, sir," she said shakily. "But it's a shocking affair!"

We passed outside, and found the constable on the doorstep as before. I didn't leave at once, however.

"Has the garden been examined Sparrow?" I asked.

"The garden, sir?"

"Yes. Has the inspector been over it?"

"Over it? What for, sir?" asked the policeman, staring at me.

"Why, to look for cloos, of course!" put in Nipper impatiently.

"Oh, cloos!" said Sparrow, scratching his

"Hallo! What's this!" exclaimed Nipper abruptly.

I turned and found him bending over the soil which stretched out beyond the pathway. There were cauliflowers and cabbages growing there.

"There's a footprint here, sir," muttered Nipper. "But I can't understand it. There's only a left footprint—not a sign of the right!"

"That's queer," said Sir Montic. "Begad!"

I crossed the path and looked carefully. As Nipper had said, there were several distinct left footprints, but no others. It was the impression of a big, clumsy boot. The path itself was quite hard, and therefore revealed nothing. I stepped among the cabbages and bent down.

"Ah, what is this?" I murmured. "By James, I am becoming interested!"

For I had seen several round impressions. They were an inch or two deep, and appeared where the unknown man's right foot should have left a mark. Obviously, the man had lost a leg, and these indentations were caused by a stump.

"A man with a wooden leg has been in this garden," I said keenly. "Don't you see, boys! We had better follow them for a little way."

"My hat," exclaimed Nipper, "this is getting exciting!"

"I'm all agog, begad!" murmured Sir Montie.

But he looked quite calm, and the three of us passed among the cabbages, and found ourselves upon the opposite path. Here we were checked for a moment, but the curious footprints were again discovered on the open soil beyond. There was no difficulty in following them.

But our task was a short one.

After a few minutes we found ourselves right against the low wall which divided the

garden from the road. Glancing over, I saw that a wide border of grass lay on the other side, with the hard road just beyond. It would be a hopeless task to attempt to follow the footprints any farther.

"That man, whoever he is, was here only a few hours ago," I exclaimed thoughtfully.

"He came, I should judge, during the night."

"Do you think he's connected with this murder, sir?" asked Nipper eagerly.

"I don't know, my boy," I replied slowly.

"But it is my opinion that he is very closely connected with it. The whole thing is more intricate than the police seem to imagine. On the face of it, Captain Garwood was killed by the hot-headed action of a senior schoolboy. He met his death at somebody else's hands."

"Whose?" asked Nipper.

"That is what I am going to find out," I replied grimly.

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CHAPTER 6.

Lambert's Innocence Proved.

(Nipper picks up the thread again.)

NELSON LEE had entered into this case with all his old enthusiasm. Of course, he and I were as much ourselves as ever. Although our positions at St. Frank's were so vastly different from our usual mode of life, we were not changed in the slightest degree.

And, at the first suggestion of a mystery, the gov'nor was hot on its track. We had only been at "The Cabin" a very short while, and he had already discovered a fat lot more than the police knew.

"Yes, boys, we have got to find out the truth as quickly as possible," the gov'nor said. "These unusual footprints may be totally useless, but it would be foolish to ignore them."

"What about that copper frog, sir?" I asked as we walked down the road, the detective whodling his bicycle. "Do you think that will be of any value—that thumb-print, I mean?"

"It might be, Bennett. It all depends," replied Lee vaguely. "I shall, of course, hand it over to the police in due course. I believe that it is connected with the crime."

"But how, sir?"

"It is impossible to form any opinion at this early stage, young 'un. I can't quite see where the copper frog fits in, but I am convinced that it fits somewhere. It is something of a problem."

"By Caesar!" ejaculated Sir Montie suddenly.

He stopped short in the middle of the road, and stood staring across the low hedge. We had passed through the village, and were on the quiet stretch of lane which led towards St. Frank's. On the left lay a rough meadow—almost a piece of waste land—with the gaunt trees of Bellon Wood beyond.

"What's the matter, you fathead!" I asked, nudging my chum.

"Dear fellow, look at that!" said Tregollis-West, pointing.

Both Nelson Lee and I were looking, and we saw something which surprised us. For there, on the farther side of the meadow, stood a tiny encampment. It was merely a wretched, patched-up tent, with a small fire burning near it. Over the fire a man was bending, and that man's right leg was missing from the knee! A stump replaced the absent portion.

"Well, I'm blowed!" I gasped.

"I am certainly surprised myself, Bennett," observed Nelson Lee calmly. "Surely this cannot be a coincidence? We are anxious to find a man with a wooden right leg, and here he is before us! This may be merely a ruse! The fellow is possibly playing a part. But we will speak to him."

"Now, sir!" I asked.

"Why not? Delay would be pointless."

The gov'nor laid his bicycle against the hedge, and we all broke through into the meadow. We had walked half-way across

before the owner of the wooden stump became aware of our approach, and even then he seemed very little interested. He merely looked up from the fire for a moment, screwed an old clay-pipe more securely into his mouth, and then went on with his task.

A pot was suspended over the fire, and as we drew nearer a savoury odour of boiling vegetables and meat assailed our nostrils. Over by the side of the tent stood a queer-looking machine, which I recognised as a tinker's grinding and pot-mending outfit. Roughly painted on the front was the name "Jeremiah Binns."

The wooden-legged man himself was carelessly attired. His hair was grizzled, and an untrimmed beard adorned his chin. He looked at us with his face all wrinkled into smiles as we came up.

"'Afternoon, gents!" he said cheerfully. "Mebbe ye be wantin' somethin' mended? I'm just a-gettin' my dinner ready, but I shan't be long—"

"No, we don't want any repairs done, thank you," said Nelson Lee.

"That's a pity, sir. Old Jerry Binns don't 'ave none too much work," said the aged tinker, shaking his head. "I ain't done wrong in campin' in this 'ere medder, 'ave I?"

"Not that I know of," smiled the gov'nor. "But I wish to ask you one question—and I want a truthful answer. Did you enter the garden of a house known as 'The Cabin'—"

"Lee" sakes! I knowed I'd be found out!" ejaculated Jerry Binns, in dismay. "I didn't mean no 'arms, sir. They was fine kebbidges, an' I only took two. I sez to myself, jest afore I went over the 'edge: 'You'll be found out, you old fool,' I sez. 'An' then that'll mean prison for ye,' I sez. I ain't got much money, sir, but I'll pay for them kebbidges if so be as you—"

"One moment Binns," interjected Nelson Lee. "If you took some cabbages which were not your own—well, it is not my place to inform against you. They weren't my cabbages."

"Lee! I thought ye was goin' to her' me took up!" said the old man.

The gov'nor and Montie and I couldn't help smiling. The old fellow was quaint, and he certainly bore no resemblance to a murderer. He was smiling again now, and his eyes shone with relief and cheerfulness.

"Tell me what happened, Binns," said Lee.

"Why, I was comin' down the road last evenin', an' I 'appened to see them kebbidges all a-growin'," explained the one-legged tinker. "I stops an' looks at 'em. 'Them's fine vegetables,' I sez to myself. 'A couple o' them'd make a fine dinner,' I sez. An' I'd no more to do but steal in the garden last night, right late, an' pull up a couple o' 'em. One o' 'em's a cookin' now."

Nelson Lee smiled, and Montie and I grinned. The footprints were clearly explained. They had merely been made by this cheerful old pillarer, who was quite open

about his petty crime now that he knew our intentions were not hostile.

"The cabbages will not be missed, Binns," said the gov'nor quietly, "for their owner is now dead. I presume you have heard of the tragedy?"

"I ain't stirred enter this field this mornin'," replied the other. "That there grunder o' mine went wrong, dat it! I bin repairin' the thing. Somebody bin killed, you say? An accident, I dessay."

"No, Binns. The owner of the house was murdered," replied Lee. "Your footprints in the garden were somewhat sinister, but I now know, of course, that you were not connected with the crime."

"Lor' save us! I ain't never killed nothin' bigger'n a mouse!" declared Binns, his smile vanishing. "But now I knows who done it. That ain't right, though—'euz when the young feller left the 'ouse, the old man was alive. That couldn't o' bin 'im—"

"What's that you're saying?" put in the gov'nor sharply. "It seems to me that you can give us some very valuable information, my man."

The old tinker scratched his whiskers.

"I damno about that, sir," he replied. "Yez see, I caught a rare fright when I was in that there garden. I'd jest got me kebbages, an' waz goin' out, when I 'eard the doze open. I crouched down, an' saw a young feller of mebbe eighteen or twenty walk to the gate. There was somebody with 'im—an old man. They seemed to be 'avin' 'igh words, so far as I could 'ear."

"Go on—go on!" exclaimed Lee sharply.

"They didn't stop at the gate long, sir—jest 'arf a minute," said old Binns. "An' then the man went indoors agin, an' locked up the door. I waited a few minuzes afore movin'. Then, like the old fool I am, I went an' cracked a great ole dead branch. Lor'! That snapped like a gun, an' give me a rare fright! The winder opened, an' the ole man looked out. But he didn't see nothin', an' closed the winder agin. An' then I come away, feelin' right steerod. Them kebbages wazn't worth it, sir. But I reckon they look nice now, don't they?"

He stirred the concoction in the pot with a satisfied sigh, and Nelson Lee looked from Sir Montie to me. There was a gleam of triumph in his eye—and I knew the reason.

This information, which had been totally unexpected, was of tremendous value. For Binns' evidence proved positively that Arthur Lambert had not killed Garwood. The Sixth-Former had told Nelson Lee the truth—he had parted with the old captain at the gate of his house.

The murder had been committed after Lambert left—that was obvious. But who had committed the deed?

"Did you come away from the garden as soon as Captain Garwood closed the window—or did you wait?" asked Lee keenly.

"That must ha' bin about three minutes afterwards, sir."

"Did you hear voices from within the house?"

"Not a sound, sir—unless, mebbe, you'd call a kind o' sigh a sound," replied the tinker. "Jest when I was a-gettin' up I heard somebody sigh real loud like. That must ha' bin this 'ere capt'in what you spoke of. Like as not, he was a sighin' for the sea agin."

Lee put several other questions, but the old man was unable to give us any further information. He expressed his entire willingness, however, to tell his story to the police—after the gov'nor assured him that he would come to no harm. He would remain encamped at Bellton for another week, and we should always know where to find him.

"It's gettin' late, Benny boy," murmured Sir Montie, as we started across the meadow again. "Dinner's been served for some time. We shall have nothin' but the leavin's, be-gad! But it's no good grumblin'."

"You won't get into trouble, West," said the gov'nor, with a smile. "You have been with me—and I am your Housemaster. It was extremely fortunate that we saw old Binns. His statement has simplified matters exceedingly."

"It seems to me that it's made the case even more mysterious," I objected. "We know that Lambert didn't do it—but who did? There wasn't a soul in the house except Mrs. Leman—and we know she couldn't have done it."

"There was one part of Binns' story which needs careful thought," remarked Lee. "He said that Garwood and Lambert stood at the gate for a minute talking. It is possible that somebody crept in by the open door during that period. The old housekeeper was in bed, and it would have been an easy matter for the intruder to enter Garwood's room—the door of which was probably open. He could have concealed himself there, and struck the blow as soon as Garwood sat down. He escaped, of course, by merely walking out in the usual way."

"That's one explanation, isn't it?" I remarked. "I think it's jolly likely, too, sir. But what's the next move?"

"Dinner is the first thing," smiled Nelson Lee. "And then, young 'un, you will have to attend to your afternoon lessons. I shall make my report to the headmaster, and take another trip over to Hannington. The chief thing is to effect Lambert's release—and that can be done, I think, this afternoon."

As soon as we got to St. Frank's, Montie and I went in to dinner. We were late, of course, but the gov'nor made that all right. Then he went off to explain what had happened to Dr. Stafford.

Afternoon lessons were a tremendous bore, but we had to go through with them. Scarcely a single junior knew that Lambert had left the school. The seniors thought that he had been called away by his parents, or something of that sort. The real truth, at all events, was unknown.

(Continued on page 24.)

Listen In Here To—



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

HALLO, CHUMS.—A week from to-day you will have in your hands the first grand yarn of a super series featuring the most sensational rebellion that St. Frank's has ever known. We have had some remarkably fine stories recently, but good as they have been, "The Mystery Master!"—which is the title of next week's yarn, beats them easily.

