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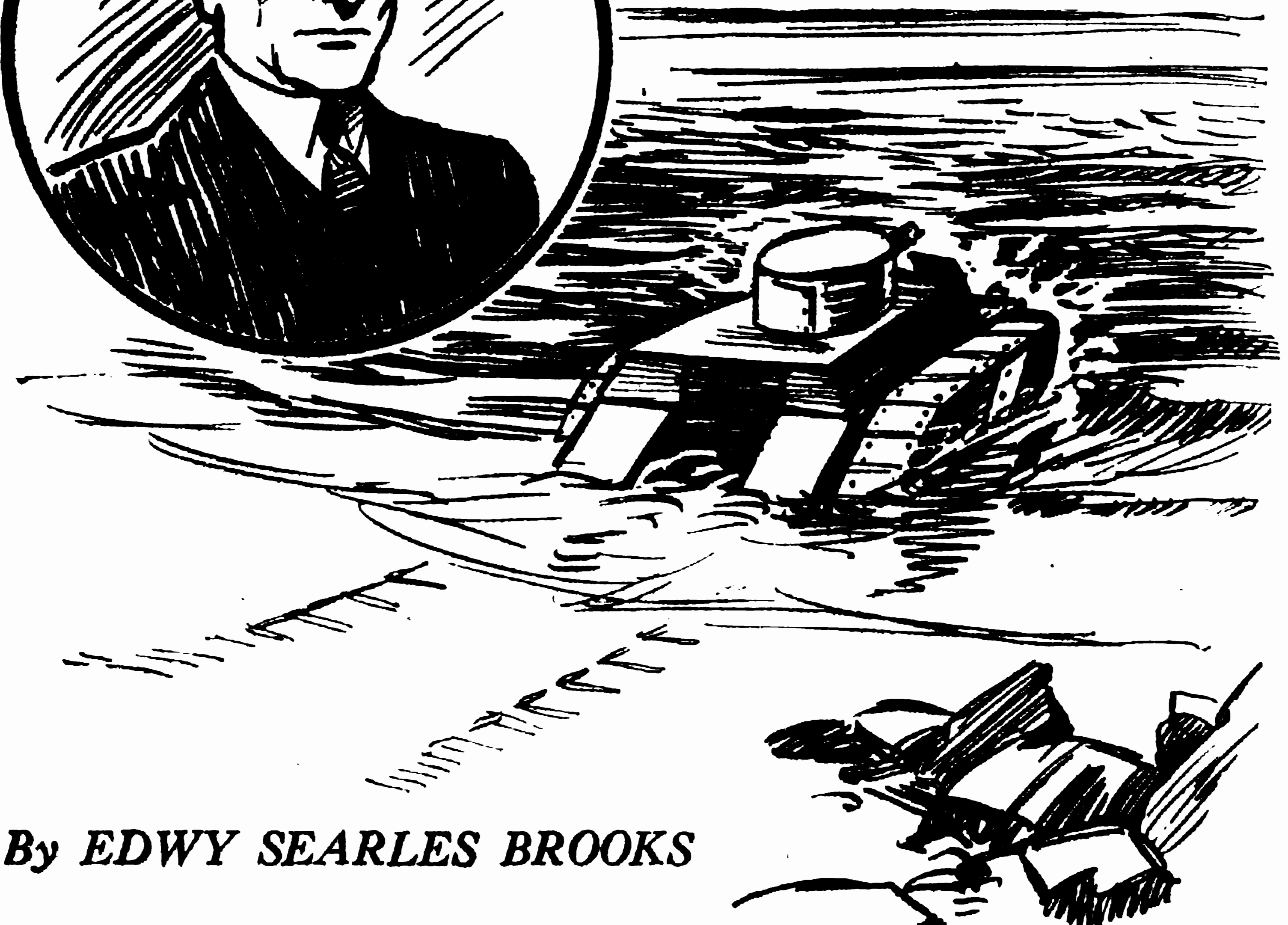


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# *The* RETURN *of*



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By **EDWY SEARLES BROOKS**

## CHAPTER 1.

### Handforth, the Rebel!

**T**HUMP—thump—thump!

Sleep did not come easily to Church and McClure in their little dormitory in the Ancient House. St. Frank's was dark and quiet; lights had been out in the Remove passage for nearly an hour.

Thump-thump-thump!

"For the love of mercy!" groaned Church, sitting up in bed and glaring into the gloom. "Why the dickens can't you go to bed, Handy?"

"He's mad!" came a bitter comment from McClure. "Stark, staring mad!

And if he keeps up this game much longer we shall be mad, too."

Thump-thump-thump!

Edward Oswald Handforth, the third occupant of the dormitory, was pacing grimly up and down the available space between the beds in the little apartment. He had not even undressed, and, being a heavy-footed fellow, he thumped forcibly as he paced.

"I'm fed up!" he said fiercely, coming to a sudden halt.

"That makes three of us, then," said Church wearily. "Mac and I are fed up, too."

"I'm fed up with Mr. Lee!" said Handforth sternly.

—Zingrave and Jim the Penman. Read this thrilling complete yarn.

# Professor ZINGRAVE!



"And we're fed up with you!"

"Eh?"

"We're sick of it!" said Church indignantly. "If you want to pace up and down, why don't you go to the bath-room, or the attic, or the cellar, or somewhere? Why keep us awake?"

"You can go to sleep if you want to," retorted Handforth tartly. "All the better if you do."

"How do you suppose we can sleep while you thump up and down like an overgrown elephant?" demanded McClure in exasperation. "Every time you come past my bed there's a miniature earthquake!"

The burly leader of Study D waved both his hands.

"Trifles!" he said impatiently. "Foolish trifles. What's the matter with you fel-

lows? Can't you think of anything but sleep? What about those poor chaps who have been kidnapped by a gang of desperate crooks?"

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Church, falling limply back on his pillow. "He's at it again!"

"Yes, and I'm going to keep at it!" said Handforth darkly. "Why doesn't Mr. Lee do something? Do you realise that a week has gone past since Chambers and Waldo vanished? A whole week! And nothing done!"

"How do you know?" demanded Mac gruffly. "It's more than likely that Mr. Lee has been making some important investigations."

"I'm losing faith in Mr. Lee!" said Handforth. "He used to be a great detec-

tive, but now that he's the headmaster of St. Frank's, he's lost most of his pep. I'm not surprised. It must be a rotten job, controlling a gang of fatheads like we have here!"

"Particularly one fathead!" said Church feelingly.

"And what about Detective-inspector Lennard, of Scotland Yard?" went on Handforth, ignoring the slight. "Where does he come in? Nowhere! He just moons about and does nothing! The local police are about as useful as a row of skittles!"

Church and McClure had heard all this so often that they groaned in anguish.

"We chaps are in a unique position," continued Handforth eagerly. "We three and Nipper. Two or three weeks ago, when six Fourth Form chaps vanished, we went on the trail with Mr. Lee. And that trail led to Crag House, on the cliffs near Shingle Head. We even saved Mr. Lee's life that night. And how does he show his gratitude? He leaves us out in the cold! I tell you frankly, I'm fed up! So fed up, in fact, that I'm going out on my own to do some investigating."

"What!" gasped his chums in one startled voice.

"I thought that would wake you up!" said Handforth with relish. "Yes, my sons! I've decided to go out to-night—alone! I'm not going to have you with me—you'd only mess up everything."

There was something in his tone which indicated that he was in deadly earnest; and Church and McClure did some quick thinking. It was perfectly true that they—with Nipper—were the only fellows in the school who were "in the know." There had been many mysterious disappearances of late, for not only had eight St. Frank's boys been spirited away, but many other stalwart young fellows of the district had disappeared, too.

Incredible as it seemed, there were indications that the missing boys had been taken to Crag House, the eminently respectable residence of Admiral Sir Rodney Carrington. The admiral himself was away, wintering abroad, and Crag House was shut up, except for Crowson, the butler, and one or two manservants. Even the police did not know of Nelson Lee's suspicions regarding Crag House. The famous schoolmaster-detective was playing a waiting game; he preferred to keep his own counsel until he had a true "line" on the crooked game.

Handforth, impatient enough in ordinary everyday things, was seethingly impatient over this. He suffered from the delusion that he was an amateur detective, and he had been longing to test his powers

—hoping and expecting that Nelson Lee would invite him to take part in the investigations. But, to his disgust, Nelson Lee had not even approached him.

Everything at St. Frank's had been going on normally—except for the one difference that no boys were allowed out of gates after dark.

"Yes!" said Handforth firmly. "I've come to the end of my patience, my sons! And to-night I'm going out—to do some scouting. What about that great cave under the cliffs—right beneath Crag House? The old smugglers' cave, by George! Don't you remember that queer motor-boat we saw there? And there are tunnels leading into the very cliff—right up to Crag House! Well, I'm going to explore those tunnels to-night—and I'll bet you that I shall find the missing chaps!"

"Look here, Handy, you can't do it!" said Church urgently. "You know what Mr. Lee told us! We've got to keep mum about all this—we've got to——"

"Well, we've kept mum, haven't we?" demanded Handforth coldly. "And what has happened? Nothing! I've given Mr. Lee every chance—I've waited day after day. But I'm not going to wait any longer!"

Inspired by the same thought, Church and McClure climbed out of bed simultaneously; and determinedly they advanced upon their hot-headed leader.

## CHAPTER 2.

### A Slight Disagreement!

THERE was no light in the dormitory, but Handforth knew exactly what was happening.

"Here, what's the idea?" he asked ominously.

"You're not going out—that's all!"

"Oh! I'm not going out?"

"You're not!"

"Who's going to stop me?"

"We are!"

"You, and who else?" demanded Handforth scornfully.

"Look here, Handy, old man——"

"You needn't argue—I'm going," interrupted Handforth. "I've got a feeling that if I break bounds to-night, and go on a tour of investigation, I shall make a big discovery."

"That's probably true," said Church with a sniff. "And the big discovery will be that you're a blundering lunatic, but you won't realise it until you've fallen into the hands of those crooks. You're always the same; you never learn by experience. Don't you think Nipper is im-



patient, too? Don't you think we're impatient? But we don't talk about breaking bounds at eleven p.m. Chuck it, Handy! Get undressed and go to bed."

"I'm blowed if I will!" said Handforth stubbornly. "I can't wait another hour—or even another minute. I'm going now! And if you fatheads try to follow me——"

"Don't worry! We won't follow you," said McClure. "There'll be no need to—because you're not going to leave this dormy!"

And he and Church, at the same moment, seized Edward Oswald in a firm grip. He wasn't in the least flustered; he was not even annoyed. If he displayed any emotion at all, it was one of withering scorn. Handforth had two characteristic moods; he was either noisy and hot-headed, or as cold as a chunk of ice. He ran to extremes in this way.

"Very interesting!" he said deliberately. "So you poor chumps think that you can stop me?"

"My only hat!" breathed Mac. "Go easy, Churchy!"

They knew this mood; it was dangerous.

"I hate doing this—because, really, I like you chaps," said Handforth with regret. "If you weren't such pig-headed mules I might like you even more."

"Pig-headed! Us?" spluttered Church. "Why, you—you—— You're the one——"  
Crash!

Unexpectedly, Handforth's right shot out, and McClure, who had anticipated that the first attack would be made upon Church, gave a gurgle of pain. Handforth's fist had smote him in the chest with such force that he staggered blindly back and fell across the bed.

Biff!

Church got the next one, and he got it on the chin.

"Come on—both of you!" hissed Handforth. "By George! I can see that I shall have to take strong measures with you. Even if I do get out, you'll only follow me and spoil everything! I shall have to make sure of you."

The thought startled him. A moment earlier he had been telling himself that all he needed to do was to push his chums out of the way and escape. But if he did that, they would soon recover—and follow him! And he had made up his mind that to-night's investigation should be a lone adventure.

"All right!" he said doggedly.

Crash! Biff! Thud!

Church went sprawling, gasping feebly. McClure reeled back, under the vague impression that an explosion had occurred. At all events, he saw all sorts of bright lights and blazing stars.

But he and Church were game; and they staggered forward to renew the attack. Generally, when it came to a scrap like this, they succeeded in subduing their hot-headed leader. Once in a while, however, Handforth prevailed—particularly when he was in one of his most obstinate moods.

"You—you mad idiot!" panted Church. "Somebody's bound to hear this din, and we shall all get into hot water——"

"The sooner the din is over, the better, then!" said Handforth crisply. "Here, what the——"

He had received a forcible jab on the left ear, and he swung round. His right floored Church completely, and that unfortunate junior rolled over, more or less "out." McClure came on with desperate energy—only to meet with the same fate.

Handforth wasted no time.

Ruthlessly he tore one of his bed-sheets into strips. He grabbed Church, and dumped him upon his own bed; then he calmly proceeded to bind Church to the bed, using the strips of sheet as ropes. Before Church had thoroughly recovered, he found himself hopelessly tied.

McClure knew what was happening, and he made an attempt to get to the door—probably to give the alarm. Handforth forestalled him, and twenty seconds later Mac was on his own bed, and there were more dazzling stars floating about. McClure was quickly bound in just the same way as Church. By now Handforth was breathless—but triumphant.

"Now, my sons!" he panted. "What are you going to do? You'd try to keep me back, would you? By George! I'll show you who's who!"

"You—you rotter!" breathed Church. "Untie these things!"

"Some hopes!" retorted Handforth.

"We'll yell, then," threatened Church.

"Oh, no, you won't!" said Handforth confidently. "I know jolly well that you're a couple of idiots—but you're not sneaks. If I thought that there was any danger of you chaps squealing, I'd gag you. But I won't go to that length. You can lie there—and go to sleep! I'm off."

"But, Handy, listen——"

"Rats!"

And Handforth, without another word, padded to the door and silently made his exit.

### CHAPTER 3.

#### The Adventure in the Lane!

AS Handforth strode down Bellton Lane he was aware of a great exhilaration. It surged through him warmly and comfortingly. He was out—he was on the trail! And his chums,



who held such insulting views regarding his detective ability, were helpless. He had the whole night before him!

"By George! I'll show them!" he muttered doggedly.

When he reached the village he found the quiet High Street dark and deserted. It was fortunate for him, perhaps, that P.-c. Sparrow, the local constable, was not lurking in one of the shadowy doorways. Policemen on night duty have a habit of lurking in dark doorways. If Sparrow had spotted Handforth just then, he would have regarded the burly junior as a suspicious character. For Handforth walked with exaggerated caution. He went through the village like a thief in the night.

By the time he was on the Caistowe road some of his exhilaration had gone. He was beginning to find himself up against hard facts. Theories were all very well, but now that he was actually upon this investigation, a practical plan of action was necessary. And, to tell the truth, Handforth had no plan of action whatever. He did not know how to proceed.

He had a vague, general idea of making his way down the cliff and entering that mysterious old smugglers' cave. Even if the tide was high, he could scramble along the rocks and worm his way, ledge by ledge, until he reached the tunnel—

At this point his thoughts received a sudden jar. He had forgotten his electric torch! How could he explore those old tunnels in the pitch darkness? He halted, frowning with annoyance.

"Rats and blow!" he muttered. "I had everything ready, too!"

He remembered—now—that he had left his electric torch under his pillow. This was all the fault of Church and McClure! Rats to them!

He felt in his pockets, and was amazed to discover that he had no matches—no light of any kind.

Of course, he could confine his attention to Crag House to-night. He could explore the cave to-morrow night. Perhaps, if he scrambled over the garden wall of Crag House, he could sneak up to one of the windows and overhear the crooks plotting. Handforth's thoughts generally ran in a melodramatic direction. In his mind's eye he pictured a desperate gang of criminals, sitting in a circle, with their heads together plotting and scheming. But this mental picture of his also provided for the crooks being careless enough to leave the blinds up and the windows partially open.

"H'm!" he muttered. "It's going to be awkward."

He remembered how Nelson Lee had entered the grounds of Crag House in the

darkness, and how Lee had accidentally fallen over a cunningly concealed trip-wire, setting off an alarm. On that occasion the detective had luckily escaped, and the occupants of Crag House had concluded that a cat or a rabbit had bumped against the trip-wire.

Handforth walked on with sudden determination. Why should he hesitate? He was in a better position than Nelson Lee, anyhow. Lee hadn't had any real suspicions against Crag House; he wasn't prepared for trip-wires. But Handforth was, and he would be on his guard.

Silently, mysteriously, a vague figure materialised out of the gloom. Up till that second Handforth had believed himself to be alone. He felt a cold sort of trickle running down his spine. Was it his imagination, or—

"My only sainted aunt!" he muttered breathlessly.

The figure was upon him, and he instinctively clenched his fists.

"What are you doing here—and who are you?" demanded a voice in a harsh, vibrant whisper.

"By George!" gasped Handforth. "I—I thought for a moment— You're one of the crooks, eh? All right!"

He meant to attack then and there. But the other had a similar idea. Like a panther he leapt upon Handforth, and the burly Removite gulped with dismay as he felt the vice-like grip of his mysterious adversary. Strong as Handforth was, he could do nothing to free himself from that clutch.

"Here, I say, you rotter—" he began.

"Silence!" snapped the man with alarming ferocity.

The struggle was brief. Handforth went down, thudding heavily upon his back. He felt a hard knee in the centre of his chest; an arm was pressed across his mouth. Fight as he would, he could do nothing to save himself.

Then, almost before he could realise it, a heavy scarf was whipped round his mouth and drawn tight—it was so arranged, too, that even his eyes were covered. Bewildered, confused, amazed, Handforth was rolled over. Now he felt his wrists being tied behind his back. Something else was fastened round his ankles.

He was disgusted with himself. Like a child, he had fallen into the hands of the enemy! Long before he had reached Crag House this disaster had overtaken him!

With a sinking sensation, he remembered the words of Church and McClure. They had warned him that if he went out he would fall into the hands of the crooks.



The thought scared him. What a fool he had been! He had played right into the hands of the enemy. To-morrow all St. Frank's would be discussing the latest disappearance!

"Walk!" commanded a stern voice in his ear. "And keep walking!"

He realised that he had been dragged to his feet; and his enemy had changed his mind, for he had unfastened the binding from Handforth's ankles. The junior

son, who shared the dormitory with him, were sound asleep.

Nipper would have been asleep, too, only he had been disturbed some time earlier by sundry violent thuds and subdued cries from the adjoining dormitory. Not that he had thought much of this—at the time.

Thuds and cries from Handforth's dormitory were by no means unusual. On the average, the chums of Study D had a dor-



Nipper switched on the light and beheld an extraordinary scene. Church and McClure were bound helplessly to their beds; Handforth was missing! "Great Scott, what's happened?" gasped Nipper.

felt something hard and round pressed into the small of his back.

He walked blindly.

#### CHAPTER 4.

##### The Surprise!

**N**IPPER, sitting up in bed, frowned. He did not know the exact time, but it was certainly late—getting on for midnight, he believed. Sir Montie Tregellis-West and Tommy Wat-

mitory scrap about three times a week.

The disturbance had ceased, and Nipper had come to the conclusion that the row was over, and that the celebrated trio had gone to sleep. Nipper had dozed, too. But now he heard soft, irregular thuds again—peculiar thuds.

