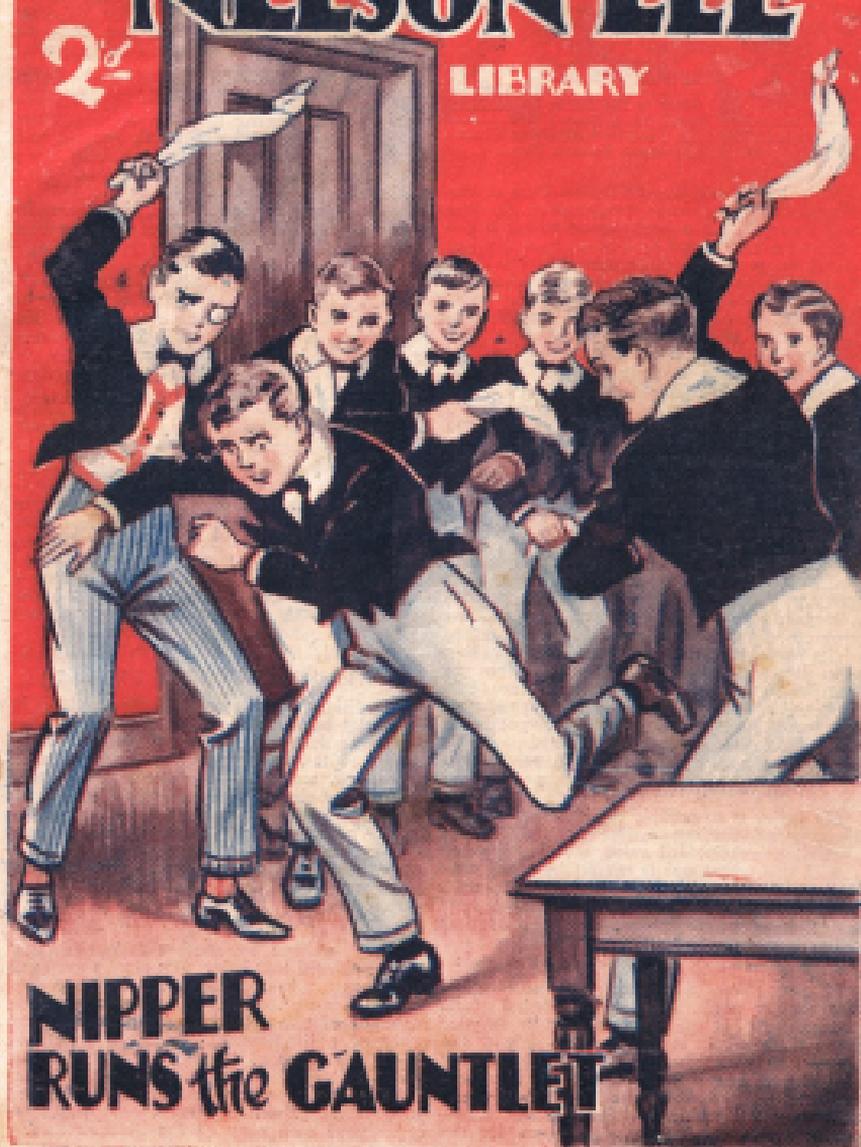


SUPER PROGRAMME OF NEW STORIES!

# THE NELSON LEE

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**NIPPER**  
**RUNS** *the* **GAUNTLET**

New Series No. 1.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

February 25th, 1933.

Here We Are Again For—



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

My Dear Readers,—With this issue of the Nelson Lee our new programme is put before you. It is a programme which is the result of a very great deal of anxious thought on my part. I can claim that it is the fruit of many years' editorial experience, vituperated by the very careful study of the many thousands of letters received from Nelson Lee readers, and I feel that I can swear your verdict upon it with confidence.

No programme is so good that it is incapable of improvement, and I have many ideas for new features, and some outstandingly good stories still in reserve. These will be thoroughly edited and long and carefully considered, and, in due course, they will appear before you in the pages of the Nelson Lee.

#### MY POLICY—

Our paper has never been one of the flamboyant type, full of highly coloured pictures and still more highly coloured stories. For many years it has made a steady appeal to a large circle of intelligent readers, making progress through the quiet recommendation of its readers to their personal friends rather than by means of spectacular offers or grandiose advertising schemes. In regard to "value for money," its forty-four pages give it a commanding position in this respect over any of its contemporaries, while in quality of reading matter offered, I am more than content to back the present programme against all-comers.

My policy is to provide the greatest possible quantity of reading matter of the highest possible entertainment value, and I ask every one of you whose eye is caught by these lines to read this issue of Nelson Lee through from cover to cover, and then judge how far I have succeeded in carrying out that policy.

#### —AND YOUR POLICY.

If you think, after fair consideration of the matter, that I have succeeded (and naturally, I am quietly confident as to your verdict), then it is up to you, friend the reader, to give the Old Paper a leg-up by securing a new reader for it. That should be your policy! If each of my friends—and that is every reader of the Nelson Lee—would obtain one new reader apiece for the

good Old Paper, what a magnificent achievement it would be! Yet it is easily within the bounds of possibility, and I appeal to each one of you to make it your definite policy to do this.

And I know I shall not have to appeal in vain!

#### NEXT WEEK'S SPLENDID PROGRAMME.

Now, having said my say about my policy—and what I think you all will make your policy—let us see what there is in store for you next Wednesday.

The top-line story in our next programme is, of course, the St. Frank's yarn, and the title of it is:

#### "KIDNAPPED!"

In boyish, breezy and fascinating style, Nipper tells of the second stage in his adventures as a member of the Remore Firm at St. Frank's. These adventures—are, of course, set down for publication by the popular Roby Scarboe Books.

A new boy named Justin B. Ferman, who hails from California, comes to the school, and, in the language of his own country, he is a "reg'lar guy." He proves to be very popular with everybody.

There seems to be, however, some mystery about the new boy which baffles Nelson Lee. The mystery gains ground when Ferman is kidnapped, and there follow many thrilling adventures for Nelson Lee and Nipper & Co. in tracing the kidnapers to rescue the new boy. This is a magnificent yarn that will compel your interest throughout.

#### "THE SQUADRON OF DEATH!"

is the title of the second thrilling story in the series by Mr. Stanton Hope dealing with a message from the East in the year 1945. Mr. Hope is a much-travelled author of wide experience, and what he doesn't know about writing first-class stories for boys is not worth knowing. You'll enjoy immensely the further adventures of Val, Mike and Pompey against the Mongolian menace.

There will, of course, be another stirring instalment of

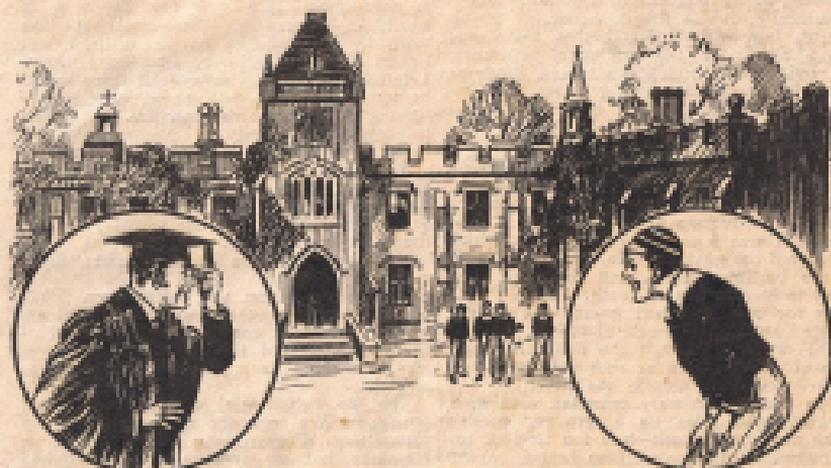
#### "OPEN THROTTLE!"

which is written by another favourite boys' author—David Goodwin. His stories are even more popular to-day than when he started to write years ago. Don't miss reading one instalment of this splendid serial, for it is the story of a life-time.

Another batch of "Smiles" from readers, and another talk with your Editor will complete our next grand programme. Tell all your chums about it—but don't forget to order your own copy of the NELSON LEE.

*Magnificent Yarn of the Adventures at St. Frank's of—*

# NIPPER—NEW BOY!



In this grand long complete story, which is prepared for publication by EDWY SEARLES BROOKS, Nipper tells, in his own breezy style, of the first experiences of himself and Nelson Lee at St. Frank's—Nipper as a member of the Remove Form, Nelson Lee as a Housemaster.

## Foreword.

**T**HIS first bit is a kind of introduction. I feel bound to shove it down before I start on the real yarn. It's necessary. But I won't make it very long—and that may be a comfort.

The gov'nor had gone to the United States after a foreign-jobbing named Ferroll. In some outlandish place called Snake City, in Colorado, Nelson Lee ran his man down. Ferroll, however, was very much alive, and things got exciting.

The gov'nor's one of the keenest chaps living, and it wasn't through any fault or carelessness of his that he got collared. Some rotten "gambler" got hold of him and chucked him down the shaft of a deserted mine.

While trying to get out, the gov'nor accidentally stumbled upon the secret meeting-place of the Fu-Chang-Tong. It's a terrible Chinese secret society—that's what "Tong" means, I believe—and the yellow brutes tried to kill Nelson Lee.

They didn't, and he made them believe that he was possessed of amazing, uncanny powers. So the Fu-Changs made him a member of the Tong—a "blood-brother." It was the only way of escape that was open to the gov'nor; he was forced to join in order to save his skin.

But, having joined, he found that yards of trouble went with it. The Fu-Chang Hightons told him that he had to stay in Snake City, and attend all their meetings, and do any dirty work which was allotted to him.

He didn't see the fun of it, and, having seen Ferroll in good, he skipped for New York. He had expected trouble—and he found it! The Fu-Chang-Tong was a grim secret society, with branches in almost every big city in the world.

On the way to New York, and in New York, Nelson Lee was attacked several times. But, owing to his vigilance, he outwitted the Chinese scoundrels every time. Then he arrived in England, and I met him at Liverpool.

On the quay we were attacked by a crowd of Chinese dock-labourers, and were only just rescued in time by some plucky blue-jackets.

Well, that incident told the gov'ner that the vengeance of the Fu-Chang had followed him to England. In the train on the way to London, Lee seriously told us that he expected to be dead within a month.

Naturally, I was thunderstruck.

And, later on, I found that there was ample cause for the gov'ner's pessimism. He and I were attacked a second time—on this occasion while walking along the Embankment. I was bowled out, and Nelson Lee was taken in a boat to a filthy opium-den in the neighbourhood of Wapping.

I found this out afterwards, for, having recovered, I at once jugged up the police, and several raids were made on the known haunts of Chinamen in London. By a lucky chance, I was with the raiding-party which discovered the gov'ner. He was in the hands of the Fu-Chang-Tong, and they had been about to torture him to death.

By my action, I had gained the amnesty of the Tong, and the pair of us—the gov'ner and I—were faced with the delightful prospect of being knifed or shot as soon as we showed our faces outside the door.

You see, an ordinary criminal, such as a burglar, who owes as a grudge, doesn't make any open attack—he's too fond of his own skin. But these Chinese bachelors, having been ordered by the Tong to kill us, didn't care a jot about their own safety.

We were in a fearful predicament.

Death was certain unless we thought of some wheeze which would cause us to completely disappear. It occurred that the Fu-Chang-Tong would drop all activity if we succeeded in avoiding their clutches for the period of six months. After six months, according to the laws of the Tong, we were safe from attack.

So, if we could only vanish for that space of time, we should be as safe as eggs when we resumed our real identities. But how could we vanish? If we hopped off to Venice, or Rome, or Australia, or any other place, we should be followed and "done in." That was certain.

It was little me who thought of a wheeze.

A stout and prosperous old individual named Sir Rupert Mandlerly, Bart., had called at Gray's Inn Road while the gov'ner was out. He was a governor of St. Francis' College, a big public school in the south of England.

It seemed that a Mr. Thorne, a House-master at the school, had mysteriously disappeared. Sir Rupert wanted the gov'ner to find the missing master. Sir Rupert, too, was an old friend of Nelson Lee's—at least, he had been acquainted with the gov'ner for some years.

Lee rang Sir Rupert up, and the old merchant came round to us. Then, in plain language, the gov'ner told Sir Rupert of the whole trouble. He explained that we

were "marked down" for immediate death. If, however, we could adopt new identities, and live for six months in a totally different sphere of life, we should be safe from attack.

My idea was simplicity itself. A House-master at St. Francis' College (it was called St. Francis' College for short) had disappeared. Well, Nelson Lee was to go down to the school—as a master! He was, in short, to become a House-master for six months. And I was to join one of the Lower School Forms as a junior schoolboy! Being a junior I should be safer—and there would be more fun. It would be as easy as pie for me to drop into the new life. I revelled in the prospect.

So Rupert shook his head, and frowned and bowed. But, in the end, he realized that the scheme was a splendid one. He promised to do his very best. He would let us know the decision of the school governors the next day. Sir Rupert being the chairman of governors, he had the most "say" in the matter.

Well, the decision was satisfactory. We were to take up the new life. The head-master had been confidentially informed of the facts—but not the other governors. It was as well to keep the thing as secret as possible.

The die being cast, the gov'ner and I got busy. We took the most extraordinary precautions. Preparations were made for a big-game hunting trip to Central Africa; everything was got ready. Passages were booked in a big liner which was leaving Southampton in a couple of days.

This was a blind, of course. The Fu-Changs would think that we were trying to elude them by fleeing to Africa. The trail being smothered, the gov'ner disguised himself in the most elaborate manner; he took six solid hours over that make-up. It was to be permanent—for six months—and so extra care was necessary.

I didn't use any make-up at all. I simply got rigged out in schoolboy's clothing, and dyed my hair and eyebrows a light brown. The dye was some ripping stuff of the gov'ner's making—he's a clever chemist—and it had the effect of making my hair curly, too. I was changed into a fair-haired schoolboy of about fifteen. I was taking a supply of the dye with me, so there would be no difficulty in making my hair keep its new colour.

Nelson Lee took his departure first; he left in the early morning. I followed him by an afternoon train. But we didn't leave our rooms in Gray's Inn Road by the usual method. We got out on to the roof, and passed along the leads to a building some little distance down. We were, of course, quite invisible from the road, and from any other house. And we didn't do the roof-journey together. The gov'ner left hours before me.

We got through the skylight of the other building—which was the engraving works of Messrs. Bewick, Norton & Co. Some little

time before, Nelson Lee had become acquainted with Mr. Bevison, and he readily consented to the idea. He thought that we were off on some detective dodge or other.

Well, we simply left the engraving establishment as ordinary customers. If there were any Fu-Ching men watching, they could not guess anything. As a matter of fact, I don't believe the Tong men were watching.

I wasn't in schoolboy's clothing then; I changed in the train, on the way down to St. Frank's. It was a bit humiliating sneaking out of our own rooms in that way, but there was no help for it. The gaw'ner took all sorts of other precautions; he had false walls, with the help of trowel assistants, and there was no fear of us being spotted and followed.

Well, to cut it short, our escape was a complete success. We got away safely and easily. And Nelson Lee and Nipper had utterly vanished. For six months we were to be non-existent. We dropped our names, our identities, and our habits.

We became totally different persons—and our sojourn at St. Frank's commenced. I'm now going to write all about it; the queerest episode of our lives, in a way. For, instead of being detective and assistant, we become master and pupil!

— —

## CHAPTER I.

### My Arrival!

**R**ICHARD BASIL HERBERT BENNETT stepped out of the train on to the sun-scorched platform of Bellison Station. There was a look of sunny anticipation on his good-natured face, and his curly fair hair escaped in an unruly fashion from beneath his cap.

"Not bad!" he remarked critically, eyeing the picturesque country station, and the green hedges and fields all around. "Not bad at all. In fact, it's distinctly good."

Perhaps it would be as well to state that Richard Basil Herbert Bennett was merely another way of spelling Nipper. I had arrived at Bellison, the station for St. Frank's, and I was feeling uncomfortable, but cheery.

I was uncomfortable because my Eton jacket was somewhat short. I don't mean that it was too small for me. But Eton jackets are absurd things, anyhow. I'd been feeling for my side coat pockets for hours.

It was evening, and the sun was shining from a clear blue sky. I couldn't have arrived in better weather, at all events. And it was glorious to feel that I was free—free to walk about without hearing an attack from behind. The Fu-Changs were dished, and the gaw'ner and I were safe.

I was looking forward in a good time at St. Frank's. Apart from the novelty of the whole situation, I knew that the gaw'ner and I would be healthier and fitter for real work when we returned to Gray's Inn Road once more.

Of course, not a word of the truth was

to leak out to a soul at the school. Only Dr. Stafford, the headmaster, knew the actual facts. Nelson Lee was just an ordinary master, and I was a common-or-garden schoolboy.

It had been decided that I should go into the Fourth Form. As regards knowledge, I believe I was learned enough to enter the Fifth or Sixth; but I didn't care to become a senior. Among the juniors I should be lost completely; I should be far less conspicuous in a Junior Form.

I had been studying the geography of the district rather closely, and St. Frank's, I knew, was situated about three miles from the Sussex coast. The village of Bellison was just a mile from the school.

Having deposited me upon the gravel-covered platform, the slow branch-line train proceeded upon its weary way. Except for a hot-looking farmer person, I was the only passenger to alight.

I gripped my travelling-bag, and hastened to the end of the platform to inspect the removal of my trunk, which had been shot out of the guard's van with unnecessary force.

There was an aged porter craning the trunk in a doubtful fashion. It was big, certainly, and the porter was small. But what are half-way porters for? It wasn't any good looking at the thing, anyhow.

"I reckon you be for the school, master?" sneered the old fellow.

"Your reckoning is a dead correct!" I replied. "How do the fellows get their trunks up there?"

"If that was the last day of a new term, which it ain't, there'd be the school brakes down here, sir," said the porter solemnly. "You'll have to have this here trunk taken up by the carrier. He'll be along by seven o'clock."

"All right!" I said. "You attend to that for me. Which is the road to the school? Straight on, I suppose?"

The porter scratched his head.

"You can go by the road, or you can go by the towin'-path, along o' the river," he said. "The towin'-path be a little shorter, I dare say. That ain't far which ever way you go. You'll likely meet some o' the boys, an' they'll tell ye."

I gave the old fellow a shilling, and then passed out of the station. Right opposite lay the River Stove—quite a decent stream.

The village itself was a little farther on, over the bridge, nestling in a hollow. The sun was shining on the river gloriously, and I decided to take the towing-path route. The roads were dusty, and I didn't want to arrive at St. Frank's looking like a miller.

Just at that moment, as I gripped my bag more firmly and stepped out, I saw a smart little boat about under the bridge, and glide along smoothly, the oarsmen resting for a few moments. The boat was occupied by three boys.

They wore in white flannels and school caps. The caps were olive green with yellow circles round them. I could see that the bot-

lows were juniors—Fourth-Formers, most likely. This was a good opportunity to introduce myself. I grinned slightly as I ran to a mile, and kept over it. I wondered how long it would take me to drop into the new life.

"Aho! there, ye laddies!" I shouted cheerily.

The boat drew in to the bank, and I found myself looking at three good-natured faces, which, at the present moment, were somewhat clouded. Two of the fellows were dark, and the other fair.

"Were you calling to us by any chance?" inquired the fair chap.

"Right on the wicket!" I said calmly.

"You're St. Frank's chaps, I suppose?"

"That's right."

"Good!" I exclaimed. "I'm a new chap—just arrived. Going into the Fourth. Hope you're in the Fourth! You look decent fellows!"

The three juniors exchanged glances. "As it happens, we do belong to the Fourth—but it's called the Reserve at St. Frank's," said one of the dark fellows. "Awfully good of you to say that we look decent! We're overflowing with conceit. But let me tell you something."

"Go ahead!" I said, stepping aboard. "We live and learn, you know."

"My hat! You've got a dashed lot to say for a new kid!" exclaimed the oarsman. "The something I was going to tell you is this: We don't allow new kids to call us laddies—understand? Do I make myself plain?"

"My dear chap, you didn't make yourself plain," I said cheerfully. "That's nature. You can't help it, and I don't blame you in the least."

The two other juniors chuckled.

"Why not get out and wipe him up, Roddy?" said one of them. "Of course, he's not far wrong—"

"You silly laddies!" roared Roddy, glaring.

"Hope I'm not causing trouble in the family?" I asked anxiously. "Or were you calling me a silly laddie? If so, I forgive you. I thought, perhaps, you were going along to the school. In that case, I'll help to make the rowing a bit easier."

I stepped into the boat, which was quite close to the bank, and sat down. The three juniors gazed at me wrathfully.

"Look out! Get out of this boat, you cheeky rotter!" shouted one of them.

"Oh, don't be wicked!" I protested. "I'm Dick Barnett, and I'm going into the Reserve. I'm weary and footsore, and the prospect of walking to St. Frank's appeals to me. Don't be rough on a chap!"

Suddenly one of the dark boys commenced laughing.

"You're a bit a corker, anyhow," he said. "I'm Bob Christie, and these fellows are Roddy Yorke and Charlie Talmadge. We're all in the Reserve—College House, of course. If you're not in the College House, you'll get turned out of this boat on your neck!"