The story opens with Nelson Lee having to leave St. Frank's to take up Secret Service work, a job bound by the strictest secrecy. A new Housemaster, of course, is engaged to take charge of the Ancient House. The newcomer, Mr. Kennedy Hunter, has the appearance of a mild, meek-looking man, with a disarming smile. Nipper & Co., who give him a hearty if "upsetting" welcome, vote him a jolly good fellow. But is he? No sooner does the new Housemaster get to St. Frank's than he hands out punishment right and left. In short, Mr. Hunter belies his looks. He is a tyrant who believes in iron discipline, with liberal "doses" of the cane for all delinquents. There is some mystery about the new master, too—for what can be his reason for disguising himself with a beard when he leaves the school after dark? Nipper's keenest interest is aroused, and he gets on the trail right away.

Chums, this is the school story of the week—intiguing, dramatic, thrilling. Pass on the good news to your pals with the advice to order the NELSON LEE in advance, and not leave it to chance.

"What speed does the swallow fly?" asks "J. R." of Reading. "Is it the fastest flying bird?" The swallow can fly at approximately 60 m.p.h., but that is by no means the fastest speed at which a bird is capable of travelling. Vultures, the birds of prey of the desert, can beat this easily. With a wingspan of six feet, the vulture's speed, when diving from a height, has been estimated at 400 m.p.h.! "Some" going!

My next reply concerns that famous old clock, Big Ben, the deep and mellow boom of which we hear over the wireless so often. "M. W." of Stockwell, has heard that the secret of Big Ben's record of keeping correct time is due to a coin. This is quite true. It has been revealed that the clock, if

it is losing, is regulated by the placing of a halfpenny or a penny, according to the time it is losing, in a tray half-way up the pendulum. The addition of this small weight has the effect of increasing the vibration of the pendulum. If the clock starts to gain, then the coin is removed.

In a Peterborough reader's letter to me he tells me of a marvellous violin that was made by a musical instrument maker in his town. This violin, which is a perfect specimen, is only four inches in length, and weighs just five ounces. I have heard of it before, as a matter of fact, and I believe it is the smallest perfect violin on record.

Ready for a laugh? Here's a good rib-tickler I heard the other day.

The new-comer to the seaside hotel was seated at breakfast on the first morning when the manager approached him.

"I hope everything is to your satisfaction?" he said.

"I only wish I had come to your hotel a month earlier," was the reply.

"Ah, you are too flattering!" smiled the manager.

"Not at all. I'd rather have eaten this egg than than now!"

We often hear of amazing feats of strength, but here's one that will take your breath away. I am indebted to "R. K." of Manchester, for this information. Only twenty years of age, Wilfred Briton, of my reader's town, recently pulled a seven-and-a-half-ton, six-wheeled motor-locomotive along the road by his teeth! Phew! This youthful Sandow has been demonstrating feats of strength since he was twelve!

It was a Dutchman named Heinrich Schilperoi who crossed from Dover to Calais on a hydrocycle, "B. M." of Folkestone. The trip only took him thirteen hours, in spite of the fact that he passed through a thunderstorm en route. His water-bike comprised the frame of a cycle set up between two long floats, the pedals working two paddles for movement.

The Death Valley, "E. J." of Hartlepool, is on the borders of the American States of Nevada and California, and as its name implies, it is a place of deadly danger. The heat in the valley is unbearable, and it is impossible to cross the eight miles of its width in the daytime. It is said that no one can live in the Death Valley for more than an hour without water—of which every drop in the valley itself is poisonous!

"See" you in next Wednesday's record-breaking number, Chaccio!

"Smilers"

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

THE REASON

Boss: "I am afraid you'll have to leave this firm, my boy."

Office-boy: "Why, sir! I haven't been doing anything."

Boss: "I know; that's why you've got to go!"

A penknife has been awarded to S. Hamstead, 15, Mossbury Road, Clapham Junction, S.W.11.

HE COULD!

Freak: "Can you take a joke?"

Taxi-driver: "Yes; where do you want to go?"

A pocket wallet has been awarded to W. Fox, 42, Lawson Road, Enfield Highway, Middlesex.

OMINOUS.

Bill: "Garn! You're afraid to fight."

Sam: "No, I'm not; but my mother'll lick me."

Bill: "Why, she won't see you."

Sam: "No; but she'll see the doctor going to your house!"

A penknife has been awarded to B. Brett, 59, Pollard Road, Whetstone, N.20.

UNUSUAL.

Warder: "What! Aren't you asleep yet?"

Burglar: "No; it seems so funny to be lying in bed in the middle o' the night!"

A pocket wallet has been awarded to N. Renahar, "Osborne House," Station Road, Amersham, Bucks.

FORCE OF HABIT.

First Steeplejack: "What's happened to that mate, Bill, you took on yesterday—the chap who used to be an artist?"

Second Steeplejack: "Oh, as soon as he laid a couple of bricks he stepped back off the scaffolding to admire his work!"

A penknife has been awarded to W. White, 92 Durham Road, Tottenham, N.17.

IRISH.

Boss: "Why didn't you come when I rang?"

Office-boy: "I didn't hear the bell, sir."

Boss: "Well, in future come and tell me!"

A pocket wallet has been awarded to S. Davis, 85, Grace Road, Mitcham.

The Remarkable Adventure TRACKETT GOES

The Dud Detective

(Drawn by Edward Oswald Hand)



es of
TRIM & SPLINTER
 and — *His Assistant*

(forth, of the St. Frank's Remove.)



"Smilers"

LOGIC.

First Boy: "I tell you I know what I'm talking about. Don't I go to school, stupid!"

Second Boy: "Yes—and you come back stupid!"

A penknife has been awarded to F. Almsworth, "Holmleigh," Crawford Avenue, Leyland, Lancs.

EVIDENCE.

"Is this water deep?" asked the motorist when he came to a flooded part of the road. "Can I drive through?"

"Easily," replied a rustic. "It's not deep."

Before the motorist had got far the water was up to his wings and his engine stopped.

"I thought you said it wasn't deep?" he shouted at the rustic.

"Well," was the reply, "it only came half-way up the farmer's ducks when they crossed this morning!"

A grand prize has been awarded to C. Parker, 19, McKenzie Street, Brunswick, Australia.

THE DIFFERENCE.

Tom: "I say, Ted, what's the difference between a dying barber and a dying sculptor?"

Ted: "Give it up."

Tom: "Well, a barber curls up and dyes, and a sculptor makes faces and busts!"

A pocket wallet has been awarded to A. Ansell, E.W.M. Hospital, Chase Side, Enfield.

QUEER.

Jack: "I've just seen a car."

Fred: "What make?"

Jack: "It's a queer name, but it starts with a 'T'."

Fred: "It must be a queer car, because they usually start with petrol!"

A penknife has been awarded to E. G. Duborn, St. Ives, College Town, Camberley, Surrey.

TOO BAD.

Teacher: "Your history was so bad I asked you to write it out twenty times; but you have only done it eighteen times."

Pupil: "Yes, sir; my arithmetic is also bad."

A grand prize has been awarded to C. Bondy, 134, Darling Street, Balmain, N.S.W., Australia.

NO HELP NEEDED.

Tramp: "Could you give me some food, mum?"

Lady: "No; I don't feed tramps."

Tramp: "Well, give me the food and I'll feed myself!"

A penknife has been awarded to T. Arlow, 70, Bfracombe Road, Southend.

UNDER ARREST!

(Continued from page 20.)

Some rumours regarding the tragic death of Captain Garwood had penetrated into the school, and these were being circulated rapidly. But nothing definite was known. I told Tommy Watson, of course, and we two and Sir Montie were the only fellows who knew the exact facts.

The very instant lessons were over I dashed to the gov'nor's study, making some excuse for doing so. But the door was locked, and I learned that he had gone out. I went to Study C, therefore, and found Tommy and Montie preparing tea.

Tea over, I again went to the gov'nor's study, and this time found it occupied. The Head himself was there, and I prepared to back out hastily.

"You needn't go, my boy," said the gov'nor, looking up.

I closed the door and walked into the room. The Head, of course, knew everything. He was looking almost cheerful.

"I am indeed thankful that I requested you to look into this affair, Mr. Lee," he was saying. "You have done wonders—wonders!"

"I am afraid you are exaggerating, Dr. Stafford," smiled the gov'nor. "Well, Nipper," he added, turning to me, "I suppose you're anxious to know what has been happening while you were grinding away at your lessons? I took Binns over to Bannington, and his evidence, with my own, convinced Inspector Jamson that a blunder had been made. I think Lambert will be released this evening. I was just about to explain matters to Dr. Stafford. To be brief, I strongly suspect that Mrs. Lennan is deeply concerned in this murder—indeed, it is possible that she struck the blow herself!"

I stared blankly.

"Mrs.—Mrs. Lennan!" I stammered. "Why, that's impossible!"

"I am afraid, Nipper, you are not so observant as you should be," smiled Nelson Lee. "Otherwise you would not be so surprised now. You were present during my conversation with Mrs. Lennan."

"Yes, I know I was," I agreed. "But I don't see why you should suspect her!"

"Well, there are two reasons, Nipper," went on the gov'nor. "First of all, the old woman struck me as being totally insincere. I can't explain exactly what I mean, but that was the impression which fixed itself in my mind. Everything she did, every word she uttered, was false. She acted a part. You didn't notice it, eh? Well, I did, young 'un. And I was at once suspicious. But the most important thing is connected with that copper frog. The old woman positively declared that she had never seen the casket, and that she had no knowledge of its contents."

"Yes, I remember she said that, sir."

"Yet, when I produced the frog, she expressed no surprise whatever, and the gov'nor

a very visible start when I remarked that a clear thumbprint was visible," said Nelson Lee grimly. "Why did she start, Nipper? For one of two reasons—because she knew that a thumbprint is one of the most positive clues it is possible to obtain, and the print was either caused by a confederate of hers or by one of her own thumbs. That was why she was so startled."

"But she wasn't startled, sir—"

"We differ there, Nipper. You were not observing Mrs. Lennan as I was—and I don't think I am mistaken," said Nelson Lee quietly. "It was she who gave the information concerning Lambert, don't forget. It was to her interest to throw suspicion upon the boy."

"But a woman couldn't have struck that blow, gov'nor!" I protested.

"Women can do far more than some people imagine," replied the great detective. "I have an idea—but this is a mere suspicion—that the woman is in some way disguised. I don't believe she's as old as she makes herself out to be. At all events, I am going to make an attempt to secure an impression of her own right thumb. If the two correspond, things will look black against her."

"But that copper frog wasn't used—"

"You don't seem to grasp the situation, my boy. Mrs. Lennan positively denied all knowledge of the thing. She did so, I believe, on the spur of the moment. But, having made that statement, she could not back out from it. And if we can prove that she lied over that, she will probably break down. In any case, I mean to put the matter to the test."

"When are you going, sir?"

"Very shortly—within half an hour."

"Can I come with you?"

"I don't think it's necessary, Nipper," smiled Lee. "I shall only be away a very short while—not more than an hour, at the most."

I left the study, feeling rather disappointed. The case seemed to have faded out all of a sudden. Now that Lambert's innocence had been proved, and his release from police custody was a certainty, Dr. Stafford ceased to worry. It was bad enough that Lambert should be expelled—but that was a mere trifle in comparison to the other matter. Besides, it wouldn't be an ordinary expulsion. Lambert had simply been taken away from the school by his parents.

But the gov'nor and I looked at the thing in a different way. The mere fact that Lambert was innocent wasn't sufficient. It was only half a case. We wanted to get at the truth. So, although the gov'nor could have left the matter as it stood, he didn't intend to do so.

I went back to Study C and told Sir Montie and Tommy something of what had occurred.

But there was to be other excitement that evening—and I didn't know anything about it—yet.

CHAPTER 7.

Struck Down!

(Nelson Lee resumes.)

DR. STAFFORD remained in my study only for a few minutes after Nipper had gone. His whole aspect had undergone a rapid change since my return from Bannington.