"Funny!" muttered the Remove captain.

There were no cries this time—only those vague sounds of strife. No, hardly strife. It was something different. Very disturbing, too—and Nipper felt annoyed. He saw no reason why his night's rest should be so interrupted.



"Bother them!" he muttered irritably.

He climbed out of bed, and, without disturbing his sleeping chums, went next door.

Thud—thud—thud!

As he entered the dormitory he recognised the sounds. They were coming from Church's bed, and were caused by the bed rocking violently from side to side; Church himself was apparently struggling desperately. He was either having a fight with somebody or he was in the throes of a nightmare.

"Here, I say, chuck it!" said Nipper sharply.

He switched on the light as he spoke—and then he gasped. For, at the first glance, he saw the plight of Church and McClure; he saw also that Edward Oswald Handforth was missing.

"Great Scott!" he ejaculated. "What the dickens—— What's happened? Where's Handy? Who did all this?"

"Thank goodness you've come!" panted Church. "Quick! For goodness' sake, untie these rotten sheets! Anybody else disturbed?"

"No," replied Nipper as he went to the bed and wrestled with the improvised ropes. "All right, Mac—I'll be over on your side in a tick. But what's happened?"

"Why ask?" groaned Church. "It's Handy! We tried to stop him, but it was no good. We had an awful scrap, he knocked us out and bound us to our beds."

By the time Nipper had unfastened McClure, he had heard the whole story.

"The crazy lunatic!" he said, troubled. "Why the dickens didn't one of you come and tell me?"

"We didn't have a chance," protested Church. "We wanted to——"

"Well, it's no good talking now," interrupted Nipper. "We'd better dress—and smartly, too. We shall have to go after him. The hopeless chump! He might get into a terrible fix!"

"He's probably in it already," said McClure with relish. "And serve him right, too."

"You don't mean that, Mac," said Nipper quietly.

In his heart, Mac didn't, but he was certainly feeling bitter against Handforth.

At that very moment Handforth was being piloted through a doorway into a warmed passage. He felt the change of temperature instantly. He heard a door softly close.

"Walk straight on," muttered his captor. "I'll guide you."

Handforth walked, and he was aware of a peculiar sense of hopelessness. The closing of that door was like the knell of

doom. He had vanished—just the same as all the others! Now he would be taken down, down into the labyrinth of underground tunnels——

"Careful here," came a whisper from his captor. "Upstairs."

Handforth fumbled his way up some uncarpeted stairs, and he was bewildered. He had already made up his mind that he was to be taken downstairs—into the cellars or dungeons.

He felt a bit annoyed, because all his theory was going wrong. He found himself walking along an upper passage, then he was halted; he heard a handle turn and a door opened.

"Great Scott! What the——"

"Handy!"

By this time Handforth was dumbfounded, for he heard the familiar voices of Church and McClure—and the voice of Nipper, too. Somebody pulled the heavy scarf from his face. Blinking dazedly, he saw that he was back in his own dormitory.

"Guv'nor!" he heard Nipper say.

And, spinning round, he made the further staggering discovery that his captor was none other than Nelson Lee himself!

"You, sir!" babbled Handforth, with mingled relief and satisfaction. "But—but I thought that I had fallen into the hands of the crooks——"

"I imagined that you were under some such impression, Handforth," interrupted Nelson Lee sternly. "You unmitigated young rascal! Did I not give strict orders to the school that all boys were to keep within gates after darkness? Yet you have the effrontery to break bounds late at night—after lights-out! I ought to give you a severe flogging."

Handforth was too weak to say anything; he sank helplessly upon his bed, and Nipper quickly unfastened his hands. Dimly, Handforth noticed that Nelson Lee was holding an electric torch—and Handforth appreciated, in that second, that it was the torch which had been pressed into the small of his back; not an automatic pistol, as his imagination had pictured.

"We were just coming out, sir," said Nipper quickly. "We knew that Handforth had gone, and we were going after him——"

"I don't think you need explain," interrupted Lee quietly, as he took in the whole scene in one comprehensive glance. "I can see what has happened. I fancy Handy will have to pay for a new sheet when the House matron gets the inevitable report in the morning. But that's only a detail. Handforth, I'm very annoyed with you."

"Yes, sir," said Handforth feebly.



"What do you mean by this gross disobedience of orders?"

"I—I'm sorry, sir," faltered Handforth. "I thought—I mean, I was awfully keen on investigating. But—but after what's happened, I realise the dangers, and I'm not so keen now. I didn't mean to butt in, sir."

"Fortunately, I stopped you in time," said the schoolmaster-detective. "But it was only by chance that I came across you."

"Why didn't you let me know who you were then and there, sir? You gave me an awful scare——"

"Which you thoroughly deserved," said Nelson Lee curtly. "My only chance of keeping you quiet, Handforth, was to gag you at once. You have an unfortunate propensity for arguing—and for using the loud pedal. Perhaps you don't realise that I was shadowing a suspected man when I met you, and if we had started talking that man would have heard us."

"Oh, my hat!" groaned Handforth. "I—I'm awfully sorry, sir."

"You'll go to bed, and you'll give me your definite promise, here and now, that you won't do anything silly like this again," said Nelson Lee, his voice becoming more kindly. "Now, Handforth, I'm not unreasonable. I know that you are impatient—and all of you, I suppose, feel the same. But you can be sure that I am doing everything within my power to help the unfortunate boys who have disappeared. Leave this to me."

"Then we can help, sir——" began Nipper.

"You can—at the right time," said Nelson Lee. "For the present you must be patient. Now, Handforth, your promise."

Handforth gave it—earnestly enough. He had had a fright, and he was glad enough to escape without punishment.

## CHAPTER 5.

### The Mystery Workers!

**C**RAG HOUSE, with its ivy-covered walls, its well-kept gardens, was the very last word in dignified respectability. For a great many years it had been the home of Admiral Sir Rodney Carrington—a brave and distinguished man, now retired from active service, who had served his country magnificently during the Great War.

A bachelor, and a man, moreover, who had spent many years in tropical zones, he had a horror of the English winter. For this reason he always wintered abroad—Madeira, Cairo, or Southern Italy.

During these bleak months Crag House was closed. Mr. Crowson, the dignified butler, was in full charge, having under him two or three gardeners and some other menservants.

Mr. Crowson had been butler at Crag House for seven or eight months, and he was a familiar figure in the district—liked and respected by everybody.

If it had been whispered to the good folk of Caistowe or Bannington or Bell-ton that there was something mysterious and sinister about Mr. Crowson and Crag House, those good folk would have laughed with scorn. Even the police would have laughed unbelievably.

Yet to-night, as on many nights recently, Crag House teemed with remarkable activity.

Not a light showed in any window; the place was quiet and still in its ultra-respectability. Even if one had penetrated into the extensive cellars, one would have found the same air of orderly rectitude.

But this was a house of a thousand secrets.

Beneath those cellars, and reached by means of a hidden lift, lay a labyrinth of passages and chambers. They were really ages old, dating back from the time of the long-dead smugglers.

Those deeper cellars were unknown, even to Admiral Carrington, whose family had owned the property for generations. For a century they had been forgotten. There was a black shaft, penetrating downwards into the earth and rock, and joining up with an ancient quarry working.

Since the advent of the dignified Mr. Crowson, strange changes had taken place. Electric light wires were secretly run down to the unknown cellars; men had been at work.

And now, on this particular night, others were working.

An observer, coming on this scene for the first time, would have stared in amazement. For the workers were all dressed exactly alike—in drab, tightly-fitting suits. Mechanically they looked, and mechanically they worked.

Never exchanging a word, but labouring in stolid obedience to orders, they were engaged upon the strange task of building solid granite walls. They were converting this queer old labyrinth of passages and chambers; the granite walls were rising everywhere. Incredibly small cells were being built, and each wall was made of solid granite blocks. Doors of hardened oak, six inches in thickness, were being hung upon incredibly massive hinges.

And these workers, unskilled though they were, produced the necessary results.



Their work was crude, perhaps, but it sufficed.

Some of these mystery workers were boys—schoolboys. Others were stalwart young fellows of between sixteen and eighteen. And they all laboured in that same queer, mechanical way.

At exactly midnight a sharp order was given, and the workers were lined up. They obeyed automatically—which was not surprising, for they were, indeed, little better than human automata.

A door in the solid rock opened, and the night shift came on duty. Another gang of these same youthful workers—dull-eyed, meek, and obedient.

"Come, my pretties," croaked the old man who had escorted the night shift to the scene of operations. "Supper now. And bed, eh? Come along! You've earned your sleep!"

He was speaking to the "gang" which had just finished work; he spoke as he might have spoken to tame rabbits in their hutch.

Another figure appeared in the electrically-lit tunnel—a tall, quietly-dressed, dignified figure. The old man respectfully touched his forelock.

"Just changing the guard, Mr. Crowson," he said, with a croaking chuckle.

"Where is Shorty?" asked Crowson.

"Down below, Chief—with them two new young 'uns what came in earlier," replied the old man. "Glad to see 'em, I was, too. The more the merrier, say I."

"I'll go down to him," said Crowson, nodding.

He looked up and down the line of workers as he might have inspected the silver in his pantry. They stood motionless, silent, disinterested.

"They're all right, Chief," said the old man. "Good as lambs. That's rare wonderful stuff you give 'em. Rare wonderful!"

"It saves us a lot of trouble," agreed Crowson, nodding. "Well, we'll be getting along!"

And the relieved gang of workers marched off, obedient to the slightest word of that feeble old man.

THEY were taken down the lift four at a time; then, when they had all collected in the ancient quarry working, far below, the old man, carrying a powerful, petrol-vapour lantern, led the way.

For some distance they marched, and then another secret opening in the rock wall was revealed, and the workers were marched into a side tunnel. Here there was a number of cubicles, with flimsy

wooden partitions dividing one from another. The doors of these cubicles were of plain deal, and of no particular strength. The workers were ordered in—two in each cubicle.

Crowson, joining a squat, square-shouldered man, had gone to a cubicle at the far end of the tunnel, and he was inspecting two young fellows who were lying unconscious upon the little camp beds.

"Got 'em easily, Chief," said Shorty Williams—who was the chauffeur of Crag House. "As you were away to-night, we brought 'em straight down. You can give them their medicine here, can't you?"

"Quite easily," replied Crowson. "Good work, Shorty!"

It was difficult to realise that this dignified-looking butler was none other than James Douglas Sutcliffe, known to the police as "Jim the Penman." He was one of the most dangerous criminals known to Scotland Yard—a master-forger, a swindler, a crook of international notoriety.

Of late years Jim the Penman had ceased to trouble the police. Scotland Yard believed that he was operating abroad under another name. Yet here he was, in this quiet corner of Sussex, living the respectable life of a country house butler.

The two men made no efforts to lower their voices, although the partitions of the cubicles were so flimsy that their words could be heard up and down the tunnel. It was really more than a tunnel—it was a kind of cavern, three parts of its space being occupied by the cubicles, with a narrow passage running down one side.

Food was brought to the workers—wholesome food, consisting of bread and cheese and hot cocoa, and plenty of it. The prisoners ate and drank in the same mechanical way as they worked.

There was only one exception. In a certain cubicle the two workers were Cuthbert Chambers, of the St. Frank's Fifth Form, and Stanley Waldo of the Remove. Chambers was a human machine; but Waldo was in full possession of his normal wits.

And now, after many hours of work—after acting his part so cleverly that none of his captors guessed his real condition—he was at liberty to relax.

As he consumed his supper—eagerly enough, for he was hungry—he allowed the lack-lustre expression to die from his eyes. He watched Chambers almost wonderingly as that usually-aggressive senior attacked his own supper with that same hideous machine-like activity. For it was





Nipper & Co. dashed into the prison quarry. Gassed convicts and warders were lying everywhere. "Anything we can do to help?" asked Nipper eagerly.

hideous—to Waldo. He had seen so much of it during the period of his captivity. He pitied these unfortunates—yet he knew that they were not suffering. He was the only one who really suffered. The others seemed perfectly content. They worked well, they ate well, and they slept well. Their captivity did not irk them in the least.

For they were under the influence of that mysterious drug which Jim the Penman had administered to them all immediately after they had been captured. A slight, harmless injection—and their brains were deadened. Waldo himself had had that same injection; but there were peculiarities about Stanley Waldo of which his captors knew nothing. They did not even know his name. Had they known it they might have given him particular attention.

For he was the son of the celebrated Rupert Waldo, known at one time as "The Wonder Man." There was something different in his constitution; he was stronger, his eyesight and his hearing were

keener than of most boys. It was one of his peculiarities that he could not feel pain. And that drug, instead of having such a startling effect, had no effect whatever.

Waldo had awakened to find himself perfectly normal—but he had had the wit to act as the others. Thus his captors knew nothing of the true situation. But Waldo was in an advantageous position, since he could see all, hear all, and the crooks believed him to be as harmless as his companions.

He was listening now to the talk of Jim the Penman and Shorty, in one of the other cubicles. They were some little distance away, but he heard their voices without difficulty.

"Infernal nuisance," came Sutcliffe's voice—and Waldo pricked up his ears. "I've brought the wrong phial, Shorty. This one's empty. Go up and bring the new phial, will you? You'll find it in the secret cupboard."

"There seems to be a drop—" Shorty was beginning.



"It's no good—the syringe won't reach it," interrupted Jim the Penman. "Go and fetch the new phial."

Waldo was interested—so interested, in fact, that he did not go to sleep after the old man had been in to clear away the supper things. He pretended to sleep—but he lay very wide awake.

He heard Shorty return; he heard the two men talking, and he knew that the two new captives were being "treated." Soon Jim the Penman and Shorty took their departure. Silence reigned, except for the even breathing of the captives.

Waldo knew, from past experience, that there was not likely to be any disturbance. No guard was placed over the prisoners, for they were so meek and obedient that a guard was not necessary.

It was a brilliant idea to capture these youngsters in this way, to treat them with that drug, and to use them as workers. It was the cheapest of cheap labour. There was also another advantage. When these boys recovered their normal wits—as they probably would when the work was finished—they would remember nothing.

It was nearly one o'clock when Waldo slipped out of his bed. With the aid of a piece of bent wire he quickly picked the lock of the cubicle door. It was a simple, commonplace lock, and quickly succumbed.

A LITTLE electric light glowed in the rock roof of each cubicle; and there was a similar light in the passage.

These lights were maintained permanently; at least, they had not once been switched off during the period of Waldo's captivity.

The boy did not hesitate now. He knew there was a risk, but he took it without a qualm. He went along to one of the other cubicles—he knew which one, for he had easily judged the distance of the men's voices—and soon he had opened the door.

It was not carelessness on the part of the crooks that these doors were so flimsy and the locks so ordinary. Not one of those captives—except Waldo—had ever attempted to break free. Indeed, they were not capable of any such thing. They did exactly as they were told; for that extraordinary drug had such an effect upon them that they were no longer masters of their own will. They would have been just as secure if there had been no locks at all—or no doors, if it came to that.

Waldo had a quick look at the two latest "recruits." His only object in coming here, in fact, was to see if these newcomers were St. Frank's fellows. They were not. They were strangers to him—and it was difficult to guess their station in life, since

they had been dressed, like the others, in the drab-coloured working suits.

Waldo was about to leave when he caught a glimpse of something which lay in the folds of the blanket on one of the little beds. He picked it up.

"Hullo!" he murmured keenly.

What he held in his hand was a tiny phial, hexagonal in shape, with little flutings. It was white—and empty. Then he remembered what he had overheard. This, then, was the empty phial which "Crowson" had discarded. After Shorty had brought the fresh one, this old one had been overlooked.

Waldo held it up to the light, and his heart beat faster. There was a tiny drop of brownish fluid in the bottom. He removed the cork and sniffed. The odour was pungent, and he had never smelt anything quite like it before.

He slipped it into the neck of his garment—for he had no pockets—and a moment later he was out of the cubicle, and the door was locked again.

Now he went to the end of the passage, and confronting him was a great block of rock in the rough shape of a door; and the whole face of it was covered with metal rods and steel springs. It was the secret mechanism which operated the door from the hidden button on the other side.

Passing along the old quarry working, this door was invisible; but from Waldo's side it was easy enough to operate. He pulled one of the bars, the catch slipped back, and the door silently swung open, in spite of its great weight. All was pitch darkness beyond, and there was not a sound.

"All serene!" murmured Waldo, after listening intently for a moment or two.

He heard the faintest rustle near him, and a queer figure came into the dim light which glowed from the side passage—a figure dressed entirely in black, even to the hands and head. Where the eyes should have been there were two little squares of glass, or celluloid. A grotesque shape to meet in the dark—but Waldo was in no way startled. He had seen the figure before.

With one movement the headgear was pulled back, and the face of Nelson Lee was revealed.

"Been waiting long, sir?" whispered the Removite eagerly.

"Nearly three-quarters of an hour—but that does not matter," replied Nelson Lee. "Anything fresh to report, young 'un?"

This was not the first time such a meeting had taken place; Lee was fully aware of Waldo's unique position, and he was taking advantage of it. Waldo was acting



as a spy within the enemy's camp. Nightly, Lee crept in, and whenever possible Waldo joined him and made his report. It was a big risk for the boy—but only if he became careless. So long as he maintained his pretence of being helpless, like the others, he was safe.

"The other shift is at work now, sir," whispered Waldo. "We're all right, I think, for an hour or two. Two more captives to-night—they're here now. Any reports of further disappearances?"

"Not yet—but we shall probably hear of them to-morrow," said Nelson Lee. "Two more, eh? So these good friends of ours require more labour? How is the work progressing?"

"Full steam ahead, sir," replied Waldo. "They're building a regular miniature prison under Crag House. Goodness alone knows what it's for. Oh, and by the way, sir—there's this."

He produced the little phial and handed it over, explaining how it had come into his possession.

"Splendid!" said Lee, his eyes gleaming. "This is a most valuable find, Waldo. I had never hoped that we should be so lucky. Well done!"

He was so pleased that Waldo looked at him in surprise.

"But the bottle is nearly empty, sir."

"Yet there is sufficient for purposes of analysis," replied Lee. "I may yet be able to identify this drug—and, if I can do that, it will be the first step towards exposing these scoundrels."

## CHAPTER 6.

### The Code Telegram!

NELSON LEE was satisfied for the time being. He knew that if he was to smash this conspiracy, and capture the crooks, he would have to proceed with infinite caution. One false step might give Sutcliffe and his men the alarm—and then they would abandon the whole enterprise.

Lee was satisfied that the captives, including Waldo, were in no danger. They were merely being used as labourers. It was hard on parents and relatives, who were anxiously awaiting news; but there would not be a very long delay now. For the great detective had taken certain steps—steps which would unquestionably lead to rapid developments.

He was particularly pleased with Waldo for obtaining that nearly-empty phial. The detective slept well that night. And in the morning he locked himself in his

private laboratory, and he was hard at work throughout the forenoon.

He was working again after lunch, and it was just before tea-time when Nipper presented himself. Nipper had been trying to see his guv'nor all day, and at last he had braved Nelson Lee's wrath by coming to the locked laboratory.