"He'll get turned out on his neck, in any case, said Talmadge, the fair one. "Do you think we're going to stand this chap's rotten nerve, Bob Christie? I'm not, anyhow!"

I was inwardly chuckling, but I looked serious.

"If there's going to be trouble, why not wait until later on?" I suggested. "We can't scrap in this boat, can we? And, if it'll smooth the troubled waters, I'll take the oars and do all the rowing. My arms aren't footsore in the least!"

"Well, by Jove," said Roddy Yorke, "you're hot stuff for a new kid! I dare say you'll improve by keeping. Hand over the oars, Tally, and give the chap a chance to show what he can do. If he's no good, we'll pitch him out."

Talmadge, still glaring, handed over the oars.

I took them without a word. I liked these three chaps, and I knew that they were quite justified in being wrathful. I'd made up my mind, however, to "surprise the natives" at St. Frank's. Going to school again was rather good, and I didn't see why I shouldn't make things hum a bit.

The gun'or will tell anybody that I'm rather handy with a pair of oars. He'd probably say more, but modesty compels me to remain quiet on the subject. I didn't mean to display my oarsmanship straight off, however.

Watched very critically by Bob Christie and Co., I pushed the boat off and obediently fumbled about with the oars, causing a deal of splashing. Then I started rowing seriously and jerkily. Christie and Talmadge and Yorke grinned.

"Do you call that rowing?" demanded Talmadge sarcastically.

"Eh?" I puzzled. "No, that's not rowing. I was just waiting to see how you were going to pitch me out." Then I lost my back again. "Still, if you're anxious to see my real form, here goes!"

This time I used all the skill I was capable of. The boat sped through the water smoothly, the water hissing against the bows musically. My oars didn't make a sound, and they were as regular as clockwork. It was easy to me, and I was good for two or three miles.

The banks and the trees swept by rapidly, and Christie, who was steering, was beginning to look surprised. His chums, too, were quickly losing their freedom. I knew that an exhibition of good oarsmanship would dispel all unpleasantness.

"My hat! You can row, kid!" said Christie with frank admiration.

I grinned, but said nothing. I merely put my back into the work with greater vigour, and the boat simply flew through the water, and by the time the school landing-stage was reached I was going as strongly as ever, and lay back without even being out of breath. Nelson Lee's training had made me strong and hardy, and this exercise was merely enjoyable.

After we'd landed, Bob Christie & Co. were much more genial, and I determined

not to rub them the wrong way again. I wanted to learn things, and these fellows could tell me a lot.

Through the trees I caught my first glimpse of St. Frank's. Well, I'd arrived, and I'd made friends with three fellows within the first half-hour, which wasn't so bad.

## CHAPTER 2.

### Tea in Study Q.

**B**OB CHRISTINE clapped me on the back.

"That was first-rate, Bennett!" he exclaimed. "You said your name was Bennett, didn't you? If it wasn't for your check—"

I grinned.

"I suppose I was a bit fresh," I said frankly. "No real harm done, is there? I don't want to put your backs up, you know. Sorry if I didn't strike you as being much enough for a new kid."

"Well, that's rather decent of you!" said Talmadge. "We're easy enough to get on with if you don't show too much nerve. Nerve in a new kid isn't tolerated at St. Frank's. Learn me! Did you say you were a Monk?"

"A which?" I asked, staring.

"Oh, you're ignorant of our little ways, ain't you?" grinned Talmadge. "You see, the College House fellows are known as Monks. In the dim past, the College House used to be a monastery, you know."

"I see! And I suppose there's another House?"

"Well, the chaps who are in it call it the Ancient House. We don't!" put in Rocky Yorko. "We call it a home for slackers and rascals. The Ancient House has gone to seed, my son—clean gone to seed. Fullwood and his gang ran the show, and a nice mark they make of it, too!"

"I dare say I shall hear all about Fullwood in due course," I said cheerfully. "Just at present I'm pining for some grub. How do you feel here—at tea-time, I mean? In Hall, or in your own studies?"

"In Hall if we're stony, and in our studies if we can rake up the grub," grinned Bob Christine. "Tell you what, you fellows! We'll have Bennett to tea in Study Q. While we're feeding, we'll tell him the general information of the place."

"That's ripping!" I said gladly. "I'll stand my check, you know—"

"Haha! You can be our guest, I suppose!" growled Talmadge.

"Thanks!" I said. "I can, and I will. You're decent."

"Hold on!" said Yorko. "You didn't say whether you were a Monk or not—that is, a College House chap. If you're a Fossil—"

"Fossil?" I gasped.

"Exactly! Ancient House fellows are known as Fossils," grinned Yorko. "They are Fossils, too. Being ancient, they must be fossils—see? That stands to reason. You see, if you're a Fossil, we can't possibly have you to tea in the College House. Fossils are barred."

I checked.

"I'm a neutral at present," I replied.

"All I know is that I'm going into the Remove. From what you say, I gather that you'd rather be heard dead than belong to the Ancient House. Suppose we delay this discussion until later?"

"Right-ho!" said Bob Christine. "This way, kid."

I smiled inwardly.

It was rather rich being called a kid in this fashion. Still, it was all part of the whimsy, and I was enjoying myself hugely.

The gamester would have a good laugh when I told him all about it in due course.

It seemed certain that Bob Christine was a leading light in the Remove, and I later discovered that he was the Form captain, and recognized leader of the College House priors. He

and Talmadge and Yorko shared Study Q, in the Remove passage.

They were not quite certain about my New chaps were usually nervous and reticent; but I had plenty of assurance, and I didn't see why I should be set upon. They all agreed that I possessed too much cheek; but then the gamester's told me that many a time. It's just a gift of mine.

From the bathhouse we walked along a path which skirted the playing-fields. I regarded them with approval. They were well kept, and the grass was splendid. Over on Big Side a number of seniors, in flannels, were hard at work at the nets. The "click" of bat meeting ball sounded pleasantly in my ears. On Little Side, too, there was considerable activity. Remove fellows were practising, and a noisy crowd of Third Form boys were playing a scratch match. It was a lively scene, and it pleased my eyes. I'm rather good at cricket, I believe. Perhaps I should have a chance of proving my prowess before long.

After the exciting times in London, all this seemed awfully peaceful. The Fu-Chang, Tong and all its works seemed millions of miles away.

We passed through a little gateway, and Bob Christine waved his hand.

"That's the old show," he said with a smile. "Not bad, eh?"

### DO YOU KNOW A GOOD JOKE ?

If so, don't keep it to yourself. Splendid Pocket Wallets, Pen-knives, and Grand Prizes are awarded to readers whose jokes are published. See Page 18.

I nodded approvingly. St. Frank's was a special place. There were two main Houses, the College House and the Ancient House. They formed a kind of letter A, the northern end of both houses being much wider apart than the southern. The wide, open space in front—in most schools called a quadrangle—was known at St. Frank's as the Triangle.

Both Houses were ivy-covered, and they looked delightful in the evening sunlight. Bob Christie & Co. had been for a run down the river between afternoon lessons and tea-time. Seniors and juniors were now pouring in from the playing-fields and other quarters for tea.

I noticed that many fellows were wearing caps of the same pattern as Christine's, but coloured blue and gold instead of green and yellow. These, I found, were Ancient House boys.

I received many glances as I marched across the Triangle, and lots of fellows took a great interest in me; but, for the present, I was concerned with Christine and his chums. Besides, I was hungry.

"That's Fullwood over there," remarked Christine, with a nod of his head. "It's not in my line to preach, Bennett, but I'll advise you to steer clear of that rotter! He's absolutely N.G."

I looked over towards the Ancient House, and saw a shaggy fellow lounging on the broad stone steps. He was attired in spotless khaki, and the crease in his trousers was perfect. His heavy waistcoat almost glared at me.

"Fullwood!" I said meaningly. "I'll remember him. Is he a—a Monk?"

"A Monk!" sneered Talmaige, who seemed somewhat hot-tempered, and ready to fire up at a moment's notice. "We wouldn't touch the beast with a barge-pole! He's the leader of the Ancient House Remover, and a regular brawler. At one time there used to be a friendly rivalry between the two Houses, but that's practically dead. The Fossils are used up! They haven't got an ounce of sportsmanship among the whole crowd! They're a mouldy lot!" added Talmaige bluntly.

I didn't say anything, but I was thinking hard. Privately, I rather fancied the Ancient House. Nelson Lee was the new Housemaster there, and I was practically bound to become a Fossil. But I didn't say anything to my new friends. I'd been invited to tea, and I didn't want to spoil the harmony.

We entered the College House, and turned from the big lobby into a wide passage, with numerous doors on either side. On each door there was a capital letter, painted in gold.

"The juniors' studies here are lettered, not numbered, as in some schools," remarked Christine. "A to N in the Ancient House and O to X in this House. Rather a cheek the Fossils having two more studies than we have, but it can't be helped. Here we are!"

We had arrived at Study Q, and Christine kicked the door open. I entered and placed my bag on a chair. The little apartment was quite comfortable, although plain both in furniture and decorations. Within ten minutes we were sitting down to a hearty tea, the kettle having been boiled on a spirit-stove.

Christie & Co. were very genial to me, and I was glad. Whether I remained in the College House or not, I knew that these three fellows were my friends. They were decent chaps, every one.

We'd just got settled down when there was a tramp of feet in the passage, and the door opened without ceremony.

"Got any caps to spare, you fellows?" asked a cheerful voice. "We're— Hullo! A visitor! I didn't know you were entertaining a guest."

"It's all right, Clapson, old scout," laughed Bob Christie. "This is Bennett, a new kid. He's in the Remover. Stay to tea! Oh, you've brought the whole family! Never mind. We'll make room, and there's plenty of tummy."

Three juniors crowded into the study, and I was introduced to Len Clapson, Harry Oldfield, and Billy Nation, of Study X. They were rivals of Christie & Co. in the College House, but stayed jabs nevertheless. They accepted me without question as "the right sort." My progress in Study Q proved that.

"I suppose you're in this House?" asked Clapson, after a while. "You'll find rooms in Study X—next to mine, you know. There's only Page and Turner there—"

"I'm not fixed up yet," I said, with my mouth full.

"Oh! We shall have to fix you, then?"

"I rather fancy the Ancient House myself," I went on hesitantly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The six juniors roared.

"Did I say anything funny?" I asked, looking round in surprise.

"Funny's not the word!" grinned Christine. "Don't you remember what I told you? The Ancient House is a home for rotters and cuds. Of course, there are some decent fellows—Tregalby-Wain and Watson and Headforth, and a few others—but Fullwood & Co. are automatic there. They've killed all decency in the Ancient House."

"Why aren't they booted out?" I asked curiously.

"There may be a difference now that there's a new Housemaster," said Christine. "Old Thorne's game-goddess knows where—and Fullwood's upset. He won't be able to hold his smoking parties so often."

"Smoking parties!" I exclaimed. "Do you mean to say that Mr. Thorne permitted 'em?"

The juniors grinned.

"Not exactly that. He just winked at them," explained Clapson. "You see, the Ancient House has been on the decline for a long while now—ever since Thorne came. It's been degenerating. There's was an out-

sider—a sneaky, sapping boarder! He was down on the decent chaps, and tooted no end to Fullwood & Co. Fullwood's paler is a baronet, I believe, and Thorne would have liked his boots if he'd met him."

"Nothing remarkable in a baronet, is there?" I grinned.

"My dear chap, Thorne lived for nothing else but snobbery," said Christine. "He

"They seem to be a rapid lot," I remarked smilingly.

"Fullwood & Co. rule the roost," said Christine. "They're blackguards of the first water, Bennett. I'm just telling you this so that you'll be on your guard. It's not my place to run fellows down; but you'll find out in a day or two. The decent chaps in the Ancient House have been kept squashed

In a dazed state, and somewhat the worse for wear, I was bumped down in the Ancient House doorway by Christine & Co., and my bag, shedding its contents over the floor, was thrown at me. "That's your kennel!" said Len Cragen.



allowed the Ancient House to run to seed. The knats practically run the Fossils, and there's not a chap over there who's got pluck enough to stand up to Fullwood."

"The knats?"

"Fullwood & Co.," explained Clapson patiently. "Ralph Leslie Fullwood and Albert Gulliver and George Bell. They occupy Study A. Then, of course, there are the rotters of Study G—Merrell and Marriott and Noye. They're all in the same set, you know—smoking and gambling and breaking boards at night. Pretty going-on over in the Ancient House, I can tell you."

by Fullwood's reign of terror. He's been carrying things with a high hand for months.

"What about sports—cricket, and all that?"

"Dead!" declared Talmadge bluntly.

"It seems to me the Ancient House wants to be swept clean," I said slowly. "Are the seniors the same?"

"Pretty nearly. But we've been talking about the junior school," said Christine. "Pass the jam, Roddy, old son. Thanks! Jam, Bennett? Yes, the Ancient House is a dead-letter regarding school games. I'm

the Remove skipper, and I've given up hope of making anything out of the Fossils. I've got three chaps in the Remove cricket eleven—Tropallo-West and Watson and Hubbard—but they're not up to our form. Tommy Watson had been trying to get up an Ancient House eleven, but it's like fighting a dead horse. House matches are impossible."

"That's a rotten state of affairs!" I said.

"I dare say it is!" exclaimed Christine dryly. "But it's none of our business. We're letting the Fossils go to the dogs in their own way. Fullwood & Co. have impregnated the Ancient House with a general sickness. The Fossils are a back number, and if you take my advice you'll stay on this side of the Triangle."

I lay back in my chair. I'd been thinking during this interesting talk, and my thoughts were rather grim. I knew these chaps had been telling me the straight truth; they were decent fellows, every one of them.

It occurred to me that I wasn't wanted in the College House; my place was on the other side. I don't mean that the fellows didn't want me. As a matter of fact, Bob Christie & Co. rather liked me already. I could see that. New fellows weren't usually treated as I was being treated.

"Here! It's a problem," I remarked thoughtfully.

"What's a problem?" asked Talmadge in his blunt way.

"Look here! I've disposed all you've told me—and the tea as well," I replied. "I reckon there's only one decision I can come to."

"Of course. You'll stay here!" grinned Billy Nation.

"Off-side, old man!" I said coolly. "I'm going to the Ancient House!"

"What!"

The six juniors stared at me.

"I'm going into the Ancient House," I repeated.

"What the merry thunder for?" demanded Clapson, with his left cheek bulging.

"Well, it's pretty obvious that the Fossils need a tremendous lot of backing up. I want an cavalry. Fullwood & Co. need taking down a peg or two. It's up to me to do the backing."

"Up—up—up to you!" muttered Talmadge.

"Exactly!"

"You silly ass!" roared Talmadge. "How much backing do you suppose you're going to do—*you*, a new kid? It strikes me you've got a jolly hot neck on you!"

"Easy does it, Tally," said Bob Christie quietly. "Look here, Bennett, you're a good chap. I believe—"

"Thanks!"

"And you'll be pretty useful at games, judging by your form at rowing," went on the Remove skipper. "But if you start any set, you'll find yourself in Queen Street. Fullwood's not going to be persuaded to by a new fellow—"

"I don't intend to preach to him," I put in easily. "That's not my idea at all. I'm

simply going to knock the Ancient House into shape. If Fullwood gets in my way he'll get knocked into shape, too—or out of shape. I'm going on the warpath!"

"On the warpath—on your feet day at St. Frank's!" gasped Christine.

"Why not? Nothing like prompt measures!" I replied coolly. "What's more, I'm going to whip such life into the Ancient House that the Fossils will soon assume premier position at St. Frank's—"

"Prem—premier position!" muttered Oldfeld.

"Exactly!" I grinned, enjoying myself mightily. "And I'm going to thank you fellows to a friend! No offence, you know. I like you all right, but you'll have to give way to me once I really get going. I'm not boasting—"

"Not boasting!" yelled Talmadge hotly.

"Not at all. But as I'm going into the Ancient House, and Ancient House has got to become the cock-house at St. Frank's—"

"Collar the cheeky beast!" roared Talmadge.

"Scrag the idiot!"

"Hold on!" shouted Christine, grinning. "He doesn't know any better. Let's frog-march him across to the old barn they call the Ancient House. That's where he belongs, it seems. All hands to the pump!"

I was collected in a second, and then an earthquake seemed to happen. The table went whirling, and there was a clatter of smashing crockery. Then, helpless in the grasp of the six sturdy juniors, I was marched out into the passage.

Out into the Triangle, and then across to the Ancient House. Bob Christie & Co. were determined, and they looked grim. Grinning fellows stood aside and watched. Finally, in a dazed state and somewhat the worse for wear, I was bumped down in the Ancient House doorway.

"That's your kennel!" panted Len Clapson warmly.

"And there's your bag!" added Christine; and my bag was thrown at me. It had burst open and my clothes were shed over the floor.

I sat up, dusted myself, and returned my belongings to the bag.

Things were getting quite interesting!

## CHAPTER 1.

### Study Males!

"RUBBISH about here—what!"

The voice was a languid, droning one, and its owner stood behind me. I had not the least doubt that I was the rubbish referred to.

I jumped to my feet and chuckled. I didn't blame Christine & Co. in the least for their drastic treatment—I had asked for it in distinctly plain language. And I knew that the College House "Co." were decent fellows through and through.

"Rubbish," I said, "is usually shot upon rubbish-heaps. Is this a rubbish-heap, by any chance?"

"By gad! This fellow is rather interesting!—he is, really!" went on the languid rascal. "Who is he, or what is he? I don't remember havin' seen him scribble about the place before."

There were two juniors facing me, and their blue and gold caps told me that they were Ancient House fellows. They were both smiling, and the one with the drawling voice was gazing at me through neat, gold-rimmed pince-nez.

Just for one second I thought that he was the famous Ralph Leslie Fullwood; but then I saw that I was mistaken. This junior was not quite so tall, and his slim figure was elegant itself.

He was dressed perfectly, from the spotless white collar to the toe of his glistering boot. He wore a fancy waistcoat, but it was rich in colour without being in the slightest degree showy. A fine gold watch-chain dangled from his waistcoat, and there was a diamond pin in his tie.

His companion was a sturdy, broad-shouldered junior with an open, sunny face.

"What's the trouble, kid?" asked the sturdy one.

"Nothing worth mentioning," I replied. "I faintly asked for it, so I don't grumble. You see, I'm a new chap, and I've decided to come into the Ancient House, in spite of all the disadvantages it possesses. I told Christine and his crowd that I was going to back the Boats up to such an extent that they'd wipe the Marks off the face of the earth, so to speak. Christine & Co. didn't seem to like it—so they told me so. That's all!"

"All!" said the less elegant junior. "A pretty good all, too, I should say! Like your nerve to tell Christine that! All the same, you did the right thing. If you're for the Ancient House you're welcome here. I'm Watson, of the Remove. This walking fashion-plate is Sir Lancelot Montgomery Tregellis-West, also of the Remove!"

"Pleased to meet you!" I said, remembering Christine's references to these two fellows. "I'm Dick Bennett, likewise of the Remove. I'm looking for a home. Having decided to come into the Ancient House, I want somebody to take me in and care for me. You're two of the best chaps in the Ancient House, I understand."

"He knows us!" exclaimed Sir Lancelot Montgomery Tregellis-West, in astonished tones. "Do you hear, Tommy, dear fellow? He actually knows us! Was it Christine who gave you that valuable information, my dusty friend?"

I nodded, eyeing the pair critically.

"Christine is scrutable," said Tregellis-West. "I always said so—I did, really. Christine is a fellow with real persuasive powers. He told you that Tommy and I were two of the best fellows in the Ancient House. I shall have to shake hands with Christine!"

"Oh, excuse St. Montie!" laughed Watson. "I heard there was a new fellow in the school," he went on, turning to me. "I thought you were going to be a monkey. You had tea with Christine, didn't you?"

"Yes, but we disagreed at the finish," I said absently. "I stated my intention of coming over this side. Look here, Watson and Tregellis-West, I like you both! I'm a chap who believes in speaking out straight. Can't we dig together? I'm looking for a study. What about yours?"

The two juniors stared at me.

"You want to come into our study?" asked Tommy Watson at last.

"That's the idea!"

"By gad! The dear fellow is rather well!" murmured Sir Montie. "But he's got sense. I can see that, although others may not. He possesses great brain-power. How did he know that Study C was the best in the Ancient House? How did he know it, Tommy? He must have second sight!"

"Not at all, but I've got eyes," I retorted. "I can see that you're both good fellows—and I'm a good fellow. We'll pull well together, I'm certain. Suppose we have a week's trial, anyhow?"

I was smiling, and I knew that my suggestion had rather startled the pair. For a new fellow to act as I was acting was rather astonishing. But that's what I was out for. I meant to make things ham right from the start.

"Is it a go?" I persisted.

Tommy Watson fixed his blue, good-natured eyes upon me.

"I'm willing," he said, after a slight pause.

"As for me, I'm agreeable to anything you like," said Tregellis-West. "Anything for the sake of peace in my motto. Bennett, dear fellow, come to our study. You will find a haven of refuge in Study C. It is white-washed, and it is dirty, but we rise above such mundane trifles."

I chuckled. Sir Montie was something of a surprise in himself.

"I'm coming into the Ancient House because I've heard a good deal about Fullwood and his dear friends," I explained. "Fullwood is the leader of the Fossils, I understand?"

Watson frowned.

"Hats to Fullwood!" he growled. "We don't want to talk about the rotter!"