I had certainly never anticipated such a prompt release for Lambert. The thick-headed country police would have kept him in custody for days, probably, if the evidence of Jeremiah Binns had not been forthcoming. I don't think the police cared for the idea of letting Lambert go, even then. In any case, they would certainly keep him under supervision until they had got on the right track.

But the trouble, so far as St. Frank's was concerned, was all over. There would be no scandal, and Lambert's name would not even appear in connection with the affair. If there were any rumours, they would be quickly denied.

But I was not satisfied, by any means. There is nothing I hate worse than relinquishing my efforts when half-way through a case. I had a very strong suspicion that the murder had been committed by Mrs. Lennan—or, at least, that she had been implicated.

And so I prepared for my visit to "The Cabin" as soon as ever Dr. Stafford had gone. These preparations were very simple. All I did was to take an ordinary envelope, and write a fanciful name and address upon it. Then I prepared the surface of the paper in such a way that it would take a thumbprint, or fingerprint, perfectly—without showing any trace, until carefully looked for. A

little fine powder, dusted over the surface, would instantly bring the tell-tale marks into relief.

This envelope I placed between two others and tucked it into my pocket. I reckoned that I should be in the village only a few minutes. And I was quite eager to learn the result of my test.

When I emerged into the Triangle I found the night to be somewhat wild and blustering. The wind was cold and sharp, with occasional flurries of rain. I was well wrapped up, however, and I set out briskly for the village.

When I arrived outside the little house of the dead captain the rain was coming down quite briskly. There was no constable at the door now—indeed, it was not necessary. Although the village could talk of nothing else but the murder, it was quite certain that the country folk would give "The Cabin" a very wide berth.

I was somewhat astonished by the fact that Mrs. Lennan had elected to stay in the house during the night—alone. Most of the villagers had been shocked, for that piece of news had very soon got abroad. Sparrow, the constable, had given it to me—and I had no reason to doubt it. Mrs. Lennan would not hear of staying the night in the house of a neighbour.

This, in itself, was suggestive.

I walked up the short garden path and tapped gently at the door. Rather to my surprise, it was opened within a minute. A small light shone in one of the rear rooms, but the hall was in gloom. The angular figure of Mrs. Lennan was silhouetted against the yellow glow.

"Who is that?" she asked tentatively.

"I am Mr. Alvington—from the school," I replied. "Can I have a word with you, Mrs. Lennan?"

PEN PALS

Miss Marjorie Dickenson, 116, John Street, Singleton, N.S.W., Australia, wants girl correspondents; ages, 15-17.

Chas. O'Neill, 4452, St. Urbain Street, Montreal, Province Quebec, Canada, wants correspondents.

Edward Bevan, 13, Ferment Street, Concord West, N.S.W., Australia, wants correspondents.

M. van Rooyen, P.O. Box 861, Durban, Natal, South Africa, wants correspondents.

Miss Renee Watson, Highfield Lodge, Dixon Lane, Wortley, Leeds, wants a girl correspondent; age, 12-14.

Miss Constance Morris, 40, Nixon Street, Newtown, Rochdale, Lancs, wants girl correspondents overseas; age, 21-22; interested in music (piano), shorthand and reading.

Miss Betty Fell, 146, Collinge Street, Cress, Rochdale, Lancs, wants girl correspondents overseas; ages, 17-18; interested in sport, travel and reading.

F. W. Minde, 100, Dalston Lane, London, E.8, wants members for the Imperial Correspondence Club.

Meyer Bucovetsky, Box 250, Timmins, Ontario, Canada, wants to hear from stamp collectors.

Claude Cook, 41, Barrack Street, Colchester, Essex, wants a London correspondent—14-15—interested in films.

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"What do you want, sir?" she said doubtfully.

"I wish to show you something—and to ask you a question," I answered, shaking the rain-drops from my hat.

"Perhaps you'd better come in, sir."

She stood aside, and I passed into the house. The door being closed, we went into the back sitting-room I had visited on the previous occasion. The room looked nice and cosy, with its cheerful fire and shaded lamp. But I could not help remembering the still, stiff form in one of the rooms above.

"I only wish to stay just a minute," I said, producing the prepared envelope. "Can you tell me if this handwriting is known to you, Mrs. Lennan? Your answer will have some bearing on the case, in all probability."

I handed her the envelope, and she took it exactly as I would have desired. Her right finger and thumb closed upon it in a firm grip, and I knew that the impression would be bold.

"No, Mr. Alvington, I haven't seen this before," she said, looking at me curiously. "I don't know what it is at all. Did you find it here?"

"No," I replied, taking the envelope back. "I just wished to know if you had seen it or not. The result of this little visit, will, you may be sure, have some certain consequence. But I'd rather not explain anything further now, Mrs. Lennan. I shan't bother you any longer."

"I'll do anything I can for you, sir—anything to prove that that poor boy is innocent," said the woman sincerely. "But, alas, he's guilty—I know he is! He struck down my poor master. I don't know how I'm bearing it all!"

She opened the door while she was speaking, and I picked up my hat and entered the hall. I was feeling very satisfied. My sole object in coming was to obtain that impression—and I had got it.

It was very dark in the hall, and as I was leading the way, I was necessarily slow, not being quite sure of the obstructions.

And it was then that I received a stunning surprise—in real earnest. It was stunning in more senses than one.

For, as I was feeling my way down the hall, I heard a rustle behind me—a sound as though Mrs. Lennan had moved suddenly and quickly. Before I could turn, something terribly hard—a poker, I found out afterwards—descended upon my head with brutal force.

Everything went whirling, a thousand fires danced before my eyes, and I pitched forward on my face unconscious.

When my senses returned I found that my ankles were tightly bound—and that my wrists were in a similar plight.

Opening my eyes, I saw that a candle flickered on the floor—and I was no longer in the hall. From the acute rake of the ceiling I needed no telling that I occupied a small attic.

I had been carried upstairs—
Carried upstairs!

How in the name of wonder could Mrs. Lennan have dragged my inert body up those stairs? A strong man could have done so, but it would have been a difficult task. But a woman! I couldn't quite understand it.

My head was singing and throbbing painfully, and I knew that my skull was badly bruised. A little more force, and a fracture would have resulted.

There could be only one explanation. For some unknown reason, the woman had struck me down from behind as I moved towards the hall door. And all my suspicions were justified. Mrs. Lennan would never have acted in this drastic fashion if she had been innocent.

I attempted to work my hands a little easier, and succeeded in a slight degree. But then I heard footfalls upon the stairs, and the door opened. Mrs. Lennan, her eyes blazing with anger and malice, stood before me.

"What did you take me for?" she asked, with great scorn. "Did you suppose that I should be tricked so simply? That envelope was prepared—you wished to obtain my thumbprint. You interfering fool, why didn't you attend to your school duties, without mixing yourself in this case?"

"Because, Mrs. Lennan, I had certain suspicions regarding yourself," I replied calmly. "Those suspicions are now justified. I knew that you had made the thumbprint upon the copper frog—and I suspect—"

"What do I care what you suspect?" she cut in harshly. "I did make the thumbprint—what of it? Does that prove anything? As soon as you found out, I felt alarmed, and I made a slip. I let you see that I was alarmed. Well, your trouble has been for nothing. I am going to settle with you at once."

"By using the same weapon as you used before, probably?" I asked steadily.

"You deserve to be killed—but I'm not going to be so drastic," she replied, with a sneer. "You'll call this a confession, won't you? Well, you can. I don't care. You will never be able to trace me—or the public, either."

"Ah, you mean to flee—"

"I must—it is my only course," she broke in furiously. "You have caused this, you fool! But I shall have a clear night's start, for you will remain here until to-morrow, at least."

She kicked the candle over, and it extinguished with a sputter. Then, without saying another word, she left the room and closed the door, locking it securely. I heard her walk quickly down the narrow top stairs—and it was not the walk of an old woman.

The attic was one of those with no window, and I knew that shouting would be utterly useless. Mrs. Lennan knew it, too. The house stood quite by itself, and the attic was probably at the rear. Nobody could possibly hear in the road, and meadows



As the gov'nor and I pelted on to the platform, a man was in the act of entering a compartment. He turned as we suddenly appeared, and then dived into the carriage. "That's the fellow!" I roared. It was the murderer!

stretched out behind. Moreover, the wind was howling noisily.

I was quite relieved.

I had fully expected that the woman would get drastically. If she was capable of killing Captain Garwood—and I was sure she had killed him—she was capable of further violence. Perhaps I had not seen the last of her.

It had been rather unwise of me to walk in front of her in the hall. But, then, one can't always be infallible. I had not imagined that she would act in any way violent during my short visit. The truth of the matter was, I had under-estimated her ability and cunning.

She had jumped to my purpose at once. She had known that I had come for the sole purpose of obtaining her thumbprint. Undoubtedly, that had been very astute on her part, and I found myself wondering. Was it possible that the woman was a professional criminal? The facts rather pointed that way. She had been absolutely on the alert—and I hadn't been quite prepared for it.

The result was galling, but by no means alarming. The prospect of lying in that icy attic all night was not at all alluring. But I couldn't get free. My hands and feet were bound tightly.

Again, I wondered how she had brought me to the top of the house. Was there an accomplice in the building? If so, I had heard no sign—I had seen nothing to warrant such a suspicion.

Twenty minutes passed—perhaps more. And then I heard movements below. I won-

dered if my captor was returning—with the object of paying me some unwelcome attention. But the movements ceased, and I heard the front door close.

Mrs. Lennan had escaped—and I could not follow.

CHAPTER 8.

Light at Last.

(*Nipper Concludes.*)

I LOOKED at my watch anxiously.

"I don't care what you say, Tommy, something's happened!" I declared.

"Of course something's happened,"

replied Tommy. "Something always is happening—"

"You ass! I mean something serious," I interjected, glaring at my watch again. "Do you know it's nearly nine o'clock? Mr. Alvington's been gone for two hours and a half—and he was to be back almost at once. It's jolly queer."

I stared into the fire moodily. I was with Sir Montie and Tommy in Study C. Prep was over, and it was nearly supper-time. I'd been to Nelson Lee's study at least six times during the last hour, but he hadn't returned.

Handforth, meeting me in the lobby, wanted to know what new game it was I was playing at, dodging up and down the passage every few minutes. But I didn't stop to answer him, and Handforth snorted.

To tell the truth, I was getting concerned. I knew that Nelson Lee suspected Mrs. Len-

man of being implicated in the murder plot; and the governor doesn't suspect people without being fairly sure of himself.

Why had he been away so long?

I couldn't think of any reason why he should be detained—except one. And that one reason made me tremendously worried. I believed that he had met with some setback—perhaps foul play.

"I've a good mind to run down to the village," I said abruptly.

"Now?" asked Watson. "It's supper-time—"

"Blow supper!"

"And it's raining like the dickens—"

"Eats to the rain!"

"And you'll be breaking bounds—"

"What do I care for bounds, or anything else?" I demanded fiercely. "I'm going. I tell you."

"All right, fatted—don't eat me!"

"Benny is anxious," murmured Tregollis-West. "He's getting worried. Tell you what, old boy, suppose we all three go! Nothin' like stickin' together, you know. I'm game for any old thing you like."

I nodded broadly.

"Right-ho!" I said. "We'll all buzz down. If we meet 'Mr. Alvington' on the way, all the better. If we don't meet him, we'll make inquiries at 'The Cabin'—or break in, or something!"

"Suppose somebody sees us going out?" asked Tommy doubtfully.

"Let 'em see!" I replied, looking round for my muffer. "My hat! You're grumbling like an old woman! If you don't want to come—"

Tommy Watson glared.

"You silly ass—"

"Dry up!" I said. "Let's get off."

"What a rapid chap you are, Benny," said Sir Montie. "You're puttin' me into a flutter, dear fellow—you are, really. You're like a miniature whirlwind when you start thinkin' of ideas. But I'm with you every time, old son. An' I'm just as anxious about Mr. Alvington as you are."

We left Study C, and went along to the junior cloak-room, just off the lobby. Here we selected our thick coats and caps, and emerged into the Triangle. Somebody shouted out after us—it was Owen major, I believe—but we didn't take any notice of him. This wasn't the time for explanations, even if we could have given one.

It was raining fast, and the cold wind lashed the drops into our faces sharply. I've been out in a few miserable nights, but this was one of the worst of any.