He knocked, and there was no answer. He knocked again. This time an impatient voice told him to go away.

"It's me, guv'nor," called Nipper.

"Don't bother me now, young 'un," came Nelson Lee's voice, and it seemed to Nipper that there was a note of exultation in it. "You had better go away—No! Wait a moment!"

Nipper heard footsteps, the door was unlocked, and Nelson Lee, attired in a long white laboratory coat, admitted him.

"Of what earthly use is a Public School education?" demanded Nelson Lee severely. "Surely you know better than to say 'It's me'?"

"Cheese it, guv'nor! Life's too short to bother about such grammatical trifles," said Nipper, looking at the detective with open-eyed interest. "By Jove, sir! What's happened? If I didn't know you so well, I'd say that you were excited."

"You don't know me well enough, Nipper—because I am excited," said Lee gaily. "I have made the most valuable discovery in this remarkable case. I don't want to mystify you, so I'll tell you at once that I have identified the drug by which Sutcliffe's prisoners are turned into working automata."

"But—how did you do it, guv'nor?" asked Nipper breathlessly.

He was told of Nelson Lee's overnight visit to Crag House—and of the phial which Waldo had secured.

"There was just one drop of the stuff in that little bottle—sufficient for my needs," continued Lee. "Now, Nipper, it is fortunate that I have a long memory—for this drug is virtually unknown to science. But it possesses certain peculiarities which touched vague chords in my mind. I got my memory to work—I looked up certain records—and now, with the help of the little sample, I have obtained the proof I needed."

Nipper watched and listened in wonder; he had seldom seen Nelson Lee so animated. The schoolmaster-detective was pacing up and down, and his eyes were gleaming with eagerness.

"I'll tell you a little story, Nipper," he went on. "During the Great War, an almost unknown German scientist, named Wilhelm von Krantz, living in Essen, and working in one of the military labora-



tories, produced a peculiar drug, which became known afterwards as 'The G.S. Fluid.' Von Krantz's name for it was Gehirn-Schlafen, which is rather a mouthful. In German it literally means 'Brain-Sleep.' The term is self-explanatory."

"By Jove! You—you mean——"

"Von Krantz was unfortunate with his G.S. Fluid," continued Nelson Lee. "He started making experiments just at the end of the war, and it was only after the cessation of hostilities that the rest of the world heard anything about his experiments. Until then they had been kept a close secret. Von Krantz claimed that he had a cure for shell-shock, and even lunacy. His drug had the effect of deadening the brain—in fact, making the brain almost dormant. He made a test upon a violent maniac, and it was certainly impressive, for after the administration of

the drug, the maniac became docile and even childlike in obedience.

"It was the great test case. Von Krantz claimed that the effect of the drug would wear off after two or three weeks—and by then, because of his further treatment, the man would be cured. The case was watched by many eminent scientists."

"And was the poor chap cured, sir?"

"He was not," replied Nelson Lee. "He was a soldier who had been driven mad by his experiences in the front line. Von Krantz treated him carefully during the period of his 'brain sleep'; but, unfortunately, when the effect of the stuff wore off, his condition was exactly as before. Indeed, if I remember rightly, the poor fellow attacked one of the doctors and nearly killed him. It finished Von Krantz. He was completely discredited, and he and his Gehirn-Schlafen were forgotten."



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"Not completely forgotten, guv'nor," said Nipper quickly. "You remembered."

"Von Krantz was broken-hearted," said Lee thoughtfully. "He still maintained that his G.S. Fluid, administered in the right way, would result in amazing cures of all brain disorders. But nobody heeded him, and he died several years ago—in poverty, I believe. Now it is clear enough to me that Sutcliffe, or one of his associates, got hold of that formula. The drug which is being used upon the boys under Crag House is the G.S. Fluid. It is perfectly harmless, for their brains are only numbed, and when the effect wears off they will become quite normal, remembering nothing of what has happened in the meantime."

Lee suddenly turned upon Nipper, and slapped his clenched fist into his other palm.

"But here's the point," he went on keenly. "Von Krantz had another drug—one which acted as an antidote. One single injection, and the patient became normal within an hour. In my records at Gray's Inn Road I have both formulæ, Nipper—for I have always taken a keen interest in such things."

"My only hat!" gasped Nipper, staring. "Then—then you can go down into those tunnels, Waldo will admit you to the cubicles, and—and——"

"Not so fast, young 'un," interrupted Lee softly. "There are many possibilities—and you can be certain that I shall take full advantage of this discovery. Tomorrow I shall make a flying trip to London, and I shall obtain ample supplies of that antidote."

NELSON LEE had a guest at his dinner-table that evening.

The burly, hard-headed Chief Detective - inspector Lennard, of Scotland Yard, was a gloomy man. He had been engaged on this case for over two weeks, and he had accomplished exactly nothing. The mystery of the vanished youngsters was as great a mystery as ever.

"It's just uncanny, Lee," complained the Scotland Yard man, as they sat smoking after the meal. "I've never been so infernally baffled. There's not a clue as to how and where these young fellows have disappeared——"

"You needn't remain so baffled now, old man," interrupted Nelson Lee. "I feel in a confidential mood this evening, and I have decided to tell you all I know."

"I was wondering how long you were going to hold out on me," said the chief-

inspector gruffly. "Of course, you're an unofficial investigator, and I can't force you to tell me anything. As usual, you've made me wait."

"My dear Lennard, I wouldn't 'hold out on you' in an unfriendly spirit," said Nelson Lee, smiling. "I merely wished to make certain of my facts before I made a statement. This is a tricky business, and the crooks, so far, are not in the least alarmed by your presence in the district—or by the activities of the local police. They believe themselves to be perfectly secure."

"As far as I'm concerned, they're as safe as the Bank of England," grunted the Yard man. "I know nothing. It's a hateful admission for a prominent officer of the C.I.D. to make, but what else can I do? You talk about crooks. I don't even know if there are any crooks. These boys just vanish—and that's all we know. What are your facts?" he added bluntly.

"The first one is that the prime mover in this conspiracy is our old friend Sutcliffe."

Lennard jumped.

"Sutcliffe!" he ejaculated. "You don't mean Jim the Penman?"

"The same."

"But, man alive, Jim hasn't operated in England for years," protested Lennard. "We've lost track of him at the Yard——"

"You'll pick up his track again now all right," said Lee confidently. "You may have heard—— Just a moment. Come in!"

It was a trim maidservant, and she carried a telegram, which had just arrived. Nelson Lee dismissed the girl, read the telegram, and then passed it over to his inquisitive guest.

"What on earth's this?" asked Lennard, staring. "It's an unintelligible jumble. A code message, eh?" he added quickly. "Who is it from, Lee?"

"It is from Admiral Sir Rodney Carrington, and it was handed in at Marseilles," replied Nelson Lee smoothly. "The admiral assures me that he is travelling overland with all speed, and that he will arrive at St. Frank's, by private car, according to my suggestion, by Wednesday evening. He also assures me that he is travelling incognito, and that his arrival in England will be unknown to a soul—excepting myself."

The chief inspector was frankly bewildered.

"But what on earth has Carrington to do with this mystery?" he asked. "Isn't Carrington the man who owns that old



house on the cliff, somewhere between here and Caistowe?"

"Crag House," nodded Nelson Lee. "Do you know the butler of Crag House?"

"I haven't met him—I've had no reason to—but I believe he is a fellow named Crowson," replied Lennard. "I don't quite see——"

"Crowson deserves our very close attention," said Nelson Lee. "For Crowson is merely another name for our old pal Jim."

This time Lennard fairly leapt out of his chair.

"Crowson!" he ejaculated. "Crowson is—Sutcliffe?"

"Yes."

"And—and you knew this all the time?" demanded the Yard man almost angrily. "Confound it, Lee, is this quite playing the game? I might have acted days ago——"

"And you might have ruined everything," cut in Nelson Lee sharply. "Sit down, Lennard. Don't get excited."

"Sorry," growled the other, subsiding.

"I have had to work with extreme caution," continued Lee. "Remember, Lennard, that I am telling you all this in strict confidence. You mustn't act upon this 'information received' without my permission. You could very easily obtain a search-warrant and go to Crag House with your men—but if you did that you would discover nothing. You might grab Sutcliffe, but what good would that do you? What could you charge him with? Masquerading as a butler? He would come back with the retort that he is attempting to earn an honest living. You would have no evidence to take into court."

The inspector grunted.

"Are you suggesting that the key to this mystery is Crag House?" he asked.

"Whatever is happening at Crag House, is happening without the knowledge of Admiral Carrington," said Lee. "He went abroad this winter, following his usual custom, and he left 'Crowson' in charge in all good faith. That is why I secretly communicated with the admiral, and urged him to return immediately. And I am suggesting that we take no action whatever until Wednesday evening—until the admiral himself is here. Sutcliffe does not expect Carrington back until March—and I have every hope of catching the crooks completely by surprise."

They continued talking, Lee taking the Scotland Yard man further into his confidence. Neither of them guessed that the inmates of Crag House, at that moment, were on the verge of panic.

## CHAPTER 7.

### The Secret Message!

JIM THE PENMAN turned three aces face upwards and smiled.

"Your luck seems to be out, Shorty," he remarked sympathetically as he reached forward and drew some notes over to his side of the table. "I really don't like taking all this money."

Shorty Williams stared hard across the table.

"I'm not making any insinuations," he said carefully. "I'm only asking a question. Did you ever 'work' the cross-Atlantic liners?"

Sutcliffe laughed.

"This is a friendly game, Shorty, and it is quite straight," he replied. "No; I never went in for the amusement you mention. When it comes to card manipulation, I fancy you are cleverer at the art than I. You're just having a run of bad luck, Shorty."

"Well, it's darned funny!" said the other savagely. "How do you do it, Jim? I'm pretty hot at poker, but I can't play against——"

"Don't call me 'Jim'!" interrupted Sutcliffe, his voice snapping dangerously. "I've warned you about that before. My name is 'Crowson'."

"Going to extremes, aren't you?" asked Shorty. "We're alone——"

"It makes no difference," cut in Jim the Penman. "My name is Crowson—and don't ever call me anything else. There's another man here named Jim—Jim Sale—and he's the only Jim on the premises. Cut!"

He held the cards across, and Shorty cut them sulkily. The two men were sitting in the warm, comfortable sitting-room at Crag House. It was Shorty's off-duty period. Jim Sale was down below in charge of the workers.

Zurrrrh!

It was the electric bell—the front-door bell. Shorty, in the act of gathering up his cards, muttered an oath.

"Who's that?" he asked hoarsely.

"Don't be a fool!" retorted Jim the Penman. "What are you frightened of?"

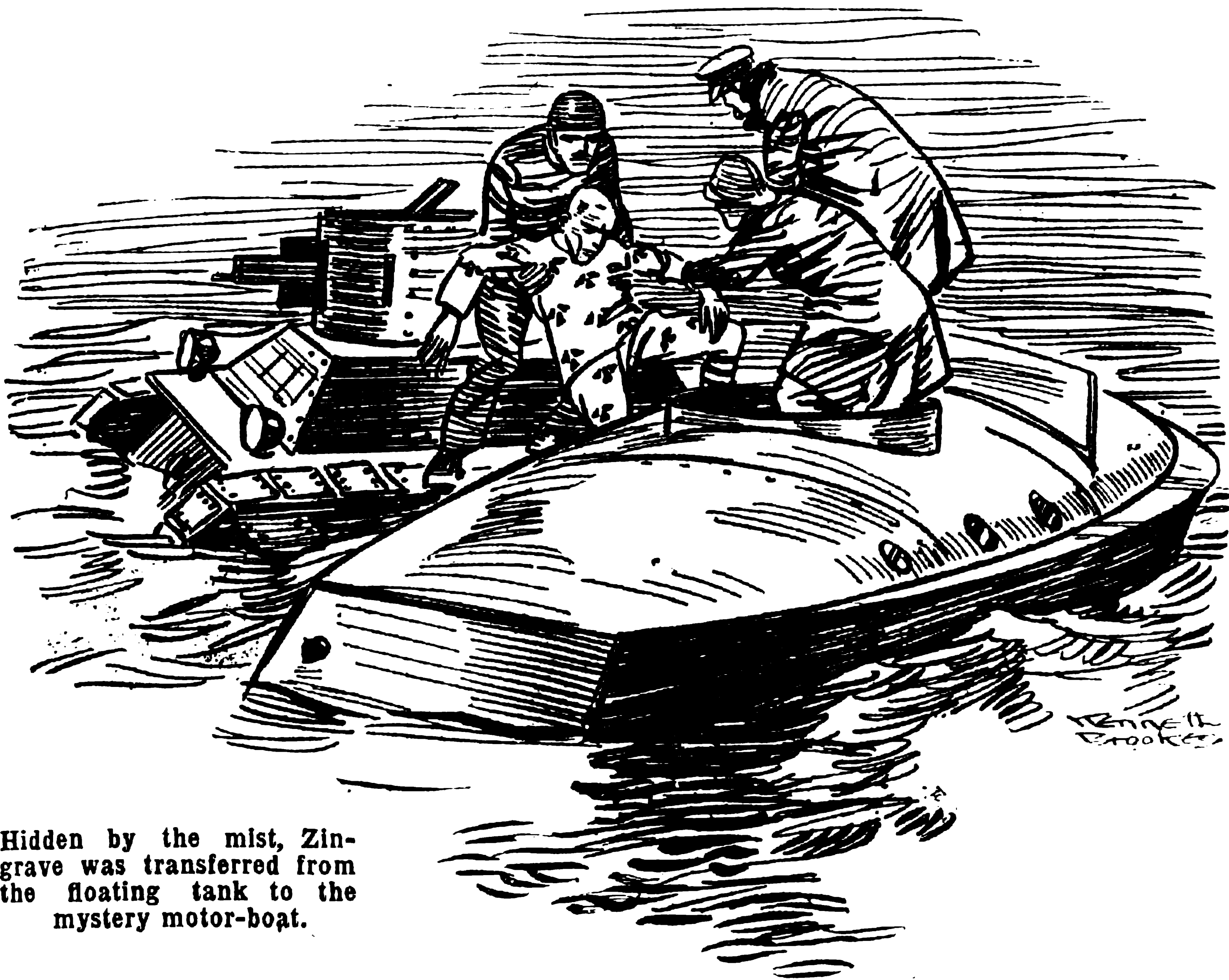
"It's late, Chief—it might be somebody doing a bit of nosing. There are lots of 'busies' in the district."

"You make me tired," said Sutcliffe curtly.

He walked out of the room, switched on the hall lights and unbolted the door. His poise was perfect; he had once again become the well-trained butler. On the doorstep stood a youth in uniform.

"'Evenin', Mr. Crowson," he said cheerfully.





Hidden by the mist, Zin-grave was transferred from the floating tank to the mystery motor-boat.

"A telegram?" said Jim the Penman, taking the buff envelope. "Rather rough on you, young man. You've had a long ride out from Caistowe."

"All in the day's work, Mr. Crowson," said the telegraph messenger. "Here, I didn't expect— Why, thanks, Mr. Crowson, sir!"

"That's all right," said Jim the Penman. "Put that half-crown into your pocket, my lad. I don't know whether I'm guilty of a technical offence in giving money to a post-office official, but I think we can keep it to ourselves, eh?"

The telegraph boy went off, highly elated. He had brought wires many times during the past few months, and he regarded "Mr. Crowson" as one of the finest sports in the district.

Sutcliffe went back to the sitting-room quickly. He tore open the telegram and glanced at it. The message was so long that it covered two sheets.

"Bannister!" he ejaculated sharply. "In code, too."

It was a coincidence—and yet, not such a coincidence, all things considered—that Sutcliffe should receive a telegram in code at almost the same time as Nelson Lee. Furthermore, Sutcliffe's telegram had also been dispatched in Marseilles. But this was no coincidence at all.

"Bannister?" said Shorty Williams, who was looking relieved. "You don't mean 'Long-arm' Bannister?"

"Yes, I do," replied Jim the Penman, sitting down and pulling out a pencil. "I wonder what on earth——"

He became absorbed in his work.

"Long-arm Bannister," said Shorty reminiscently. "Haven't seen him for years. Last I saw of him was just before he went down for a three-year stretch. One of the cleverest con-men——"

"Shut up!" snarled Jim the Penman, his voice savage and almost panic-stricken.

Shorty looked at him in amazement. He had never seen his Chief in this condition before.

"Bad news?" he asked anxiously.

"Bad?" said Sutcliffe, rising to his feet. "Man alive! It's the worst news we could have! Carrington's on his way back."

"What!" gasped Shorty. "But that's impossible! He's in Cairo, or Algiers——"

"Carrington is in Marseilles, and he has boarded the Paris express," snapped Jim the Penman, pacing up and down. "He's on his way home. He'll be here by Wednesday evening. Bannister happens to be in Marseilles at the



moment, and he recognised the admiral, and so he sent me this warning."

"But Long-arm doesn't know our game —"

"That's neither here nor there," interrupted Jim the Penman. "He knows that I'm serving as butler here, and that I'm on a particularly big job. He also knows that I wasn't expecting Carrington to return until March. I can't understand it. The old fool always wires me before he's coming home—or writes. There was a letter only yesterday morning, and he told me that he was going on to Nairobi. It's ugly, Shorty."

"He'll never know about what's happening down below—"

"You infernal fool!" grated Sutcliffe. "Of course he'll never know. But that's not the point. His unexpected return will absolutely ruin the Big Plan!"

He broke off, leaned across the table, and stared at Shorty.

"Lee is in this!" he went on deliberately. "We thought we were safe from him, didn't we? But I tell you that Lee is in this. Old man Carrington sent him a long telegram from Marseilles—in code! Bannister was clever enough to find that out, although he couldn't get a copy of the message. But the very fact

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that the old man wired to Lee proves that he is coming home at Lee's suggestion."

"We'd better quit!" ejaculated Shorty in a panic.

"No, we won't quit," said Jim the Penman slowly. "There's too much at stake."

"But Lee knows something, or he wouldn't have sent for the old man!"

"Lee knows nothing," insisted Sutcliffe. "He's guessing. That's it, Shorty. We don't mind how much Lee guesses—or how much the police guess. As long as they haven't got hold of any facts we can laugh in their faces."

"Even if they find out who you really are?"

"The worst that can happen to me on that score is that Carrington will fire me," replied Jim the Penman, with a shrug. "The police have got nothing on me—and I'll see that they never have. As for the Big Job, we shall have to do some thinking. We were planning everything for March, to coincide with the old man's return."

"But he's returning on Wednesday," muttered Shorty, swallowing something.

"Yes; and perhaps we can put the Big Plan into operation on Wednesday, too," said Jim the Penman, nodding. "I hate being rushed into anything—that's when



## The SNEAK of the SHELL!

"Er—um—yes. I had—er—prepared a nice little speech to make to you, but—er—I seem to have forgotten it! Anyway, what does it matter?"

You see, chaps, I am the leader of the School House, and the leader of all the juniors in the School against anyone else. There are some kids in Study No. 6 in the School House, I believe, who think that I am not leader, and then there are some New House wasters like Figgins and Co., who think that I am not the junior leader, but, of course, I don't take much notice of them.