"So my information was correct?"

"If your information was to the effect that Fullwood is every variety of an outsider, then it certainly was correct," said Sir Montie languidly. "Fullwood, my excellent Bennett, is a goer. He is a brute—the chief knave, I might say. He sets the pattern for the Ancient House, and, alas, a great many fellows follow his lead. Why is it so?"

"Don't take any notice of this one!" grinned Tommy Watson. "He can't help it, you know—he's always like that. Bore in him. You'll soon get accustomed to him. Come along to Study C. Hold on, though,

Hadn't you better go and ask the House-master? He usually decides which study a new fellow has to go into. Tell him you've fixed it up, and he'll be all right, I dare say."

I grinned; I couldn't help it. The House-master, Mr. Abington, was the gov'ner himself. I wanted to see him, to let him know how I'd got on. So I seized this opportunity. It was necessary for me to have a good reason for going to the House-master's study. We were master and pupil now, and I couldn't go to him just whenever I pleased. Any familiarity between us would have been noticeable—and that's what we had to avoid.

Leaving my two friends—whom I really liked—I entered the lobby and turned to the right. Watson had given me directions, and I soon came to a door with the word "House-master" painted upon it. I knocked.

"Come in!" called a strange voice.

I entered the study, and found myself in the presence of Mr. Peter Abington. He was sitting at his desk busily writing. As I came in he laid his pen down and smiled.

Mr. Abington was a man of about fifty-five; tall, narrow, and grey-haired. He wore pince-nez, and his shoulders were more than usually rounded. His grey eyes were twinkling.

"Well, Bennett, what is it?" he asked curiously.

I closed the door tightly and grinned.

"Oh, come off it, gov'ner!" I exclaimed softly. "You look ripping! But when we're alone we're not master and pupil; we're just comrades. My hat! I'm having a roaring time!"

Nelson Lee lay back in his chair.

"I'm not satisfied that we are wise in recognizing one another, young 'un," he said seriously. "Perhaps it will be safe, but you must not stop long. Under no circumstances must our true relations become known to the boys."

"Trust me, gov'ner!" I said, squatting on the corner of his desk.

I chuckled as I did so. I would have given pounds to have seen Tommy Watson's face at that moment—if he could have seen me! Squatting on the House-master's desk, and calling him "gov'ner!"

The situation was full of humor.

But Nelson Lee was serious enough.

"You got away all right?" he asked loudly.

"Everything's passed off beautifully, sir," I replied. "Why, those Tung lighters will never find us here. We're as safe as eggs. I've been having a lovely time. Of course, I'm in the House—I've chattered up with a couple of fellows in Study C. I've come here to ask you if I can go into that study."

The gov'ner chuckled.

"Anyhow you like, Nipper," he said. "But I couldn't use that name—even when we are alone. While I think of it, I have something to tell you. You will sleep in a separate room to-night, and shift into the

Remove dormitory to-morrow. At eleven o'clock you must get up and come down to me. There's work to be done."

"What sort, sir?" I asked eagerly.

"I have been examining this apartment thoroughly, and I have discovered several things," replied Lee. "Mr. Thomas, as you know, mysteriously disappeared a few days ago. We have got to find him, young 'un. But I can't say any more now. We will discuss the matter to-night, after the House is asleep. How are you falling into the new life? Do you find it difficult?"

"Easy as winking, sir!" I grinned. "I'm going to make things burn in the Ancient House. I'm going to create the very dickens!"

Nelson Lee laughed softly.

"Go ahead!" he chuckled in a very unmasterlike way. "Only mind that you don't fall foul of me, my lad. If I catch you at anything that's against the school rules I shall have to punish you just the same as any other boy!"

"What a cheery prospect!" I smiled.

"But I say, sir, this House seems to be in a bad state, by what I can hear."

Lee nodded.

"Mr. Thomas was disgracefully lax," he agreed. He has left me a legacy of incompetence and slackness which will be difficult to cope with. I shall have much to do in the way of reform. You, among the juniors, will be able to help. But you'd better cut along now."

"Right, sir!" I said. "I'll see you again to-night."

The gov'ner nodded, and I left him. We were both immensely relieved by the way our plans had succeeded, and I, for my part, was enjoying myself tremendously. The prospect of encountering the redoubtable Fullwood was a pleasant one.

When I had arrived at Study C I found that Tommy Watson and Traggie-West had been tidying up in my bedroom. This was rather a compliment, and I appreciated it. The two fellows hadn't known me ten minutes. But, somehow, I knew that they had "taken" to me, just as I had "taken" to them.

Watson was a good-tempered, cheerful sort of chap. Very possibly my rough treatment at Christine & Co.'s hands had put me into immediate favor with the two Feds. Since I was at ease with Bob Christine & Co.—friendly comradery, of course—it was natural that I should be gaily with Study C.

For I found very soon that Study C was the leader of all the decent juniors in the Ancient House. I certainly couldn't have made better friends than Tommy Watson and Traggie-West.

Watson was an absolutely straight chap, but I could see that he wasn't very imaginative. He hadn't got any power as a leader. His word didn't go, so to speak. That's where I came in. I rather pride myself that

I've got cheek enough for half a dozen, and I'd easily make up for Tommy's lack of it.

Tregellis-West was a queer stick in his way, but I grew to like him tremendously. He was a terrific swell always, and as true as steel. His code of honour was of a very high order. I didn't find these characteristics out all in a second, it must be understood; but it's better to make things clear straight away. Sir Montie generally spoke slowly, and when he spoke he said things different from any other chap. And he was always smiling and urbane. Nobody had ever succeeded in making him angry. Nothing could disturb his equanimity. He was serene always.

If he had any occasion to punch a fellow's nose, he would punch with a smile on his face; if he had a real scrap, he was just as unshakable. He was always lacy, and yet he was certainly the finest cricketer in the Ancient House, and was as keen as mustard when he liked to be.

Upon the whole, I was delighted with my study-mates.

"Well?" inquired Tommy Watson as I strolled into Study C.

"All serene!" I said. "I'm going to dig with you two fellows. Do you do prep here, by any chance?"

"At St. Frank's, do you mean?" asked Tommy. "Of course we do! You won't have any prep to-night, though, being a new fellow."

There was a tap at the door, and then a big Sixth-Former looked in.

"Hallo! I heard there was a new kid," he exclaimed cheerfully. "Got fixed up with a study yet, nipper?"

I gapped.

"Yes. I—I'm staying in this study, thanks!" I exclaimed.

"We've taken the excellent Bennett under our wing, dear fellow," said Tregellis-West laudly. "He came to us in sore trouble, and we haven't the heart to turn him away. In future Bennett belongs to Study C. And, by gad, I have an idea that he will prove to be a valuable acquisition."

"It's all right, Morrow," said Watson. "We'll see after the new chap."

The Sixth-Former departed with a nod. Just for a moment I had been decidedly startled. When he had called me "nipper," I had thought for a second that he knew my name. But I realized in time that there was nothing in it.

"Morrow's a good chap," Watson exclaimed to me. "Head perfect of this House, you know. Fenton's the school skipper—Fenton, of the College House——"

There was a tramp of many feet outside in the passage.

Then the door burst open without ceremony, and five or six juniors crowded in as though they owned the place!

Watson and Tregellis-West frowned, and I grinned.

Fullwood & Co. had arrived!

## CHAPTER 4.

### Ragged!

RALPH LESLIE FULLWOOD was looking grim.

I had seen him once before, but only at a distance. Now I was enabled to inspect him with greater accuracy. He was a fellow of about Watson's age, but somewhat more burly. At the same time, he was a dandy in every sense of the word, and a monocle was screwed into his left eye.

The fellows with him were Gulliver and Bell, his own especial chums of Study A, and Merrill and Marriot and Noye. These six juniors were the knots Bob Christie had told me of.

I was rather surprised to see that Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West were looking not only uncomfortable, but just a little startled.

For a moment there was silence.

"Is this grand?" I inquired politely.

"Is what usual?" asked Fullwood, looking at me aggressively.

"I have always understood that a fellow's study is regarded as private," I replied. "It is the usual thing to knock before entering. When you come again, Fullwood, you'll knock, won't you?"

"By gad," murmured Tregellis-West, "things will happen! Things will certainly happen in a very few weeks! Tommy, dear fellow, observe Fullwood's face. Allow me to point out the sweet curve of his lip, the glint in his eyes, the dilation of his nostrils. Most decidedly things will happen!"

"You shut your head, West!" exclaimed Fullwood savagely. "You keep the door closed, you chaps. I've been told to knock at the door by a new kid! I don't allow that! And the new kid is going to learn some facts."

"Oh, I think I know all about you, my dear Fullwood," I said blandly. "You're a blackguard, I believe! A kind of the first order—a sneaky, gambling rascal! Have I got the facts correct?"

Several of Fullwood's dear pals chuckled audibly.

"He knows you already, Fullwood, dear boy!" murmured Tregellis-West.

Ralph Leslie Fullwood remained quite calm. "I came here to tell this new beast that he'd got no right to enter any study without asking my permission. I'm the chief of the Ancient House Brevoy, and I don't allow any cheeky ruffians to do as they like. What's your name?"

I appeared to consider.

"Well, it isn't Fullwood!" I replied. "I wouldn't own a name like that!"

"You cheeky ruffian!" roared Fullwood, losing his temper at last.

"Hold on!" I continued. "I've got something else to say. I'm not going to ask you or anybody else what I'm going to do in this House. I came to this study at the express wish of its owners. You're not a prefect by any chance, Fullwood? You don't happen to have any authority?"

Fullwood was quite at a loss. He had evidently expected me to be humble and submissive and frightened. I should never have spoken as I had spoken if he hadn't tried to ride the high horse. I knew that a ragging would probably follow, but I wasn't afraid of that.

Fullwood's cheeks were looking startled and astounded. One or two of them were grinning. Probably they rather enjoyed seeing their famous leader taken down a peg or two. Watson and Tregalis-West were serious and smiling respectively.

Sir Montie gazed thoughtfully at the ceiling.

"It doesn't appear to be falling!" he remarked, in a puzzled tone. "I had expected the heavens to crash down—"

"You shut up!" snapped Fullwood furiously. "And look here, you!"—turning on me in a flurry of anger. "You're going to pay for what you just said! I'm the boss of this show—understand? I don't suppose you know any better, being a new kid. But you're going to toe the line!"

"What line?" I inquired.

"The line I have set up!" shouted Fullwood savagely. "You're going to lose all this cheek of yours, and you're going to crawl as my feet before I've done with you! You're going to beg my pardon this very minute!"

"Your mistake!" I said politely. "I'm not!"

"Better do it!" roared Watson, in my ear. "They'll wrag you frightfully if you set your back up against 'em!"

"I can look after myself, thanks," I replied.

The knots made a movement towards me. "Just a minute!" I exclaimed, holding up my hand. "I just want to give you fellows warning. If you lay your paws on me, there's going to be trouble! Is that clear? I'm set going to stand any nonsense!"

"Not—not goin' to stand any nonsense!" stammered Galloway. "Oh, my hat!"

"I'm a peaceful chap," I went on calmly—

—very peaceful. But you have to treat me with respect. If you get my back up, there's trouble. It may not come immediately, but the natural outcome of hating against me is—trouble! I thought you'd better know that before you do anything rash."

Fullwood adjusted his eyeglass deliberately.

"You're awfully kind an' considerate," he said coolly, but with a steady glitter in his eyes. "Just now I was gettin' wild. That was ally of me! Fellows of your sort are best dealt with calmly. You're goin' to get it in the neck! What's your beauty name?"

"I haven't got one," I replied.

"Haven't got a name?" demanded Merritt, from behind.

"Oh, yes! I'm Dick Bennett," I said. "But Fullwood asked about a 'beauty' name. Bennett ain't beauty that I know of."

Tommy Watson grinned, but he was looking anxious.

"Better stop this rotting, old son!" he roared. "They'll skin you!"

"Dear fellow, pray don't interrupt," protested Sir Montie, being his piece-ent on more securely. "Let the excellent Bennett ramble on. He is entertaining. This is the best show I've had this term! Fullwood's face is an interesting study. I am impressed. I shall have to shake hands with Bennett later on—I shall, really!"

Fullwood grinned sourly.

"He'll need restrain' somehow!" he said grimly.

"You're going to rag me?" I inquired, without turning a hair.

"Don't you expect to be ragged, you cheeky rotter?" asked Matthew Nogg, of Study G.

"Well, yes, I do expect it—"

"Then you won't be disappointed," grinned Fullwood. "Collar him!"

I was collared. I didn't make any attempt to resist. Now and again, while engaged upon detective work, I have faced desperate criminals. When I'm outstrangled hopelessly, I don't set the goat. I give in. And I give in now. It saved a lot of trouble and pain. Besides, Fullwood & Co. were disappointed.

They thought that I was going to struggle and hit out; then they'd have an excuse for handling me roughly. But I was as quiet as a lamb, and grinned with apparent enjoyment. Plainly Fullwood & Co. didn't quite know how to take me, and Tommy Watson and Sir Lancelot Montgomery Tregalis-West were openly astonished. Sir Montie, however, was smiling urbanely the whole while.

"We're outclassed, Tommy, dear fellow," I heard him drawl. "And Fullwood's outclassed, too; by gad! This new fellow is mustard. He is cayenne. He'll astonish the natives before long. He will, really!"

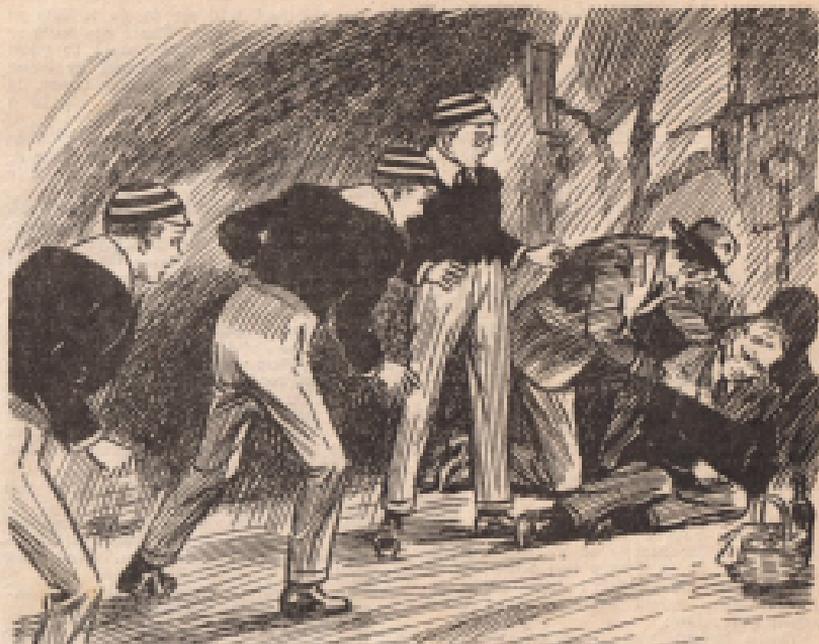
I had an idea that I was astonishing the natives already, but I could see that something really revolutionary would have to be accomplished in the Ancient House. Fullwood & Co. resigned supreme. It was really amazing. The House was "run" by a set of backwardly fellows who ought to have been barred. But Fullwood & Co. had firmly established themselves, and they'd take a deal of upsetting.

I soon had a taste of their delightful methods.

Surrounded by the knots, I was taken down to the Common-room. This was at the foot of a few stairs, for the Common-room was like a semi-basement; a huge, bare apartment, with green-washed walls, two fireplaces, and several chairs and tables. The floor was covered with oilcloth of no particular pattern.

There were a good many fellows in the Common-room, and they looked on with interest as Fullwood & Co. crowded in. Watson and Tregalis-West lounged in behind. The latter was still smiling.

"A rag, dear fellow," he said, addressing the Remonties. "The new fellow has incurred the wrath of the mighty Fullwood. Reactions are about to commence. Earth-



On the floor of the covers lay a human form, still and silent, with Nelson Lee kneeling beside it. Then Tringillo-West suddenly gave a yell as he saw the man's face in the light of the torch. "Great Scott!" he shouted. "It's Mr. Thomas!" It was the missing Housemaster!

quakes will now happen. It is sad, but Fullwood must be satisfied."

I looked round calmly.

"Now, here's your chance, you fellows," I said. "Look alive!"

"What do you mean?" demanded one chap, whose name was Church.

"Why, rescue me, of course!" I said. "I can't rescue myself, can I? I'm not a Hercules! I can't fight six. My idea is to wipe up the floor with Fullwood and his dear friends."

"Oh, don't be an ass!"

"You'll find things out soon, you new fat-head!"

"Go it, Fullwood!" grinned another junior—a fat, weak-eyed little bander.

"I am going it, Lanky!" said Fullwood coolly. "It's a rag. This cheeky new head has had the nerve to buck against my orders, and he's going to pay for it! If there's any interference—"

"Oh, get it over, you cad!" snapped Tommy Watson.

But even Watson made no attempt to rescue me. Fullwood, it seemed, held complete sway over the Ancient House Rowers. There wasn't a single fellow among the whole crowd

who had the instinct of leadership in him. They were disturbed; they hadn't any notion of opposition. Yes, there were plenty of really decent fellows in the Fossils' camp.

Well, I went through it properly.

I was ragged unmercifully by Fullwood & Co. Most of the fellows looked on with disapproval and anger, but they didn't interfere. The rabby, watery-eyed junior whose name was Teddy Long—usually called Lanky—regarded the whole proceedings as first-class. He wasn't a member of the exclusive Fullwood & Co., but he looked to them, and was a regular little snook and snorer.

I won't go into painful details of the ragging. I'd rather draw a discreet veil over that episode. I'll only say that Fullwood & Co. revealed to me their true, vicious, vindictive, and cruel nature. An ordinary school-boy ragging isn't much to hurt a fellow, but Fullwood had original ideas in the torture line.

I say torture because the ragging which Fullwood & Co. treated me to came jolly near the border. They didn't satisfy themselves by merely giving me the frog's-mouth, or something of that sort. They formed me in a line, and made me run the gauntlet. I was forced to stagger between the double

line of fellows—for several other juniors had joined in the "fun"—and they whacked me with knotted handkerchiefs as I passed.

This in itself wasn't much, but Fullwood and Gulliver and Bell, at least, tied marbles or stones into the knots, and I was three-parts dazed from hard blows by the time the thing was through. Fullwood & Co. were roaring with laughter, and enjoying themselves hugely.

I wasn't. But, all the same, I didn't show the white feather, and it was no good jibbing against this ragging. I should only have labelled myself a bum if I had done so; and, as I'm not a funk, I was anxious to create a decent impression. I think I did so.

After raising the question, Fullwood & Co. put me through some other equally delightful assessments. But, as I said, I'll draw a veil over the precise details. One thing was certain—there'd never be another ragging like that at St. Frank's as long as I was there! I'd see to that.

At last Fullwood & Co. finished with me. They left me lying on the floor, utterly dazed and in considerable agony. Then they crowded out, laughing and joking, in order to celebrate the occasion in Study A.

"Fusin' rotten, dear fellow!"

Triggles-West was bending over me, and I looked up with a weak sort of grin. I didn't blame Sir Montie or Tommy Watson in the least. Even if they had attempted to help me matters wouldn't have been improved. They would certainly have been ragged themselves.

"That's taught you a lesson, you new hound!" grinned Lanky Long, his little weak eyes gleaming with malicious joy. "Frag you won't be so jolly cheeky in future—"

"Shut up, you little worm!" snapped Watson angrily.

"Look here, Watson, I ain't going to shut up— Yow!"

Lanky shut up quite suddenly. He had been seized by several of the chaps, and had been tramped. The sympathies of the Removites were with me, and they weren't inclined to stand Long's glib.

Everybody expected me to crawl away and to become tremendously subdued. But I wasn't subdued, and I didn't crawl away. Without boasting, I think I can say that I was just as cool as ever.

Within me I was boiling with anger, but I didn't show it. I was fully determined to make Fullwood sit up for his treatment of me. A fight would be the finish of it, I knew, and it would be a stiff fight, for Fullwood was strong and hairy.

At the moment it didn't suit my book to challenge Fullwood just yet. The knots had scored a triumph, and they foolishly believed that I had been put in my place—that I was duly humbled, and that in future I should keep-low to them as most of the other juniors did.

They were destined to receive a bit of a surprise before so very long. But to-night it wouldn't be the thing to engage in a terrific fight. I was thinking of Nelson Lee.

The gas'oor had told me to go to him at eleven o'clock that night. There was work to be done. Therefore I didn't want to upset the governor's plans for the night by being crooked. Fullwood was a mighty boxer, in spite of his smoking habits, and he'd be a handful even for me.

"It's a rotten shame!" declared Watson hotly. "My hat! We shall have to do something, you chaps! Fullwood's coming; it a bit too thick!"

"In a way our excellent friend asked for trouble," remarked Sir Montie languidly. "Bennett, dear fellow, my heart goes out to you. It bleeds. At the same time, I must be allowed to remark that you are a fat-head!"

"Thanks!" I said cheerfully.

"No offence, dear lad!" Triggles-West hastened to say. "I wouldn't offend you for worlds. I respect you too highly. My esteem is too great to be put into blotted words. You are a marvel. I say that because you seem in no way humbled. Permit me to say, Bennett, that your eye is as steady as ever, your grin as cheerful. Let me shake hands, dear fellow!"