The gates were locked, of course, but we simply slipped along to the master's private gate, and went out that way. This gate wasn't locked until ten, but all the masters had a key.

The road was slushy and soaking. The wind howled mournfully in the trees of Bellon Wood. But we went to the village at the double, through dense blackness. By the time we reached the first house, however, the darkness wasn't quite so intense. A slight

break had appeared in the clouds, and, besides, our eyes had grown accustomed to the gloom.

We were all silent as we neared the house of tragedy. We could see it distinctly ahead, standing back from the road, dark and somewhat sinister. I was just about to make a remark to Montie, when I checked myself. A dim figure—the figure of a man—appeared at the gate of the house, and emerged into the road.

"Mr. Alvington," I murmured. "No, it can't be. By jingo!"

I drew my chums close against the hedge. The man who had just left the house had passed for a moment. And I had distinctly seen him shake his fist at the building. Then, with his head down, he came along the road with rapid footsteps. He passed us without knowing of our presence; but I could not distinguish his features.

It seemed to me as though he was moving furtively.

"Who was it?" breathed Tommy.

"Blessed if I know!" I replied. "Did you see the way he shook his fist? What the dickens for? I say, I'm beginning to get alarmed. This thing looks fishy, I can tell you."

I pushed open the gate and strode down the path to the front door. The house was in complete darkness, not a light showing from any window. I lifted the old knocker and hammered it down hard.

"Now we'll see," I muttered between my teeth. "I'm fed-up with waiting!"

But we had to wait again. Two minutes passed by—two minutes, three minutes, and there was no answer to my knock. I hammered again, harder this time, but with the same result.

And then, faintly, I heard a cry; at least, I thought I did. What with the wind and rain, I couldn't be quite sure. It seemed to come from the very interior of the house.

"Look here, I'm going to break in," I said grimly.

"Dear boy, you can't do that—"

"Can't I?" I exclaimed. "You wait, my son!"

I left the little porch and went to one of the front windows. As I had expected, a shutter covered it. But it was only the work of a minute to wrench it away. And the lower sash of the window went up at the first touch.

"I—I say," said Tommy Watson in a scared voice. "We—we can't get in, you know. It's burglary! We shall get lagged—"

"Rot! I'm going in!" I declared, throwing my leg over the sill.

In two ticks I was inside, and I stumbled across to the door and felt for the handle. I heard my chums close behind me. I found the handle, and opened the door.

"Anybody at home?" I shouted loudly.

I heard a faint hail from upstairs.

"That you, young 'un? I'm in the attic!"

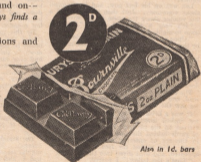
(Continued on page 35.)

North of 85°-



It's simple fare (and no second helpings!) for the Arctic explorer North of 85°. Every ounce of rations carried must be stamina foodstuff that will give a man strength to keep on—and on—and on. *Chocolate always finds a place on the sledge.*

For your own explorations and ramblings you can't beat chocolate. Better get Bournville if you want a chocolate that tastes extra good. For dealing with that 'empty feeling,' Bournville is really fine. And 2d. now buys such a jolly big chunk!



CADBURYS

2oz. Bournville Block 2d.

UNDER ARREST!

(Continued from page 23.)

"Mr. Alvington!" I muttered excitedly. "I jolly well knew that something had happened! Come on, kids!"

We stumbled up the stairs better-skulter, and in next to no time we stood outside the attic. The door was locked, but it was old as the hills, and when we all three pulled the woodwork gave way.

"Well done, boys!" came Nelson Lee's smooth tones. "Strike a light! You'll find a candle on the floor."

"What have you been having a game at, sir?" I asked breathlessly, as I struck a match. "Great Scott! You're all trussed up—and there's some blood on your collar!"

"A slight mishap, my boy—nothing worse," smiled Nelson Lee. "I half-expected that you would turn up, but I wasn't hoping for such a prompt rescue as this. How did you get in?"

"Broke in, sir," I replied as I lit the candle and took out my pocket-knife. "We met somebody coming out, sir."

"Yes, I suppose you did. Mrs. Lennan only left a minute or two ago—"

"Mrs. Lennan?" ejaculated Sir Montie. "Oh, no, sir! It was a man we saw, an' he shook his fist at the house in quite a nasty way."

"A man!" said the gov'nor thoughtfully. "That's surprising! Ah, of course! Mrs. Lennan disguised herself in order to facilitate her escape. But I wonder—I wonder— By James!"

Lee was on his feet now, and he stamped about vigorously. Just then we all heard a low rattle above the noise of the wind.

"It's only a train," I said. "The last train to-night, I expect."

"Upon my soul, the fellow means to escape by that train!" exclaimed the gov'nor rapidly. "Come, boys, we'll run! It's only a chance, but we had better make sure."

We pelted downstairs as quickly as we had come up, and rushed at full speed down the road. Nelson Lee, I felt sure, was a bit done up, but he outstripped the three of us.

The station was only just at the end of the road, and as we turned the corner in the run, we saw the train just entering the station.

It was a brisk race up the slope, and when we dashed through the booking-office and arrived on the platform I was only a couple of yards behind the gov'nor. One man was in the net of entering an empty compartment. He turned his face quickly as we appeared, and then dived into the carriage.

"That's the fellow!" I roared.

Nelson Lee pelted up, and I followed. As we drew opposite the doorway, we caught a glimpse of the man, wrenching furiously at the handle of the opposite door. But it was jammed, and before he could get it open the gov'nor was upon him. He fought like a demon, but with the help of Tommy and Montie, he very soon lay flat on his back, exhausted.

It had been a wild scramble, but it was

over now. Outside, the guard and the stationmaster were all asking questions at once. But Nelson Lee bent close over the face of the fallen man, and then whistled softly.

"Well, this is a surprise!" he exclaimed. "Unless I am very much mistaken, I am gazing upon Carter Gibbons, the Clapham murderer!"

Our prisoner drew his breath in with a whistling hiss.

"Hang you!" he snarled chokingly.

"It was quite a neat thing, my friend," went on Nelson Lee. "The game's up now, however. It will be necessary for you to stand on trial, to answer two charges, both of murder!"

The facts were very surprising.

The gov'nor had been quite right in his surmise. The prisoner was none other than Carter Gibbons, the brutal Clapham murderer, who had been missing for years.

Years before, when that foul crime had been committed, Gibbons had fled to Hastings—in the house of Captain Garwood, who had been his best friend. Garwood himself had a most unenviable record, and his loss would not be felt by anybody. It appeared that Gibbons had arranged with his friend to live with him in concealment. For some years Gibbons had been an actor, and he was undoubtedly a clever impersonator.

In brief, he had dressed himself as a woman, and had posed as Mrs. Lennan, the captain's housekeeper. Never for a moment had I imagined that that white-haired old dame had been a man! Even Nelson Lee himself had not suspected it until the last few minutes.

By this pretence, Gibbons had completely eluded the police, and two or three years before he and his supposed master had settled down in Bellton. Not a soul in the village had ever suspected a thing.

But Garwood had treated Gibbons harshly. For months on end the pair had lived on the very worst possible terms, although nobody suspected it. Then there had been the quarrel with Lambert of the Sixth, and Gibbons had seized his chance, for he had discovered, too, where Garwood had hidden a hoard of money.

Undoubtedly his vile plot would have succeeded if Nelson Lee hadn't been on the scene.

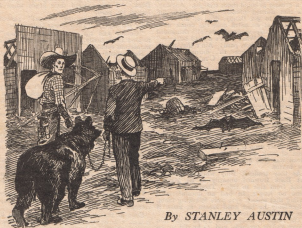
The scandal at St. Frank's had been averted. The school, instead of having a regular sensation, knew nothing. The gov'nor and I, and my two chums, had played our parts in the drama, and it wasn't necessary for us to give any evidence at Gibbons' trial, at which he received the full penalty for his crimes.

THE END.

[Watch out next week for the magnificent yarn of the chums of St. Frank's—entitled "The Mystery Master!" It is the first story of a thrilling and sensational "rebellion" series. Tell all your pals.]

A Nerve-tingling Yarn Of Daring Deeds In The Wild West!

The GHOST TOWN!



By STANLEY AUSTIN

Hidden Danger!

"WE seem to have shaken off that sneaking rifleman now, Buck," remarked Billy Baxler.

"Mebbe we hev' and mebbe we ain't!" said Buck Malone.

Evidently Buck had his doubts.

All that afternoon the two pals—known as the Battling Bees in the wild cow-country through which they were travelling, giving boxing shows with Bandy, their boxing-bear partner—had been trailed by an unknown rifleman, many of whose zipping bullets had come unpleasantly close.

But since reaching the foothills the shots had ceased. Out on the burning, sun-scorched plain the two pals and the big grizzly bear had been clear targets for the rifleman. But among the boulders and shadowy recesses of the buttes, long-distance shooting was dif-

feult and wasteful of ammunition. If the unknown was still on their trail he clearly had no intention of coming within range of the six-gun Buck Malone carried.

After the burning, dusty trail of the grasslands, the cool shadows of the buttes were welcome to the toiling trio. The cessation of the treacherous rifleman's shots was also more than welcome.

Buck's eyes glinted as he turned and stared down on to the sunlit plain below.

"Mebbe we ain't," he repeated grimly. "And I reckon we ain't, pard! I reckon t'bet of the skunk is t'bet darned greaser, Gomez, then he

won't drop our trail until he's got odd Bandy."

Gomez had been the animal trainer of the circus in which Buck and Billy had been employed until a robbery had ruined the owner, Joe Sandley.

With Bandy, the bear, which Sandley had

Eerie, sinister and desolate, the ghost town held no hope for Buck & Co. of earning a good square meal. But if food is scarce, thrills are not—and to our boxing pals a thrill's as good as a meal!

given them, Buck and Billy had become boxing showmen of the cow-towns of the Wild West.

"You still think it's Gomez trailing us, Buck?"

"It shore is, Britcher. I guess that only a Mexican could hev' been potter' at us all afternoon without hitting one of us," said Buck with a grin. "I reckon I never heard of a greaser as could shoot straight. Anyway, it's that darned greaser right enough, an' he means to get Bandy, dead or alive!"

"But what on earth does the skunk want with old Bandy—especially dead?" demanded Billy Baxter. "What good's a dead bear—"

"Ask me another, pard! Ain't that what's bin puzzlin' us since th' darned greaser horned in on this game? C'm', Bandy, old pal!"

Buck jerked on the chain fastened to Bandy's neck, and the trio ambled on again, the same bear grunting disconsolately as he ambled behind the pals. All three made a quaint trio—Buck in his cowboy attire; Billy in his store-clothes of English cut, his head topped by a battered straw hat; Bandy with his quaint, bandy legs, his shaggy, grey-brown coat and ambling gait.

It was hard going over the rocky trail, which thereabouts was a mere ledge a few feet wide with a sheer drop on one side and a frowning mass of rock on the other. The horizon ahead was shut out by the frowning wall of the buttes.

As they trudged, Billy whistled cheerily, but Buck frowned uneasily as he glanced about from side to side. Though the shots came no longer, he had an uncomfortable feeling that unseen eyes were following them.

Suddenly he had good reason to know it was more than a feeling.

The rattle of loose stones above made him glance swiftly upwards, and, as he did so, he gave a frantic yell.

"Holy smoke! Look out!"

Startled, Billy Baxter looked up. And then he also yelled as he glimpsed a huge mass of rock hurtling downwards towards them, accompanied by a shower of rock and gravel.

Buck had grabbed his arm and dragged him violently back against the rocky wall. But, quick as he was, the massive boulder struck first. Had it struck the ledge they were on, nothing could have saved them.

But the rocky wall curved outwards just above their heads, and, striking this with a resounding crash, the boulder was deflected and went hurtling over their heads and downwards.

Chunks of flying rock and gravel showered over the trio, and then, from far below, came the grinding thud as the boulder landed among the dwarf pines and sassafras in the bed of the ravine.

Bandy growled deeply as a jagged chunk of rock struck him, while Billy gasped as a sharp splinter cut his cheek. Buck also was hit and hurt, but he ignored the flying rock. Scarcely had the echoing crash died

away than his gun was out of its holster and pointing upwards. Then it roared again and again as Buck pumped lead upwards.