My two chums, Manners and Lowther, and I—we're known as the Terrible Three—often have rows with Blake and Co. of Study No. 6, and we all have rows with the New House, but they're quite harmless affairs, and really we're the best of friends. But this week things are rather different, because I have been called a "sneak." You'll discover the reason, and you will learn how I clear myself when you read this week's story of St. Jim's in

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men make mistakes—but there's no help for it this time. We shall have to chance it, Shorty—we shall have to fix the thing for Wednesday, and there's just a chance that we'll get away with it."

## CHAPTER 8.

### The Mystery Aeroplane!

"**E**VERYBODY ready?" asked Nipper briskly.

"Waiting for you, old man!" went up a chorus.

"Rats! I've been here for ages," said Nipper. "Right-ho, driver! Fire away!"

The motor-coach was a handsome, well-appointed one. It was licensed to carry thirty-two passengers, but there were at least forty in it this afternoon. It was Wednesday, and the St. Frank's Junior XI. was going over to play a League match against Carlton College—and a number of supporters were accompanying the team.

"It'll be good to see old K. K. again," remarked Reggie Pitt as the coach started. "I bet he'll be as full of confidence as ever."

"He won't by the time we've finished the game," retorted Handforth. "We're going to lick that Carlton gang, my lads—and don't you forget it!"

Even Handforth & Co. and Nipper—eager as they were to investigate the mystery of Crag House—were looking forward to meeting the celebrated Kirby Keeble Parkington and his "Red-Hots," of Carlton College.

"This fixture list is a bit messed up," said Handforth, frowning upon a piece of paper. "We haven't played that home game against Bannington Council School yet—and it's on the list for December 19th. And we're not supposed to play Carlton until next Saturday."

"It'll come all right after this," said Nipper confidently. "We were interrupted by Christmas, and by that dust-up we had with the town. But that's all over now, and things are getting straightened out. K. K. agreed to have this match to-day, instead of Saturday, so that we can get right. We shall play Bannington Council School on Saturday—and everything will be all square. Don't you see? Next week we play Helmford College, away, and after that there'll be no more muddle."

"Well, you're skipper—it's up to you," said Buster Boots, of the Fourth.

The coach was rolling speedily and smoothly across the moorland road. It wasn't such a good road as the main high-

way, but it cut off a few miles. The afternoon was sunny and clear, and the rolling moor could be seen stretching away on either hand for miles.

In one direction the moor was bordered by the barren seashore. There were no cliffs here. The moor ran right down to the coarse grass which grew amongst the sand of the beach. It was one of the bleakest stretches of coast imaginable.

The motor-coach, climbing well, reached the highest point of the moor. From here the road led away to the right, into a comparatively fertile valley, and then onwards through well-cultivated and well-populated country.

Over to the right, some distance below the road, stretched the most rugged part of the moor. The boys watched rather fascinatedly—and in silence—as the coach bowled along.

For there was something grimly attractive about that bleak scene. A mile or two distant, but seeming much nearer, lay the squat, sprawling stone buildings of the great convict prison. Farther beyond, and only dimly visible, was the seashore, half-concealed by a haze.

"Look!" said Handforth, pointing.

Nearer at hand was a great, jagged scar in the moor—the stone quarries where the convicts worked. Figures could be seen—drabably-clothed figures; and, here and there, other figures in dark attire, and carrying rifles. There were lorries, too, and a fussy little steam-engine or two, with trains of toy-like trucks.

The coach was running parallel with this scene, and as the road continued in the same direction for another half-mile, the boys would have plenty of opportunity to examine the landscape.

"I don't wonder this part of the country is out of bounds," remarked Reggie Pitt. "I've never seen anything more desolate or ugly."

"I say—look there!" exclaimed Church suddenly. "Look at that aeroplane! Flying pretty low, isn't she?"

Their attention was attracted by the machine—a monoplane of unfamiliar design. It was an enclosed-cabin model, and it was swooping down to a low altitude, and the pilot was clearly going straight over the quarries.

"By Jove!" said Nipper with a start.

"What's wrong?" asked Tommy Watson.

"Look at the 'planes of that machine."

"What about them?"

"There are no markings—no letters or numbers," replied Nipper keenly. "She's not a registered machine! Not even a military plane, or she would carry the red circles."



"That's funny!" said Handforth, frowning. "I thought it was prohibited to fly a machine that hasn't been registered?"

"So it is," said Nipper. "I'm beginning to think——"

And then, at that moment, the mystery-plane suddenly swooped down, diving straight for the quarries. The schoolboys in the coach watched—breathless. They felt that something dramatic was about to happen.

Zooming with a powerful roar, the plane swung round—and there came a sudden puff of dense smoke or vapour from the ground, which completely obliterated convicts and warders alike.

"STOP, driver! Let's look at this!" shouted Nipper urgently.

The driver needed no bidding.

He was interested himself. The coach, as it happened, had reached the nearest point to the stone quarries and the prison; it was a sort of promontory, and from that very point the road bent sharply away.

The boys piled out with eager speed. They could see better now—and they were astonished to observe that the cloud of vapour, instead of clearing away, had spread. It was thinning, however, and it was possible to see the vague shapes of the convicts and warders.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Handforth, pointing.

All the boys could see what was happening. Where that vapour was spreading the convicts and warders were staggering about—many of them had fallen, and were lying still. Others were sagging to their knees and rolling over. In other parts of the quarry, warders were shouting orders, convicts were forming up into gangs.

"It's gas!" said Nipper breathlessly. "That plane must have dropped a gas-bomb!"

"My only sainted aunt!"

"Look!"

The strange machine, having zoomed up, was swooping down again. Then came another ominous puff—and more convicts and guards were caught in the stupefying gas.

That gas was not of the injurious kind. It spread in great, choking clouds, and its aim was not to injure, but to cause insensibility. It was the same gas, in fact, which had been used on the unfortunate youngsters who had been kidnapped and taken to Crag House.

Again the aeroplane came round—another bomb was dropped. But this time the machine, which had an enormously

powerful engine, zoomed up into the heavens. And now a great puff of reddish vapour suddenly appeared from near the tail, hovering in the air like cotton-wool.

"That's a signal," said Nipper as he stared upwards. "There's more in this than meets the eye, you chaps."

"I don't know about that," said Tregellis-West in a strange voice. "Look over there! What's that thing?"

It had appeared suddenly from beyond a craggy tor. At first the boys thought that it was a motor-car; then, to their astonishment, they recognised it as a curiously designed tank. It was a squat-looking thing, curiously flat, with a sort of conning-tower sticking up from the centre, and the speed at which it came across the rough moorland was amazing. By now the aeroplane had climbed higher and higher, and was making straight off across the Channel.

"Better watch this closely, you chaps," said Nipper. "It's going to be exciting. We're practically in the grand-stand—and we shall see the whole performance."

"But—but what's going to happen?" asked Watson, gulping.

"Unless I'm very much mistaken, it's an attempt to stampede the convicts—or a rescue of some kind," said Nipper. "Something big, anyhow. Look! That tank's coming straight down into the quarries. By Jove! She was nearly over that time—but she keeps straight on. The rough ground doesn't seem to hinder her in the least."

He was right; the tank was surmounting all obstacles, driving deeper and deeper into the quarry. One or two warders at that end were rushing up, and they were gesticulating, but those in control of the tank took no notice. The heavily armoured vehicle drove straight on.

It made direct for the helpless men—for there were scores of convicts and warders lying unconscious, just as they had fallen from the effects of the gas.

And now a hatchway had opened in the tank, and a man had leapt out—a man attired in a curiously clumsy-looking suit. It was a bullet-proof suit—even to the headgear. He clutched desperately, and the tank rolled on. Suddenly the man in the bullet-proof suit leapt to the ground. Quickly he examined convict after convict.

He ran to another group. Then he waved an arm, and the tank swung round. The mystery man gathered up one particular convict, and as the tank approached he bundled the unconscious convict aboard. Other hands helped him into the interior of the tank.

(Continued on page 24.)



Everybody's having fits—of laughter—over Handforth's Weekly.



# HANDFORTH'S Weekly

No. 39. Vol. 2.

EDITORIAL STAFF.

January 16th, 1932.

## A CHEERY CHINWAG

By  
THE EDITOR.

### Editor-in-Chief

E. O. Handforth

### Editor

E. O. Handforth

### Chief Sub-Editor

E. O. Handforth

### Literary Editor

E. O. Handforth

### Art Editor

E. O. Handforth

### Rest of Staff

E. O. Handforth

### Rest of Staff

E. O. Handforth

## WORD PUZZLES

By  
NIPPER.

I MENTIONED last week about the insulting letters and postcards that pour in upon me. By George! I had hardly finished writing last week's notes when I received a letter that absolutely takes the biscuit.

The letter comes from Brenda Mae Hicks, of Port Elizabeth. It is a complete volume of several hundred pages, in which she tells me that:

I'm an awfully fiery chap,  
I am a lazy ass,  
I have bats in the belfry, and  
I ought to be in an asylum.

She finishes this nasty talk by describing herself as "Your pal, Brenda." If this is the talk of a pal, thank goodness she isn't a relation!

For some reason that I can't understand she seems to think a lot of Nipper, and gives me scores of messages for the chump. I simply handed him her letter. He read it with a good deal of interest, and asked:

"What's the fare to Africa, Handy?"

"Do you mean single or return?" I sniffed.

"Single, I fancy!" grinned the silly ass. "I shan't know for certain till I get there."

When she talks of me this cheerful reader can't keep her feelings where she can reach them with English, but descends into an awful lingo called Afrikaans. I'm afraid to get it translated. By George, some chaps would be depressed by this sort of thing!

After complimenting me in the manner described above, our hopeful Brenda actually has the cold cheek to ask me to do her the favour of acknowledging her letter in my WEEKLY

Well, after all that she has said about me, I refuse to do her the favour, and, so far as I'm concerned, my readers won't know anything about it. So there!

E. O. H.

### HOW TO SAVE MONEY.

Go out to the Sahara Desert and save up for a rainy day.—(U. S. Adams.)

THIS week, you fellows and girls, we have one or two little word-catches. These are easy. You can do them on your heads if you like.

(1) Can you read this sentence?

The NELS

LEE has

reader, reader, reader, reader,  
reader, reader, reader, reader,  
CCCCCCCCCCCC

(2) How many English towns can you read in the following jumble—not altering the position of any word or letter?

LIVERPOOLEWESTBURYTRUROCHEST-  
ERTONBRIDGENORTHFLEETWOODFORD  
HAMPTONSHANKLINCOLNBROOKLANDS

(3) Starting with one letter, add one letter at a time to make the words suggested by the following clues:

1. Exclamation. (One letter.)
2. Alternative.
3. Preposition.
4. The front part.
5. A plate of type ready to print.
6. Fashioned.
7. (Two words.) A seat and the conclusion.
8. Not made.
9. Wearing livery.
10. Without knowledge.

You will thus finish up with a word of ten letters.

Solutions elsewhere, as usual. Cheerio!

BERNARD FORREST (Lie Specialist).  
STUDY A.

If you are in trouble, make an appointment with me and state your case. I will provide a suitable lie to meet any emergency. All lies tested personally.

### DETECTIVE WANTS CASE.

I understand that Trackett Grim, Esq., Detective, is in urgent need of a case on his birthday. Please pack the case carefully to prevent breakage of bottles. (C. de V.)



## The Editor burbles a few WORDS OF WISDOM

**I** THINK I can say quite truthfully that my paper is fair to everybody. Even Fourth Form fatheads are allowed to put their silly contributions in my WEEKLY—providing, of course, they don't say anything about the Remove or me.

In spite of the fact that I still think the paper would be better if I wrote everything myself, I'm a reasonable chap, and I let other fellows have a show. So when Ulysses Spencer Adams told me that he was going to write me a little article on "Country Life," I said:

"O.K. with me, big boy! But see that you keep me out of it, and don't let us have any chin about America being the best country in the world, etcetera."

"Sure!"

"And, mind," I added suspiciously, "I don't pay for contributions."

"Nix!" said Adams promptly. "I'll pay you to put it in, if you like."

"The fact is," he said, "my popper's keen on seeing an article from me in your paper. He'll be no end bucked—he mentioned it in his letter."

"Well, that's all right," I said at once. "You're as much entitled to a show as any other fellow."

Of course, with my usual unsuspecting nature, I let him bluff me. I ought to have smelt a rat when he talked of actually paying for it.

The article came along. It seemed all right, and I wasn't going to bother to read it right through. But, for some reason, I changed my mind. Lucky I did.

After starting off in a really good way about the beauties of the countryside, U.S.A. begins discussing farms.

"I'll say your English farms are cute," writes the bounder. "Gee! They remind me of the wonderful farms way over the Pond, where ADAMS' DELICIOUS PIMENTO CHEESE is produced. Boy! It's only a shilling a box of six large pieces, but is it good? Ask the first guy you meet on the street if it's good."

I began to sit up and take notice. In the next paragraph he talks about cows.

"They sure are noble animals, I'll tell the world. You should take a slant at the cows which produce ADAMS' PIMENTO CHEESE (of all grocers', stores, and dairymen). Gee! There are no cows like 'om in the universe."

In the next sentence he talks of the healthy life of the country, and goes on:

"They call the country people buxom, and, sure, they are buxom. Directly you lamp a country girl, you say to yourself, Gee! You can see that she feeds on ADAMS' DELICIOUS PIMENTO CHEESE. Have you tried it yet? It melts in the mouth."

The whole article, in fact, was one large

advert for Adams' beastly cheese. I rushed round to Adams' study with the thing.

"You big cheese!" I roared.

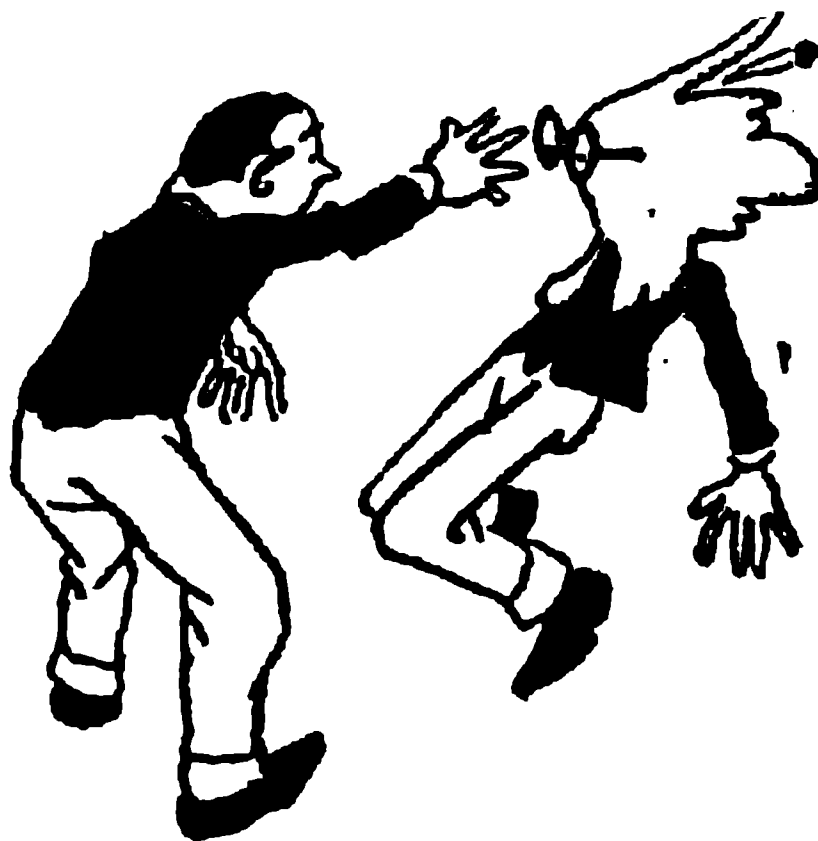
"Say, what's biting you, buddy?" asked Adams, looking up from his tea. "Have a bit of cheese—it's good!"

That was the limit. I seized a large portion of Pimento cheese—the creamy variety—and plastered it over the wise guy's face.

"Hi! Cheese it!" he yelled. "Say—you let up!"

"How do you like cheese now?" I grinned. And then, after pouring the contents of the teapot over him, and plastering a large cheese advert on his napper, I left him—a sadder and a wiser cheese.

And this is the reason why Adams' article on "Country Life" will NOT appear in HANDFORTH'S WEEKLY. Mr. Adams Senior—please note.



## BEFORE THE HEAD

**M**Y boy, with considerable pain  
I see you before me again;  
My words are apparently vain,  
My warnings are wasted—  
that's plain;

There's nothing to make you refrain  
From leaving the College domain  
And sliding down Bannington Lane  
When the moon's just about on the wane,  
And the night is quite clear, with no rain,  
And playing at billiards for gain—  
An action completely insane;  
You need not attempt to explain  
The deeds that have placed such a stain  
On the name we preserve might and main;  
And please do not trouble to strain  
That object you use for a brain  
By making excuses to gain  
A respite, or else to obtain  
Relief from a dose of the cane.

But one thing I'll tell you true,  
**THIS HURTS ME MORE THAN YOU.**  
(Whack! Whack! Whack!)

**FELLOWE'S INSTITUTE OF BARDS**  
supply poetry for Birthday Cards. Verses  
for remuneration on the slightest pro-  
vocation.

Clarence Fellowe takes the chair  
Of this versified affair;  
If you want a rhyme or two,  
Come to West House—Study U.

## THE B. Proa

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# A LITTLE TRAGEDY

(Letter from Mrs. Poulter to the Head.)

"Dear Sir,—I beg to inform you that seven mice made their appearances in the domestic quarters at 6.30 p.m. on the 3rd instant, and sent the maids into hysterics. Annie is still screaming fit to bust the ceiling as I write these words.

"Yours truly,

"M. POULTER."

(Letter from the Head to Mr. Wilkes.)

"Dear Wilkes,—I have received the enclosed note from Mrs. Poulter, reporting the appearance of seven mice at 6.30 p.m. on the 3rd inst. As mice have hitherto been excluded from the building by the strength of the foundations, it seems that the cement work of the kitchen floor must be crumbling. Perhaps you will investigate.

"Yours,

"NELSON LEE."

(Letter from Mr. Wilkes to Messrs. Plaster & Hodd, Builders.)

"Dear Sirs,—I have received information that seven mice appeared in the College domestic quarters at 6.30 p.m. on the 3rd inst, having undoubtedly made their way into the building through interstices in the cement-work. As this seems to argue that the foundations are crumbling, perhaps you will please investigate.

"Yours truly,

"ALINGTON WILKES, M.A."

(Letter from Messrs. Plaster & Hodd to James Warburton, Esq., Surveyor.)

"Dear Sir,—We beg to inform you that seven mice appeared in the domestic quarters of St. Francis' College, Bellton, at 6.30 p.m. on the 3rd inst. As this seems to indicate necessary repairs to the floorwork, we shall be glad if you will undertake a survey in order to ascertain the probable extent of the repairs, when we will submit our estimate to the College.