Sir Montie gripped my hand warmly, and the juniors grinned.

"That's Montie's little way," chuckled Watson. "When he shakes hands with you he's pleased. It's a great sign. He's your pal for life."

"True, dear Tommy—quite true," murmured Sir Montie solemnly.

"By jupiter, I'm still a bit dazed!" I exclaimed. "I'm not going to bang, but Fullwood's going to pay for this! It seems to me that the Ancient House wants a leader—the Removs, I mean."

"And you're going to be that leader?" asked one fellow.

"Perhaps."

"Like your blessed chest!"

"Oh, dry up, Handforth!" growled Tommy Watson. "We don't want any of your set now! If you ask me, I reckon Bennett will make things hum before long. I'm ready to follow his lead, anyhow, although he is a new kid!"

"You see! He's only been at St. Frank's a few hours!" howled Handforth.

"New kid!" chuckled Sir Montie. "He's the goods, Hardy—the real goods!"

Edward Oswald Handforth glared.

"I'm the leader of the Fossils!" he declared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites were hugely amused. And, later, I discovered the reason. Edward Oswald Handforth had a curious idea that he was a born leader. Coupled with this idea he had a fat with a terrific drive, and nobody was particularly anxious to argue with it.

Handforth was allowed to harbour that delusion. He ruled his study with an iron hand. His chums, Church and Mellors, were his faithful followers in everything. Handforth didn't speak—he barked. His voice resembled a sphinx, and his eye possessed a perpetual glare.

But as a leader Handforth was hopeless. The only advice which was any good was his own. He treated everybody else with contempt, and as a consequence, nobody took him seriously. This was a constant grievance with Handforth, as I soon discovered.

I also discovered, however, that Edward Oswald was a really decent fellow in the main. He would lead a fellow his hat ten bob just as soon as he would punch his head. In fact, he'd often punch a fellow's head, and lead him ten bob during the next five minutes. He had a great idea of his own importance, and the only drawback was that not another soul shared that idea.

"As a matter of fact," boasted Handforth, amid the laughter, "I think that Bennett ought to have another ragging for being such an ass as to back against Fullwood. Personally, I think Fullwood's a rotten cad and a fearful blackguard, but he's got power in this House, and we can't suppress him."

"We'll try, anyhow," I said quietly. "My programme is to break Fullwood's power just as soon as ever I can—"

"Dry up!"

"Swabber!"

"Check!"

I looked round in surprise.

"Absolute check!" declared McClure. "You're only a new kid. This is your first day, and you make a fatheaded suggestion like that! If you do check Fullwood again, you'll get it in the neck, my son!"

The Common-room door burst open, and the udalshy form of Lanky Long rolled in. I hadn't seen him go out, but he had evidently been spying.

"I say, chaps," he exclaimed with a grin. "Fullwood & Co. are going strong in Study A. They're celebrating the occasion by holding a smoking party. They're gambling for money, too!"

"You blessed little nosy parker!" growled Handforth gloweringly.

"Oh, so Fullwood & Co. are smoking and gambling?" I said grimly, making up my mind on the spot of the moment. "Now, you fellows, it's up to you! I call for volunteers!"

"Volunteers!" yelled Church. "What for?"

"Why, to raid Fullwood's study as an opening lesson!"

"You frightful ass!"

"Can't be did, old scout," said Watson unhesitatingly.

"And why not?"

"Oh, hang it all! We can't raid Fullwood's study!" said Watson unconformably. "It's—it's impossible!"

"I didn't say much, but I thought a lot. Theory was plucky enough, I know, but the thought of raiding the mighty Fullwood's study appalled him evidently. But it didn't appal me. Before a week was out, I'd have a different spirit in these Remove fellows!"

"I believe all you chaps are called Fossil!" I asked deliberately.

"What if we are?" asked Handforth.

"Well, you are Fossil—that's all!" I said, breathing hard. "You want some life put

into you! You're named jolly well! Fossil! My hat! You're more like a set of dead mummies!"

"There was an angry roar.

"You cheeky new bouncer——"

"Calling me names won't do me any harm!" I roared grimly. "Now, listen! Will any fellow come with me to raid Fullwood's study? I give you ten seconds to answer! If nobody steps forward, then I'll go alone!"

Somehow or other the tone of my voice seemed to hush the whole crowd. They just stared at me in wonder and astonishment. I waited with flashing eyes and clenched fists. By Jove, I'd show those chaps some spirit, anyhow!

"Nobody coming?" I asked tartly.

"By gad, I can't let you go alone, my good Bennett!" declared Sir Montie peacefully. "I'll come, dear fellow. I'll go to the sacrifice like a martyr. You're an ass, an' I'm an ass. We make a pair. But I can't let you go alone. That would be too utterly rotten!"

I gave Tregellis-West a warm look.

"Good man!" I said boldly. "Anybody else?"

But not another junior moved, and Tregellis-West and I left the Common-room. We heard a general gasp as we closed the door behind us.

## CHAPTER 5.

### A Check for the Kauch!

SIR LANGLAOT MONTGOMERY TREGELLIS-WEST looked at me rather queerly through his pince-nez as we mounted the few steps from the Common-room to the big lobby. He coughed.

"Dear boy, this is going to be hot!" he said quietly.

"Think so?" I checked. "My dear old chap, I'm not going to adopt any halting tactics. That's not my line. What we've got to do, as we're so small in number, is to adopt a ruse."

"By gad, s—a ruse?" repeated Sir Montie blankly.

"Exactly?"

"Forgive me, Bennett, old boy," he pleaded. "I'm dolt. You may not know it, but I am habitually stupid. I fail to see things, you know. Queer, isn't it? A ruse, you said? I am at a loss."

"You're a blessed fraud, Montie!" I grinned. "You know it, too. You're just as keen as I am, anyhow. The idea is to give Fullwood & Co. a thorough start, and so confabulate their smokes and cards. Then we'll take 'em down to the Common-room and burn 'em. That'll make the fellows stare."

Sir Montie grinned.

"Precisely," he agreed. "I should stare myself, dear fellow. I wish I had your brains. I can't see how it's going to be done. As I can't, will you be good enough to explain?"

"You wait and see, old son!" was all I said.

We came to the Remove passage, and found it deserted. From Study A, however, came much of laughter and jollity.

"Stay here until you're wanted!" I whispered.

"I'm your willin' slave, dear Bennett!"

Sir Montie stood stock-still, and I moved on. But my tread was now very different. I walked heavily and deliberately, and at last came to a stop outside Study A. I sniffed the air keenly and then coughed.

From within the study came some hushed whisper.

I rapped on the door sharply, and then turned the handle. As I had strongly suspected, the door was locked. If it hadn't been, my little whoose would have been raised on the spot.

"Why is this door locked?" I asked sternly, and I spoke in the gov'nor's exact tones—in his character of Mr. Alvington.

I think I'm a bit of a dab at mimicking voices, as the gov'nor will tell anybody, and this was dead easy.

Not a sound came from the study.

"Open this door at once!" I went on sharply. "Upon my soul, can I smell tobacco-smoke! This is outrageous!"

I listened intently, and heard the study window open. Then the door was very quietly unlocked. I had guessed things exactly. Fullwood & Co. thought that I was the Housemaster, as I had intended. I turned my head and beckoned to Tregellis-West.

"Sharp's the word!" I murmured crisply.

I entered the study with Sir Montie close at my heels. The electric light was switched off, and the room was empty, but the air

was thick with tobacco-smoke, and the window was open, although the thick blind was drawn. I switched the lights on.

"You stand by the window, Montie," I whispered hurriedly.

In a few seconds I had found what I wanted. A box of cigarettes and a pack of cards had been hastily stuffed into one of the drawers of Fullwood's desk. I grabbed them, and then grinned.

"All serene!" I murmured. "We'll clear now!"

"Dear boy, I am bewildered——"

"Rats! Come on!"

"But what the merry dickens——"

"You don't want us to be collared in here, I suppose?" I asked. "Fullwood will smell a rat in two ticks!"

We switched off the light and left the study. The passage was quite deserted, and I grinned at Tregellis-West and glanced at the confiscated property. The cards were expensive ones and the cigarettes a "swell" brand. The box contained about ninety.

"Hallo! What's that you've got?" I asked suddenly.

"I spotted them on the window-ledge, old boy," replied Sir Montie apologetically. "Have I done right? Do you approve? I am anxious."

He was carrying a couple of dark bottles with gold-lids at the top.

"Champagne!" I exclaimed, with a whistle. "Jupiter! Fullwood means going the pace, and no mistake! Do I approve? You see, of course I do! But let's get back to the Common-room. I can hear ominous sounds."

"Oh, my poor man!" she said. "Have you been wounded?"

"Oh, no, ma'am; I've been kicked by a cunary!"

A pocket snuff had been awarded to G. Phillips, 332, Fordingeh Road, Cricklewood, N.W.2.

#### NOT WELCOME.

Departing Guest (to host's chauffeur): "I do hope I don't miss the last train."

Chauffeur: "There's no fear of that, sir. The master told me it would be more than my job's worth to bring you back!"

A penknife has been awarded to K. Clark, 43, Talbot Street, Brierley Hill, Staffs.

#### EASY.

Uncle: "If had a splendid shot, Tommy. How did you do it?"

Tommy: "I shot the mouse first and drew the target afterwards!"

A pocket snuff had been awarded to F. Woodall, 254, Prospect Road, Scarborough.

## "Smilers"

John from readers wanted for this feature. If you know a good rib-ticker, send it along to "Smilers," Nelson Lee Library, 8, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4. Splendid pocket wallets, penknives, and grand prizes are awarded for all efforts published.

#### HOME, SWEET HOME.

Billy: "That kid over there lives in a sweet shop. Isn't he lucky?"

Sammy: "Yes, that's what you call 'home, sweet home.'"

A penknife has been awarded to N. Green, 2, Brown Avenue, Loughfield.

#### SARCASTIC.

A dear old lady approached the bed where a soldier lay with his face almost hidden in a mass of bandages.

Fallowood & Co. were returning, and Monte and I buzzed along the passage and made for the Remove Common-room. Several fellows in the lobby looked at us curiously as we passed, but we didn't stop.

The Common-room was still crowded.

"Hallo! Give it up!" asked Tommy Watson, with a chuckle.

"No. We've come back victorious," I replied somewhat tartly. "No thanks to you, though."

"I say, I wanted to come with you," Watson urged, "but you cleared out before I could speak, and then the fellows wouldn't let me go. Said there was no need for me to be slaughtered, too!"

I grinned.

"There's been no slaughtering," I replied. "We just rained the enemy's dug-out, that's all, and we've brought considerable booty away with us. It's just the harness of a big offensive, you know."

I held up the cigarettes and the cards, and there was a general gasp.

"Fallowood's habits are really disgusting," said Treggell-West severely. "Champagne and smokes and cards. Dear boys, Bennett and I have been successful. My respect for him has increased a hundredfold. He is a top-bowler."

The Removees crowded round us.

"How—how did you get those things?" roared Handforth amazedly.

"Took them!" I said.

"Great Scott!"

"Surprise, dear fellows, but it's a fact," declared Sir Monte.

"Well, I take back what I said," declared

Edward Oswald Handforth. "If you can go and leave Fallowood's rotten smokes and cards like that, Bennett, you must be a corker!"

"It's a trick!" shouted Church. "That's what it is—"

He passed as I walked across to one of the fireplaces. I bent down and set a match to a litter of paper in the grate. There was seen a big blaze, and I piled the cigarettes and the cards on.

"I say, chaps, what a rotten waste!" piped Long indignantly. "All those eggs, being burnt! We could have had them ourselves!"

"Shut up, you fat toad!" snapped McClure. "We don't want the meat!"

"But how the deuce—" began Hubbard, another Remove fellow.

Then the Common-room door opened, and Fallowood and Galliver and Bell came in, followed by Merrill & Co. They were all looking awfully queer. Ralph Leslie Fallowood had a grim glitter in his eyes. His monocle was banging loose on his card.

"Anything the matter, dear friend?" asked Sir Monte severely.

"There's going to be trouble!" snapped Fallowood. "That interloper's beast of an Alvington has been to my study! Old Thyme had sense enough to keep out of the fellows' studies, but this new rotter had better go easy!"

"What's the trouble?" asked Handforth.

"Alvington's been near' round!" said Fallowood angrily. "Come to my study and faced his way in!"

"We only just slipped through the window in time!" growled Galliver. "He'll make a

**SOMETHING FOR NOTHING.**

Shopkeeper: "Yes, sir, you should certainly have one of these coats; they pay for themselves within three weeks."

Customer: "Good! I'll be back in three weeks!"

A pension has been awarded to A. Coley, 25, Wheat Street, Leicester.

**A CHAMPION.**

Cliffy to gaffer who has let his club slip from his hands for the third time: "If you keep on like that, master, you'll be champion of the world."

Gaffer: "What—of golf?"

Cliffy: "No; throwing the hammer!"

A pocket-wallet has been awarded to H. Trunfern, 129, Starbuckstone Road, Luton.

**EASILY CAUGHT.**

"Which travels the faster," asked the teacher, "heat or cold?"

"Heat, m'um," replied a bright boy.

"How do you know that?"

"Because, sir, anyone can catch a cold!"

A grand prize has been awarded to J. Cartney, 145, Cobalt Street, New South Wales, Australia.

**GENEROUS!**

First Tramp: "I wish you'd share that loaf you've got there, 'Eeb."

Second Tramp: "You know very well I'd share my loaf around with you!"

First Tramp: "Well, why don't you?"

Second Tramp: "Because I ain't come to it yet!"

A grand prize has been awarded to R. Hensford, 22, Hopper Street, Wellington, New Zealand.

**A READY REPLY.**

Customer: "I've brought these trousers to be recanted; I sit a lot."

Tailor: "Yes, and I'd like my last bill to be recanted; I've stood a lot!"

A pension has been awarded to J. Hoop, 25, Cedar Street, Accrington.

**WOODEN-HEADED!**

Club Hero: "You know, I am very fond of birds. Yesterday one actually settled on my head."

Pre-dig Listener: "Really! It must have been a woodpecker!"

A pocket wallet has been awarded to H. Penderast, 5, Broadway Road, Duffresne, S.W.A.F.

now about it, I dare say. The study was a bit croaky. Still, it's no business of his what we do in our own quarters. The rotten pick-pocket!"

"Pick-pocket!" shouted McClure.

"Well, he took our caps, and cards away with him——"

"What!" roared Handforth.

"He took our caps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removites roared with merriment.

"Jolly funny, isn't it?" started Fullwood, glaring round.

"It is—thundering funny!" grinned Tommy Watson. "Too funny for words! And you thought that Alvington——"

"We didn't think—we knew," snapped Bell savagely. "He came and knocked at the door, and we only slipped into the Triangle in time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fellows were yelling, and I glared with appreciation. I had created an impression, at all events. Sir Morio grinned with me, but he was somewhat uneasy. He could see trouble coming along, but he wasn't afraid of that.

"What are you cockin' at, you idiots?" shouted Fullwood.

"Look in the fireplace, Fullwood!" shouted Lanky Long gleefully.

Fullwood started.

Then he gazed at the blazing mass in the grate. Then his eyes travelled to the two champagne-bottles which Tregalle-West still held in his hands. Fullwood understood in a flash.

"We've been tricked, you fellows!" he exclaimed thickly. "It wasn't Alvington at all!"

"Oh, glory!" gasped Gulliver. "Who—who did it?"

"I did!" I said coolly. "Cigarettes and champagne aren't good for little boys. I thought you'd be healthier without them!"

Fullwood & Co. simply stared in wonder.

"You—you came an' pitched our cigarettes and cards!" he asked dazedly.

I nodded.

The Common-room was strangely still. The fellows waited with bated breath. Then a hissing gasp came from Fullwood's lips. It was a gasp of absolute fury, and I looked round. This time I expected some backing from the chaps.

Just then another Removite entered.

"Hallo! What's the rumpus?" he asked, staring round.

"You shut up, Owen major!"

"Rate! The Housemaster's just coming," said Owen major. "Better look meek and mild."

"Another trick, I suppose!" started Fullwood. "But it's not going to save the precious new bouncer. We've put him through the mill once, but this time he'll wish he'd never been born!"

"Alvington's coming, you say!" said Owen major.

"Hang Alvington!"

"Ahem!"

Fullwood swung round with a crimson face. Mr. Alvington was standing in the doorway. He wore a grim expression, and I checked. The gas'ner looked the part to the life. The other fellows simply gaped with consternation.

The gas'ner stepped into the Common-room.

"Your name, my boy?" he said, addressing Fullwood.

"Fullwood, sir!" growled the leader of Study A.

"You will write me a hundred lines, Fullwood, and bring them to me before afternoon lessons to-morrow," said Mr. Alvington gently.

"What for, sir?" demanded Fullwood truculently.

"You were disrespectful."

"You weren't supposed to hear what I said, sir!" exclaimed Fullwood. "Mr. Thomas never took any notice of anything he chanced to overhear."

"It is not necessary for you to quote Mr. Thomas's example to me, Fullwood," said the gas'ner gently. "You are impertinent, boy! You will write three hundred lines!"

"Mr. Thomas never gave me lines at all!" roared Fullwood angrily.

"I am your Housemaster now, Fullwood, and you'll do as I order you," said Mr. Alvington sharply. "I did not wish to give any boy lines during my first day at the college, but I cannot overlook your conduct!"

"What have I done?" demanded Fullwood hotly.

"Unless you can address me respectfully, Fullwood, you will receive, not lines, but a severe caning!"

"Kek-kek-caring, sir?" gasped Fullwood, as if he couldn't believe his ears.

"Apparently the prospect appals you," said the gas'ner drily. "Take heed of my words, Fullwood, and bring me those lines as I ordered. You appear to imagine that you are a person of some importance. That is quite a mistake on your part. And, in future, you will take that absurd monocle out of your eye while I am addressing you!"

Fullwood didn't say a word. He just looked terribly nervous, and when he saw that the other fellows were all grinning he nearly burst a blood vessel. The gas'ner had just come at the right moment, and I was feeling pleased.

And a second ragging did not take place.

## CHAPTER 5.

### A Night Expedition!

ELEVEN o'clock beamed out from the old tower which surrounded the College House at St. Frank's.

I was fully dressed, and had been waiting for the hour to elapse for some minutes. During my wait I had been pondering over the events of the evening. To say the least, my first few hours at St. Frank's had been somewhat interesting.

Fellowed and his pals had received their first check, and they didn't like it. After the gas'ner's visit to the Common-room, Fellwood had slouched off to his study without a word. Gulliver and Bell had politely informed me that I should have to look out for myself on the morrow.

Further trouble was brewing, I knew, but I wasn't worried. Why should I be? My idea was to break Fellwood's power as soon as I could. A big step in that direction would be Fellwood's defeat in a fight. A fight was bound to come, in fact, I was pretty sure that Ralph Louie himself would challenge me in the morning. Another rugging wouldn't meet the case; I had to be completely squashed.

The knots of Studies A and G were beginning to realize, too, that life would not be so easy under the new Housemaster's rule. Mr. Abington would not wink at their word "blagging" as Mr. Thorne had done.

It was rather a good thing that I slept by myself that night. If I'd been placed in the Remove dormitory, I'm jolly certain I should have been mauled about.

But there was important work to be done.

Being no ordinary schoolboy, I was, of course, allowed special privileges on the quiet. As, for instance, this occasion. At a time when all the juniors were asleep I was allowed to go down to the Housemaster's study. For some hours, at least, I should cease being a schoolboy, and should become Nelson Lee's assistant once more.

While the others were still quivering on the air I left my little bed-room, and noiselessly descended. The house was all quiet. Juniors and seniors were all in their lock-cots.

But when I got to the gas'ner's study I found Dr. Stafford there. The Head was a kindly old gentleman with a grave, lined face. He looked up at me and smiled as I softly closed the door behind me.

"Mr.——Abington informed me that you were coming down, my boy," he said gently. "Upon my soul, it is difficult for me to realize that you are not one of my junior pupils!"

"But I am, sir!" I put in smilingly. "I may be Nipper, really, but that's all dead for six months. I'm Dick Bennett now, and I think I shall enjoy life at St. Frank's tremendously."

"I am glad of that—Bennett!" exclaimed the Head. "But you must not let me interrupt your labours, Mr. Lee. Dear me! I must not make these mistakes, must I? Mr. Abington I should have said!"

The gas'ner chuckled.

"The position is somewhat extraordinary, Dr. Stafford," he smiled. "But we shall soon fall into the way of things, I am sure. Of course, this sort of thing is most unusual! I shall not permit Nipper to leave his bed at night very often. But I have shrewd suspicions that we may be able to get on the track of the unfortunate Mr. Thorne almost at once."

"That's fine, gas'ner!" I exclaimed eagerly.

"You see, young 'un," went on Nelson Lee, "the police have got taken much trouble over this affair. They believe that Mr. Thorne left the school voluntarily for private reasons of his own. There has been no direct proof that the master was kidnaped. He is simply missing. And as there are some thousands of cases of missing people reported to the police yearly, they cannot investigate every individual case very closely. When—as in this affair—a man has obviously vanished from his usual—or—haunts, they merely instruct police-officers to keep their eyes open. But it is not always wise to believe the obvious."