From the rocks above sounded a startled yell, and something came flopping downwards and landed on the ledge. It was a high-crowned Mexican sombrero, and it had a hole bored clean through the crown.

"I guess I nearly got that coyote!" gasped Buck. "I jest spotted their heads when I looked up, pard."

"Ehew! Jolly narrow escape!" panted Billy shakingly. "Then it was Gomez—"

"Gomez and his pal, Mexican Pete," nodded Buck curtly. "I seed 'em both. The murderous skunks!"

He glanced upwards again, his shooting-iron ready. But no heads now showed among the rocks above. The rattle of loose stones ceased and silence settled once again on the gloomy hills.

"Waal, I reckon this shore ain't a healthy place for us hombres," said Buck at last.

"I guess I never reckoned on that greaser hevin' the sand to come close to my gun. Keep up agen th' cliff, pard, and keep yore peepers open."

They moved along the rocky wall, expecting every moment to hear the whizz of another boulder. But nothing happened, and Buck halted as they reached the yawning mouth of a cavern in the wall.

"Jest the place for us, pard," he said briskly. "I guess I don't like that ledge with those guys up above hungerin' for our scalps. An' we c'n rest and feed— Jumpin' rattlesnakes! What's that?"

It was a deep, blood-curdling growl, savage and threatening, which came from the deep recesses of the hillside cavern.

Even as the startled Buck realized what it meant, a huge, shaggy grey monster reared itself high above them in the cavern-mouth.

"A darned grizzly!" roared Buck. "Look out!"

Billy Baxter did not move—he was too paralyzed with fear at sight of the huge claws and great slaving mouth of the wild grizzly. Behind them Bandy, their tame grizzly, was growling and tagging at his chain. There was a vast difference between Bandy, the performing bear, and this great, ferocious beast. This was the real thing, a terrible foe, evidently roused from sleep in its hidden lair by the uproar.

But the ex-cowboy boxer had met grizzlies before, and once the first shock was over, he acted swiftly. His six-gun swept up, lowered, and belched fire and lead. The great grizzly, with his terrible claws almost clatching the nerve-shocked Billy, shuddered and staggered backwards, crimson splashes spreading on the fur.

Smoke swirled and filled the entrance, while the shattering roar echoed and re-echoed in the cavern, drowning the savage snarl and growls of the wounded bear.

Somehow Billy found himself out on the ledge again, with Buck urging and prodding the excited Bandy before him, both pals ex-

pecting every second a rush from the wounded monster through the smoke.

But no rush came, and presently the pals reached a second cave farther along the ledge, and a glance inside showed that it was empty.

"In here, pard," said Buck through his teeth. "I guess I'd sooner scrap with grizzlies or greasers in hyer than out on that durned ledge! I figure that bear's got his, though!"

It seemed so. Several minutes passed while they crouched in the shallow cave, Buck's gun covering the entrance. But neither human nor animal enemy showed up, and Buck holstered his gun at last.

"I guess we'll have some grub now, Billy," he remarked calmly. "That bear's shore got his'n, and them greasers ain't sich boneheads as to pop their durned cabezas in hyer. Hitch up old Bandy and get them packs open, pard."

Silence had settled down on the hills again, and Billy set about opening the packs, while Buck scraped together brushwood and twigs and made a fire. Soon smoke was curling out of the cavern and a cheery smell of coffee followed it. Keeping a careful watch outside, the pals had a hasty meal of flapjacks and coffee and then packed up again.

"Gotta get to Prairie Dog afore sunset," said Buck. "And as far as I c'n make out, it's a tidy trail across the desert after leaving the buttes. We'll hev' to chance them greasers, Billy."

He stepped out of the cavern, intending to scout round before they moved out on the trail again, and as he did so the boxing puncher jumped as a hard, metallic voice rang out:

"Put heem hands up high, gringo!"

Buck twisted round and glanced upwards, raising his hands. The voice sounded close, and even a Mexican could scarcely miss at the distance. As he expected, it was Manuel Gomez and his rascally partner, Mexican Pete. Both greasers were crouching on a rocky ledge scarcely six feet above his head. Gomez covered him with a rifle, while Mexican Pete's black, beady eyes glinted over a Colt.

Buck had emerged with caution, but he had scarcely expected the enemy to be so near. He gritted his teeth, but he knew the folly of attempting gun-play.

Gomez got to his feet and scrambled down to the lower ledge, his swarthy features wearing an evil grin. Billy was still at the back of the cavern, trying to unhitch the bear's chain from a jutting rock. He neither heard nor saw what had happened.

Gomez approached Buck, his rifle held ready. He glared at Buck in a sinister manner. Then he peered behind Buck into the cavern, but evidently he could not see into the gloomy interior.

"Carimbo! So we meet again, amigo," he grinned. "Ees your friend in there? And where is Bandy—the lictle bear that I, Manuel Gomez, trained, and that you hav' stolen from me, gringo?"

"Stolen, nix!" snapped Buck coolly. "That bear was given us by old Joe Sandley when we left the circus at Pine City, Gomez—and you know that durned well enough, you sneaking greaser. And ef—"

"Senor Sandley gave heem to me, Manuel Gomez, who was animal trainer in hees circus, si!" snarled Gomez. "Stand away, gringo—"

He broke off just as he was pushing past Buck to enter the cavern. For just then had come a series of low, savage growls from the big cavern lower down the trail. Buck knew, of course, that they came from the wild grizzly, evidently wounded, but not dead as he had supposed. But Gomez knew nothing of their adventure, and instantly he supposed the growls came from Bandy.

He turned again, his eyes glittering, and called something in his own tongue to Mexican Pete, evidently a warning to watch Buck. Next instant, before Buck grasped his intention, Manuel Gomez was running towards the big cave.

"Holy smoko!" gasped Buck. "Hyer—come back, you blamed fool!"

The startled Buck made a move as if to go after Gomez, yelling a warning as he did so. But a hissing voice came from above.

"Keep them up, gringo! I drill you full of lead eef you move again!"

"Oh, gosh!"

Gomez vanished into the black mouth of the bear's lair. Next moment his voice was heard in a terrible yell that rang above the savage snarling and growling of the wounded bear—a yell that reached Billy in the smaller cave and fairly made his blood turn cold.

The Ghost Town!

"WHAT the dickens—"

Billy Baxter came rushing out of the cave. He stared at sight of Buck standing there with his hands raised. But before he could even glimpse Mexican Pete, terrified shrieks from the unseen Gomez drew his instant attention.

Suddenly he saw the Mexican emerge from the far cavern, stumbling and backing, blood streaming from his face where the bear's claws had evidently ripped. After him, limping and hunching, came the wounded bear, a mountain of ferocious and savage vengeance.

A yard from the brink of the precipice the unfortunate greaser turned at bay and raised his rifle desperately with shaking hands. As he did so the grizzly's huge paw swung out, sending the rifle spinning from the Mexican's grasp over the edge.

Gomez spun away under the force of the blow, dropping almost on the brink of the cliff. The rifle went flying downwards out of sight. Gomez shrieked in deadly fear; he was at the mercy of the infuriated grizzly, wounded and mad with pain and rage.

"Jumping snakes!" gasped Buck.

Gomez was looking death in the face. Mexican Pete was staring, transfixed with astonished fear. Buck realised that if the ruffianly Gomez was to be saved, only he could do it.

Risking Mexican Pete's Colt, he whipped out his own and fired—pulling trigger again and again. A zipping stream of lead plugged into the massive body of the mountain bear. The grizzly shuddered, gave a long-drawn, gurgling growl and toppled over. It crashed down on the brink, hung there a terrible second, and then it vanished from their sight. From far below came a heavy, thudding crash as its mighty body struck the ravine bed.

Buck Malone did not wait a split second to see the results of his gun-play. He had reloaded his gun in the cave, and now he retained one shot for another purpose.

Wheeling swiftly, he caught Mexican Pete napping—as he knew he would. Pete's gun was lowered in scared indecision. But even as Buck twisted, the greaser seemed to sense his intention, and he hurriedly lifted his gun and fired, just as Buck did the same, aiming at Mexican Pete's Colt.

Crack, crack!

The two reports sounded almost as one. Mexican Pete's shot went wide, though Buck felt the wind of its passing. Buck's bullet must have caught its objective, for the Colt jerked from Pete's hand and he hugged his numbed fingers.

Only for a brief instant, however. As Buck dropped his empty, useless gun, Mexican Pete grabbed up his gun, which had dropped scarcely a foot away from him, with his other hand, and lifted it savagely.

He evidently realised Buck's gun was empty, for he grinned evilly as he slowly sighted, and his finger trembled on the trigger.

It was then that Billy Baxter took a hand in the game. Billy was unarmed, but he acted, for all that. He whipped off his battered straw hat, took a swift aim, and sent it whizzing upwards.

That old "straw" was, in fact, Billy's favourite weapon next to his fists. He was a deadly shot with it, and he did not miss now.

The keen, ragged edge of the old straw hat whipped through the air, and, swooping upwards, caught the greaser full in the face. Mexican Pete let out a wild howl of pain as the jagged straw cut into his swarthy face, and dropped his Colt.

This time, however, the Colt spun over the edge and dropped on the ledge below. Buck Malone laughed aloud and jumped forward to retrieve it.

"I guess that was a darned good shot, Britisher," he grinned, ramming the Colt into his belt. "I reckon I takes back all the funny things I've said 'bout yore headgear after that, pard! I figure as Pete's dial'll be purty sore after that smack—it shore will! Now, Gomez, you sneaking coyote, what about it?"

He turned to Gomez, who was just staggering to his feet, dizzy and shaking. Blood streaked his swarthy face where the bear's claws had caught him, and the greaser was still shaking with fear. But his eyes glittered with rage and hate as they rested on the cool, young ex-puncher. Plainly Buck could expect no gratitude for saving the rascal's worthless life.

"Carrai!" he hissed, breaking forth into a torrent of Spanish oaths.

"Run yore hands over him, Billy," grinned Buck. "I shore am 'itchin' to help him on his way."

Billy Baxter obeyed, swiftly running his hands over the Mexican. But save for a long, ugly-looking knife which Buck allowed him to keep, the Mexican had no other weapon on him. A glance upwards showed them that Mexican Pete had vanished, evidently realising the game was up so far as he was concerned.

"Yore bearin' must be defective, greaser," Buck told the glaring Gomez. "I reckon you thought them growls came from Bandy, huh? I guess poor old Bandy used ter growl like that when you walloped him with that in-changed whip of yurts in th' circus tent. Wan, we ain't honin' for yore company, and now we've drawn yore teeth you can hit the horizon—and here's helpin' you to do it."

With that Buck grabbed the fuming Mexican by his greasy neckerchief and whirled him round. Then he planted a heavy boot behind Gomez again and again. The Mexican roared and leaped away. Buck followed him, kicking out in fine style. But Gomez soon leaped ahead and vanished round a bend in the rocky trail ahead.

"I reckon we shan't have any more trouble with them coyotes," grinned Buck. "C'm', pard! Fetch old Bandy forth and let's be listin' th' trail again."

"I'm gettin' my old straw first, old sport," chuckled Billy. "It's more reliable than your pop-gun, after all."

Billy clambered up the steep slope and scoured around for his hat. Luckily it had dropped on level ground, and was little damaged, and Billy thankfully rammed it on his head and rejoined his pal. A few minutes later they were treading the trail again along the ledge. Despite Buck's optimism regarding their enemies, they kept a careful look-out above and ahead. But not until they had crossed the rocky buttes and were descending into the plain beyond did they sight the greasers again. Then Billy grinned as he sighted two tiny figures moving in the far distance.

"There they go!"

The chums were glad to see them go, feeling they were safe from their Mexican enemies—until Gomez succeeded in getting his thieving hand on a gun again, at all events!

They reached the plain at last. Unlike the grassy lands they had left beyond the hills, the plain here was little more than a desert covered with grey sand and dotted with cacti and ghostly yuccas.

Buck was staring ahead and looking puzzled. From the hillside they had glimpsed a sprawling cluster of shacks and larger buildings far out on the desert sand. And Buck had been told that Prairie Dog was many miles beyond the buttes.