"Hoping to receive your report in due course,

"Yours truly,

"PLASTER & HODD,

"p.p. A. J."

(Letter from James Warburton to Plaster & Hodd.)

"Gentlemen,—By kind permission of the headmaster, I called at St. Francis' College yesterday to complete the survey of the floorwork, which is undoubtedly in a state to account for the appearance of seven mice at 6.30 p.m. on the 3rd inst. Full report and account of surveying fees are attached.

"Yours faithfully,

"2 enc." "JAMES WARBURTON."

(Letter from Plaster & Hodd to Mr. Wilkes.)

"Dear Sir,—Further to the incident of the seven mice which appeared in the College domestic quarters at 6.30 p.m. on the 3rd inst, we beg to inform you that our surveyor has forwarded us his report (copy of which is enclosed), and we shall have pleasure in undertaking the necessary repairs for the sum of £36 (Thirty-six

pounds). Trusting to have your confirmation in due course.

"We are, yours truly,

"PLASTER & HODD.

"p.p. A. J."

(Letter from Mr. Wilkes to Plaster & Hodd.)

"Dear Sirs,—Kindly begin on the repairs to the domestic quarters at once. Your account of £36 will be settled upon completion of the work.

"Yours truly,

"ALINGTON WILKES, M.A."

(Letter from Chubby Heath, 3rd Form, to "Handforth's Weekly.")

"Dear Sir,—I beg to inform you that 7 mice have escaped from there cage in the lag's common-room, and if annybody finds them they belong to me. Will you please return the mice when found as they are petts.

"yours trully,

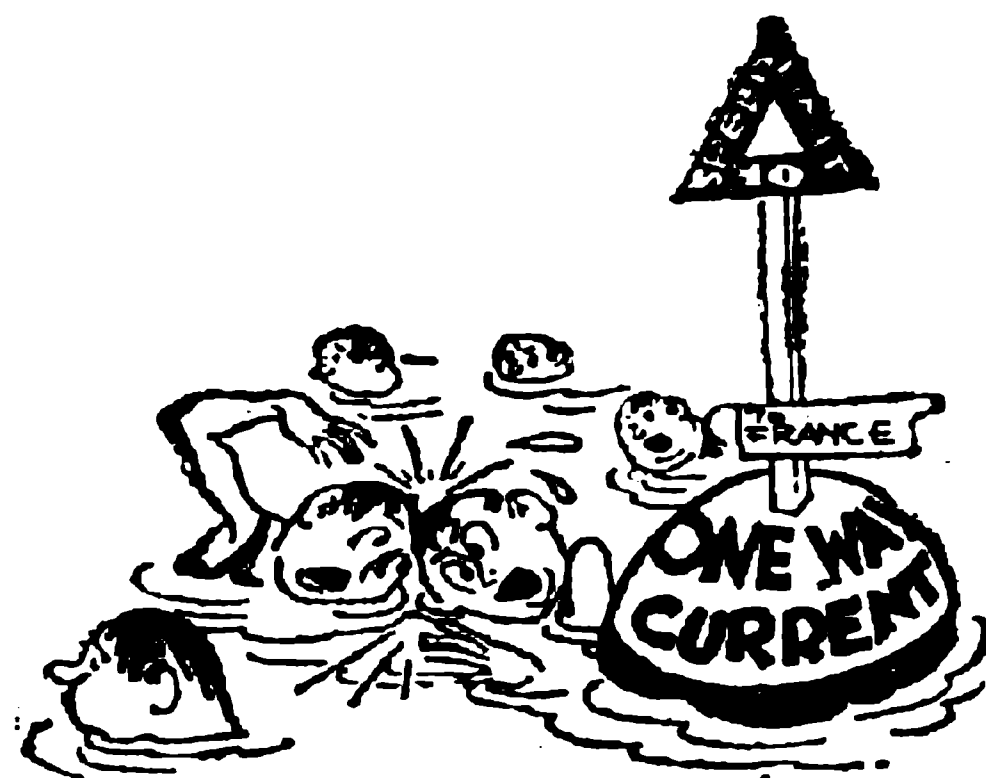
"C. HEATH."

## OUR DICTIONARY

(Reggie Pitt's Dictionary will be more famous than Dr. Johnson's—perhaps.)

**CAULIFLOWER:** A sweet-smelling wild flower found in great profusion in markets, gardens, etc. (Literally, a blooming cabbage, from the Latin, *Cauli*, a cabbage, and *Flower*, a bloom.)

**CHANNEL:** A strip of water between England and France which is largely used for swimming.



**CHANGE:** That which is often taken, but never given, by automatic machines. "No change," is a frequent situation in Scottish elections.

**CHARITY:** Something which usually begins at home and very frequently ends in the same place.

**CHAT:** This word means (a) in the Common-room—a rag; (b) in the Head's room—a lecture; (c) in the Form-room—fifty lines or detention.

**CHEER-UP:** The remark usually made to a fellow who is due for a flogging from the Head.

**CHEESE-IT:** The reply given to the foregoing remark.

**CHESS:** To play this game takes hours. In order to prevent one going to sleep, it is customary to wear a "chess-protector." The worry and trouble of the game inspired the saying, "to get it off your chess."

**CHILI:** A Form-room in winter.

B.B.C.C.

actus

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## PUZZLES

LEE has many ole, Lewes, West- Rochester, Chester, dge, Bridgenorth, Fleetwood, Wood- dham, Hampton, Colnbrook, Brook-

gether. Some found more, but I out such places as cause these villages own.

FORE, FORME, UN- END, UNIN- right?



## The Return Of Professor Zingrave !

(Continued from page 20.)

It was all done with bewildering quickness. The man in the bullet-proof suit vanished inside, too, and the hatchway closed down again. With a triumphant roar the tank went back on its own tracks—out of the quarry.

Its mission was accomplished—it had rescued one certain convict.

Warders who had not been affected by the gas were running up from all directions. They fired at the tank, but their bullets spattered harmlessly against the armour-plated sides.

Then came the most astounding feature of all. For the tank, attaining a speed of thirty or forty miles an hour on the open moor, made straight for the steeply sloping beach, a mile or two away. The schoolboys, from their prominent position, could see it streaking off, getting nearer and nearer to the seashore.

"They're mad!" bellowed Handforth excitedly. "They can't escape that way. There's no road."

"That's not an ordinary tank," said Nipper.

Nipper was right. For when the tank reached the beach it drove straight on; it ploughed down the shingle at reduced speed, it struck the waves, but instead of plunging helplessly into the water it floated—and it made straight out into the open Channel!

### CHAPTER 9.

#### A Sensational Escape!

THE boys did not quite realise it at the time, but they had actually witnessed one of the most astounding prison rescues on record.

It had all happened so quickly. Not ten minutes ago the moor had been peaceful; the stone quarry had carried on with its work in the same humdrum way, as it had been carried on week after week and month after month. Then the mystery aeroplane—the gas-bombs—the tank's dash—and the escape.

"But it's impossible!" said Handforth huskily. "Tanks can't float!"

"That's what I was thinking," muttered Church.

"It's a new kind of tank," said Nipper. "It's one of the very latest—an amphibian."

"A which?" asked Handforth, staring.

"A tank that can travel either on land or water," explained Nipper. "There's a propeller underneath, which comes into operation as soon as the machine gets into the water. Don't you remember we

saw it in one of the news-gazettes, some weeks ago? I believe they are only intended for river work, but the sea is as calm as a lake to-day."

He frowned. He could not quite understand it, even now. Amazingly efficient as that tank was, its speed on the water was necessarily slow. How could the crooks hope to get far before the alarm became general—before fast motor-boats roared out from various coast towns to scour the Channel?

"I say!" said Handforth abruptly. "What's the good of our standing here like this? Why shouldn't we get in the coach and go down to the quarries? We might be of some use. There are lots of poor chaps lying gassed."

"Hear, hear!"

"Good idea, Handy!"

"What about our match against Carlton?" asked Reggie Pitt.

"Bother that—we can postpone it," said Nipper crisply. "Handy's right—we'd better go down to the quarry and see if we can do anything to help. We'll send a wire to K. K., later, putting off the match until to-morrow or Friday."

And even Handforth, who usually regarded football as more important than anything else on earth, forgot the match completely.

The coach driver was as eager as any of the boys; and they all piled into the vehicle, and a moment later it was on the move. A considerable detour was necessary, but the driver made all haste; and presently the coach lumbered on to a private road which led only to the quarries and the prison buildings.

"That tank's out of sight already," remarked Church breathlessly. "There's a bit of a haze over the sea and she has vanished into it."

"The tank can't get far," said Travers. "Even if the sea is calm—I can't help thinking that there's something else behind it all. Anyhow, nothing can alter the fact that a convict was grabbed and rescued. That wheeze of gassing him first was brainy."

"They couldn't make any exceptions," said Nipper. "They had to gas him with the rest."

By the time they reached the prison quarries, most of the convicts and warders were showing signs of recovery. The gas had cleared, and the fresh breeze helped.

"Anything we can do?" asked Nipper, running up after the coach had stopped.

One of the warders, who was just rising painfully from the ground, shook his head.



"No, lad!" he replied brusquely. "You oughtn't to be here. Who gave your driver permission—"

"We thought we might be able to help," said Nipper. "We're Boy Scouts, you know—we know all about first aid."

The warder's face softened.

"Very kind of you—sorry I spoke so abruptly," he said. "No; you can't do much. That gas wasn't so bad. I got a whiff of it myself, and it only made me dizzy. Everybody is recovering, and they're none the worse."

"I'm glad to hear that," said Nipper. "We saw everything, you know—from the upper road. We saw the aeroplane throw those gas-bombs—and the tank—"

"I've seen a few years' service at this prison, but I've never known anything like to-day's affair," remarked the warder, breathing hard. "They got clear away with him—out to sea, too! What I want to know is—where did they get that tank from?"

Nipper was thinking of Crowson, the butler of Crag House—he was thinking of Jim the Penman—of the black motor-boat which came and went so mysteriously from the smugglers' cave. Was there any connection between the crooks of Crag House and this daring prison rescue?

"Who was the convict they took away?" he asked eagerly.

The warder's lips tightened.

"I don't know that I'm allowed to say anything, young 'un," he replied. "Best ask no questions."

"No ordinary prisoner, eh?" asked Nipper shrewdly.

The warder hurried away without saying another word—and this, in itself, was significant. As it happened, Nipper's curiosity was satisfied a moment later. A motor-car containing an elderly man, who was probably the governor of the prison, came speeding up; another man, who looked like the head warder, approached the car.

"You were right, then?" the elderly man in the car was saying. "It was Zingrave they took away? I might have known it."

Nipper jumped.

"Zingrave!" he ejaculated in amazement.

**N**IPPER had been prepared for something startling, but this sensational revelation nearly bowled him over.

Zingrave! Professor Cyrus Zingrave, the one-time Chief of the infamous League of the Green Triangle—the greatest and

most dangerous confederation of crooks Europe had ever known!

The League was dead—stamped out by Nelson Lee and Scotland Yard. It had been dead for years. There had been one or two half-hearted attempts to revive it, but they had all come to nothing. Nipper had had a vague idea that Professor Zingrave had escaped the country.

It was news to him that the rascally professor was serving penal servitude. Yet it was a fact that Zingrave, a year or two earlier, had been quietly taken by Scotland Yard detectives, and, convicted of conspiracy and fraud, he had been sentenced to twenty years' penal servitude. Little mention of it had been made in the papers, and at that particular time, too, Nipper and many of the other St. Frank's boys had been away on a holiday trip abroad.

"Zingrave!" muttered Nipper, as he found Handforth & Co. gathered closely round him. "Did you hear? The man they took away was Professor Zingrave."

"You mean the Green Triangle is active again?" asked Handforth breathlessly.

"I don't mean that," replied Nipper. "I doubt if the League will ever flourish again. But here's the point. Some years ago Zingrave and Jim the Penman were working hand in glove."

"Great Scott!" said Church, open-eyed.

"My guv'nor has said all along that there was something big behind this mystery at Crag House," continued Nipper. "I'll swear that this job was pulled off by those Crag House people—and that's where Zingrave is being taken. It's not far along the coast. And don't forget that cave—"

"Let's get to the school—let's go and tell Mr. Lee," interrupted Handforth tensely.

**B**Y this time the tank had vanished completely from sight—it had disappeared into the haze which hung over the Channel.

It reached a point so far distant from the shore that it was invisible. No shipping could be seen, either—although, not far away, through the haze, vessels were ploughing steadily along on their respective courses.

The hatchway was open, and a man was keeping a close look-out. And presently a blackish object came shooting silently through the water—revealing itself as a curiously designed motor-boat, so low that it was not entirely unlike a miniature submarine.

A rough-looking man, wearing a peaked cap, sat at the wheel. With him was



another man, even more weatherbeaten in appearance.

"There she is, Jed," said the man in the peaked cap. "Easy now. Split me! They've done it—which is more than I thought they'd do."

"The Chief knows a thing or two, capt'n," said Jed.

Captain Slaney steered the motor-boat skilfully, and the next moment it drew alongside the tank.

"O.K., Slaney," said one of the men in the tank. "Good work! Stand by to take us aboard. There isn't a minute to be lost. This haze may lift at any moment—and we mustn't be seen."

The transfer was quickly made. The rescued convict, only partially recovered from the gas, was helped aboard—and taken straight below to a tiny cabin. The other men followed.

There was only a brief delay while the last man pulled a lever—which automatically released a hidden plug at the bottom of the tank. He set the steering, and the last thing he did before abandoning the tank was to turn her engines on full power. Then the hatch was slammed down, and the man scrambled clumsily aboard the motor-boat, which was now keeping pace alongside. He nearly fell in, but Captain Slaney just saved him. The motor-vessel veered off; the tank ploughed on towards the open sea.

"She's all right, Slaney," said the man who had come aboard last. "She can't shift from that course, and she's bound to be seen by at least one ship. They'll watch her, too—and they'll see something interesting."

Thus the tank kept to her course—full speed ahead. With her hatch closed, it was impossible for any observers to know that the craft contained no living thing. Deliberately she had been abandoned—holed. She was going to her doom.

The officers and crew of at least two coasting steamers sighted that queer little craft, and they were so intent upon watching her—wondering exactly what she could be—that they did not even see the motor-boat as it stole stealthily up the coast, avoiding all shipping, even avoiding the shore—for those aboard were waiting until dusk came.

The tank was also observed by two fishing-boats, and even by people aboard a fairly large incoming liner. They all saw the catastrophe.

For that remarkable craft, getting farther and farther out into the Channel, seemed to be making heavy work of it now that she was encountering the swell. She plunged and rolled, the water sometimes sweeping clean over the conning-

tower. There were indications, too, that she was getting lower and lower in the water.

One of the coasting steamers was obliged to alter her course slightly, for those aboard the tank were seemingly steering in a straight line, taking no heed of shipping. The steamer's officers and crew could not guess that the tank had no steersman!

She plunged heavily into the wash of the steamer, passing fairly close astern. The sound of her engines was clearly audible. And then suddenly, as though defeated by the choppy sea in the steamer's wake, the tank dipped steeply, showing her stern for a moment and the whirling propeller. Then down she went.

She did not come up again. There was only a smother of foam, a mass of bubbles.

## CHAPTER 10.

### Crooks Allied!

THE mystery motor-boat took advantage of a patch of dense haze which unexpectedly drifted across the scene. The mist clung to the coast near Shingle Head, and Captain Slaney, at the wheel of the motor-boat, made a quick decision.

"We'll duck in, Jed!" he said shortly.

"Mighty risky, capt'n," muttered Jed. "Them coastguards will be on the watch."

"If they've got telescopes that can see through this mist, I'm a porpoise!" retorted Slaney. "This job's being done in a hurry, and we've got to choose the quickest way. The Big Chief wants to get ashore—and we're taking him. There's a heap of craft coming out from Caistowe, and we don't want to be hunted across to the other side of the Channel. We've got the chance of slipping in under their very noses."

Captain Slaney, in fact, was jubilant. The sudden mist helped them enormously; there was very little risk. This part of the coastline, at such a time of the year, was utterly deserted. The cliffs rose frowningly, but they were nearly invisible in the haze. The coastguard station was farther along, out of sight. The tide was high, too. Soon the black craft was nosing her way into the depths of the old smugglers' cave.

The convict, a smallish man, had now completely recovered from the gas. He was assisted ashore, and although his eyes were active, he spoke no word.

"This way, sir," said Captain Slaney, with great respect in his voice.

He was taken up the black tunnel, Slaney leading the way with a powerful





The unsuspecting driver was knocked out, and then armed figures surrounded Admiral Carrington in the limousine.

electric torch. They reached the old quarry working; the secret door swung open, and they entered the hand-controlled lift.

Up they went—through the double cellars of Crag House. Finally, they reached the house itself. "Crowson" was not in evidence yet. Captain Slaney had his instructions, and he took the escaped convict straight to a small room in which a fire burned brightly. There was a wash-basin, hot water, towels, razor. Clothes were laid out ready.

"There you are, sir," said the captain with a nod. "Everything's prepared."

"Good!" said the escaped convict. "I will join you later."

Slaney left, closing the door after him. He went to the butler's sitting-room and reported. Jim the Penman listened intently, and not without a certain amount of anxiety.

"I didn't expect you until after dark, Slaney," he said at length. "You took

me by surprise, coming so early. Are you sure you were wise?"

"I thought you wanted some speed, Chief," said the captain. "The last thing you said to me was that I wasn't to waste no time. There's a tidy haze out on the sea, and nobody saw us slip in. I did the best thing. There's a pile of boats coming out, and they're searching everywhere—for that tank. Good luck to 'em! They'll need it!"

"Perhaps you were right," said Sutcliffe, his eyes gleaming. "This has been a splendid afternoon's work, Slaney. In spite of the short notice, we have achieved complete success."

Less than twenty minutes later the escaped convict joined them—and the transformation was startling. For the man who entered was a quietly dressed, dignified individual of striking appearance.

Professor Cyrus Zingrave was a small man, but an imposing one, nevertheless.



His shoulders drooped a little, and upon them was set one of the most remarkable heads Captain Slaney had ever seen. The professor was clean-shaven, and his skin was almost dead white. Not a spot of colour relieved his cheeks, and his brow was high and massive—the brow of a genius. Even his short-cropped hair did not detract from his impressiveness, for his locks—on the top, at least—had always been scanty. But it was the eyes which held Slaney's attention most. Those eyes fascinated him. They were large and absolutely black. They were piercing, commanding, and they held a hypnotic quality.

"Well, Jim, this is a pleasant meeting," said Zingrave softly as he grasped Sutcliffe's hand. "I am greatly in your debt."

His voice was wonderfully musical. It was caressing. It possessed a silky, gentle note which was irresistible. The man's whole personality, in fact, was remarkable; and, master of himself though Jim the Penman was, he instinctively felt that he was in the presence of a mightier will than his own.

"I hardly dared to hope for such success, professor," said Jim. "We had very short notice, you know—we could not even get word to you that we were coming."

"I understand that something must have gone wrong with your plans," nodded Zingrave, his voice as silky as ever. "Tell me. I am not grumbling because I have obtained my liberty so many weeks earlier than I expected. But I take it, Jim, that there has been a hitch?"