"What do you mean, sir?" I asked curiously.

"You may not have heard the actual facts, Nipper," said the gas'ner, lighting a cigar and crossing his legs. "One night, a few days ago, Mr. Thorne informed the headmaster that he would be at work in his study until late. In the morning Mr. Thorne was missing. The electric light in his room was full on, and the window was wide open. From that minute Mr. Thorne has not been seen. There is no actual evidence of violence—hence, the inactivity of the police!"

"But you've been active, I'll bet!" I remarked.

"Dr. Stafford will have you before the school for a blagging if you bet, young 'un!" smiled Nelson Lee. "Yes, I have been active. I won't go into details—there is no time for that. Two pieces of evidence I have discovered lead me to a definite conclusion. Mr. Thorne was forcibly taken from his room and conveyed to the washroom."

"Dear me!" ejaculated Dr. Stafford mildly.

The gas'ner wouldn't explain, and he and I took our departure almost at once. We left the school grounds and started out on the three-mile trudge to the coast—Castlere Bay.

"A bit thick, leaving the Head unattended, gas'ner?" I remarked, as we walked briskly along. "What are the clues you've found, anyhow?"

"A very slight bloodstain on the window-sill—pointing to violence—and a soap of dried seaweed which I discovered underneath the desk."

"Dried seaweed!"

"Exactly. Where could that have come from, young 'un?" went on Lee heavily. "Obviously the washroom—possibly a cave. There are numerous caves in Castlere Bay. I have read the case this way. Some men, for reasons best known to themselves, have thought it necessary to kidnap Mr. Thorne. They decided to hold him a prisoner in one of the caves. They went to the cave, prepared it, and then came up to the school. One of the kidnapers had a piece of seaweed clinging to his boot, and this became detected in Mr. Thorne's study. A slim one, my boy, but a likely one. My whole theory

may be at fault, but it will be better to make sure.

"[Faint] It is a bit thin, gov'nor!" I remarked critically. "Still, a skin thread sometimes proves to be the strongest."

The night was very dark and still. During our three-mile walk we didn't meet a soul. This was just as well, for it would have looked curious to any outsider to see a Housemaster and a junior schoolboy out together at half-past eleven at night.

When we got to the coast we skirted past the fishing-village of Camrose, and went on to the downs. The Channel stretched away before us in a huge, black expanse, and, down below, the waves were greatly breaking on the shingle.

Curiously enough, even as we gazed down, we saw a light among the rocks almost immediately below us. The gov'nor whipped out a pair of night-glasses in a flash and focused them.

"A storm-lantern!" he murmured. "There are two men, Nipper. They seem to be entering— Ah, they have vanished!"

The light had vanished, too.

"Talk about luck!" I exclaimed. "A squid to an old bootlace those lighters were the men we're after! Are we going down, sir?"

"Most certainly!"

The cliffs here were sloping, and we succeeded in scrambling down without much difficulty. But, in the darkness, we could find no trace of an opening. The rocks were jagged and rough, and there were deep pools left by the receding tide on every hand. At last we gave it up.

"This is a daylight job, young 'un!" murmured Lee. "We must come here to-morrow and examine the place more thoroughly. I have hopes—distinct hopes!"

We reached the cliff-top after a hard struggle.

"But look here, sir," I exclaimed, pointing, "it would look funny, wouldn't it? We can't come down here by ourselves."

"I don't intend to, Retreat," smiled Nelson Lee. "To-morrow is a half-holiday, and, during the afternoon, you and some other boys will accompany me for a ramble among the caves. If we discover anything of importance we shall do so by accident. Do you understand—by accident?"

"I twig, gov'nor!" I grinned.

It was really the only course to pursue. We couldn't go alone, as I said, for that would attract attention. But a party of juniors, accompanied by a master, was nothing out of the common. The other fellows would think that it was just an ordinary jaunt, but the gov'nor and I would know otherwise.

One little incident occurred before we arrived at the school again. As we were going up the lane from the village we passed the White Hart Inn. Here, Tommy Watson had told me, Fullwood & Co. sometimes spent hours at gambling with shady characters. And, by a queer chance, we found a door open at the back of the inn as we passed.

Through a gap in the hedge I spotted three dim figures cutting across the garden towards a gate which led to the towing-path. I didn't say a word to the gov'nor. But I knew that those three figures belonged to Fullwood and two of his pals.

If I had spoken to Nelson Lee about it he would, of course, have had to take action. And that would have been sneaking on my



With a sudden left-handed uprush I caught Follen crashed down. He was done! Very slowly and calmly

part. As it was, I made up my mind to deal with Fullwood & Co. personally.

## CHAPTER 3.

### A Fight to a Finish!

"WITH or without gloves?"

"Eh?"

"With or without gloves—just as you like!" said Ralph Leslie Fullwood contemptuously.

It was the next day, and morning lessons were over. In the Remove Farm-house I had had an easy time. Mr. Crowell, the Remove-master, was a nice chap; and I had acquitted myself well. As a matter of fact, I could have done much better, but I didn't want to be shamed in the Fifth.

I had just sauntered out into the Triangle with Watson and Treggill-West. The sun



shined fairly on the chin. He went back gladly and my boys began counting: "One—two—three—"

was shining gloriously, and cricket was the general talk—among the College House fellows, at least.

I hadn't had a word with Fullwood that day. He and his fellow knaves had kept to themselves. But now, on the steps of the Ancient House, the leader of Study A confronted me with his challenge.

"Any old thing," I said calmly. "Wick-out gloves for preference, Fullwood. I can smash your grandy beauty a lot more if I don't wear gloves."

Fullwood grinned maliciously.

"You'll do a fat lot of smashing, won't you?" he sneered. "I'm the top boxing man of the Remove—"

"Hallo! What's that?" exclaimed a cheery voice. "Loving as usual, Fullwood?"

Fullwood scowled.

Bob Christine & Co., of the College House, came up.

"Top boxing man of the Remove, did you say?" asked Christine grimly. "I'm ready to take you on whenever you like, Fullwood!"

"I meant in the Ancient House, you rotten Monk!" growled Fullwood. "I wasn't talking to you, anyhow!"

"What's the trouble?" asked Talmadge curiously.

"Dear boy, Fullwood's dignity has been deeply affected," purred Sir Mootie. "He is out for gore, you know. Bennett's gore. Whether he'll get it or not is a question. Bennett is a surprise-packet! He is, really!"

"A fight—on your second day at St. Frank's?" said Christine, looking at me queerly. "You've lost stuff, Bennett. I found that out yesterday. Well, good luck to you! If you smash Fullwood, we'll give you a medal!"

"You silly idiot!" roared Fullwood angrily. Then he turned to me.

"Behind the gym., after dinner," he said curtly.

"Now, if you like?" I replied.

Fullwood walked away, scowling. I smiled at the fellows round me, and then suggested a stroll to the tack-shop, pointed over by Mrs. Hale, for the purpose of purchasing ginger-beer.

"Ain't you frightened of Fullwood?" asked Rocky Yorks, staring.

"Frightened?" I asked. "My hat! Of course not! If he hadn't challenged me, I should have challenged him, so where's the difference? A fight was bound to come. Fullwood's been cock-of-the-walk too long!"

"You won't whack him, you see?" yelled Talmadge.

"Shan't I! Wait and see, as a worthy gentleman once remarked," I smiled.

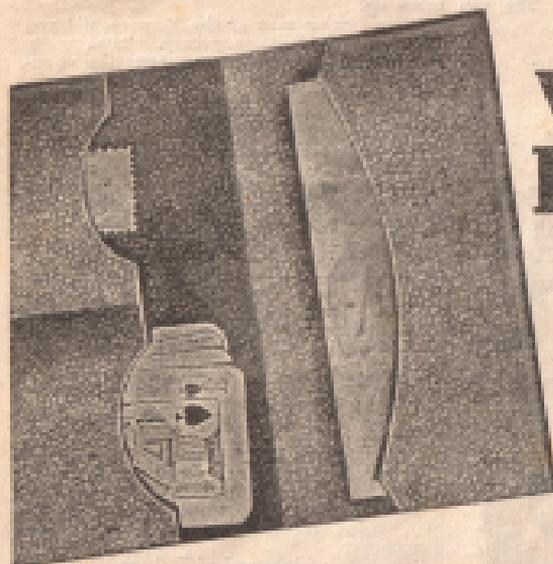
With that I took Watson's arm and Sir Mootie's arm, and sauntered across the Triangle to the tack-shop in the corner.

I was thinking of the gym's arrangements for the afternoon, but I couldn't let Fullwood's challenge pass. I should have labelled myself a jerk for evermore if I had refused to fight him.

Directly after dinner I made my way to the gymnasium. Behind this building there was a little natural amphitheatre. Trees grew all round, and the gym. wall effectively concealed the place from view. The grass was good, and formed a flat patch of about twelve feet square. All round the ground sloped upwards.

It was the recognized place for a "mill" among the St. Frank's juniors of both Houses. I found half the Remove there. College House fellows had been attracted, but Fullwood wasn't on hand yet.

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But he arrived in a few moments, looking as though he'd finish the affair in about ten seconds. He swaggered into the ring with a contemptuous expression on his face. He looked me up and down sneeringly.

"Without gloves?" he asked.

"No!" interrupted Tommy Watson sharply. "With gloves, you rotter! We're not going to have a prize-fight!"

Watson was my second, and he had brought the gloves along. Fullwood shrugged his elegant shoulders, and strolled across to his corner. His second, Gulliver, helped him to peel off his jacket.

Watson performed a similar office for me. I was quite cool, and just a little amused. The fight had caused an enormous amount of interest. Everybody expected me to be knocked over in no time. Fullwood's reputation was great, and not another fellow in the Ancient House was able to stand up to him. Perhaps his glory was somewhat overrated. We should see, anyhow.

"Who's timekeeper?" asked Bob Christie.

"I am," said Matthew Noye.

Christie frowned.

"This is none of my business," he said, "but I shouldn't advise you to have Noye as timekeeper, Bennett. I should protest. Noye isn't to be trusted."

"What?" roared Noye furiously.

"You're not to be trusted," said Christie deliberately. "I suggest that a Monk should keep time—Clapson or Oldfield."

"Oh, don't bother!" I said, grinning.

"Noye will do. He's making a good deal of noise; but he's got a noisy name, hasn't he?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Noye glared, but said nothing. The other fellows were rather surprised at my coolness. But why should I be otherwise? Fullwood probably thought that I was N.G. with the gloves. But he'd soon find out his mistake. Nelson Lee had trained me in the noble art of self-defence until I was pretty good. I certainly knew all the science there was to be known.

Fullwood had a bit longer reach, and his shoulders were heavier than mine; but I was quite confident of victory.

"You seem chippy, dear fellow," remarked Sir Montie, in my ear.

"Why not? I'm going to win," I replied.

"By gad, I hope so!"

Fullwood stepped into the ring.

"Come on, you rascal!" he said sneeringly.

"I want to get it over."

"Feeling a bit uncertain, eh?" I smiled.

"No, I'm not! I'm going to smash you!" snarled Fullwood.

"Smash away!"

We faced one another, and the onlookers stood silent.

"Time!" said Noye sharply.

Fullwood opened with a fierce, savage onslaught. Perhaps he thought that he'd wipe me up in the first round. He didn't!

But I was forced to give ground before the heavy attack, and I was driven almost round

the ring. I'll admit that I allowed myself to be driven. I didn't see why Fullwood should learn the uncomfortable truth regarding my horn all at once.

"Go it, Fally!" chuckled Bell. "He's no class!"

Fullwood made savage drives at me, and some of them got home. One blow caught me fairly on the mouth, and I staggered. There was a swagger back, Fullwood's pale. I still gave ground, and appeared to be crumpling.

"Ain't it time yet, Noye?" asked Watson anxiously.

"No. These rounds are two minutes each!" snarled Noye.

"It's been nearly three!" said Watson snarling. "Fair play, you warr!"

"Hut!"

Noye looked at his watch calmly, and then called time.

I went across to my corner and sank down. Fullwood, grinning with triumph, stood on the other side.

"Next round'll finish it!" I heard him say.

"Dear fellow, he's above your weight!" murmured Sir Montie concernedly.

"Think so?" I smiled. "Don't you worry, Montie! I was just seeing what he's worth. I'll get busy in the second round."

Watson didn't say anything. He evidently thought that I should get whacked, and so did the rest of the chaps. They were nearly all on my side, for Fullwood wasn't popular except in his own particular set.

"Time!" said Noye.

We stepped up to the line again, Fullwood with a perceptible swagger. He was brimming with confidence, and his face wore a grin.

I didn't wait for him to attack. I started in myself, deliberately and solidly. My left lashed out, and landed upon his cheek. He staggered. Then, before he could lash out, my right shot out. Crack! Fullwood went down in a heap. It was easy.

"My hat!" muttered Gulliver. "That was a sike!"

Fullwood scrambled to his feet, breathing hard. He simply flew at me, lashing out for all he was worth. He possessed a fierce, savage temper, and it was allowed to run riot now. That was foolish of him.

I stopped every one of his wild lunges without the least difficulty. Then I attacked severely, and Fullwood's guard seemed to go to pieces. My gloves whacked upon his face and his chest senselessly.

"Time!" gasped out Noye hurriedly.

"You rotter! It hasn't been two minutes!" snarled Watson.

"I'm timekeeper!" snarled Noye.

I grinned cheerfully. I wasn't touched. The next round, I determined, would finish the fight. Fullwood wasn't half the terror I had been led to believe he was. Now that he was getting the worst of it, too, he was nervous and touchy. His face was red with fury, and his breath was hard and forced.

## CHAPTER I.

## An Amazing Discovery!

The third round started gingerly. Fullwood seemed bent on saving up his strength for a big attack. But I didn't care to prolong the "mill." The sooner it was over, the greater Fullwood's fall from his lofty pedestal.

I took a deep breath and attacked.

My previous attack was nothing to this. I put every atom of skill I knew into that onslaught, and my drives were irresistible. Blow after blow went home. Fullwood attempted to answer, but he was nowhere. To do him justice, he stood up to me gamely, and showed no sign of giving in.

I drove him right round the ring, receiving a few weak blows, and delivering some heavy ones. Just for a second Fullwood rallied and counter-attacked; but I warded off his wild blows easily.

Then, with a sudden left-handed upper-cut, I caught him fairly on the chin. He went back giddily and crashed down. There was a general gasp as Fullwood showed no sign of getting up. He was done!

"One—two—three——" counted Noye robotically.

He counted the ten very slowly, but Fullwood lay quite still. I peeled off the gloves and looked round smilingly. I don't think there was any sign of "swank" in my manner, but I was naturally elated.

"That's the way it's done!" I said lightly.

"Bemost, old boy, you are a public benefactor!" said Sir Monte.

"Good for you, Bennett!" exclaimed Bob Christine heartily. "You've whacked him fairly, and I'm glad. Most of the fellows we glad. Fullwood needed a thrashing badly."

"And he's got it!" grinned Watson. "Benny, old son, you're the goods!"

"Wasn't bad at all!" remarked Handforth critically. "Of course, I could have whopped Fullwood——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth glared and scowled and walked away.

I looked over at Fullwood. The noble Ralph Leslie was surrounded by his anxious followers, and was already on his feet. He was looking badly battered and wildly furious. He knew that his prestige was sadly damaged. He hadn't expected the fight to end this way.

"You'll pay for this, you rotten cad!" he muttered venomously.

Then he walked away, followed by the watchful glances of the Removites. At least, the fellows had expected Fullwood to take his beating like a man. But Fullwood was full of hatred and malice.

My own position at St. Frank's was vastly improved.

Fellows who hadn't taken much notice of me before now eyed me with respect. I had whacked Fullwood, therefore I was deserving of respect. The Fossils began to realize that I wasn't a "swanker" after all.

But my campaign against the Fossils had only just commenced.

NELSON LEE regarded me sternly.

"A Right already, Nipper?" he asked. "Upon my soul!"

"Couldn't be helped, guv'nor," I chuckled. "Fullwood's a ratter, and I simply had to take him on. He challenged me, you see."

"It's a good thing I don't know anything about it," said the guv'nor. "As it is, I have been informed unofficially. Fullwood is the boy who checked me last night, isn't he?"

"That's the chap, sir."

"If'n!" He struck me as being a young rascal," said the great detective. "But I know nothing of this fight. You must go your own way, my lad. Only, if I catch you fighting again, I shall have to punish you."

I grinned.

"That's all right, sir," I said lightly. "You won't catch me."

I was in "Mr. Alvington's" study, I'd gone there to borrow a Latin grammar occasionally. I found him ready for the faintest down to the seashore.

"About this investigation of ours, Bennett," said the guv'nor, using my new name as a matter of course. "I suppose you'll have a bit of a job to persuade some of your schoolfellows to accompany us?"

"Well, it will be stiff, sir," I said doubtfully. "They wouldn't care for the idea of going out with a master. But it's got to be done. I'll persuade Watson and Tregellin-West to come along. They'll agree. Two'll be enough, I suppose?"

"Quite! Tell them we are going to start now," said Nelson Lee. "And add, by way of inducement, that there is an excellent tea-shop in the village, where we will call on the way home if we are unsuccessful in our search."

"Right-ho, sir!" I said.

In a few minutes I was back in Study C. I had washed since the fight, and had left Tregellin-West and Watson in the study, talking to some other fellows. They had decided to stroll over to Little Sals to watch the First Eleven cricket.

"Here's a go!" I said, as I entered the study. "Old Aley wants us to go for a walk with him—three or four of us!"

Handforth, who was there, sniffed.

"A walk with a master!" he exclaimed. "Not me! This isn't a kids' nursing-school! Let him go out for a walk by himself!"

And Handforth stroiled out, followed by Church and McChure. Watson and Sir Monte looked at me doubtfully.

"Did you promise to go?" asked Watson.

"Yes. I had to, you know."

"Oh, my hat!"

"He says he's going to explore the caves or something," I went on, "and he hinted that there's a decent tea-shop in the village. Is there?"

"Yes, a ripping place," said Watson.

"Well, he's going to stand in a feed."

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"That's not so bad, anyhow!" grinned Tommy. "Shall we go, Morrie? Might as well please the old boy. He's wiser better than that beast, Thorne, anyhow. The letters will grin—"

"Let 'em!" I interrupted. "Come on, my back! Alby's waiting!"

I swept Watson and Sir Morrie out of the study before they knew it. You see, they had to come with us; it would have looked queer for the gu'nor and I to go alone. But with the two other chaps everything would be O.K.

We found "old Alby" out in the Triangle carefully adjusting a little pocket-camera. He looked at us benevolently.

"Ah, you have succeeded in persuading your schoolfellows, Dearest!" he asked. "That is excellent. I am sure we shall have a lovely walk."

Watson grinned.

"Dear Deary, this is awful!" murmured Sir Morrie. "But I am resigned."

We all marched across the Triangle together, followed by the grin of many Removites. I heard Chambers, of the Fifth, asking in a sarcastic voice if St. Frank's had been turned into a kindergarten by any chance.

Of course, it was unusual for a master to go out with boys on a half-holiday. Even on Saturdays the fellows didn't care for it. In their own time they liked to be at liberty.

But the gu'nor soon made Sir Morrie and Watson at ease. He was genial and jolly and full of life. Both my new chums were

rather surprised. They had looked upon Mr. Alvington as a staid, stiff old chap. But they were now finding that, outside of school hours, he was a very cheerful companion.

In fact, he put us all at our ease long before we had traipsed the three miles to Chistore. It was a fairly long walk, and I was rather surprised that Watson and Trogellus-West had agreed to go.

But at last we stood upon the beach. The tide was nearly out, and the rocks were all accessible. We could see their gaping mouths, dark and sinister, in the whitish wall of the cliffs.

Lee had led us to the exact spot where he and I had seen the man with the lantern the previous night. After a while the gu'nor suggested that the three of us should back while he searched for shells and pebbles. Watson and Sir Morrie grinned, and heartily agreed. They didn't know Mr. Alvington's real object in searching for "shells and pebbles."

So we backed. We had brought bathing things and towels, and we found a secluded nook amongst the rocks. Within ten minutes we were in the water, splashing about and enjoying ourselves.

Again I surprised my chums of Study C. They were both decent swimmers, but they couldn't touch me. In my time I've been compelled to swim for my life! I've had to battle with strong river currents. The gu'nor has often praised me for my swim-

ring power. And I simply walked away from Moxie and Watson in a rage.

They were enthusiastic and admiring. Their admiration was all the greater because I hadn't mentioned a word about my prowess in the water. Naturally I was pleased; I wanted them to have a good opinion of me.

After we had dressed ourselves we strolled along the beach towards Mr. Alvington. I knew that the gov'nor had got rid of us so that he could have a chance of investigating, and I wondered how he had got on.

He beckoned to us as we approached.

"Boys," he exclaimed in a hoarse voice, "I have discovered something!"

"By god, sir! Have you really?" asked Sir Moxie mildly.

"There is a cave here which seems to have a secret entrance!" went on the gov'nor, giving me a quick, keen look which meant words to me. "I have a mind to explore it!"

"Good business, sir!" I said. "I'm game!"

I knew by his attitude that he had not been idle while we had bathed. He had, of course, been looking for the place where the two strange men had disappeared. And now, from his words, I knew that he had found it.