"Beats me," he said thoughtfully. "That

ain't no live town. From all accounts Prairie Dog is an all-fired lively town! But that ahead is a darned dead town—stone dead, pard!"

And so it proved to be. No tracks of hoofs or vehicles showed in the grey sand drifted here and there in hummocks. Most of the houses were in utter ruin, with roofs fallen in and doors gone. The rusted iron roofs went well with the time-weathered, unpainted shacks they topped. There came no friendly curl of smoke from chimneys, and a deadly, ghostly silence hung over the whole place.

It was, in fact, a ghost town.

Twenty and more years ago, probably, it had been a busy mining place, attracting swarms from far and near with its lure of gold. But the mines had proved merely temporarily rich "pockets," which had soon become exhausted, and prospectors and miners had turned their disappointed faces towards new grounds. And with the gold-seekers had vanished the saloon-keepers and other merchants.

Billy shivered as they entered the single street. Countless hats were darting in and out of the shutterless windows of the houses fronting the street. From a distance a few chattering prairie dogs scolded the new-



The rattle of stones above made Buck glance swiftly upwards. "Holy smoke!" he yelled frantically, dragging Billy back against the rocky wall. "Look out!" A huge mass of rock was hurtling down towards them!

burgh can't be Prairie Dog, shore. That cowpoke we asked must've told us wrong, pard!"

"Well, that's a town ahead, anyway," said Billy. "Thank goodness, I say, for I'm fed-up with tramping in this rotten sand!"

They trudged on hopefully, encouraged at the thought that the town they were aiming for was nearer than they had supposed. But they were booked for a disappointment.

As they tramped on along the half-obliterated trail they eyed the cluster of shacks and adobe buildings with growing curiosity and wonder. Suddenly Buck gave a grunt.

"Prairie Dog—shacks!" he growled. "That

comes. An owl emerged from its burrow to gaze in goggle-eyed wonder at the visitors. The whole atmosphere of the town was eerie and ghostly.

Buck Malone explained the meaning of it all to Billy.

"But someone's been here recently, or the wind would hev' blown them marks away," he ended, pointing to some recent footprints.

"Gomez and Mexican Pete," said Billy, looking about him sharply. "And—great guns! There's someone living in that show yonder!"

He pointed across the street to a small shack at the end. From the stone chimney

a thin trail of smoke curled up lazily into the air.

"But those darned greasers made those hoofprints," said Buck definitely. "I been keeping tabs on 'em since we came near this burg, pard. Keep yore pawsers peeled, old son!"

The footprints certainly seemed to lead up to the shack, yet it was clear that someone other than the greasers was there. The shack had roughly glazed windows, with faded curtains, and around it were tools and utensils and other signs of habitation. None the less, the pals approached it cautiously, knowing the treacherous foes they had to deal with.

With his shooting-iron ready, Buck crossed the threshold of the shack, the door of which stood open wide to the evening sunlight. And as he did so he gave a startled gasp.

The shack was occupied, though not by Gomez and Mexican Pete. It was occupied by an elderly man—a grizzled old veteran of the gold trails. He was alone, and he lay on his face near the lit stove, and he was unconscious. And from a nasty wound in the back of his head a crimson stream trickled slowly. Close by him one of the floorboards of the shack lay aside, disclosing a hole in the floor.

The pals could read what had happened in that lonely shack in a flash. Evidently the old prospector had been kneeling by the hole in the floor when someone had crept in upon

him and knocked him unconscious from behind.

"Them darned greasers!" hissed Buck, his good-humored, bronzed face setting hard as iron. "Them pizen snakes hev' done this, pard! Get some water, Billy—pronto!"

Black Carter!

TOGETHER they busied themselves bringing the old man round, dismissing thoughts of his assailants from their minds for the time being, though fierce anger at the ruffianly attack filled them as they worked.

The man opened his eyes at last, and they lit up dully at sight of friendly honest faces. "I guess you're all right now, old-timer," said Buck quietly. "You needn't fear us guys none. Who downed you like this-away, pard?"

"I—I only gotter glimpse of 'em," panted the old fellow. "Two—two greasers, they looked to me! I just happened to hear a sound and looked round, and then—"

His garbled hand went to the back of his head, deftly bandaged by Buck. Then sudden remembrance seemed to come to him, and he sat up and stared at the hole in the floor. He stared blankly, and then he gave a deep groan.

"Gone!" he mumbled brokenly. "Them coyotes hev' cleaned me out, strangers!

"WELL HIT, WALLABY!"



There's more fun at St. Jim's next week, as you can see if you take a look at our cover reproduced here in miniature! Harry Noble, otherwise known as "Wallaby," is the cause of a good bit of it—he just loves pulling people's legs! But the Head is responsible for some of the fun—amongst other things, he offers a prize for any boy who can knock a cricket ball through his study window from the cricket ground! Don't miss this ripping school yarn of Tom Merry and Co. Get a copy of the GEM to-day!

Ask for the

G E M

Now on Sale 2d.

Twenty hundred dollars of dust! An' th' claim worked out now! I was figgering on leavin' here an' retirin'-like wif' my son to-morrow."

"Ho'y smoke! You actually mean as them greasers hev' stolen your dust, old-timer?" gasped Buck, his eyes flashing.

"Yeah! Twenty hundred dollars' worth! Twenty hundred dollars' worth!" wailed the old man brokenly. "All I had—soil of months and months, and now th' claim's worked dry! And me too old to start agen! Twenty hundred dollars!"

The old man repeated it again and again as if dazed by the shock. Buck's eyes blazed like steel at Billy.

"Partner, you stay here and look after the old-timer," he snapped. "Shove Bandy in there shed at th' back presently out of the way. Me—I'm goin' after them coyotes, and I goes it's them or me for it."

He drew out his six-gun again, examined it, and then he left the shack. From the signs it seemed certain that the Mexican ruffians had been at the shack only a few minutes ago—that the dastardly deed had been committed recently. Somewhere in that ghost town Mexican Pete and Gomez were hiding—if they hadn't started out on the trail within the last few minutes, at least.

A glance back along the sandy trail showed Buck that they hadn't retraced their steps, at all events, and so he went on along the deserted street. He reached the end at last, without sighting a soul. Then he granted as his eyes swept the desolate waste of sand beyond. A few stray buzzards wheeled aloft in the air in the distance, but the trail itself was empty of life.

"Not gone, then," grunted Buck. "Waal, I reckon I'm going to get them guys, the durned rattlers!"

He knew the Mexicans were not armed with guns, and he started fearlessly and without caution to search the shacks and houses. Above the first and largest building showed a faded, weatherbeaten signboard. On the sign showed faintly the words: "Lucky Dog Hotel." Through the open doorway could be seen piles of sand covering the floor. Parts of a bar still remained, with a shattered, dusty mirror behind it.

Buck walked inside boldly and glanced round him. The room seemed to be empty, and Buck was just about to stride through to the rear rooms when he suddenly realised what a fool he had been to ignore caution—realised it too late.

For suddenly there came a curious whirring noise above him, and then, even as he glanced up swiftly, something whipped itself round his body, pinning his arms to his sides.

It was a lariat, and instantly it tightened cruelly, and the gun dropped from his fingers. Too late Buck understood and started to struggle, but a vicious tug on the rope swung him clean off his feet.

He crashed down on his face, and the man who had dropped the lariat over his head

jumped down with a soft thud to the floor and pounced on the gun.

It was Mexican Pete, and he had been sitting straddled over one of the roof beams above. That the trap had been set for him, and that he had walked into it blindly was only too clear to the enraged Buck—now! The greasers had known full well that they were on the trail. And Buck soon knew why they had hung on for them.

As Mexican Pete picked up the gun, Manuel Gomez emerged from the room behind the bar, his face wearing an evil, triumphant grin.

"So we meet yet again, gringo!" he murmured. "For those kicks you gave me, I, Manuel Gomez, will now repay you, si! But first—my gun, amigo!"

Gomez's own gun was still in Buck's belt, and Gomez stooped and took possession of it. Then he gave Buck a brutal kick in the ribs, following this with a series that made the helpless ex-puncher writhe with pain. He did not murmur, but his teeth set hard and his eyes glinted up at the greaser.

Mexican Pete twisted Buck's wrists behind him and tied them together, cutting a short length from his lariat for the purpose. He did the same to Buck's feet, and the remainder of the lariat he wound round his own waist, where he had evidently kept it.

"A verus useful article, amigo!" he grinned. "Now—adios!"

He turned to Gomez, speaking in Spanish and obviously urging a hasty departure. Gomez nodded, gave the prostrate Buck a few parting kicks, and followed his companion out of the abandoned saloon.

Their footsteps died away in the grey sand.

Buck's eyes burned with rage, and he struggled desperately with his bonds. But Mexican Pete had done his work well, and they resisted his utmost efforts to loosen them.

Then Buck started to shout, but it was only after twenty minutes that his shout was heard and the startled Billy Baxter turned up and found him.

"Been hunting for you everywhere," said Billy crisply as he started to cut the rope. "Well, you bonehead, Buck! How d'you come to get in this mess? If you only leave me for a minute, this is what happens!"

"Aw, quit cheswin' the rag, Britisher," said Buck, with a rueful grin. "Yap, you was right, though—I bin a durned bonehead over this, I shore hev', pard! Gee! Fancy bein' took in by a greaser! Waal, carry me home to die!" The sight of Billy's cheery face was a tremendous relief to Buck, who had feared that, now they were armed, the greasers would make for the shack in another effort to get at Bandy. "Is Bandy all O.K.—did them durned greasers visit you?"

"No—seen nothin' of 'em, Buck." "That's good! They must've taken th' trail, then! How's the old-timer?"

"Right as rain save for a headache," grinned Billy. "He's busy oiling an old

frontier gun—one that Columbus brought over when he hit America. He's talking of taking the trail after Gomez."

"We're darned well goin' to do that for him, pard," grunted Buck, his eyes glinting as he rubbed his numbed limbs. "Guns or no guns, we're trailing them cusses, an' we're gettin' that gold dust back for the poor old-timer. C'm on!"

They quitted the old saloon. Buck climbed up on top of a half-raised shack. Behind the distant hills the sun was setting, but there was still plenty of light. Once glance over the sandy trail showed him two moving, distant dots on the waste. In the farther distance he could make out the roofs of a town.

"They're on the trail makin' for a town over thar," grunted Buck, as he dropped to earth again.

"That'll be Prairie Dog," said Billy. "The old chap—Kelly's his name—has a son there who works at a livery stable. He wants us to fetch the chap over here."

"Then I guess we'll kill two birds with one stone! You left Bandy safe?"

"Fastened up in that lean-to shed behind Kelly's shack; he's safe enough, Buck!"

"Then let's hit th' trail, pard!"

They started off without further discussion. According to the old miner it was a five-mile trudge to the town, but, though tired, the pals did not hesitate. Nor did the fact that the Mexicans were armed while they were not trouble them overmuch. Buck and Billy relied more on fists than guns. After more than an hour's hard walking the town loomed before them, a dingy, irregular bunch of shacks and saloons.

"Kelly says it's a hot place—full of cut-throats and bad men," said Billy.

"We'll make it hotter if necessary, pard!" said Buck grimly. "We'll find them greasers if we have to search the whole town. Hallo, hyer's a likely place."

It was a shady-looking saloon, but a glance inside showed that their quarry was not there, and they moved on to the next. Crowds of men were lounging about in the shade of the single street. They were all hard-bitten, rough-looking customers, and every man carried guns. On all sides the pals met curious and hostile glances. Clearly strangers were not welcome in Prairie Dog.

They found Gomez and Mexican Pete at last. The two were seated at a table in a dark corner of a saloon at the far end of the street. Buck coolly led the way across the saloon to them, ignoring the evil-faced crowd that filled the place. Buck knew that, with two thousand dollars' worth of gold dust on them, the greasers would not dare to start a rough house in there. Once that crowd of gunmen knew it, they would certainly not side with the greasers—or with the pals. They would be after the gold. Moreover, greasers were not popular in the country.

Buck proved to be right. As he sighted his pals, Gomez half rose, and his hand flew

to his hip. But instantly he drew it away again.