"We must act at once—this evening," replied Jim the Penman. "Admiral Carrington is returning unexpectedly, and that is why I brought off the coup to-day. I think I have planned everything satisfactorily—and we should go all out for the Big Success. I have much to tell you, Zingrave."

They talked long and earnestly.

## CHAPTER 11.

### Failure—or Trickery?

**S**T. FRANK'S was quiet and sleepy when the motor-coach returned. Nobody at the school seemed to know of the eventful happenings of the afternoon.

Nipper's first task was to hurry straight to the headmaster's house. Handforth & Co. wanted to accompany him; but he prevailed upon them to stay behind. It would be less conspicuous if Nipper went alone.

He found Nelson Lee in his study, and the detective was standing with his back to the fire, a pipe clenched between his teeth.

"Guv'nor!" exclaimed Nipper. "I've some big news."

Lee nodded.

"I think I can save your breath, young 'un," he said. "Our old friend Zingrave is at large."

"Then—you know?"

"Are you surprised?" asked Nelson Lee dryly. "You may be sure that the police were informed immediately, and Lennard lost no time in 'phoning me."

"Of course, sir," said Nipper, feeling slightly disappointed. "Well, what do you think of it?" he went on eagerly. "Zingrave! I didn't even know that he was in prison!"

"I am awaiting the reports," said Nelson Lee slowly. "Warders are out scouring the countryside; motor-boats have put out from every port along the coast hereabouts, and the Channel is being scoured at this very moment. Yet, somehow, I doubt if that amphibian tank will be found."

"But it's bound to be, guv'nor," said Nipper. "Those tanks, marvellous as they are, aren't constructed for sea work. They've no speed."

"Our friends, the enemy, knew that, too," said Lee. "And you can be quite sure, Nipper, that they have made special arrangements. They're clever, and they would not have embarked upon this adventure unless they had their plans all cut and dried. There would be no sense in making off with Zingrave unless they were virtually certain of getting him safely away. A daring rescue, young 'un—one of the most daring in the annals of crime."

"Who do you think did it, sir?" asked Nipper quickly. "I mean, who were the people who effected the rescue?"

Nelson Lee looked at him hard.

"Haven't you any theory?" he asked.

"Yes, sir—Jim the Penman and those people at Crag House."

"I agree with you," nodded Nelson Lee. "There isn't a doubt of it, Nipper. This is Jim's work. The rescue of Zingrave was part and parcel of the Big Plot. In fact, I am now beginning to get a complete grasp of the whole conspiracy."

"Then you're certain, guv'nor?"

"Zingrave was rescued by the use of a harmless gas," continued Nelson Lee. "Nearly all the youngsters who have been captured by the Crag House gang have been gassed. That proves nothing, of course—but it is a significant parallel. And there is something else. Zingrave is a scientist—and the League of the Green Triangle was flourishing at the time when Von Krantz made his big discovery of the G. S. Fluid. In my own mind there is not a doubt that Zingrave secured the formula of the G. S. Fluid—and he kept it for his own nefarious purposes. It is only a guess—a theory—but it fits perfectly."



"By Jove! I hadn't looked at it like that, sir," said Nipper. "You mean that when Von Krantz was discredited, Zingrave either bought the formula from him or stole it?"

Nelson Lee did not reply, for at that moment the telephone bell rang.

"Yes, I see," said Nelson Lee in answer to the call. "Yes, it looks queer, Lennard. But don't be too sure."

Chief-inspector Lennard, who was speaking from Caistowe, expressed surprise.

"How do you mean—'don't be too sure'?" he repeated. "There can't be a doubt of it, Lee. The whole thing has failed. Zingrave is dead."

"I hope you are right."

"There's no hope about it—it's a certainty," retorted the Scotland Yard man. "The officers and crew of the Orion saw the tank pass astern, fairly close. At one time, in fact, there was some danger of collision. The tank capsized in the Orion's wash."

"She sank like a stone, you say?"

"That's what I'm told," replied Lennard. "Took a sudden dive in the choppy sea, and never came up again. The Orion stopped her engines and cruised about for a bit. But they only saw a little smother of foam, and then some floating oil. There's no doubt about it, Lee—the tank sank, with everybody on board. They hadn't a ghost's chance. That tank was a death-trap. It dived right to the bottom, with hatches closed."

"Come along and see me when you get the chance," said Lee.

"I will—I'll be over within an hour," promised the Yard man. "A daring rescue, Lee, brilliantly planned—but it has conked out. Rescuers and rescued have all perished. And I'm not saying that I'm sorry. The thought of Zingrave being at liberty again was not a pleasant one."

Nelson Lee hung up, and he told Nipper of this latest development.

"Then—then it's failed, guv'nor?" asked the Remove captain. "Do you know, I half thought that that tank——"

"Make no mistake, young 'un," interrupted Lee. "There has been some tricky work here—and the prison authorities and the police have been fooled. I very much doubt if Professor Zingrave is dead."

"You're not suggesting that the men aboard the Orion were fooled, guv'nor?"

"That is exactly what I am suggesting," replied Lee grimly. "Oh, yes, the tank sank—but I believe that it was supposed to sink! You haven't forgotten that low-built motor-boat, Nipper? I believe there was a transfer before the tank was sent on her last trip. It was all part and parcel of the plan. Anyhow, I'm preparing for the next move—and I fancy it will be exciting."

"You—you mean the raid on Crag House, sir?" asked Nipper. "Admiral Carrington is coming here this evening, isn't he?"

"That is just what I mean," replied Nelson Lee. "Admiral Carrington is coming in secret—he will arrive after dark. Len-

nard will be here, and we shall take the admiral into our full confidence. I fancy that our friends at Crag House will get the surprise of their lives to-night!"

## CHAPTER 12.

### The Enemy Moves!

**B**RILLIANT as Nelson Lee was, he was no magician. He did not know that his carefully arranged plan with Admiral Sir Rodney Carrington had miscarried, and that the enemy was in full possession of this secret move.

Thus, when the admiral arrived in London late that afternoon, his movements were closely watched. He arrived incognito—but that made no difference. He was watched from the moment he arrived at Victoria; he was watched as he entered the hired limousine outside; the instructions he gave to the liveried driver were overheard. A telephone message was put through to Crag House.

The admiral was impatient and somewhat testy. He disliked his holiday being disturbed in this way; he hated coming back to England in this bitterly cold weather. He found London murky and bleak. He had resolved to give Nelson Lee a very severe wiggling unless Lee had a perfectly good reason for his activities.

The admiral was a small man, and his shoulders drooped a trifle. His face was small, like his body, and his brow was massive—the brow of a thinker, rather than a bluff sailor. In fact, Sir Rodney, in all essentials, was astoundingly like Professor Cyrus Zingrave!

The same build—the same figure—the same shape of head. Otherwise, of course, he was very different. Side by side there would have been no possibility whatever of confusing the two. But it was this sameness of build which had prompted Douglas James Sutcliffe to mark down Admiral Carrington as the victim.

There was no chance about it—the thing had been done deliberately. It had been planned months—even years—in advance. For a long time Jim the Penman, working with the one aim of securing Professor Zingrave's release, had sought about for a likely "double." He had hit upon Admiral Sir Rodney Carrington—and his next step had been to secure a situation as Sir Rodney's butler.

The admiral was a bachelor; he had very few relations, and even these he seldom met. In fact, he had not visited them, and they had not visited him, for years. He was a lonely man. If he suddenly changed his mode of life, there was nobody to make much comment. If he decided to take up his permanent residence at Crag House, people would not give the matter a second thought.

It would have been easier for the plotters if their scheme had been allowed to take its original course—if the preparatory work



could have been spread over until March. But now the crooks knew Sir Rodney had been warned—that he was coming home—they were forced to act at once. It was their only chance.

The limousine glided smoothly out of London. It was a car which had been hired—by telegram—from one of the big hiring companies. The driver was not in the pay of Jim the Penman.

He had no difficulty in following his instructions; he took the main road south, passing out of London by way of Putney and Kingston. Then on through Esher, Ripley, and Guildford.

He did not keep to the Portsmouth road after Godalming had been left behind. He branched off—and this other road would take him by way of Helmford and Bannington to St. Frank's.

It was dark, and the road, in places, was misty. There was a particularly lonely stretch some miles north of Helmford. The road led through pine woods, and there were no houses here—not a village.

A man in the uniform of a road scout was on duty at a lonely section, where a tiny by-road branched off. This scout was keeping a close watch on all cars which came from the direction of London. He stopped most of them, politely informing the drivers that there was a good deal of mist ahead, and caution was necessary.

He had given this warning to at least a

score of drivers when the hired limousine, with its glaring headlights, came into view. The scout stood out, hand uplifted. The limousine pulled up, and the man in uniform at once recognised the car.

Following his procedure with the other cars, he flashed a powerful torch-light upon the driver—and the beams strayed to the rear, revealing the admiral's lone figure at the back.

This time the fake scout flashed his light round, and it switched on and off quickly.

"Anything wrong?" asked the driver wonderingly.

"I should say there is," replied the man in uniform. "Come out here a minute and look! If I hadn't stopped you, you might have had a serious accident."

The unsuspecting driver climbed out of the car. A sandbag whirled, and it descended with brutal force upon the unfortunate man's head. Without even a groan, he sank limply to the ground.

At the same moment several dark figures leapt from the neighbouring hedges.

**"WHAT'S** wrong out there?" demanded Admiral Carrington testily. "Why this delay? What are you men doing—"

The doors on either side of him were opened at the same moment. Two men, well-dressed and gentlemanly in appearance, stepped briskly in and slammed the doors



Jokes from readers wanted for this feature! If you know a good rib-tickler, send it along now. A handsome watch will be awarded each week to the sender of the best joke; pocket wallets and penknives are also offered as prizes. Address your jokes to "Smilers," Nelson Lee Library, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4.

#### **GLOVES ON.**

**Jack:** "Why are you wearing those waterproof gloves, Tom?"

**Tom:** "So that I can wash my hands without getting them wet."

(E. Woodward, 19, Partridge Road, Llanhilleth, Mon., has been awarded a handsome watch.)

#### **CHEESE IT.**

**Customer:** "This cheese isn't strong enough."

**Grocer (to assistant):** "George, unchain our special gorgonzola and let it walk in."

(D. Hulin, 119, Lower Ashley Road, Bristol, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

#### **DIDN'T COME TRUE.**

"I dreamt last night that you gave me sixpence, uncle," said Willy, hopefully.

"Well," replied his uncle, "as you have been a good boy lately, I'll let you keep it."

(A. Pascoc, 4, Woodway Street, Chudleigh, Devon, has been awarded a penknife.)

#### **A.B.C.**

**Tramp:** "I've asked for money, I've begged for money, and I've cried for money, ma'am."

**Lady:** "Have you ever thought of working for it, my man?"

**Tramp:** "No, ma'am. You see, I'm going through the alphabet, and I ain't got to 'W' yet."

(S. Gill, 122, Lilycroft Road, Manningham, Bradford, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

#### **FOLLOWING IN HIS FATHER'S—**

**Old Lady:** "Well, sonny, what would you like to do when you grow up?"

**Burglar's Son:** "Follow in my father's fingerprints!"

(A. Andrews, 51a, Ballingdon Street, Sudbury, has been awarded a penknife.)

#### **A DUD TEAM.**

**Spectator (to goalie, whose team is losing 6—0 after ten minutes' play):** "Hi, goalie, when did your team last score a goal?"

**Goalie:** "How do I know? I've only been with them seven years."

(S. Marshall, 132, Carr Road, Walthamstow London, E.17, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)



behind them. They sat down, one on either side of the admiral, before he could splutter out any further expostulations. A long-barrelled Browning was thrust into his chest.

"Better ask no questions," said one of the newcomers. "Sit tight—and say nothing!"

"Why, why— Good heavens!" gulped Sir Rodney. "What in the name of— You infernal scoundrels! What is this—a hold-up?"

"Better keep quiet!" snarled the man with the automatic, pressing it harder against the admiral's ribs.

Meanwhile the unconscious driver had been dumped into the vacant seat in front. Another man took the wheel. The limousine glided off—not along the main road, but into that side lane. The whole incident had not occupied more than one single minute; and other cars, passing up and down the main road a little later, had no suspicion that such a dramatic hold-up had taken place.

The man at the wheel now was the false scout. He drove skilfully, and the car, after covering a mile of that ratty lane, turned off into a grass-grown farm track. It was so narrow that not even a bicycle could have passed. High hedges rose on either side of the limousine's wings. The lane was winding and hilly, and the surface was atrocious. But there was no danger of meeting any other traffic, for this track led only to an old derelict farmhouse which had been long deserted.

Only the sidelights were switched on now, and presently the car went through an opening where a crazy gate was hanging upon its rusted hinges. The vehicle pulled up in a cobbled yard. The mist was fairly thick here.

The old house loomed eerily; the plaster walls were broken in places, revealing ugly gashes, criss-crossed by ancient laths. In places the roof was missing, and over everything grew a wild tangle of dead creeper and weeds.

Even the sidelights were extinguished now.

"Admiral, you'll oblige us by stepping out," said the man with the Browning. "And please don't give us any trouble. It will be far better for you if you take this thing calmly."

Sir Rodney was by no means calm; he was boiling with rage.

"You confounded rogues!" he exploded. "What do you mean by this? Do you want money off me? You won't be very lucky—I haven't more than ten pounds in my notebook!"

"No; we don't want your money," said the man with the automatic—who was none other than Jim the Penman. "You'll learn all about it when you get into this delightful country residence. Now, sir! If you don't mind!"

There was no help for it. The admiral got out of the car. The two men closed in upon

### A GOOD WORKER.

Captain: "Have you cleaned the deck and burnished the brass?"

Seaman: "Ay, ay, sir, and I've swept the horizon with a telescope."

(P. Brady, 27, Sarah Place, Island Bridge, Dublin, has been awarded a useful prize.)

### FINDING THE BIRD.

Old Lady: "I've lost my canary, constable."

Policeman: "You'd better notify the Flying Squad, madam."

(W. Louch, 10, The Croft, Headington, Oxford, has been awarded a penknife.)

### ANOTHER ALARM.

Son (to father, who is desperately stemming a leaky pipe): "You needn't worry about that leak now, father."

Father: "Thank goodness! Has the plumber come at last?"

Son: "No, but the house is on fire now."

(F. Marsden, 27, Waterloo Road, Burnley, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

### PA DIDN'T NEED ONE.

Teacher: "Tommy, why is your hair so untidy?"

Tommy: "I haven't a comb, sir."

Teacher: "Then why don't you use your father's comb?"



Tommy: "He hasn't any hair."

(F. Foster, 162, Gt. Titchfield Street, London, W.1, has been awarded a penknife.)

### THE KEEPER'S MISTAKE.

Keeper: "Can't you see that notice, 'No fishing in these grounds'?"

Boy: "Yes; but I'm not fishing in the grounds. I'm fishing in the water."

(Gladys Stiggins, 28, Robertson Road, Preston Park, Brighton, has been awarded a penknife.)

### ABSENT-MINDED.

"Has the professor in room 13 had his tea?" asked the landlady in a boarding-house.

"I don't know, ma'am," replied the maid.

"Well, ask him," insisted the landlady.

"I have, ma'am," replied the maid, "but he doesn't know either."

(A. Wilkinson, Southmeads Hospital, Bristol, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

### BEYOND QUESTION.

Prospective Tenant: "If the house has been recently occupied, how is it that all the windows are smashed?"

House Agent: "Well, sir, my partner will insist on demonstrating to every inquirer that this house is only a stone's throw from the station."

(G. Cook, 21, Roberts Terrace, Jarrow, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)



him, and he was virtually forced through the half-ruined doorway. A torchlight gleamed. He was taken over a sagging floor, and a door opened. He passed into a room which was surprisingly warm. He heard a key turn in the lock. Then suddenly a light was turned on—a brilliant electric lamp which cast a soft glow over the entire apartment.

The admiral now saw that an oil-stove was burning; some old boxes had been placed in a row to serve as a crude couch. Other boxes had been set up in the form of a table, and here reposed a mirror, and, near by, some little bottles, curious-looking tubes, and an assortment of wigs. Standing in the full light of the electric lamp was the motionless, impressive figure of Professor Cyrus Zingrave.

"Good heavens!" ejaculated the admiral, staring at him fascinatedly. "Who—who are you?"

"We regret, Sir Rodney, that it was necessary to give you this—er—unpleasant shock," said the professor in his silky voice. "But I assure you that our action was necessary. You have regarded us as enemies—as criminals—but you will be relieved to learn that we are Scotland Yard officers."

"What!" ejaculated the admiral, open-eyed. "I don't believe——"

"Let me convince you," went on Zingrave gently. "You have an arrangement with Mr. Nelson Lee, the well-known private investigator. You are to meet him at an agreed-upon rendezvous."

"Upon my soul!" ejaculated Sir Rodney. "That's true."

"The chosen spot was a hotel in Helmsford——"

"Nothing of the sort," broke in Sir Rodney. "I arranged with Mr. Lee to go straight to St. Frank's."

"Thank you, Sir Rodney," said the professor silkily. "That is all we wanted to know!"

## CHAPTER 13.

### The Transformation!

**I**T had been very easy to trap the blunt old sailor into blurting out the information.

The conspirators, thanks to Long-arm Bannister's warning telegram, had known that the admiral had come to England in secret; they had also known that the admiral had some arrangement with Nelson Lee. Now, thanks to Sir Rodney's admission, they knew that it had been his plan to travel straight to St. Frank's—where Lee was awaiting him.

The unfortunate Sir Rodney had been suspicious of that statement that these men were Scotland Yard officers; now he had every reason to know that the statement was false.

For, without a word, he was seized. To his consternation and fury, the coat was removed from his back; after the coat his waistcoat, and then the remainder of his

clothing. The outrage rendered him well-nigh speechless.

"I can assure you, Admiral Carrington, that this little ordeal will be much more pleasant if you accept it calmly," said Professor Zingrave. "We are not going to hurt you—but we must have our own way."

"You—you scoundrels! You rogues! You infernal miscreants!" stormed the admiral. "Good heavens! Never in my life have I——"

"Just a touch," said the professor gently.

It was the work of a moment for Jim the Penman to clap a pad over the admiral's mouth and nostrils. He struggled gamely for a moment, and then his efforts grew more feeble. He sank back, only semi-conscious.

"We have no time to waste," said the professor briefly.

During the next five minutes a complete change was effected. Zingrave, who had been wearing nothing but a long robe, quickly attired himself in the garments which had been removed from the admiral. They fitted him perfectly. The professor was thorough—he was to become Admiral Sir Rodney Carrington, so he wore every stitch of Admiral Sir Rodney Carrington's own clothes.

The admiral himself was quickly dressed in a reserve suit, and he was so bound that he could not make any voluntary move. Then he was sat upright upon a box, his back to the wall. The full light from the electric lamp played upon his features.