A secret entrance! That sounded likely, anyhow!

The gov'nor led the way through a perfect maze of rocks. Most of them were slippery and covered with seaweed.

He walked right up to the face of the cliff, and then we saw a little narrow opening running flush with the cliff; a portion of the rock formed a shield to the entrance, thus hiding it completely at a distance. The formation was so singular, in fact, that nobody would have seen the entrance unless it had been deliberately looked for.

It was very narrow, and the ground was sandy and dry. But it was all disturbed as though men had been to and fro. Just inside I bent down suddenly and picked up something.

"Why, look at this, sir," I said. "Somebody's been here!"

Lee knew what I was getting at at once.

"Dear me! A cigarette-end!" he exclaimed, in a most benevolent fashion. "Come, my dear boys, we will venture inside. Fortunately, I happen to have an electric torch with me. I find it useful, you know, for finding my way about after dark," he added, with a smile.

We plunged into the little opening, the gov'nor leading the way. His light showed us that we were standing in a long, low cavern. The roof almost touched our heads. The floor was sandy and uneven.

"Nothing here, sir," said Tommy Watson. "Just an ordinary common or garden cave. A fine hiding-place, though!"

Mr. Alvington flashed his light round, and I felt a bit disappointed. The cave was certainly very bare. Yet I felt sure that it was here that we should find the secret of

Mr. Thorne's disappearance. I don't know why that conviction took possession of me—but it did.

The gov'nor flashed his light upon the roof. Quite suddenly he uttered a surprised exclamation. There, close against our heads, was a narrow black opening. The light did not reveal much, however, for the opening seemed to come to a blank end three feet higher.

"Dear me! This seems to be an entrance of some sort!" murmured Nelson Lee. "Suppose we explore it? Best! There has been somebody here quite recently, to judge from the marks upon the rocks!"

He heaved himself up laboriously, and I nearly grinned. The gov'nor could have swung himself upwards in one jump had he chosen. He disappeared completely, to our surprise. Then his face came into view.

"There is quite a tunnel here," he declared.

"Dear fellows, this is gettin' exciting!" murmured Sir Moxie languidly. "A bag, but no matter. We cannot allow the esteemed Mr. Alvington to lead where we dare not follow. We will venture into the dark depths."

Tregellis-West jumped up first; and, for all his apparent laziness, he displayed astonishing agility. I followed next, and then Watson. The gov'nor was already ahead with the light.

He was passing along a narrow, natural tunnel, so low that we were forced to walk in a doubled position. But, quite suddenly, after about twenty yards, the tunnel widened out into a great black cavern. Nelson Lee's light only illuminated a tiny portion of the place.

"A regular adventure—what!" drawled Sir Moxie.

"Good heavens!" gasped the gov'nor suddenly.

He ran forward, and we, startled by his tone, followed. Right at the far end of the great cavern lay—a human form! It was still and silent. Nelson Lee knelt beside it, and we stood round, excited and eager.

"It's some man or other!" muttered Tommy Watson.

"Good gracious! What can it mean?" asked Mr. Alvington, turning his glasses upon us. "I thought perhaps the fellow was a drunken fisherman, or—"

Tregellis-West suddenly gave a yell as he saw the man's face in the light of Mr. Alvington's torch.

"Great Scott!" he shouted. "It's Mr. Thorne!"

"Mr. Thorne!" gasped Watson.

He bent forward, and then looked round at us, his face flushed with intense excitement.

"Moxie's right!" he declared. "It—is he dead, sir?"

"No, Watson," answered the gov'nor gravely. "But he is in a bad way. We must remove him from this place at once!"

(Continued on page 34.)

An Amazing Yarn of Adventure Ten Years Hence!

# PERIL from the EAST!

By STANTON HOPE




---

It is the year 1943. Disarmament is a problem of the past; there is peace throughout the world. And then Val Crichton, a millionaire rover, makes a staggering discovery. With Oriental cunning and secrecy the Mongolian races are preparing for war against defenceless white people!

---

## Harbour of Danger!

THE vapour-driven speedboat Golden Carp held a nor-easterly course through the Yellow Sea at moderate cruising speed—a mere forty knots. Ahead loomed the blue hills of Korea; away on the port bow two junks crept sluggishly westward, bound for Tsingtao.

The crews of the ancient junks had even many of the marling wonders of 1943—glad speedboats, hydroplanes, and so forth. Nevertheless, the Asiatics opened wide their shut eyes as the Golden Carp slashed past.

Reasonably, they expected to see a smartly-uniformed officer in control of so slick a craft. Instead, they saw the black valenite steering-wheel gripped by the bony hands of the toughest-looking customer of the Seven Seas!

Val Crichton, the youthful owner of the boat, had often said jokingly that old Mike O'Hara was well worth his pay, if only to scare off Chinese pirates. Mike's face was aggressive, and unsmile.

His bristly red beard, aquat nose, and steely-blue eyes that peered from under

busy brow, gave him the ferocious aspect of a full-grown congo-eating. The hairy, tanned hands, the huge muscles that seemed to be about to burst through his grubby jacket, and the sun-burnt stained from the discoloured clay pipe he wore in the process, or cloth band, added to the appearance of toughness.

Nevertheless, Mike, like the coconut, was only tough of shell and fibre, and possessed a heart of milk.

A passing junk or liner usually produced a cheery "Arrah!" or "Top o' the mornin'" from him. This salty afternoon he gripped the wheel and scowled gloomily at the distant coast.

"Bedad, I don't loike it," he granted.

He turned his attention to a small negro, the ship's boy who emerged through the hatchway.

"Take those witch-rags out o' your Irish hair, Pompey," Mike greeted. "Sure, there's naught to be afraid o', me boy."

Foxtail Horn, otherwise Pompey, glanced back furtively over the small sea.

"Yo'-yo' don't tink I've selected, Massa Mike?" he muttered.

The Irishman gave the wheel a deft flick.

"No, I don't reckon you're scared, me boy," he said. "You're loike all blackies—just superstitious. Did you tell the skipper about that disturbance in the water four cables' length astern?"

"Yes, Massa Mike. He said it was a shoal of fishes."

"Hah! Fhuah's he doing?"

"Tinkin' wid de combustible engine," the boy answered plumbly. "He am always experimintin'—or tinkin'."

A cheery whistle sounded, and Val Crichton, in white overalls, bounded up the half-dozen steps that led to the open deck.

When world disarmament had taken place, five years before, he had been working in the Experimental Department of the Royal Navy. His brilliance had ensured him continued service when the Fleet had been whittled down, and he had been given his promotion early to lieutenant. Then, chiefly through the insistence of Moroko, the Mongolian statesman, the Fleet, the Armies and Air Services of the Powers had been further reduced, and Val had secured his discharge.

In this course he had been influenced by the death of his uncle, Professor Norvall Crichton, the famous scientist, who, after residence in Greece, had spent the last two years of his life at Fusan. To Val's satisfaction he had been left the whole of his uncle's fortune—25,000,000—a sum utterly undreamed of in his Navy days. He had turned his hand to sport, and he had broken the world's speed record on land, on sea and in the air. Then, with no more worlds to conquer, he had bought the Golden Carp and cruised in the Far East with Mike and Pompey for crew.

"Well, shipmates," Val piped cheerily, "gharr's this shoal of fish? The sea's like a mill-pond."

"It am now," Pompey responded. "A while back de discontinuation ad de water was as plain as yo' face, sah. When de big fishes called barracuda am closing de little fellows, dey jump out de sea like popovers. But dere was only a lot of foam wh-uh kept up wid de boat."

"That's so, skipper," Mike nodded. "It was enough to give you the creeps. I'm not superstitious, but I myself got the feeling that we were being chased by the Flying Dutchman—the ghost-ship."

Val laughed.

"Oh, rot!" he chuckled. "Every effect has its natural cause. The wind plays queer tricks in the tropics, and you fellows have been spoiled by a freak of the weather."

Neither Mike nor Pompey was convinced by the explanation. They were certain there had not been a breath of wind stirring over the Yellow Sea, and they went below still feeling that there was some mystery about the occurrence which they could not fathom.

Val settled himself comfortably at the wheel. He saw nothing unusual and busied himself occupied by making alterations of course in the Korea Strait to avoid a fleet of fishing junks. And so the Golden Carp sped towards Fusan, driven by compressed vapour generated from pure alcohol and ignited by a set of sparking-plugs.

His plans for the future were vague. He intended paying a courtesy call on the two foreign scientists who had been his uncle's partners at Fusan. Perhaps after that he would drift across to Japan—he was not sure.

The cruise was beginning to bore him. Life was calm as the tropic sea, and he almost wished for a typhoon to liven things. Not for a moment did he guess the typhoon of trouble brewing for him in Fusan, where, owing to the wireless news sent out from Shanghai, his arrival was expected!

The Golden Carp came to anchor in the harbour of the Korean port as the last rays of the setting sun died out over Asia. Val straggled himself in his best corn-coloured suit, and insisted on Mike getting into a presentable shore-going rig.

"Young Pompey can stay on board," he said, "and have a day off to-morrow. We'll go and stretch our legs to-night, and to-morrow I'll call on my late uncle's pals."

"Queer partners, skipper," Mike commented. "One's a Scandinavian, I believe?"

"One is a Dane," Val smiled. "His name is Borstein. And there's a Greek called Petropoulos."

While the small darky settled himself below to improve a doubtful knowledge of Eastern languages, Val and Mike embarked in a native craft called a sampun. The Korean boatman plied his stern-oar, and the craft glided through the water of the darkened harbour. Neither noticed another sampun, which had been heading towards the Golden Carp, turn abruptly in their direction.

"Stop! For Heaven's sake—stop!"

The hail in a breathless voice caused Val and the Irishman to look round sharply, and,

as their boatman passed, the pursuing craft glided asternside. The passenger in the other boat tossed a handful of coins to his companion and croaked an order. Then he stumbled aboard and the other boat departed.

Val and Mike gazed in astonishment at the obviously terrified man, crouched and peeping beside them. The dim light revealed a pale face heavily lined and wet with perspiration, a mat of fair hair and a drooping mustache.

"For the love o' Mooka!" the Irishman exclaimed. "Thwat is ut, man? Are the harbour cops after you?"

The intruder took no heed of him, but turned his fear-stricken eyes towards Val.

"You are the nephew of Professor Crichton?" he panted.

Val helped him upon a thwart.

"I am, sir," he acknowledged. "And you?"

The man breathed deeply.

"My name is Borsten," he replied—

"Professor Borsten. I have urgent news for you. Allow me to order your companion to return to your boat. You must get away from Fusan at once, and take me with you. To remain here is—death!"

The sargan turned back towards the Golden Carp, and Val demanded an explanation of the astounding assertion.

"You have heard of Perinopol?" Borsten croaked. "He and I worked with your uncle in Greece, and later in Fusan. Our chief patron was the Oriental statesman, Mooka; our chief source of income came from the Mongolian governments." He paused, and his voice lowered. "We have been traitors—traitors to our own race."

The terror seized hold of him again. His fingers twitched on the thwart, and he glanced furtively over the dark water.

"Take it easy, sir," Val advised. "We shall be back on board the Golden Carp within a few minutes. Keep your news till then."

Borsten moistened his dry lips.

"Hear what I have to say," he said hoarsely. "I am a man hunted by enemies who seek my life. My associates, Crichton—your uncle and Perinopol—invented a metal which we called aldrin. The metal diffuses light in such a manner that it is invisible except at short distances. The secret of it was sold to the Mongolians for a large sum of money. They have turned that invention to further their own ends. In their dockyards and workshops they have built secretly a fleet of small warships which can be used also as armored tanks on land. In secret they have constructed squadrons of fighting aeroplanes in defiance of the World Disarmament Treaty."

Val and Mike stared at him in blank amazement. His tone bore hardly a trace of foreign accent, and he spoke with an earnestness that carried conviction.

"It—it seems incredible!" Val breathed.

"It is true," Borsten stated. "Your own uncle was the chief designer of the first ships and aeroplanes. He himself designed another

and more ingenious machine. That is your inheritance, for it was never sold to the Mongolians, although they have secretly discovered it and taken it for their own use. It is by the lake near the house where we lived and worked—the House of the Seven Dragons. Mooka feared you might go to the house to-night."

"I certainly intended calling to-morrow."

"There is something Mooka is after," the scientist said; "some documents dealing with the invention. Your uncle had them in a wall-safe, but whether the Mongolians have found that safe yet, I do not know. But Mooka feared you would take over the house and interfere with his plans. He is ruthless. So he decreed that if you came here to Fusan, you must be put out of the way. It is easy in an Eastern seaport, my friend—too easy. Already they have killed Perinopol."

"Killed the Greek?"

"They killed him in cold blood, Crichton.

He expended more money on them—he was avenged. He threatened to reveal that the Mongolian nations had formed a secret alliance, that they plan to seize the American islands in the Pacific—and Hong Kong, Australia, New Zoo—"

His voice, which had risen shrilly, cracked suddenly, and he mopped the cold perspiration from his face.

"Caln yourself, sir," Val inspired. "The British Consul—"

"I have tried to get in touch with the authorities," Borsten interposed. "Admiral Floyd Dwight of the United States Navy is at present on a visit to Fusan, but I could not reach him. But would the admiral or the Consul believe? Do you believe these secret ships exist? That I can prove to you personally. At an hour after midnight one of them, I know, is due to pass the Black Shark Rocks."

"In the Korea Strait?"

"Yes. The ship is somewhere along this coast, and is to go to Taiwan, the port of Formosa. You shall witness a message to the American admiral, Crichton, and we will be in wait. At an hour after midnight—"

He broke off short and gave a choking cry. Val and Mike jumped round in the direction of the sound that had further terrified him, and saw an electric launch filled with men.

"Pirates?" Mike speculated.

Whether the men were Koreans, Chinese or Japanese they could not tell. They had the stocky, muscular development of Mongolians, and wore scarves over the lower part of their faces.

In sudden panic the sampan-man abandoned his oar, dived into the water and swam like a seal. Val and Mike leaped to their feet. The launch swung round, the propeller reversed and churned the sea into foam. Borsten dropped on his knees and buried his face in his hands, his body trembling like a man stricken by malaria.

The startling confirmation of the Dane's peril appeared in the form of steadily-looking

cordbags and loaded rubber-tubes in the hands of the Mongolians. Val stood astride the fugitive and yanked in the hope of attracting attention; Mike spat on his heavy hands and bellowed a wild Irish battle-cry.

Then the tidal wave surged upon them—a tidal wave of powerful native bodies, with flying weapons, one blow from which would be enough! A straight left from Val took one of the attackers clean on the jaw and sprawled-saght him back into the launch. Mike's pile-driving right hooked another into the narrow space of dark water between the two craft.

The sampan rocked crazily, and Val hurried from his balance over the shuddering base, but the fall saved him from a slashing blow aimed at his head with a sandbag. He yanked the legs from under one of the silent assailants who tried to deliver a sidelong blow at Mike, and next moment saw the Irishman go spinning overboard from a crack of a loaded pipe between the eyes!

"You murderer avout!"

He scrambled up and strove to use his feet again in the cramped space. He might just as well have tried to ward off a Yellow Sea typhoon with an umbrella! A sandbag caught him a glancing blow on the side of the head, and, completely dazed, he reeled backward and splashed into the sea!

A sensation of choking made him struggle desperately for life.

Mike! That was his first thought as he rose to the surface. A round object within a couple of yards of him disappeared among the eddies, and he dove downward, clutched the Irishman's collar and vigorously kicked his way to the surface again. The sampan was rocking a couple of airy lengths distant, and the electric launch was speeding away down the harbour.

"Pompey!" he spluttered. "Shoot! Shoot!"

The small ducky was on the deck of the Golden Carp, and he was armed with a 38-shot automatic of the latest 1943 type. Flashes flickered like a serpent's tongue from the muzzle, but his workmanship was no better than his bonneted "Honey" in Chinese! The bullets struck into the water harmlessly, and the launch rapidly opened the surge and disappeared behind a large cargo-ship.

Val towed the unconscious Irishman to the sampan, and the Korean came swimming back to help him to get Mike on board. With difficulty, the badly-served boatman was persuaded to return to the Golden Carp, and, when he had been so liberally paid, he rowed lustily for the shore.

Between them, Val and Pompey revived Mike, who reminded his thanks and inquired for "Mister Boraston."

"He's gone," Val answered. "I saw him tied up in the launch as it boated off."

The old Irishman's eyes narrowed as he nursed his bruised face.

"Do you remember that ruffin' o' the water we reported at sea, sir?" he mumbled.

"Bedad, at looks looks we've found the right explanation of it. Those yellow spalpeens learnt you were on the way to Fusan, and was of them speak-ships of theirs followed us. You bet that ship reported by wireless the likely time as our arrival to Mister Maska aither at had pushed off."

#### The House of the Seven Dragons!

TAKEN inches later, the Golden Carp was moored among some deserted sampans in a dark cove at the south end of the harbour.

"We've got to report this affair," Val informed his crew.

"Sure," Mike groaned—"and take a post at that House o' the Dragons. I'll come wid you."

"No. Your eyes are going into swimming, and I want you to stand by the boat. Young Pompey must come along, and later we'll drift down the coast to the Black Stock Rocks."

Once ashore, Val engaged a rickshaw, and, accompanied by the ship's boy, who retained no great enthusiasm, bowled rapidly into Fusan, with its queer, twisted streets thronged with natives. The best plan, he decided, was to go direct to Admiral Dwight, who was a guest at the American Consulate.

The admiral was preparing to leave for Seoul, but consented to see him. Neither had time to spare, and Val, who had left Pompey in the rickshaw, refused the hospitality offered him and gave an account of the fight and Boraston's amazing statement.

Admiral Dwight listened attentively, but with a suspicion of a twinkle in his eye.

"Guss Boraston has been cross-walking—poor fellow," he commented. "He seems to have gone kind of cracked on some subjects. However, Crickton, there'll be no need for you to go to the police about this kidnapping affair. I'll send an orderly, likewise a signal to the guardboat in harbour. Believe me, no stone shall be left unturned to find the prisoner."

"You don't credit his statement, sir?"

The admiral detached a couple of signals and dispatched them.

"Hardly," he smiled. "Boraston told you the Mongolian natives have not discovered Bigot. That's the word, Crickton—bigot!"

He shifted his black chair to an aggressive angle between his lips.

"I've been out East for three years," he added. "The Oriental nations are in the same boat as ourselves. They've no bigger fleets or air services than we have. Considering everything, the yellow folk get on mighty well with us. Maybe you know that a combined fleet of British, American and French ships are going to Tainan in Formosa? There are only about a score of them altogether—most of the ships we've got on the China station, in fact. The visit should help cement the friendship with the Formosans." He rose to indicate the interview

was ended. "And now you must excuse me, Crickton; I've got to get away on the nine o'clock train."

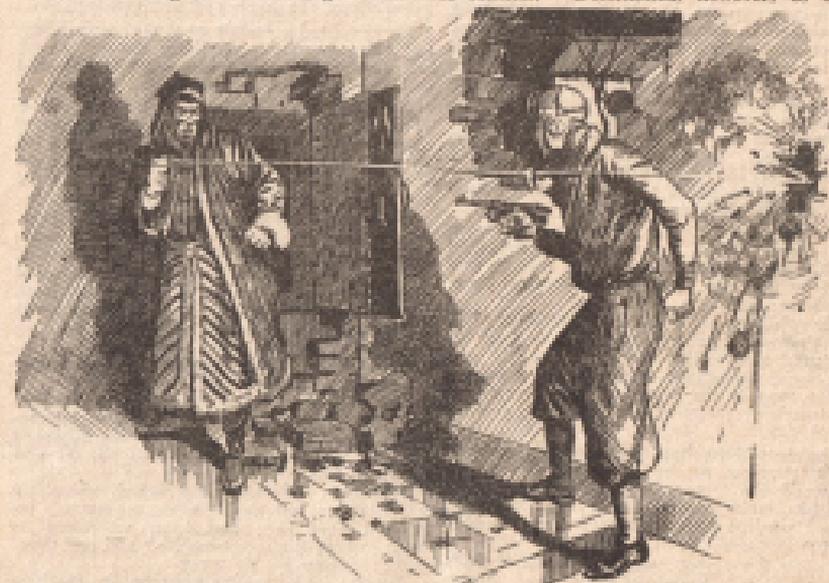
It had been Val's intention to mention Davison's further statement about the House of the Seven Dragons, but he changed his mind and left the Constable.

Beginning Pompey, he gave his orders to the rickshaw-runner, who, after hesitation, set off through the town. The man obviously held the House of the Seven Dragons in superstitious awe, and when he reached a narrow lane bordered by pepper-trees, on the outskirts of the post, he indicated the direction of the building but refused to go farther.

a lake bordered by trees and bushes, and with a large open shed on the far side.

He drew nearer to the shattered house, and now by the starlight the grotesque stone dragons which gave the building its name—one at each corner, two at either end of the roof, and one spread over the porch. A gleam of light showed briefly between the chinks of the shutters at a lower window, and he knew that he was not the only visitor to this eerie place.

Cautiously, Val advanced among some bushes towards the porch, and he saw two stocky Mergolans armed with rifles, acting as sentries. Determined, however, to see



As the Mergolan pivoted he fired, and a thin stream of whitish liquid slashed across the room, missing Val's head by inches, and made a blackened hole in the stone wall where the foot struck.