"Belter not, greaser!" grinned Buck, seating himself opposite Gomez coolly. "Now, what about that bit of gold dust you took off'n that poor old-timer?"

"Carambo!" hissed Gomez, his eyes glittering with fear as he glanced about the saloon. "Senor, do not start trouble here, or—"

"Just my advice to you, greaser," grinned Buck coolly, reaching over and lifting his own gun from Gomez's belt. "Now we kin talk better, I guess. An' I'll remind you as I c'n shoot straight, which is more'n either you or yore pard c'n. Now—"

Buck halted, suddenly aware of a ghastly, terrified look that had crossed Gomez's face. His eyes were on the door through which four men had just entered. The foremost was a giant of a man, with a big black beard and small, dark eyes, and he carried two guns. Buck's own face went a trifle paler as he recognised the man.

"Holy smoke!" he breathed. "Black Carter! Thar's shore goin' to be fireworks soon!"

It was, indeed, their old enemy, Black Carter—bushwhacker, rustler, road-agent, and the worst character in the whole district. And both Buck and Billy knew that once the rascal sighted them, their lives would not be worth a cent.

But Black had not seen them yet. He entered with noisy boasting and leaned on the bar as he called for drinks. A sudden silence had settled on the saloon—a silence that told eloquently of the fear in which the bushwhacker was held. There was a chance that, if they remained quiet, the rascal would not see them in that dark corner of the room.

Then Gomez's ghastly face brought an idea to Buck. He knew that Gomez at some time or other had double-crossed the rustler, and that Black Carter had sworn to hang the Mexican.

"Quiet, senor!" whined Gomez in a trembling whisper. "For pity's sake do not make one leetle sound. That man—he will keel us all!"

"We'll take a chance on thet, Gomez," said Buck softly. "But you—waal, I reckon it rests with you, greaser! You see thet clock on the wall, thar? Waal, ef you ain't handed over thet gold dust by one minute I'm goin' to hollar out and fetch Black hyer! Git thet, greaser!"

Gomez panted. Buck's eyes were glinting and he knew that the cowboy boxer meant every word he said.

"I—I know nothing of gold dust, senor," he breathed. "You—you would not dare—"

"Ten seconds left, greaser," said Buck, half rising. "I c'n shoot as good as Black, and chance it! I mean it, you yeller-hearted skunk! Hand thet gold dust over— pronto!"

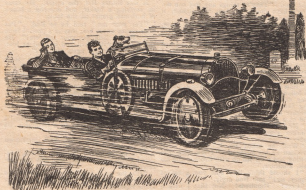
Once again the Mexican's terrified eyes met Buck's steely ones. He saw neither mercy

(Continued on page 44.)

There's Rousing Adventure In These Chapters Of—

OPEN THROTTLE!

By DAVID GOODWIN



Scoundrelly Schemers!

BUD returned, with a load of jellies and parcels, also an enormous haddock, and some hot rolls. He found Cyril in his shirt-sleeves, washing at the kitchen sink. Cyril asked after his mother, and was delighted at the news. Bud expected to find his luxurious boss half dead after a night in his clothes on the couch.

"Me? I'm fit as a fiddle!" cried Cyril, and he looked it. "Only thing that worries me is these giddy tops. They'll set the dogs on me if I go out like this!"

Bud looked at Babbit's dishevelled evening clothes and grinned. In Couper Street, by

daylight, he would look like a comic turn escaped from the music-halls.

"That's all right," he said. "I looked in at the post-office and 'phoned home for your clothes. Mr. Binns is sending 'em along in a taxi."

"What a brain you've got, kid!" said Cyril admiringly. "That would never have occurred to me. Fact is, I got the wind up so yesterday, thinking I was going to lose you—that's what brought me chasing along here. My aunt! But I'm hungry!"

As soon as Bud had the fire lit and his mother's needs attended to upstairs, he cooked the haddock. With hot coffee, rolls

THE OPENING CHAPTERS

Bud Kelly, a clever young motor mechanic, gets a job as chauffeur-coalet to Cyril Babbit, a youthful millionaire. He has a suspicion that Hotham Finch and Barney Finch, Babbit's uncle and cousin respectively, and Joe Clough, a roscally chauffeur, are in league "to get rid" of Cyril.

Clough is arrested for putting into effect a scheme to end Cyril's life—a scheme which misfires, Bud having a miraculously escape. Later, Bud gets fed-up with Babbit's erratic behaviour, and after a heated scene, he clears out and goes to his mother, who, he discovers, is dying. The repentant Cyril turns up at the house, and when he hears of the situation, he gets the services of an eminent specialist, who saves the life of Bud's mother.

(Now read on.)

and butter and marmalade, they had a breakfast together that Cyril declared beat anything that Eaton Terrace ever turned out. Cyril had never come across haddock before. He ate about a pound of it. It was piping hot, and it exactly suited him.

"What a Dickens of a lot of things you can do that I can't, Bud," he said, taking a long swig at the coffee. "Extraordinary chap! Where did you pick it all up?"

"Like you picked me up—by the roadside," said Bud. "They're things any fool can do. You'd have done 'em, too, Mr. Babbit, if you'd had to."

"Nor me! Not in a hundred years. Bud, I'm going to double your salary from to-day."

"What! After what you did for me last night?" exclaimed Bud. "By crabs, I can't take it! Of course, I like all the money I can get, and I've never yet touched twenty-five bob a week; but on the level, sir, I'm not worth four pounds in any market."

"Rats!" replied Cyril. "I know plenty of fellows who pay their shavers four. And they can't cook. And they haven't got a dog like yours. By the way, didn't he bite Crocker last night? Crocker was making no end of a song about it, I remember."

"Mr. Crocker tried to scrag me, sir, and Pincher panned him. I'm sorry about it, but—"

"Well, he asked for it, then," Cyril wrinkled up his forehead. "I say, Bud, I'm getting just a bit fed-up with Crocker and his pal, somehow."

"I should think they cost you a bit of money, sir?" said Bud dryly.

"Cost? Hundreds! Not that I care a button about the money. But I'm sick of them. I wish I could shift them."

"Well, why don't you?"

"How can I?" said Cyril weakly. "They won't go. And a fellow doesn't like to make himself unpleasant in his own house. And they've all got latchkeys to my front door. Had 'em made at my expense. I did get a bit ratty once and told them to push off, but they only laughed at me. What would you do if a big bunch of guys sat themselves down, and wouldn't clear when you told 'em? Call a policeman? He wouldn't interfere—not in a private house."

Bud chuckled.

"Do you really want to shift 'em, sir?"

"Yes, I do!"

"Will your butler, Mr. Binns, obey orders?"

"Yes, rather. He's the only chap in the house that does. But what can old Binney do against a dozen?"

"Telephone Mr. Binns, sir, to smash all the bottles in the cellar, and let the stuff run down the sink. When that's gone they'll go," grinned Bud. "It's what they chiefly come for. I know 'em."

Cyril sat back and stared at him in admiration.

"Another brain-wave," he said. "It must be living on haddocks, Bud, that makes you

one of the world's greatest thinkers. I'd never have got an idea like that. It shall be done. And if they try to come back—"

"If they do Mr. Babbit, I'll show you how to make 'em go in double quick time. I'll shift 'em quicker than they shifted me last night. But I don't think you'll have much more trouble."

"Well, I'm— Halo, who's this?"

"Sparrow-grass! Fine sparrow-grass!" boomed a voice at the shop door.

It was Buster Bill, the coster. He came in, carrying a basket, and dumped a bunch of hothouse grapes on the table.

"For your ma," said he to Bud. "Put your money away, kid; they're a present from me. What! Still got your toff 'ere!" He shook hands with Cyril and beamed at him. "Prahd to meet yer ager, guv'nor!"

"Sit down, Mr. Bill, and have some coffee," said Cyril hospitably.

"Don't mind if I do," replied Bill, seating himself and taking a swig at the jug. "Tain't every day we clear twenty quid. Here's to your toff, Bud. 'E's a proper sport, and may you never get the sack!"

"I did get it last night," said Bud, "and earned it!"

"Skittles!" said Cyril rather angrily. "I never sacked you. I made a blithering ass of myself. It was like this—"

"Never mind about that, sir," interrupted Bud, alarmed.

"I'm going to tell Bill how it was," insisted Cyril, and he did. Bud felt very uncomfortable.

"It's the only time it ever happened to me," concluded Cyril, "and Bud got fed-up. Quite right, too."

"Well, er! You got to make allowances, Bud," said Buster Bill generously, as he lit a black pipe. "What if a toff does go a bit free sometimes when he's had a drink or two? 'Tain't as if we set 'em such a peevish-in' good example. I suppose you got to go back to the West End now, kid? My word, you're missin' something! The make races are on at High Wick ter-day!"

"The what?" said Cyril quickly.

"It's a 'all-holiday," said Bill, "and when I've done me mornin' round I'm pullin' out for High Wick. The Dalston Donkey Club is holdin' its 'all-yearly festival. It's the biggest beano of the season, guv'nor. I'm takin' my moko and light batter along, and between you and me, me and my entry is fancied for the three o'clock race. We're hot stuff, I tell you!"

"What do you race?"

"Why, the donkey-barrers, guv'nor. Owners up. By crabs, you should see the way them mokes can shift!"

"I see. A sort of giddy Roman chariot race," said Cyril. "Ought to be rather sporty—what?"

"Sport! You never saw nothin' like it at Newmarket!" said Bill. "All the costers in Mile End an' Hackney'll be there—them that's got any real bood stuff in their stables. It's a speciality of ours round Couper Street."

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"Toll me 'bout it," said Cyril. "This sounds pretty good to me."

Buster Bill told him about the costers' race-meeting. Just then Dr. Bolt came in. Bud took him upstairs.

Cyril, left with Bill, listened while the coster described the great donkey festival at the Wick, which Bill and his mates had started as a bi-annual fixture four years ago. It was Bill's pet subject, and he got quite excited. The sporting blood of the Babbitts was fired.

"Ripping!" said Cyril. "We don't get any stunts like that down my end of the town. By gad, I've a mind to come along and see it!"

"You, gov'nor?" exclaimed Bill.

"Rather! I suppose your mates wouldn't mind? I'd like to take a little whirl at this game. I'll bring the car and a load of grub—a Derby hamper, what?"

"Prahd to have you, gov'nor! You're a sport!" said Bill, shaking him by the hand. "We'll show you a bit o' life at the Wick. Here, Bud!"

Bud was told about the fixture, and his eyes glistened. But he shook his head.

"Can't be done," he sighed. "Not to-day!"

"What can't be done!" asked Dr. Bolt, coming downstairs.

Bud explained.

"Now, look here, my lad!" said Dr. Bolt. "You clear out and get some fresh air. You

want a holiday. Your mother's ever so much better, and there's nothing to worry about. You'll do no good hanging about here, and I want the house kept quiet. Go away and get busy. That's doctor's orders."

It was quickly settled, and Dr. Bolt departed.

"Three o'clock at the Wick, then, young gov'nor!" said Bill. "Bud'll show you the way."

"Go out an' buy a ham, Bud!" said Cyril. "Buy half a dozen hams and all the grub you can lay hands on. We'll stand 'em a feed on the course. I'll look after the giddy abop. Business as usual!"

He gave a five-pound note to Bud, who went on his errand with some misgivings. But Cyril had already taken a look round the shop. Always keen on new experiences, Cyril took a fancy to try his hand behind the counter. He doffed his dress-coat and put on an apron. He took down the shutters, and contrived to crack one of the windows in doing so.

Then Cyril had a shock.

Mr. Hocham Finch, accompanied by his son, Barney, walked in, both of them dressed up to the nines.

They had a shock, too, when they found themselves facing the immaculate Cyril, in his evening-dress shirt and an apron, standing up with his knuckles on the counter and an eyeglass in his eye.

"Hallo, Barney!" said Cyril, "what can I do for you? Try a two-hour-sucker, penny a time. What's brought you down here? This is my busy day."

"What the dickens are you paying as, Cyril?" exclaimed Barney.

"That's what I'm asking you, my lad. Keep your hands off the giddy hardbake. No credit given here."