And now Professor Cyrus Zingrave, sitting at the improvised table, started his skilful work. He was a past-master in the art of make-up—and so was Jim the Penman. Between them they worked, Jim offering a suggestion here and there. The other men, who were Shorty Williams and Jim Sale, stood by watching with fascinated interest.

And it was really uncanny—the gradual transformation of Professor Zingrave.

Inch by inch he built up his face so that it became an absolute replica of Admiral Carrington's. He did not rely upon make-up alone; for he had a remarkable knack of controlling his facial muscles. Then he selected the wig which most nearly resembled the admiral's own hair. Skilfully he trimmed it, cutting here and cutting there. The white grizzled moustache was a triumph in itself; it was built up almost hair by hair. Under the strongest light, no eye could have detected that it was false.

The transformation occupied the better part of an hour. When it was completed, the result was startling—bewildering. For Professor Cyrus Zingrave had vanished. In his place sat a second Admiral Sir Rodney Carrington.

By this time the admiral himself had recovered from the slight whiff of anæsthetic; and he was staring almost dazedly. He had an absurd, fantastic impression that he was looking into a mirror. It was himself he saw—and yet it was not himself.





The gas bomb exploded, blinding, suffocating Nelson Lee and Lennard. "Back!" snarled Zingrave as he climbed through the smashed window. "If you attempt to follow I'll plug you!"

"Am I mad?" he muttered. "What does this mean?"

"I will tell you, Sir Rodney," said Professor Zingrave.

And even Jim the Penman was startled. For that voice, coming from the professor, had lost all its silkiness; it had become gruff and boisterous; in every respect it was the voice of Admiral Carrington himself!

"I will tell you," said the professor. "From this minute, Sir Rodney, you have vanished from the face of the earth. I am taking your place—I am the new Admiral Carrington—and not a soul will ever know the difference."

"I am dreaming—dreaming!" muttered the admiral. "This is a horrible nightmare!"

"It is with regret that I have taken this step," continued the professor. "I have no ill feeling towards you—but it so happens that you must be sacrificed. It is necessary for my purpose. But let me assure you, sir, that I will make your exile as com-

fortable as possible in the circumstances. I have prepared a special suite for your exclusive use." His manner changed, and he turned to the others. "Now!" he said crisply. "Let us be going."

Two minutes later he was sitting in the big limousine. The man at the wheel was dressed in the quiet blue uniform of the original driver. The car glided off, carrying with it a different Admiral Carrington and a different chauffeur. But who could guess that there had been this double change?

Soon afterwards another car left—a car with closely drawn blinds. It was taking Admiral Carrington to his life-long exile!

And Professor Zingrave, with amazing audacity, drove on to St. Frank's—to face Nelson Lee! He had supreme confidence in his own ability, and he was looking forward to this meeting with his old arch-enemy.

Zingrave was a daring man, and he knew that if his ultimate plan was to succeed, he must face this interview. Nelson Lee was



expecting Admiral Carrington—and if Admiral Carrington did not turn up, the detective would start some very awkward inquiries.

Moreover, there was another reason for the professor's daring visit. He wanted to find out exactly how much Nelson Lee knew—or how much Nelson Lee suspected.

And in the guise of Admiral Carrington, he had all the advantage on his side.

## CHAPTER 14.

### The Vital Conference!

"**H**E'S late," said Inspector Lennard, looking at his watch.

"We mustn't be too exacting, old man," smiled Nelson Lee. "There are some bad patches of mist along the road, and perhaps the admiral's car has been delayed. He can't be long now."

They were sitting in Nelson Lee's study, at St. Frank's. Lennard was impatient and restless.

"I fancy we shall be too late," he said for the twentieth time. "Zingrave is dead—there's not a question of that. He went down with that tank. And I believe that Sutcliffe went down with him. The rest of the gang will have taken fright by now, and by the time we search Crag House the place will be empty."

"Yet we cannot do anything until we have placed all the facts before Admiral Carrington," said Lee smoothly. "You mustn't forget that it is his house——"

"Yes, I know!" growled the inspector. "It has been infernally awkward. Thank goodness the old fellow has come home."

"As for Zingrave and Jim the Penman—we must wait," continued Nelson Lee. "The evidence is that Zingrave, at least, has perished, but don't be too sure, Lennard."

"You've said that before!" exclaimed the inspector. "But, man alive, how can there be a doubt? We've had the story from a score of eye-witnesses." He paced up and down, smoking hard. "As for this admiral, I'm not so sure of him," he went on. "According to all I can hear, he's a peppery sort of merchant, and he'll be difficult to handle. The chances are that he'll pooh-pooh the whole story, and call us a couple of madmen. And you must admit that it sounds fantastic."

"I think his car has just arrived," said Nelson Lee smoothly.

"The deuce it has!" ejaculated Lennard. "I'm hanged if I heard anything."

A moment later there came a tap at the study door, and a visitor was ushered in—a smallish man, aggressive-looking, impatient, brisk.

"Mr. Nelson Lee?" he asked boisterously, looking from one man to the other. "I am—er—Mr. Walters."

"Come in, Mr. Walters," said Nelson Lee cordially. "I am Lee. This gentleman is Mr. Lennard."

The false admiral waited until the door was securely closed, and then he strode forward and grasped Nelson Lee's hand.

"Now, sir," he said. "Perhaps you will kindly tell me what all this infernal mystery means? Walters, indeed! Was that the name we agreed upon?"

"It doesn't matter, Sir Rodney," said Lee dryly. "You are here—and that is the important thing. I especially asked Chief Detective-inspector Lennard, of Scotland Yard, to be present at this interview."

## COMING NEXT WEDNESDAY!



"Oh, indeed!" said Zingrave, acting his part well. "A Scotland Yard man, eh? A detective? I confess I am bewildered. What is all this intrigue? You cannot really assure me that something is amiss at Crag House?"

"Sit down, sir, and please remain calm," said Nelson Lee, eyeing the admiral thoughtfully. "I do not wish to alarm you needlessly, but I have every reason to believe—in fact, I know—that your house is in the hands of a gang of particularly dangerous criminals."

He spoke so quietly—so impressively—that the visitor calmed down at once, and became grave.

Neither Nelson Lee nor Lennard had ever



met Admiral Carrington; thus Zingrave's impersonation was all the easier. He had arrived according to the appointment—just a little late, perhaps, but that made no real difference. Already he had learned something which had rather startled him. So Nelson Lee knew that Crag House was in unlawful hands.

"You can be quite sure, Sir Rodney, that we would not have brought you home without good and sufficient reason," continued Nelson Lee. "I am going to tell you a story which will startle and amaze you, but please hear me out to the end. There have been some very mysterious happenings in this

## "THE CAPTIVES OF CRAG HOUSE!"

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district of late, and I have traced the source to Crag House, your own home. It will not be a pleasant revelation for you, but, if we take drastic action, I have no doubt that some useful results will be achieved."

"I cannot believe it," said Zingrave bluntly. "Crooks at Crag House? Impossible! I left a thoroughly reliable man in charge. Crowson, my butler. I trust him implicitly—"

"Yet I must tell you that Crowson is not the man you believe him to be," said Lee. "He is, in fact, a very dangerous criminal named Sutcliffe."

"What!" ejaculated the professor, so startled that his amazement was genuine.

"Sutcliffe—known to the police as Jim the Penman," continued Nelson Lee. "He has completely deceived you, Sir Rodney. And

during your winter's absence he has been making some very drastic changes at Crag House. Listen."

Quietly and deliberately, Lee told the startled Zingrave the full story. The professor was considerably alarmed to know that Nelson Lee and the Scotland Yard man were in possession of such complete information. Apparently they had probed all—or nearly all!—the secrets of Crag House.

But he had one cause for tremendous satisfaction. In the course of that story, he heard that Lee and Lennard were the only two men who knew the inner facts. They had kept their own counsel, pending the admiral's return.

Inwardly, Professor Zingrave gloated. Lee was telling him everything—Lee was playing right into his hands, all unsuspecting of the real truth!

## CHAPTER 15.

### Exposed!

THE impostor acted with exactly the right amount of fire.

"Absurd! Ridiculous! Fantastic!" he burst out at length. "You will pardon me, Mr. Lee, but frankly I regard the whole story as sheer nonsense!"

"Listen, Sir Rodney—" began Lennard.

"I won't listen! I refuse to hear any more of this rubbish!" broke in the professor impatiently. "It seems to me that you two gentlemen have been putting your heads together, and you have been using your very fertile imaginations. The whole story is ridiculous!"

The inspector looked at Lee helplessly.

"I was half afraid of this," he muttered.

"And well you might have been," growled the imitation admiral. "What do you take me for? I am prepared to accept your statement that Crowson is a criminal, but what of that? What, exactly, have you against the man? For all you know he may be running straight. He couldn't get work under his own name—"

"Criminals of Sutcliffe's type do not run straight, Sir Rodney," interrupted Lee quietly. "I want you to help us—"

"And I see no reason why I should," snapped Zingrave. "It seems to me that you have brought me home for nothing. Just to listen to these preposterous theories of yours. Do you think I don't know about the cave? Or the tunnel which leads into the old quarry working? Pooh! I've known about them for years."

"But—"

"But nothing!" roared the false admiral. "You have made a few discoveries, and you have been indulging in a lot of nonsensical guesswork. There must be some other explanation of all these strange disappearances."

"Will you permit us to make a complete search?" asked the chief inspector.



"It seems to me I've no option in the matter," growled Zingrave. "Of course you may search. Bring your men—hundreds of them! And I'll warrant they'll make no discoveries of any value. You can search Crag House from top to bottom—from the cellars to the attics. You can explore those old tunnels, too. You won't find those missing boys, or any gang of criminals, either."

He was safe in saying this. He knew that Crag House could be searched; its secrets were well protected. And the hidden doors in the old quarry working were so cunningly contrived that nothing would ever be discovered. It was far better—Zingrave considered—for him to give this full permission, and to have the search over and done with.

"Of course," said Nelson Lee smoothly, "I can quite understand your perturbation, Sir Rodney. I can understand, also, that you have no fear of the full truth being revealed. Unfortunately for yourself, however, you are labouring under the delusion that we have no means of penetrating the inner tunnels—and the secret cellars."

Zingrave started back, expressing bewilderment.

"But—but I don't know what you mean!" he exclaimed.

"I mean, Sir Rodney Carrington, that you are hand-in-glove with these crooks!" snapped Nelson Lee, his voice sounding like a whip-lash. "No, don't move! There will be very tragic results if you do."

In a flash, he had brought an automatic pistol into view, and he was holding it steadily, its barrel pointing directly at the visitor's heart.

"This—this is an outrage," panted the professor, inwardly staggered.

"Lee! Are you mad?" asked the chief inspector harshly. "What is the idea of this melodramatic—"

"I am inclined to use one of my school-boys' terms and advise you to keep your hair on, Lennard," said Nelson Lee gently. "I know exactly what I am doing. Did I say that Sir Rodney Carrington is hand-in-glove with the crooks? An absurd slip on my part. Not Sir Rodney Carrington—but Professor Cyrus Zingrave."

The words shot out exultantly, and the automatic went nearer.

"What!" gasped Lennard. "You—mean—"

"I mean that Professor Cyrus Zingrave has, up till this moment, been congratulating himself upon my dunderheadedness," said Nelson Lee. "The detective telling his enemy everything he knows, eh? But I only told you that Zingrave, because I knew I had you just exactly where I wanted you. I am afraid that you have walked into the lions' den—and you must suffer the consequences."

It was an overwhelming shock for the trickster—who had certainly believed, until that moment, that he held the advantage. Even now he tried to bluff it out.

"If this charge was not so idiotic, I would be angry," he said coldly. "Why are you

trying to trick me like this? You know perfectly well that Professor Zingrave is dead—that he went to his death in the Channel."

"Yes?" said Lee dangerously. "And how did you know that—Admiral Carrington? Considering that you have driven straight from London, and that no mention of the 'tragedy' has been made in the newspapers, I am interested to know the source of your information."

"By gad!" muttered Lennard.

"It's no good, professor—you are trapped," went on Lee. "I will admit that I did not anticipate any such move as this; when you first entered this room I thought you were Admiral Carrington. But within ten seconds I knew the truth. Your make-up is good, but your eyes betrayed you. They are eyes which cannot easily be forgotten."

"You are mad!" snarled Zingrave.

"It is you who are mad—to come here thinking that you could delude me," retorted Lee curtly. "I am glad that Inspector Lennard is present. I have no power to arrest you—but Lennard has."

Zingrave was silent.

"You took me rather by surprise, professor," went on Lee. "I anticipated that you would make some move against Sir Rodney when he went to Crag House—and I had made my plans. What I did not reckon upon was your activity during the evening. Now, Zingrave—you will tell me exactly what you have done with Admiral Carrington!"

## CHAPTER 16.

### The Tables Turned!

NELSON LEE was in deadly earnest. He was concerned, too, about the fate of Sir Rodney.

"I was suspicious of that sinking tank from the first," continued the detective, almost mockingly. "A very clever trick, Zingrave—and it fooled quite a lot of people."

"Including me!" growled the chief inspector ruefully.

"I do not usually indulge in guesswork—as you have so unkindly suggested—but might I hint, Zingrave, that you were transferred from the tank to a motor-boat, and taken into the old smugglers' cave?" asked Nelson Lee gently. "The conditions were favourable for such a move. It might interest you to know that as soon as I heard of your escape I knew precisely what the Crag House plan was."

"Oh?" Zingrave was forced to utter. "You know a great deal, don't you?"

"The scheme was a very elaborate one, involving the unfortunate 'death' of Professor Zingrave," pursued Nelson Lee relentlessly. "Admiral Carrington, returning home, was to take up his residence at Crag House. And who would have guessed the truth? The hue and cry after the escaped convict would have fizzled out. And you,



Professor Zingrave, impersonating the unfortunate admiral, would have lived unhindered. A brilliant scheme. No inquiries—no awkward questions of any kind. Not a soul in the world would have known of Admiral Carrington's disappearance—for, to all intents and purposes, Admiral Carrington would have been alive, and residing in his own home. It will be a great disappointment to you, after you have schemed and plotted for so many months, with the aid of your confederates. Again I ask you, Zingrave—what have you done with Sir Rodney?"

"I am Sir Rodney!" shouted Zingrave angrily. "You are talking absolute drivel, sir! If you think for one moment that you can get away with this nonsensical——"

"I should advise you to sit perfectly still, Zingrave," interrupted Lee sharply. "Do not, I beg of you, forget this pistol. You are an escaped convict, and I shall be justified in firing if you offer any resistance."

The chief inspector was looking slightly bewildered; in fact, even now he was not quite certain. The whole thing seemed so impossible. Not by one word or sign had Professor Zingrave admitted the truth of Nelson Lee's charge.

"Get up, Lennard, and carefully examine the—er—admiral's head," said Lee smoothly. "You will find that he is wearing a wig. His moustache is also false."

Lennard, very startled, moved forward. He grasped Zingrave's moustache; tugged. It came away in his hand. And then—

Crash!

It was an unexpected splinter of glass, and even Nelson Lee, who was as cool as ice, was momentarily distracted. Only for a second did he shift his gaze, but in that second Professor Zingrave leapt. With one movement, he flung the automatic out of Nelson Lee's grip, and it went clattering across the floor.

"Hands up—both of you!" commanded a low, tense voice.

"Jim the Penman!" muttered Lee, furious with himself.

It was a dramatic turn. The window had crashed in, and through the opening of broken glass a man stood revealed. "Crowson," the Crag House butler! In his grip he held an automatic pistol, and at the first glance Lee could detect the Maxim silencer.

"You heard what I said!" snapped Jim the Penman. "Up with your hands!"

Reluctantly Nelson Lee and Lennard obeyed. Zingrave took three quick strides, and gained possession of Lee's own gun.

"Now, my friends, I think the tables are nicely turned," said the professor silkily. "You did not know that I had come prepared for all eventualities? This house is fortunately isolated from the rest of the school buildings——"

Tap, tap!

A knock sounded on the door, and Zingrave swung like lightning upon Lee.

"Tell them to go away!" he hissed. "Give one word of warning, and you're a dead man!"

Nelson Lee knew by the tone that Zingrave was in deadly earnest.

"Yes?" he asked, in a perfectly steady voice.

"Is there anything wrong, sir?" came the anxious inquiry. "We heard a crashing of glass——"

"It is nothing," replied Lee impatiently. "Just a slight accident. Do not disturb us now."

"Very good, sir."

Zingrave breathed more freely, and, in the meantime, the window had been pushed open and Jim the Penman and Shorty Williams entered the study.

"I have failed," said Zingrave curtly. "I was a fool to put my make-up to such a test. Lee saw through it. But I have learned that these two men have carried out their investigation in secret. Not another soul knows of the secrets of Crag House."

But there Professor Cyrus Zingrave made a fatal mistake. At least four junior boys of St. Frank's knew!

## CHAPTER 17.

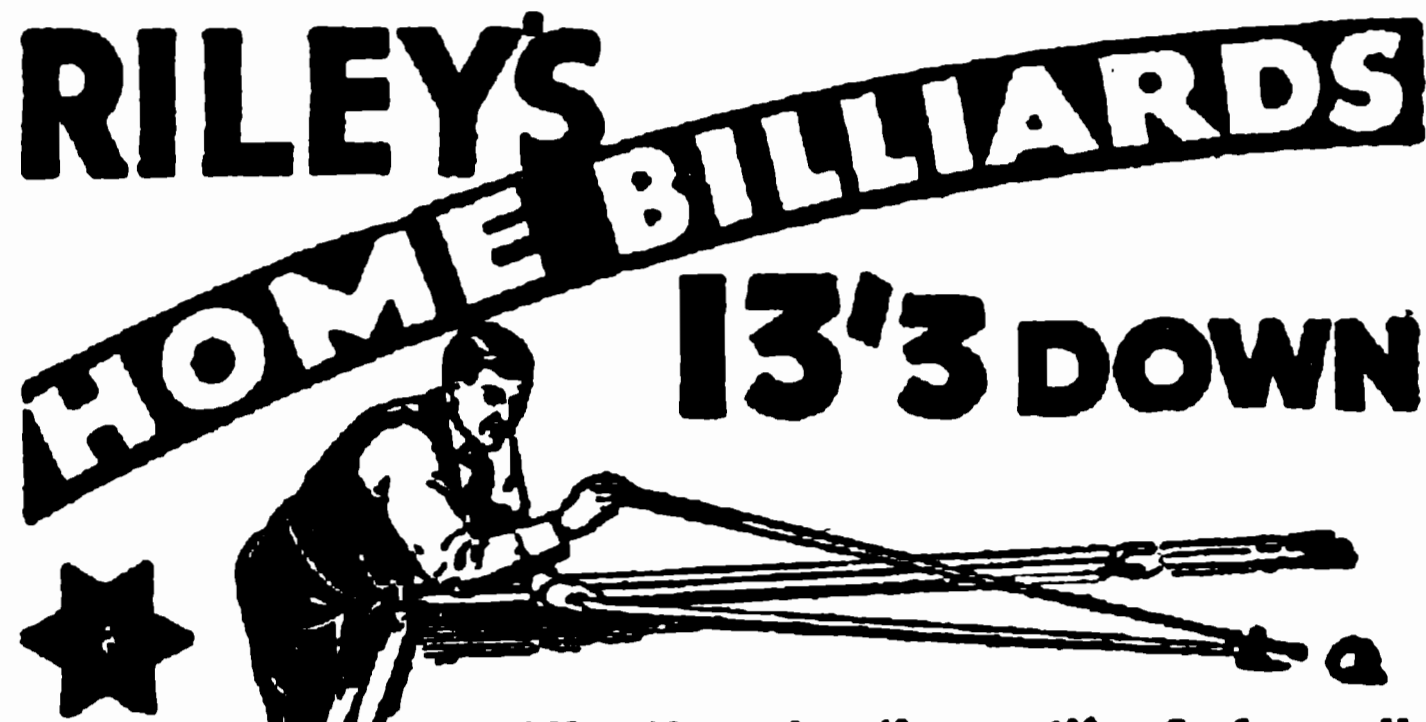
### The Fight!