"Wait here, then," Val ordered.

He alighted from the vehicle, and, accompanied by Pompey, proceeded along the lane. Farther along they saw a high bamboo palisade which enclosed a large private estate, and near a place where the spokes of the top had been broken, Val climbed up by standing on Pompey's small, muscular back.

"Can't help you over, I'm afraid, young 'un," he muttered. "You'll have to stay here."

"Yes, sah," Pompey agreed in relief. "Very good, sah!"

Measuring his distance to the ground, Val dropped among some minuscule bushes and set off towards the weird-looking house. Over to the left was a black sheet of water,

things through, he crept round to the back of the building, set to work with a combination-knife on a shutter, and, after several minutes' work, effected an entrance.

The room into which he scrambled was dark and deserted, but he could hear the rumble of voices talking in a foreign tongue, and he crept stealthily to a door and opened it. Beyond was a small inner courtyard covered by tiles and illuminated by a brass lamp.

He drew back sharply as two men left one of the doorways bordering the court, and, their backs to him, walked towards another of the doors. They spoke in sing-song tones, and he could make nothing of what they said until they passed, and one, bowing low, addressed the other by name—"Mowaki."

Val drew a sharp breath, and waited.

The two men parted, one through a narrow corridor at the end of the courtyard, and the other—the who had been addressed as Mosaki—entered another room.

For a few seconds more, Val waited in silence, and then he glided across the courtyard. The door of the room was open, and he peered into a small apartment devoid of furniture on its mosaic floor, but dimly lighted by a lamp.

From the appearance of the four walls it looked as though an earthquake had struck them. Great gaps showed in their thickness, and bricks and tiles lay in heaps. But almost instantly, he knew the reason for the destruction; parts of the walls had been demolished in search of something, and that object was a steel safe deeply embedded in the far wall.

The black-robed Mongolian stood before the wall-safe, a strip of vellum in his hand, and used a combination lock with twitching fingers until he was able to draw open the steel door. A guttural exclamation of triumph left his lips; his hand reached inside the safe and withdrew a folio of papers bound with a strip of green silk.

On the impulse, Val silently pushed open the door. These documents had belonged to his own uncle, and, as his uncle's sole heir, he had the legal right to regard them as his own property.

He whipped a Mosaki automatic of 1945 silent pattern from his pocket, for he had not ventured ashore this time without it. But the slight movement attracted the attention of the man by the safe, and he swung round immediately, gripping in one hand a squat pistol.

The alert Mongolian recognized the presence of a stranger as he pivoted. His finger squeezed the trigger, and a thin stream of which liquid slashed across the room and struck against the stone wall within inches of the intruder's head.

Yellow flame spat from the muzzle of Val's own pistol to a sound no louder than a faint gasp of breath. A crack shot, he aimed for the small target presented by his assailant's hand, and the bullet raked Mosaki's fingers and sent the glister pistol spinning through the air. The man uttered a guttural cry of pain, and, reeling back, slipped on the smooth floor and fell. His head struck heavily against the wall, and he collapsed senseless below the safe.

Immediately, Val leaped across the room, snatched up the folio of papers and dashed back for the door. Before he passed through into the courtyard, he glimpsed the wall on which the fluid ejected from the other's pistol had shot like venom from a snake. Where the fluid had struck, there was a blackened hole as large as his fist, eaten into the stone by a powerful corrosive acid.

Startled voices sounded from the direction of the corridor, and Val dashed across the court to escape by the way he had entered the house. Two bullets cracked into the wall beyond him, but he heard no sound of the

actual shots. He flung into the room, crashed shut the door behind him, stored the papers in his pocket and swung out of the window. As he dived through a stamp of minnow, another bullet whanged past his head; then heaved for the shelter of the trees near the lake.

Twice the Asiatic glimpsed him as he swerved among the bushes, and twice bullets whanged perilously near. He dashed through an open door of the large shed by the lake and raced out of the far end, turned abruptly to the right and ran along the bank.

The trees extended almost to the water's edge in uneven rows, and he chose the second grove along the bank and plunged into it.

He advanced a couple of dozen yards without being aware of anything unusual about the place, and then suddenly he saw it—the machine of which Burrows had spoken!

Overhead the branches of the trees were entwined in black lacework against the star-studded sky, but now he noticed a lane of darkness across as if a bridge extended across the grove. That "bridge" was formed by the wings of a powerful airplane!

The mystery machine had a boat-like hullings on wheels, and a large pair of floats were raised from the ground. Val remembered that the secret ships of the Mongolians could also be used as armored tanks on land. The appearance of this extraordinary craft suggested that it could be used at sea, on the land or in the air.

"By rights," Val muttered, "that comic kite belongs to me!"

He stepped forward another pace or two and the thing became more solid in appearance. But now for the first time he glimpsed two armed Mongolian guards at the far end of the grove.

The men evidently had heard something of the chase, but their restless movements indicated that they had been set there as sentries over the secret machine and had strict orders not to go far away.

Though he wished to examine the machine more closely, Val knew that the wisest course was to go while the going was good. He must bide his time, and, by leaving the Mongolians in the dark about his discovery of the plane, he might secure a better opportunity for returning to it.

stealthily he crept away among the trees, and by making a wide detour safely regained the broken part of the bamboo palisade.

Pausing, he heard Pompey on the far side warbling what might have been the Chinese alphabet to dissect his mind from thoughts of jinn and goblins. He had to snatch a couple of the bamboos to secure a toe-hold and then, with difficulty, clambered over.

"Tank goodness yo' are back, massa!" the boy exclaimed.

"Steer a course for the rickshaw!" Val panted. "We must get back to the boat!"

They sprinted to the waiting vehicle in the narrow lane, awakened the Koreans, and bowled rapidly back to the harbour.

## The Ghost-Ship!

AT the dark cove where the sampans were moored, Val handsomely paid the rich-bar-keeper, and followed Pompey aboard the Golden Carp.

"Cast off the moorings, Mike!" he ordered. "We're putting to sea—sharp!"

Within three minutes the speedboat was sliding through the harbor with the lights of Fusan receding astern.

"Say! Phew! about Mister Bornsten?" Mike demanded.

"The police and the Yankees will look for him," Val returned. "We'll get down to the Black Stork Rocks."

Briefly he narrated the happenings at the house beyond Fusan, described the pursuit, and the finding of the mystery machine.

"Fifth, you're not a-going to 'ave that airplane Val could Mosaki, see?" Mike protested.

"For the time being, yes," answered Val. "There's been enough haddery raised to-night, and the yellow swabs will be too wide-awake. Give 'em time to get over the shock, and we'll go back to the place and try to bag that bus."

He untied the green silk ribbon that bound the folio and unfolded the papers. By electric torch-light he saw they were covered with characters in blue ink.

"Neighbors," Mike muttered, "it's all Greek to us."

Val peered closely at the writing.

"Small wonder," he grinned; "this is Greek! It's the work of either my uncle or Perinopoli. I feared the documents might be in Korean or some other lingo, and this simplifies matters. At last, I'm glad I swotted up Greek at Dartmouth. Keep by a point to starboard, Mike, while I go below and get busy."

For once Val defied the "Rules of the Road" by running without lights, and he gave warning to Mike to travel slowly and keep a weather-eye open for fishing junks which often offended against the regulations. Then, leaving young Pompey to keep the Irishman company, he went below to his cabin and looked through the documents taken from the mystery house.

Unfortunately, his knowledge of Greek had become distinctly shaky since his cadet days, but he persevered, and, by re-reading the writing which bore his uncle's signature, he gradually made sense of it. And the more he understood, the more amazed was he by the revelation of the scientific inventions which had made practical the Mosgatois' treacherous plot to acquire an empire.

He decided to make a full translation in English, and to submit that and the Greek original to the senior American naval officer at Fusan on his return to port. But before he could begin the formidable task, the voice of Mike O'Hara floated down the companion.

"Black Stork Rocks ahead, skipper?" Hastily Val stowed the folio of papers in

his pocket, and, regaining the deck, identified the rocks by their curious shape.

"We'll keep moving at six knots," he said. "That will give us headway against the tide, and we shan't make much wash astern. Bornsten mentioned 'an hour after midnight.' We're not more than fifteen minutes ahead of that time."

The engine that pumped and compressed the vapour for driving the boat, could be operated either from below or by controls near the helm, and speed was reduced to dead slow.

The darky boy opened his mouth to put a question regarding the papers when Mike batted it.

"There's somethin' wrong with this compass, skipper," he announced. "Sure, the needle's started playing tricks."

Stepping to his side, Val peered down on the dial of one of the two compasses with its needle and points clearly defined with luminous paint. The needle was quivering half-a-point from the True North as indicated by the gyro-compass, an instrument which was operated by an electric connection to a last-running gyro below deck.

"The gyro always points to True North, as you know, see," Mike said. "This entry one gets a bit out o' reckoning at times, but only if there's a cause. It would be aisy to understand the movements of the needle were there a steel ship near us in the Strait, but there's no traffic at all, hehah."

An alarmed cry rose from Pompey across the deck.

"Look!" he cracked, pointing with trembling finger. "De water an stirred up and movin' like we saw dis afternoon!"

Val gazed across the dark sea, ruffled by hardly a cat's-paw of wind, and saw a grey streak of heaving water moving at considerable speed parallel with the Golden Carp! It was as though some ghost-ship were speeding down the Strait. The bow-wave could be seen indistinctly; the wake streamed away astern.

"It's the ship Bornsten spoke about," he raged. "When the coast neerer, we shall be able to see something of her. It was the metal of her hull that deflected the needle of the magnetic compass."

While they watched in the eerie dark, several black moving figures became apparent above the vortex which marked the stern of the unseen craft. Those scolded a muffled cry, followed by a frenzied shout in some foreign tongue as if the victim of an assault had suddenly freed himself from a gag. And then the form of a man with weights tied to his ankles hurled down into the grey foam and vanished!

"You—you heard it, see?" stammered Mike. "It was in Danish. I picked up a smattering of that lingo in the Scandinavian wind-jammers."

"Bornsten!" Val exclaimed. "No doubt now about his fate! They've 'got' him, as they got Perinopoli!"

As the last word passed his lips a streak of light shot across the sea, struck momentarily upon the wind-shaped rocks, moved swiftly and caught the boat in its dancing glare.

Val and the negro boy covered their eyes; Mike staggered, temporarily blinded, from the wheel. The lightning-flash lasted but a second or two, and then they were left in blackest night.

Val stumbled toward the Irishman.

"Full speed ahead!" he roared.

He sensed the overwhelming danger while Mike and Pompey were too straddled to realize anything but the blinding effect of the light. The Mongolian warship had located the Golden Carp, and then the speed-boat's position had been pointed clearly by the white glare of a searchlight!

"The controls!" Mike cried hoarsely. "I can't see! I—"

The rushing of water churned into two howlers told Val it was too late! Though the controls were found and operated, the Golden Carp could never gather speed in time, for the Mongolian ship had altered course and was racing full towards her!

His vision cleared. He saw the enemy loom into view—a small powerful vessel with the high bows of a destroyer. It was like a moving shadow that deepened to jet-black as it sped onward.

"Quick! Over the side!" he yelled. "Drift when on the tide!"

The urgency of his tone brooked no delay, and Mike and Pompey staggered across the deck and toppled over the lee gunwale into the sea.

The spray swept upward like two huge white leopards from the warship bearing down on the boat. And not a moment too soon, Val himself dropped over the side and drifted astern in the warm sea.

The roar of water assailed his ears in crescendo as he floated with his head above the surface. Now he could see only one howler, like a shimmering apparition lunging towards the Golden Carp, and the grim black-shape of the destroyer looming against the stars.

There followed a rending crash, and the speed-boat lurched sideways under a tremendous shock; then fell apart, sheered through cleanly into two halves as by a giant steel knife!

The Mongolian ship sped on. The sinking wake described a semi-circle away from the Black Rock Rocks, and the vessel herself merged into the darkness of the night and was lost to view.

The three victims tossed like corks in a wash of foaming water, and for breathless minutes, battled for their lives. At last, almost exhausted, they rolled in the uneven swell, shook the water from their eyes and looked about them. The Golden Carp had vanished and the sea appeared empty.

Val struck out towards Mike, who was helping Pompey to keep afloat.

"You fellows all right?" he gasped.

"So to speak, not—so to speak," came Mike's hoarse response. "This small lump of blarney is only thrashed with a few gallons of sea-water inside him."

They wasted no more breath in talk, and when Pompey had recovered partially, swam steadily towards the shore.

Half an hour later, Val, Mike and the ship's boy rested on the high ledge of rock overlooking the dark abyss. The Golden Carp, insured for \$25,000, was gone, but the documents had been saved.

With shaking hands young Pompey wrung out the wind-rags tied among his woolly hair.

"G-golly!" he gasped. "My lucky rabbit's foot was in de Carp's galley."

"Huh!" Mike growled. "Oy will soon be struck in a fish's gullet. Niver mind, sonny, 'tis myself will find you a how-shoe when we get back to port."

Val drew Mike and the boy closer to him. "Listen," he said; "we've got to show a course for the nearest village and try to get a life back to Fusan. These cut-throats who captured Bonister must have been on board the ship that cut us down."

"Aye," Mike agreed. "They must ha' recognized the odd Golden Carp—had eyes to 'em!"

"I'll bet they think they sniggered the lot of us," said Val, "and destroyed the papers as well, but I've still got 'em. I had intended making a translation, but there'll be no time to do that."

"Misther Mosaki was mighty keen to get them."

"No wonder," Val said. "They give the formula of alibion, the metal used in the construction of the secret planes and war-ships. And they include notes about the use of the controls in that queer kite I saw in the grove last evening. No, Mosaki didn't want to risk these papers falling into the hands of any outsider."

"Faith," Mike muttered, "thin the papers are proved that the spalpeens have got a daffy game on."

"No definite proof," Val told him, "but in the light of Bonister's information and ours, the authorities will have to sit up and take notice. What we've got to do now we've lost the Golden Carp, is to snaffle that kite I've told you about. It's mine by rights, anyway."

"Sure, I'm wid you, skipper!" Mike said.

"Me likewise, boss," piped Pompey.

"Good for you, my hearties!" Val exclaimed. "The old kite's built of the same kind of material as the Mongolian planes, so we shall have a powerful weapon to use against 'em. Backing up against Mosaki will be about as safe as hammering dynamite with a pickaxe, but I reckon between us we can give a few wallops that'll stagger him! Now come on! Let's get moving."

The horizon light of dawn was in the eastern sky when they arrived at some ramshackle buildings not far from a village which they discovered to be Ku-ling. They crossed some

heap folds, and the well-educated Pompey managed to make himself understood to the Korean owner of the place. By the offer of a large sum of money supplied by Val, they obtained three waxy pieces. Then, having dried their clothes and had a meal, they set off for Pusan.

Late that afternoon, in new clothes bought at an outfitter's in the port, they reported at the British Consulate. There Val made a full translation of the papers, which had suffered small harm from their immersion in the sea.

No report had been received of Mosali's visit to the House of the Seven Dragons, nor the "spot of trouble" he had encountered there so unexpectedly. That affair, evidently, was being kept dark.

The astounded Consul recalled experiments by other scientists with a kind of "invisible steel" several years before, and decided to take no chances. Soon the ether was vibrant with wireless messages in cipher warning the British, American, and French authorities to take every precaution against treachery. Obviously, if a large, secret navy and air force were in existence, there was fearful danger of war and the triumph of the Mongolians.

That night Val, Mike, and Pompey made their way secretly to the large estate surrounding the House of the Seven Dragons. Not a soul appeared to be near the place, and they stealthily crept toward the grove which sheltered the weird sculpture.

"Bedad," Mike whispered, "I can see nothing' entirely."

"That doesn't mean the machine isn't there," Val replied. "When we take another dozen paces forward we should see it all right."

They moved forward slowly in single file, close to the trees, and, as they advanced, a black shadow rose before them and took definite shape. The sculpture was there and apparently unguarded.

"Golly!" breathed Pompey. "It can like a lost wild wing."

"Sh—sh! Hould yer wips!" Mike warned. "I see somevan moving."

Val dodged into the deeper shadows of the trees, and his chums followed suit. Two Mongolian guards armed with rifles came from behind the mystery machine and patrolled the width of the clearing.

The men separated, and for fifteen minutes searched to and fro on either side of the sculpture.

"This is not so good," Val muttered. "We haven't start a swap for fear of making a row that'll bring their pals along. I'm certain they're not the only ones around this place by a long chalk."

He could have picked off both the guards in swift succession with the wireless automatic gripped in his hand, but shooting men in cold blood was no part of his code. What threatened to prove an outward deadlock,

however, ended when the guards, plainly in disobedience of orders, joined company again and squatted casually on the grass near the forward end of the sculpture.

Their backs were toward the trees among which the chums sheltered, and Val whispered a swift order in Mike's ears. Then together they raced noiselessly over the short distance of grass from the trees, their patches gripped by the barrels.

The Mongolians heard the faint sound of their footsteps, but too late! Even as they grabbed the rifles they had laid beside them, Val and Mike struck home, hard and true! The men reeled headlong upon the ground, and Val made a swift examination of them.

"Stout work!" he panted. "They'll stay in dreamland long enough to give us the chance we need. Pompey, collect those guns and hand 'em to Mike when he gets aboard."

Metal steps on the boat-like fuselage enabled them to get into the machine, and Val quickly looked over the controls in the cockpit, which was illuminated faintly but sufficiently by tubes containing a particle of radium mixed with phosphorescent zinc sulphide.

The tanks were full of pure alcohol, which he judged might last for a week. The engine and pump worked on a similar principle to those of the lost speed-boat, and ejection of vapour was used for driving the machine instead of propellers.

He took his seat in the pilot's cockpit with Mike and Pompey behind him. To the movement of a switch, the engine started with no more noise than the hum of a disturbed bee. He moved a lever. The machine moved slowly over the grass and glided into the water.

Even Mike's weather-beaten face was pale in the dim light within the machine, and he could feel Pompey trembling like a leaf beside him. Faster and faster the craft shot over the wide lake, leaving a hissing trail of foam astern.

The needle of the speedometer quivered in indication of over ninety miles an hour. Val moved the control-stick toward him, and his heart seemed to bound into his throat as he feared he would shoot out among the bushes on the far side. Then the nose lifted, bushes and small trees shot away underneath, and the mystery machine rose skyward and sped on through the night air!

An hour afterwards, Val alighted easily on the smooth sea of the Korean Strait and headed westward.

"Boys," he exulted, "this has got the Golden Carp beaten to a frazzle! What shall we call the old kite?"

Young Pompey rolled his eyes.

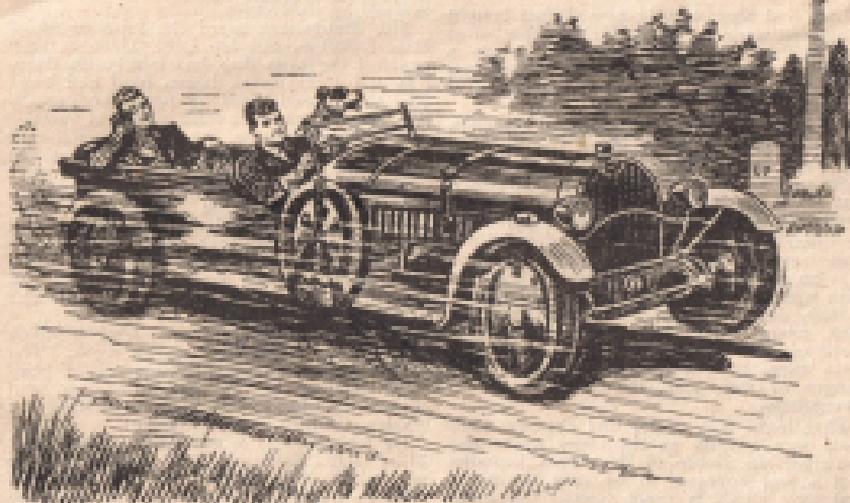
"D-de Buggy," he suggested, "or de Fihberghibbet."

"Sure, the spalpeen's a speak all right," Mike chuckled. "Bedad, we'll call of the Kambon!"

(There are thrills galore in the next gripping page of Val, Mike, and Pompey. It's called "The Squadron of Death!" Don't miss reading it.)

There are High-Speed Thrills in the First Chapters of—

# OPEN THROTTLE!



Fired!

**M**R. EBENEZER HUGGINS, proprietor of Huggins' Garage, which stands a little over fifty miles east of London on the Great North Road, entered the workshop and stopped in front of a shabby Overland car. Two legs in blue but grubby overalls stuck out from under the front wheels. Mr. Huggins looked at the legs, and sighed.

"Come out of that, Bud," said Mr. Huggins meekly.

The legs moved, and a boy of about fifteen emerged from under the Overland. He was big for his age, and broad across the shoulders. His face was freckled, and looked characteristically innocent, except for a pair of grey eyes that sometimes had a very knowing glint in them. His hair was wavy red.

Bud Kelly gripped a spanner in his right hand as he looked inquiringly at his employer.

"Put down that spanner, Bud," said Mr. Huggins dimly.

"But I haven't tightened up the axle-nuts yet, sir!" protested Bud.

Mr. Huggins shook his head.

"You never will now," he said; "you're fired!"