"My dear boy," cried Mr. Finch, "we have been terribly anxious about you. We called at your house, and Binns said you had sent an urgent message for your clothes to be sent to this address. So we told him we would bring them. We've got the bag outside in the car. What's the matter? Has there been an accident?"

"By gad, that's jolly good of you!" said Cyril. "No, no accident. Everything's O.K. Bring in the togs. I'm sick of this rig-out."

He refused to give any explanations till he had changed his clothes. The bag was brought in and Cyril changed in the kitchen, while his uncle and nephew, bewildered at finding themselves in such a place, bombarded him with questions.

Cyril told them about Bud's troubles. Barney and his father listened rather gloomily. They did not at all like what they heard. They had hoped Bud was sacked.

"My dear boy, how noble of you!" cried Hotham warmly. "You are, and always will be, the most open-hearted and generous lad alive. I hope this young chauffeur is not imposing on you. And you have actually handed yourself in this shocking rough neighbourhood on his account?"

"No flies on the neighbourhood," retorted Cyril. "Very sports" set lives here. You ought to meet my pal Buster Bill. I'm going to the coasters' races at the Wick at three o'clock. Bill says it's a beano. And what Buster Bill calls a beano is some beano. You can bet your Sunday shirt on that, my dear uncle."

He told them about the meeting at the Wick. Barney and Hotham propped up their ears. They were very interested. Barney nudged his father meaningly.

"You don't say so!" said Hotham, when Cyril had finished. "Rather a tough crowd, isn't it?"

"All the more fun," said Cyril.

"Dear me! It certainly sounds amazing. Quite a new experience. I think we will go, too."

"The dickens you will!" exclaimed Cyril. "Not much in your line, is it? Hop along with us by all means, if you think you'd like it."

"You bet we'll go!" said Barney, rubbing his hands. "Three o'clock, you say! At the Wick? I think I know where the place is."

Cyril turned round. Bud was standing in the doorway, laden with parcels.

"Bud, Mr. Finch and Mr. Barney are going to join us at the Wick," said Cyril.

"Oh, indeed, sir!" replied Bud dryly.

"By the way, I meant to tell you, Cyril," said Hotham, "they are bringing that man

Cleugh up at the police-court to-day about the smash at Brooklands. But the police will ask for a remand. You won't have to give evidence for a day or two yet."

"All right," said Cyril. "I'm ready when they want me. Though there isn't much I can tel. 'em."

"We must push off now," said Barney; "but we'll meet you at the Wick, old bird."

Mr. Finch and his son left the shop. They got into their car and drove away.

"We must certainly go to the Wick," said Hotham to his son. "It's just the place for us—a meeting like that. We ought to find an opportunity, if we keep our eyes open."

"Just what I thought, dad," said Barney.

"If we had had any luck yesterday," muttered Mr. Finch, "Cyril would never have left Brooklands alive. Things went wrong. However carefully you lay your plans, a bit of bad luck may always spoil them. But Cleugh will keep his head shut, whatever happens. He won't give us away, and nobody would believe him if he did. But we'll have to pay him a lot of money when he comes out. That makes it more necessary than ever that we should get hold of Cyril's fortune."

"We can't try to put him away again," said Barney uneasily. "It's much too dangerous with yesterday's business hanging over us still."

"No," agreed Hotham, "we daren't try that. Besides, there's nobody to do it for us. But, remember, if we can get him into serious trouble it's really just as good. We are both pretty sharp, and we'll watch for our chance to-day. We can't try to do him in, but we can scotch him."

"Yes. If that beggar of a shuver of his doesn't mess us up," said Barney rather gloomily.

"Leave that to me," replied Hotham.

"That boy's not quite so sharp as he thinks."

The Moke Meeting.

AT three o'clock Bud was at the wheel of the big car, steering through the rather dingy thoroughfares a mile or two north of Couper Street, bound for the Wick. Cyril sat at his side.

"It's a funny thing, my uncle Hotham coming all the way down here after me, and then butting into our race meeting," said Cyril reflectively.

Bud thought it was more than funny. He thought it was fishy.

"Did you say you saw him in Couper Street last night as well, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, I'll swear I did. So he must have known where I was, before Binns told him this morning."

"He seems to stick to you like glue, sir," remarked Bud. "He and Mr. Barney."

Cyril passed, and seemed to be thinking it over.

"I say, Bud," said he, "what do you think of my uncle Hotham?"

"I'd rather not tell you, sir," replied Bud slowly. "I don't like makin' accusations against people, unless I'm sure what their game is. And I'm not sure yet. But I think I soon will be. There's one thing I'll say straight out, though, if you won't be offended."

"I shan't be offended. Fire ahead."

"Well, he and Barney told you a pack of lies yesterday about the race, and the car, and the axle. It was all mighty smart. But there wasn't a word of truth in it."

"Think so? Such a lot of people tell me lies," said Cyril rather gloomily. "It's a rummy thing, but if you happen to be a rich chap, somebody's always pinching you the tale. I've got so as I hardly notice it. Chaps always want something out of me."

"I dare say, sir," said Bud, grinning. "I hear a good few lie myself, but being poor, I can't afford to believe 'em. As we understand each other a bit better now, Mr. Babbitt, I'll tell you what I didn't like to tell you yesterday. Your uncle and Mr. Barney are a couple of wrong 'uns, and if I were you I'd give them a wide berth, or they'll jolly soon do you a mischief."

"That's putting it rather strong," murmured Cyril. "Barney and his dad have never done me any harm that I know of, and I can't see why the dickens they should want to, either. You're a sharp kid, Bud, but you may have made a mistake. Still," he added cheerfully, "be hanged to Barney Finch. I'm not going to think any more about it. I'm out for a good time to-day. Hallo! What's this?"

"The Wick!" said Bud.

They drove through a muddy lane with half-built houses and piles of bricks and scaffolding on either side, which suddenly opened out on to a wide, grassy space of wasteland, more than half a mile across.

This was the Wick. It was nearly circular, hemmed in all round by fences and small houses and the walls of back gardens. There were only two entrances to it, both of them narrow.

A bunch of gipsy caravans stood at the nearer end, and three or four tents. Hobbled horses were grazing near the caravans, and there was quite a squadron of costers' donkeys and barrows gathered together. A crowd of over a hundred men and boys had assembled. They were making enough noise to raise the dead, and a mouth-organ and concertina band discoursed sweet music.

Four donkeys, each harnessed to a barrow, and driven by its owner, were cantering round the course, cheered on their way by the excited shouts of the mob.

"This is the giddy arena, is it?" exclaimed Cyril. "By gad, Bud, we're late. The fun's begun. And yonder is my uncle's car!"

Bud drove straight across the grass towards the crowd. Mr. Finch and Barney were standing up in their motor, watching the race, but catching sight of Cyril, they descended and came to meet him.

"We were afraid you'd missed your way, Cyril," said Mr. Finch, beaming. "Most

amusing entertainment, my dear boy. The simple pleasures of the honest poor."

"Yes," replied Cyril. "But don't give 'em any of that stuff, uncle, or you might get your face pushed in. Which snake have you put your money on, Barney? Gee! What a finish!"

There was a mingled roar of jeers and cheers from the crowd as the leading donkey-barrow finished in a canter, three lengths ahead of the second, the driver, a boy of fifteen, whooping like a demon.

"Lady Lucy wins the Banana Stakes, Tug Ellis up!" cried Buster Bill. "Good on yer, Tug!" He turned round, and seeing Cyril's car, waved his hat in welcome. "Come on, young gu'nor. This way to the grand-stand. I'll pass yer through!"

The crowd, their attention attracted by Babbitt's big car, gathered round it. A huge thick-set man with pearl buttons and a face like a prizefighter's pushed his way forward.

"What! More toffs!" he exclaimed. "Pay yer footing."

"Cheese it, Ike," said Buster Bill in a pained voice. "Am I clerk o' the course, or ain't I? This here toff is a pal of mine, and one o' the best. He don't pay no footing. He's bought Cooper Street."

"I don't care if 'e's bought London. His sort don't come bustin' in here wiv a free ticket," said Ike, the Bashier, ferociously. "You may be clerk o' the blessed course, but I can break your jaw in less than two ticks, and I'm ready to oblige."

"Come on, then, an' do it!" snorted Buster Bill, stripping his coat.

"Peace, peace, my friends," bleated Babbitt. "Let us not mar the merry meeting with strife. Lots of footing here, Bud, produce the ham!"

Bud dived into the hamper, and held up a magnificent York ham with a frill round its neck.

"Special prize for the next race!" announced Cyril, fixing his eyeglass, and smiling genially on the crowd as he waved his hand towards the ham. "Three more hams here—lunch for the stewards and committee. The gentleman with the pearl buttons is invited to help himself."

The crowd cheered, Cyril had done the right thing in the right way, Bud was surprised. He did not think Cyril had so much sense. Ike, the Bashier, shook him by the hand, and declared Cyril was a sport, and that Ike was ready to break the jaw of anyone who disagreed.

"Course he's a sport!" said Bill, and began to ring a dinner-bell violently. "Second event on the programme!" he roared. "Bareback Rodeo race, for bona-fide barrier boys under fifteen years of age. All-mile circular course. Stakes, five-and-a-tanner, with one twenty pound York ham added. Bring out yer bronchos an' get busy!"

(Don't miss the further adventures of Cyril and Bud at the male meeting. Next week's chapters are full of fun and thrills. Make sure of your copy of the "Nelson Lee.")

"THE GHOST TOWN!"

(Continued from page 38.)

nor weakness there. He knew Buck would keep his word, whatever the consequences. With a hissing Spanish oath he drew a leather bag from beneath his ornamented jacket and placed it gently on the table. Buck calmly reached over, picked it up and pocketed it.

"That's good 'ough, greasers! As you've come over with the goods, I guess we'll save you burned bacon and lead that bushwhacker away from you. C'm' on, pard—and git ready to burn leather!"

With the gold dust safe in his pocket, Buck nodded to Billy and the pair calmly started for the door, both with their eyes fixed wryly on Black Carter's back.

They passed within a foot of the burly ruffian, who was drinking at the moment. A yard from the swing doors Buck glanced back. His keen eyes caught a glimpse of a mirror behind the bar—of Black's evil face in it as he drank. "And then—"

Black had seen him in the mirror. Buck caught the sudden glaze of recognition in his eyes. There was a spluttering oath—the smashing of a glass on the counter.

"Hit it, pard!" hissed Buck.
He fairly hurled his pal through the swing doors and leaped out after him. There followed the roar of six-guns and the smashing of glass as lead crashed through the glass doors. With Billy at his heels, Buck were round the building to the back, and then up a narrow opening. A low door stood open, and Buck darted through this.

They found themselves in an eating-house. From the street came an uproar of shouts. The eating-house proprietor eyed them suspiciously as they coolly seated themselves at a table. Buck ordered coffee, and, after hesi-

tating, the man grinned and departed to get the coffee. He guessed they were the cause of the commotion, but it was none of his business.

He was just bringing the coffee in when the clatter of hoods came from the street. Through the window they glimpsed the bearded face of Black Carter as he led three other evil-looking ruffians past the eating-house at a mad gallop.

"And that's that!" murmured Buck, as the thunder of hoods died away. "I kinder reckon Black must think as we had hoses an' have hit the trail on 'em. I shore don't reckon he'll keech either us or them greasers way as he's goin'. Waal, we'll take it easy, pard, an' then we'll hunt up this hyer Kelly feller. Black seems to hev' no luck with us, same as them greasers!"

From the friendly eating-house proprietor they learned where Kelly junior was employed, and they found him a cheery, decent sort of youth. They told the story, and the proprietor's son, grateful, but still anxious, hurriedly got three horses out, and they hit the trail at top speed for the ghost town. But he need not have feared. They found the old prospector still on guard with his frontier gun, and the old man's joy at the recovery of his dust was gratifying, if a trifle embarrassing, to the pair.

The three barstiffs stayed the night at the shack. Then, after a hearty breakfast, they bade farewell to the prospector and his son and set out on the trail again in search of new adventures, not sorry to leave behind the eerie ghost town.

(Keep going with our boxing pals of the prairie for thrills. They are on the scene again next week in another eye-fogging adventure, entitled, "The Runners of the Prairie!" Don't miss it.)

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