The boy stared at him. His cheerful grin changed to an expression of blank dismay.

"Fired?"

"In other words, the sack," said Mr. Huggins.

"But what for?" gasped Bud. "What have I done wrong?"

By

**DAVID GOODWIN**

**It is a good thing for Bud when he gets "fired" from his garage, for he lands a thrill-a-minute job that motor mechanics dream about!**

"Nothing," replied Mr. Huggins, with a still more depressed air. "You're done very well. Come over here to the desk, my lad."

Bud, wondering if he heard aright, walked over to the office desk, and Mr. Huggins, taking out a note and some silver, laid them down.

"Twenty-five bob," he said. "One week's

wages instead of notice. It's no wish of mine, Bud. I never had a lad who did me better. I wish I could be warned you. But since twelve o'clock last night this place ain't mine any longer. I've sold the whole show, lock, stock, and barrel, to Mr. Harbage, of Northford. It's now Harbage's Garage."

"Sold it!" exclaimed Bud.

Mr. Huggins nodded. He glanced round

the garage and heaved a still deeper sigh. Mr. Higgins looked pale and worried, but it was surprising he could be sorry at losing the garage. It was small and shabby and cramped; it contained nothing but worn tools, the wrecks of two Ferris, the old Overland, and a decrepit Talbot-Darrang that looked as if it waited weeping.

"It don't pay," he said. "There's no room for these little shops nowadays with big 'ars north and south of us. I've lost the money I put into it. I tried hard to get Harbage to take you on, but he wouldn't hear of it. He's got an assistant—a red-headed dud who'll drive more corks than sparking-plugs by the look of him. Anyway, the place has broke me, and I've sold out."

"My eye!" said Bud sympathetically. "That's had back, sir. I hope you get out well. Make a good bargain!"

"A rotten bad one," said Mr. Higgins gloomily. "Harbage, who owns a line of big places along the road, has squeezed a lot o' little men out. He rigged the cards till he got me cornered. I was in debt. He rebid the place for next to nothing, an' I couldn't help myself."

"The dirty dog!" said Bud warily.

"Can't be mended," said Higgins. "I've lost my capital and my living; got only forty pounds left, and I'll have to find a job in somebody's pay—if I can." He put a hand on Bud's shoulder. "Bud, my lad, thank your stars you're young and strong an' haven't a wife and two kids to worry over, like me. Bless your luck that there ain't anyone depending on you!"

Bud's face fell.

"Well, I have," he said miserably.

"There's my mother."

"Mother!"

"Lives in Shoreditch," said Bud, "and hasn't anything much to live on but her old-age pension. I help her all I can—she's helped me often enough. Got to hustle and scrouge pay again; that's what's up to me. But jobs is scarce."

"Mother, eh?" said Mr. Higgins. "I never knew that. A boy who's got a mother has something worth keeping. But how in thunder do you manage to live yourself, then? Here?" He pulled out another can-shilling note. "Take this for a bonus, Bud, an' I wish it was more. You'll want it before you hit the pay-roll again these times."

Bud's eyes glittered as he looked at the note. He knew to a halfpenny the value of money. Then he shook his head.

"Blow me, but you're a brick!" said he. "It's no go, sir; you're against the hard stuff, see. There's only a pair on my side, an' I can't rob your wife and the kids."

"Go on, take it, you young fool!" said Mr. Higgins. "You won't? Well, take five bob, anyhow, else you'll offend me. We don't want to part on a quarrel."

Bud hesitated, and swept the five shillings into his pocket.

"I'll never forget that," said he, "and some day I believe I'll do you a turn, sir!"

Mr. Higgins smiled slightly.

"I wish I'd your confidence in yourself," he said. "It's a bit funny, sometimes, by the way, how you call me 'sir.' Which ain't usual to cobb mechanics."

"Ho!?" said Bud. "I never noticed it. Got the habit, I s'pose. You see, sir, you've treated me like a gent. When folks is civil to me," added Bud, "I'm civil to them."

"And if they're not?"

Bud grinned.

"Then," said he, "they get a push in the face, sir!"

Mr. Higgins chuckled.

Just then a shadow fell across them, and a big, fat man in lumpy trousers, with a puffy face and bowen side whiskers, strode into the garage. He took no notice whatever of Bud, but stared at Mr. Higgins miserably, and frowned.

"I thought I should find this place clear of you!" said the mannequin. "We went over the inventory last night. What are you doing here?"

"Just going, Mr. Harbage," said Higgins. "I was only paying off my assistant. Look here," he said earnestly, "can't I get you to reconsider takin' Bud Kelly on? You'd never regret it. Though only a young 'un, he's the best mechanic I ever had. He made those old works go. A fine driver, and a born engineer. Give him a sponsor and a can of oil, an' he can own a heated push-bike to do experimenting. It's born in him. I'd have gone broke long before without him."

Mr. Harbage stared contemptuously at Bud. "That!" he said.

"He's worth his salt, I tell you. He ain't only a special mechanic, either. He's a London lad who knows every motor route in the country, and every trick of the streets. What's more, you can trust him."

Mr. Harbage sneered.

"With a face like that?" said he. "Cut it out. If I hired a cab mechanic it wouldn't be one who talks about pushing people in the face."

"That was only a figure of speech, sir," said Bud quietly. "Wasn't intended for publication."

"Come on," sighed Mr. Higgins, taking Bud by the arm and moving to the door. "You're missing something, Mr. Harbage, in Bud."

"I'd be missing a lot more things after he'd been here a week!" sneered the new proprietor. "And likely he'd pass them on to you, Bud! Proper name for him. Rhymes with dad!"

Bud's eyes scanned the proprietor's large fat face, and his ear was still perfectly polite.

"So it does, sir!" he said cheerfully. "And your name, Mr. Harbage, rhymes with garbage!"

The garage proprietor was unable to believe his ears. He looked at Bud with a stumped expression.

"Here!" he cried. "Are you trying to get fresh with me? Get out of here!" he shrieked, advancing upon Bud.

"That's what I'm going to do," said Bud airily, tossing his overalls aside and slipping into his old serge jacket.

"Out! Quick!" screeled Mr. Huggins, gripping Bud's shoulder and pushing him violently towards the door.

The push did not quite take effect. Bud slipped aside, and gave Mr. Huggins a thrust in the chest that sent him staggering back several paces.

"Don't like people pawin' me," said Bud.

Mr. Huggins turned purple in the face. He rushed blindly at Bud, making a terrific round-arm slug at his head. But the slug was too slow; Bud ducked under it, and, clenching with Mr. Huggins, allowed him to swing round by his own weight, and threw him with a clever cross-hat-sock trip. Such a throw as that will upset the biggest man if he is not ready for it. Mr. Huggins spun sideways and collapsed with a heavy thump on a pile of canvas tyre-packing; his broad face splashed down into a pan of thick grease that was there ready to receive him.

"How my heart!" exclaimed Mr. Huggins, grinning. "How forgotful a fellow is. I quite forgot to tell you, Huggins, when going over Bud's points, that it don't pay to monkey with him. He's got a twenty-horse-power engine in a light-car body, and his temper is apt to short-circuit, if you know what I mean."

Mr. Huggins staggered to his feet, his whiskers dripping with grease. He bellowed with rage, and, looking round him wildly, snatched up a heavy four-inch spanner and faced Bud, his eyes gleaming murderously.

"Put that down," said Bud grimly, "or you'll get hurt this time, instead of bein' played with!"

Mr. Huggins stopped short. Frantic with rage though he was, he took a look at Bud, and hesitated. The young mechanic looked so cool and so dangerous that Mr. Huggins let the spanner drop, and stepped back hastily.

"I'll have the police on you!" he stammered, choking. "I'll have you up for assault! I'll get you these months! I'll—"

"No, you won't, Huggins," said Mr. Huggins loudly, "for you laid hands on him first, an' I'm a witness. Go an' scrub your whiskers with petrol, for you don't know how cheap you've got off. You're one of the lucky 'uns, you are!"

He drew his arm through Bud's and led him outside on to the high road. And there Mr. Huggins bent double, with his hands on his knees, and laughed till he nearly fell down. The tears rolled off his chin.

"Bud, I haven't had a laugh like that since I took on this mouddy, one-eyed garage," he said, when he got his breath. "I feel I can make a fresh start an' face the music now. It's done me good!"

"It's done me good, too, sir," grinned Bud. "I feel a heap better."

Mr. Huggins gripped his hand warmly.

"Good-bye, Bud, my lad," said he. "We've both got the world to face on two

poor-halfpenny and a kick; but you're young, and here's the best of luck to you. Keep a stiff upper lip an' you'll pull through!"

"The same to you, sir," said Bud heartily, "and the next time we meet may we both be rollin' in dollars."

Mr. Huggins, turning away rather suddenly, set off at a rapid pace northwards along the road to Huntington. He looked back and waved an arm, shouting something that Bud could not hear. Bud waved back.

Then the late assistant of the Huggins' garage made his way quickly and silently round to the back of the premises, avoiding any fresh encounter with Mr. Huggins. He came to the little wooden out-house where he slept at night, thereby saving himself lodging money, and packed up his few belongings in a blue check cloth.

"Now for the only treat!" said Bud, coming out, and gave a whistle.

Wow! Wow! came a sharp bark, and there was the rattle of a chain.

At the back of the shed a small, rough-haired fox-terrier of the Jack Russell breed was dancing exuberantly. Bud unchained him, and the terrier, after rushing round the yard three times with yelp of glee, bounded up at his master like a rubber ball. He was a cheery and disreputable-looking dog, with one black-patched eye and a piece bitten out of his left ear, for fighting was his chief recreation.

"We're wicket, Pincher, my lad," said Bud. "No bones, no work—we're all adrift among the kinks and ha'pences!"

Pincher was delighted to hear it. He did another spring round his tail stiff as a spanner, his mouth grinning from ear to ear. He bawled the garage. Pincher was all for a free life, change and movement, and the broad highway.

Bud set his face Londonwards and moved off along the road with a free stride, swinging his bundle over his shoulder from a stout ash stick, Pincher making rings round him.

"Thirty Bob!" said Bud. "A quid goes to mother, and if we don't strike a job or rob a coach before many days are over it's up to us to curl up an' die or go on the dole. Are we disappointed?"

Wow! said Pincher.

#### Rabbit!

FOR the first three miles along the Great North Road Bud felt as cheerful as a blackbird in a strawberry-bed, and whistled all the way. After all, he couldn't have chosen a better way to get soaked on. It was high summer, with a warm breeze in the oak trees, in full leaf at last. All the world was green and blue and gold.

Hardly a car had passed him that morning. Cars cheered Bud up at all times. He liked to test himself at telling the make of them before they even became visible, by ear alone. The beat of the engine was like a friend's voice to him, and he was able to tell the



With a clever throw, Bud swung Mr. Hodge away, and the fat man shot forward and collapsed over a pile of canvas tyre-packing, his fat face squelching down into a pan of thick gear-oil!

various makes apart. There are very few who can do this. Bud could do it five times out of seven. He had done it for a hot, blistered, and had won the bet, too.

"Never saw the road so lonely," mused Bud.

Just then he came up to the forty-seventh milestone from London, and there he saw a sight that made him pull up and stare.

"Glory!" exclaimed Bud. "Here's a rare old mess!"

By the roadside stood a big, super-sports Bugatti car with a glittering aluminium body and a huge bonnet. It was the sort of car that looks as if it took a river of mercury to keep it going. But it was not going at all; it was standing still.

By the side of it was a litter of tools, scattered all over the place, and an expensive alligator-skin suitcase, wide open. Silk-lined dress-coats and white shirts and patent shoes and gloves were littered over the tarmac road.

Oh the car's driver Bud could see nothing but the seat of his breeches, for he had got the car's bonnet open and was leaning over it, tinkering with the engine. He was also grunting and using strong language.

"Hallo!" said Bud.

The owner of the breeches started and turned round.

He was tall and slim, and quite young; he hardly looked much older than Bud. He had a smooth, rather, good-looking face, and a pair of china blue eyes with an eyeglass screwed into one of them. His hair was short and yellow and curly. It was a very cheery sort of face, but it looked a bit weak about the chin. He was in his shirt-sleeves. The shirt was silk, and his feet gripped a spanner.

"Hallo!" he retorted, taking a good look at Bud through the eyeglass.

"Hang up!" asked Bud.

"Heavily car won't go!" said the youth.

"Had a bad smash, sir?"

"Smash? No! Why the dickens should I have a smash?"

"Then what's all this kit in the road for?" asked Bud, wondering, pointing to the scattered clothes.

"Oh, that! Couldn't find the plug-spanner—though I might have packed it in the bag by mistake. So I checked all the heavily things out. I'm an impatient sort of bloke. Then I found it under the seat, after all. I hate spanners. Dashed things are always getting lost!"

Bad grinned. He thought he had never seen such a mess.

"I never have smashes," said the youth. "I can do ninety an hour without tearing a hair. If you know what they call me in the car-racing world?" He screwed the glass loosely into his eye and grinned at Bad. "They call me Tin-Eye, the Terror of Brooklands!"

"I bet they call you a hot-air merchant, too?" thought Bad, chuckling.

"But I don't know anything about tinkering engines," added the Terror. "My mechanics do that for me. I left my shop at Huntington. He wasn't there when I came out for the car, and I shoved off without him. I'm an impatient bloke. Know anything about cars?"

"That's my job," said Bad quickly.

"Is it, by gum? See if you can start this brute, then. She won't go. Engine ticks off for a few turns and coughs out. It's the plugs. I've changed four of 'em, but still she only gives a grunt or two and stops."

"Ah!" said Bad. "Then just press the starter, sir, will you?"

And he turned his ear towards the engine.

"That's all right," said Bad. "Tell her to 'Whisper and I shall hear.'"

The tall youth started the engine. It fired lazily for a revolution or two and stopped dead.

"Thank you, Sister Mary," said Bad to the engine; and, picking up a spanner, got busy.

"Nothing wrong with the plugs at all," said Bad as he worked. "Some trouble has washed her down with the bonnet half-open, and you've got a speck of water in your magnets, shorting the current."

He finished the job deftly, putting the trouble right in less than two minutes. Then he started up, and the engine roared merrily.

"She'll go like a bird now, sir," said Bad.

"By gad!" exclaimed the owner with admiration. "I call that smart. The average self-taught mechanic would have taken half an hour over that. Now I'll be on. I'm

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an impatient blink. Will you check those things in the car for me?"

Bad picked up the clothes, brushed them, folded them neatly and quickly, and had the lot packed in no time. The tall youth looked at him and breathed hard.

"Wonderful guy!" he exclaimed. "Where did you learn to handle studs like that?"

"Been a hotel page-boy in my time, and looked after gent's clothes. But I'm not struck on it."

"My aunt! Is there anything you haven't been? Are you an airman or a ship's cook?"

"I've always had to fend for myself since I was six," said Bad modestly, "so I've learned to do most jobs that come along."

"Well, that's the difference between you and me. Know Larkin well?"

"Not half!" said Bad.

"The youth with the eye-glass made one fat into the other palm.

"You're the thing I've been looking for!" said he. "Want a job? What? Valet and chauffeur to me. Scid around with me as my valet. I'm a high-prize famer and full of life. I want somebody who can stand the racket. Does it go?"

Bad's heart gave a bound. This was too good to be true.

"Rather!" he said quickly. "Is good, sir?"

"Wages?" said the car-owner, and stopped.

Bad cut in, taking his courage in both hands:

"I think I'm worth two quid a week, sir."

"The tall youth stared at him in astonishment. Then he threw his head back and roared with laughter. Bad fell a horrid quiver. It had been a bluff. He had asked too much, and would be turned down.

"Done!" said the other. "I take you a week on trial. Name?"

"Bad Kelly."

"Bad gone. I never can remember those long names. Rabbit is mine—Cyril Rabbit."

"Mr. Rabbit," repeated Bad politely.

The new employer stared. He seemed surprised at Bad taking the name so coolly.

"Mr. Rabbit?" said he, and fixed his eye-glass in an impressive stare. "I'm THE Rabbit!"

Bad looked puzzled.

"Great Caesar's ghost, where do you come from that you haven't heard of me?" exclaimed Mr. Rabbit. "Don't you read the papers? Look here!"

He pulled the "Daily Sketch" out of his pocket, and held the front page before Bad's admiring eyes.

"That's me!" he said.

Cyril Rabbit's impressive face, nearly as large as life, grinned at Bad from the page. It was a most striking photograph of the youth who stood before him, eye-glass and all. Underneath it, in large print, was the caption:

"THE GILDED YOUTH."

And below this were several lines of print. Bad ran his eye over them. They covered the latest escapades of Mr. Cyril Rabbit, the young millionaire, who had just come of age.

In a flash Bad understood. This obnoxious youth before him was the owner of Rabbit's Stores. Every Larder, and half England besides, known Rabbit's Stores, the gigantic emporium in Regent Street where you can get everything from a collared to a two-thousand guinea one. Started by Theophilus Rabbit thirty years ago, it had grown into a gigantic money-making concern. Theophilus Rabbit had been dead ten years, and the business had been run by trustees for the benefit of the only son and heir, Cyril.

Cyril, educated at Harrow and Oxford, had now come of age, and fallen in for the Rabbit millions.

Cyril was making the money spin right and left. The "Sketch" printed some of his latest exploits. He owned racing cars. He had a string of houses at Newmarket. He had bought a Derby candidate. He owned a steam-yacht on the Solent. He possessed a country house and a mansion in Mayfair.

Strange stories were told of him. A five-paired nose seemed to mean no more to him than a cigarette. He had tipped a barber a pound for shaving him, though he had no more hair on his face than there is on an egg. He was known variously as the Boy Plunger, Beautiful Rabbit, and to his intimates as that Giddy Am Cyril.

Bad stared at him for a moment or two, open-mouthed. He understood now why Mr. Rabbit had laughed when he only asked for two pounds a week.

"Get on with it, have you?" grinned Rabbit, watching him. "Want a bigger wage?" he added, rather mockingly.

Something in his tone put Bad's back up. "Bargain's a bargain, sir," he said bravely. "I'll ask you for more when I earn it. I know you was a rich chap as soon as I was the car."

"Rich!" roared Rabbit; and with a whomp of laughter he began to dance on the seat and burst into song:

"Twenty-one to-day!

Twenty-one to-day!

I've got the key of the door—

Never been twenty-one before—"

He sprang into the car and passed the carriage.

"In with you!" he cried. "You're going to see life, my lad!"

He let the clutch in, and in thirty seconds the car was heading along like a bullet.

"Half a million in the bank,

About his hip-pocket!

Everything is lovely—

Twenty-one to-day!"

(Bad's fallen in for a "coshy" job with the young millionaire, but there are thrilling adventures ahead of him. Make certain of not missing any of them. See that you get your NELSON LEE regularly every week.)

## NIPPER—NEW BOY!

(Continued from page 38.)

And to think that we should stumble upon him by sheer accident! Wonderful!"

And so it would have been wonderful; but, you see, there wasn't any accident about it. Nelson Lee had found Mr. Thomas because he had deliberately set out to do so. But why was he in this street? Why had he been kidnapped?

Somehow or other we got the poor man out of the cage. My man had been a stark, cold-blooded Housenator, but he was undoubtedly a man of brains. And his condition inspired pity and compassion.

It seemed obvious that his captors had tried to force Mr. Thomas to do something, and he had refused. So they had left him to half-starve.

He was conveyed to the doctor in Alington, who at once examined him. The doctor's report was not cheerful. He said that Mr. Thomas's brain was affected, and that he would not recover his reason for at least two months. He would require careful nursing and doctoring.

While the unfortunate Housenator was being attended he became half-delirious. Evidently he had had the name of "Justin Farman—Justin Farman." His abduction was a complete mystery, and it did not seem likely that it would be solved for some time.

But the girl's ear had rescued the poor chap, and that was a great step in the right direction.

At St. Paul's there was tremendous excitement.

Sir Maudie and Watson and I were the centre of attraction. We were people of importance for the time being, and the other fellows were rather sorry that they hadn't

accompanied us in the little afternoon jaunt.

And that night there was a meeting in the Ancient House—a junior meeting in the Remove Common-room. Sir Lancelot Montgomery Troggle-West took the chair, and he made a stirring speech. In short, he put it to the Faculty that it was up to them to select a new leader. Ralph Leslie Fullwood had been shaken from his lofty perch, and he was a waverer, anyhow.

And great excitement I was declared to be the new leader of the Faculty. This was a bit odd, but I was good enough. On my second day at St. Paul's I had been elected junior leader!

Naturally I was elated, and I declared that I would make things buzz with a vengeance. Fullwood & Co. were furious.

But they couldn't do anything, and they knew it. A feeling was fast growing up against them in the Remove—thanks to my advent in the school! Fullwood's defeat in the memorable fight had worked wonders.

But the surprise of the evening came later on.

I managed to have a few words with Nelson Lee. And the girl's "old man" told me that he had learned from the Head that there was a new boy coming into the Remove in a few days. And the new boy's name was—Justin H. Farman!

What could it mean?

Farman was coming from Western America—California. How could this complete stranger be connected with the abduction of Mr. Thomas?

It seemed as though events were going to move excitingly in the near future!

THE END.

"Kidnapped!" That is the title of next week's magnificent gem of Mr. French's. This story is fast going to make—unless your nose gets right strong!

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