NELSON LEE and Inspector Lennard had exchanged quick glances, not unnoticed by Professor Zingrave.

"We'll need you—both of you," he said. "You are too dangerous to remain at liberty. Now, Jim—quick!"

Jim the Penman understood. The crooks were, indeed, well prepared. For Zingrave's confederates had been waiting outside the study window, fully confident that the professor would succeed, but ready in case he failed.

Jim the Penman flashed something from his pocket—something which glittered. With a quick movement he flung it at the feet of Nelson Lee and the inspector. It shattered like glass, there was a dull "plop," and instantly a dense, acrid cloud of vapour arose.



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"Look out, Lennard!" shouted Nelson Lee. "A gas bomb!"

They leapt back, but the fumes spread rapidly. It was no ordinary gas-bomb, either, for the vapour was impenetrable, like the thickest of thick smoke. As the puffing explosion occurred, Zingrave made a leap for the window. Jim the Penman and Shorty were already outside.

"Back!" snarled Zingrave. "If you attempt to come through this opening, we'll plug you!"

Already the gas was having its effect, and Nelson Lee and Lennard were staggering dazedly.

"Help—help!" croaked the inspector.

He meant it to be a wild shout, but his voice was feeble. He felt that he was choking.

Nelson Lee, on the other hand, did not waste his breath. He was holding it. And he made a determined effort to reach the door. If he could only open that door and get out into the hall, he could call for help; servants would come—

He reached the door, and he was still holding his breath. He could see nothing, for he had closed his eyes, knowing that the gas would blind him. The room by now was invisible; it was filled with that dense, fog-like vapour.

Nelson Lee grasped the door-handle, he turned it, and swung the door open.

"Not this time!" said a low, vibrant voice.

Shorty Williams was there! With one shove, he heaved Nelson Lee back into the dense vapour and pulled the door to. He caught a whiff of the stuff himself, and staggered dizzily.

Nelson Lee, within, unable to hold his breath a second longer, gulped in a fatal lungful of the gas. He felt his senses leaving him; he staggered blindly, striving to retain control. Then he sagged down and collapsed.

It had been Professor Zingrave's idea to send Shorty indoors. It had been risky, but necessary. The front door was not latched; Shorty had easily entered, and he had arrived just in time to prevent Lee escaping.

Now he padded softly out again, closing the outer door behind him. No members of the household guessed what had happened. Some of them had heard the crash of glass, but Lee had given instructions that he was not to be disturbed.

Nelson Lee, in the study, was not quite "out." For when he collapsed, his head was on the floor, and here there was a distinct draught. After a moment or two he even opened his eyes, and he was startled to find that he could see clearly. Above him, not six inches away, the vapour floated and eddied uncannily. Then he understood. The draught was preventing the gas from reaching the floor. By an extraordinary piece of luck Lee's face was in pure air, and he was breathing it in rapidly. He was recovering. He lay still, and his brain commenced to work again. He would wait.

He heard movements near him, and although he was still far from himself, he braced up. Hands reached down through the mist, and he felt himself being seized. With a supreme effort he took a gulp of pure air, leapt to his feet, and punched.

Crash!

His hard fist thudded into a face, and he experienced a glow of fierce enjoyment. But only for a brief second. Something whirled downwards; it crashed upon Lee's head, and this time he subsided instantly into unconsciousness.

He was dragged to the window, bundled out, and laid beside the chief inspector, who was very completely gassed.

"The fellow is like a cat!" snarled Jim the Penman, wrenching the scarf from his face. "He wasn't even gassed! Look at my face! I shall be disfigured for a fortnight! But I got him with the butt of my gun."

"We must get clear without a soul knowing," muttered Professor Zingrave. "We are lucky to get away at all, Jim; fortune favours us. There will be two more disappearances to report soon, and there will be no clue!"

## CHAPTER 18.

### The Private Prison!

THE limousine was still waiting, and it was only the work of a moment or two to bundle the two unconscious men into it. The others jumped aboard, and the car glided off.

It went sedately across Inner Court, through Big Arch, and then into the Triangle. No less than three prefects and half a dozen juniors were about at the time, and they hardly gave the car a glance. Just a visitor taking his departure!

"It might be an hour—two hours—before any of the servants dare to go into the headmaster's study," said Zingrave within the car, as it drove down Bellton Lane. "We'll go straight to Crag House. This mist is gathering, and it will help us. Afterwards, somebody must take this car a hundred miles away—into Kent or Somersetshire. It doesn't matter where, so long as it is abandoned a great distance away."

The car soon arrived at the lonely old house on the cliffs. It did not wait long. The unconscious passengers were dumped out in the front drive—it was very misty here—and the car then took its departure.

Nelson Lee and the inspector were carried indoors; they were taken below to the ordinary cellars of the house.

"We have only to keep our heads and everything will be all right," said Professor Zingrave. "I am back in residence, and I am now speaking as Admiral Sir Rodney Carrington. Life at Crag House will go on normally, smoothly. Meanwhile, the underground work will continue, and when all is completed the drugged boys

(Continued on page 43.)



The Editor's own corner in which he chats with his reader-chums.



A breezy chat with readers conducted by the EDITOR. All letters should be addressed to The Editor,

NELSON LEE LIBRARY, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

**A**LWAYS glad to hear from you, Julius Herman (Tarkastad, South Africa). One of the old regulars, eh? Very pleased to know that the Quirke stories interested you so much. Your opinion is especially valuable as you're a schoolmaster. You can take it from me that Mr. Brooks is now writing just the kind of stuff you like most—and I think that "goes" for the majority of readers. Yes, Edgar Sopp of the Fifth somehow got missed in the recently-published pen-sketches; not that there's anything particularly noteworthy about Sopp, except that he has a knack of turning out alleged verse and light essays, and he only started doing this because of the coincidence of his name—E. Sopp—being similar in sound to the renowned Aesop. Stanley Clavering and Howard Rowe have always been in the school, but, like many other seniors, seldom get mentioned.

I shouldn't worry so much about getting hold of No. 1 of the Old Paper, Phyllis Allen (Hucknall), because, even if you did, you would not read of how Nelson Lee first met Nipper. Stories of the famous pair had been appearing for years prior to their appearance in the Old Paper. One of these days, perhaps, there will be a chance of publishing a serial dealing with the *very first* adventures of Nipper, showing just how he met his celebrated "guv'nor."

Pen-sketches of three more St. Frank's Removites: **STUDY B.—CLAUDE GORE PEARCE.** The son of a millionaire who made most of his money quickly—mainly by profiteering. Claude is a snob of the most pronounced type, and a mean-spirited fellow in every way. Conceited and unpopular. He is not even popular with the spongers, for, in spite of his generous supply of pocket-money, he is tight with it. **EDWARD LONG.** A squat and dumpy youth with

podgy features, a snub nose, and watery eyes. An unsavoury specimen in all ways. Slovenly by nature, he is also grubby and his neck seldom lacks a water-mark. In addition to being the laziest boy in the Remove, he is the biggest funk. He has reduced spying to a fine art, and holds the Form championship for sneaking. A bare-faced liar, and, all round, a most undesirable person. **ARTHUR HUBBARD.** Not a bad fellow in many ways—well-set-up and sturdy—but weak-willed and capable of being easily swayed by undesirable companions.

Yes, Noel D. McLean (Johannesburg), E. S. Brooks has written many stories under the nom de plume of Robert W. Comrade. I agree with you that it is about time that Ernest Lawrence appeared prominently in a story, and I'll jog Mr. Brooks' memory. Mr. Arthur Stockdale is still at St. Frank's; and he is the Housemaster of the Modern House.

The author you mention, G. S. D. (Liverpool), is not related in any way to our own E. S. B. I am glad to note that although you have reached the years of discretion you still read the Old Paper with considerable relish.

No, C. W. Cowdey (Westmount, Quebec), Bernard Forrest has no particular girl chum, although he has sometimes been friendly with Joan Tarrant. She is rather a catty person, and not popular with Irene Manners and her chums. Skeets, otherwise Viscount Bellton, is very good at sports, and is liked by all his Form-fellows.

There is one Canadian boy in the Remove, Donald Horin, and his name is Clive Russell. The thumbnail sketches of masters will follow later on, when we have dealt with the more prominent boys.



***Dick Forrester arrested and brought before the magistrate!***

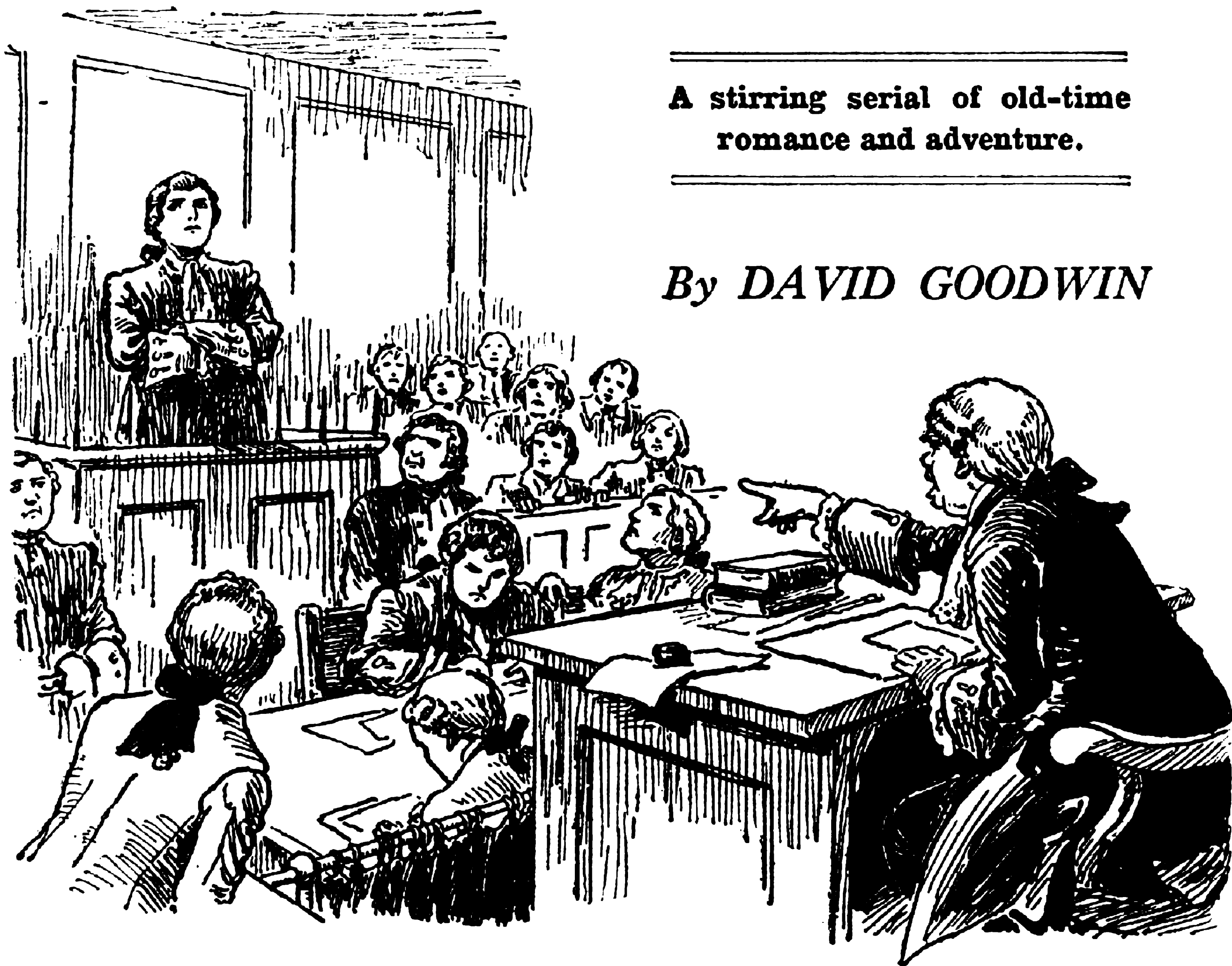
# Outlawed!

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**A stirring serial of old-time  
romance and adventure.**

---

*By* **DAVID GOODWIN**



## Trapped!

**F**EELING strangely light-hearted, as though with never a care in the world, Dick Forrester set Black Satan at a canter down the road leading to Boxley. His encounter with Squire Grafton, in which he had taught that bullying landlord a well-deserved lesson, left a pleasant taste in his mouth.

The distance to Boxley was quickly covered, and he pulled up outside the inn of which Turpin had spoken, and where he had arranged to meet his comrade. He was anxious to learn the nature of the errand which had called Turpin away so suddenly.

Dick dismounted and entered the inn, finding it to be a very cosy little hostelry. He inquired if another traveller, on a black mare, had yet arrived. The landlord smiled discreetly, and replied in the negative.

"I expect a friend shortly," said Dick. "Let dinner for two, and of the very best, be prepared."

"It shall be done," replied the host, bowing low.

"He evidently knows well enough who we are," thought Dick, leading Satan round to the stable and tending the horse's wants. "It is a snug little place, and Turpin guaranteed it safe. He never makes a mistake in these matters. I will stroll along the road a little way to meet him. He cannot be far off."

He walked back a distance along the road till he came to a crossway, where he hesitated a moment, wondering by which road Turpin would arrive.

As he stood there, a stranger, not ill-dressed, who was coming down the left-hand road on foot, took a glance at Dick and immediately walked towards him.

"Pray, sir," said the stranger, raising his hat civilly, "are you awaiting a companion?"

"Yes," answered Dick, looking shrewdly at the newcomer.

"He upon the black mare?" asked the man, with a half-smile.

"May I ask with what warranty you inquire, sir?" said Dick guardedly.



"I come from him, and I hope I am so fortunate as to find the gentleman he bade me seek. We will mention no names, but I have a message for the late squire of Fernhall."

"What was the message?" asked the young outlaw.

"The gentleman on the black mare finds he may not enter Boxley. He would be glad to see you in the wood yonder, where he has news of importance to communicate."

"Then I had better get my horse," said Dick.

"Not so. There will be no need. He said it would be but a few words he would have to say, and then you would return to Boxley. I am to take you to him."

"So!" thought Dick. "What has happened that Turpin cannot come to the inn? Doubtless he has lit upon some matter that needs haste, and does not wish to be seen in Boxley. Lead on, sir!" he added aloud to the stranger.

They started for the little wood that had been mentioned, and Dick looked at his companion curiously.

"You have been riding hard, sir," observed Dick.

"Ay!" laughed the stranger, looking down at his boots, which were flecked with the froth that comes from a hard-ridden horse.

"Did I not see you in the hostelry when I was ordering a repast?"

"Possibly," said the man, looking rather disconcerted. "I left my horse there, having ridden in to give you this message. It was not wise to speak to you there, so I made a detour to meet you on the road. Our mutual friend was most anxious I should not fail to find you. Here we are," he added as they reached the wood. "Come in towards this thicket, and our friend shall give you his message. I will call him."

He gave a shrill whistle, and at the same moment clapped his long arms round Dick's body and held on with all his strength.

With a cry of wrath, the young highwayman tried to wrench himself away, but the whistle had brought six or seven lusty fellows dashing out of the coppice, and they flung themselves upon Dick. He struggled furiously, and sent two of them flying with the breath knocked out of their bodies, but he could not draw a weapon, and they over-

powered him by sheer weight. Down he went, with the assailants on top of him, and in a few moments they had bound his arms tightly to his sides and disarmed him.

"So much for Galloping Dick!" said the man who had decoyed the young outlaw to his fate.

"You treacherous dog!" cried Dick furiously. "You are one of Hector's mongrel crew, then! You and your six rufflers could not take me without playing the fox! I would have made short work of you but for the lie that put me off my guard!"

"I know nothing of Hector unless he is another candidate for the gallows," said the man. "As to my strategy, I think it a very pretty one, and I grieve that it does not please you. I am not paid to fight pitched battles with young gentlemen of the roads. It is my duty to take them whole and sound, that they may be duly and decently hanged as an example to those who stray from the straight and narrow path. Good Galloping Dick, I am the head bailiff of Great Baxford Court House, and I take you on the information of his worship of Claverhouse, Squire Grafton, whom you this day put in peril of his life, and robbed of his gold."

"Do I owe my capture to him?" muttered Dick, and the thought was a harder blow to his pride than the danger.

"Nay, rather to me," boasted the head bailiff. "I have taken more highwaymen than any man in England! And now, by your leave, we will escort you to the courthouse."

"I will give you credit for a neatly-laid capture," said Dick as they marched off. "It is a great comfort for me to know that Grafton had so little to do with it. To fall into the hands of a fool is humiliating, and when you mentioned his name I feared I had done even that. A shrewd court-bailiff is another matter, and I suppose it was your duty to lie. You did it well."

"I am flattered," said the bailiff, with a pleased smile. "You must understand that it is not a personal matter with me. I know of your career and somewhat admire it. It is a pity you should be hanged. Yet be very sure that his worship, whom I have never seen in a worse humour than to-day, will commit you, and there is nothing for it but the gallows!"

#### *How the Story Began*

**DICK FORRESTER**, formerly a young highwayman, has been deprived of his fortune and estate at Fernhall by the trickery of

**HECTOR FORRESTER**. This is only the beginning of Dick's troubles, for he next falls foul of

**CAPTAIN SWEENEY**, the notorious leader of a gang of footpads, and is also wanted by the King's Riders for assisting his former comrade of the road.

**RICHARD TURPIN** the famous highwayman, to escape capture. Dick is forced to become an outlaw, and he and Turpin ride off together. They encounter many stirring adventures, during which Sweeney makes numerous unsuccessful attempts on Dick's life. The two comrades frustrate a plot arranged by Hector to kill Dick's young brother Ralph, and the young outlaw sends the boy to St. Austell's School. Later Turpin departs on a secret mission, arranging to rejoin Dick at Boxley. Dick earns the displeasure of Squire Grafton, a prominent magistrate and a tyrant in the county. He vows to be revenged against the highwayman. Meanwhile, Dick proceeds on his way to Boxley.

(Now Read On.)



### The Shadow of the Gallows!

**T**HAT ever I should have been such a fool!" thought Dick savagely as he paced up and down the dimly-lighted cell at Great Baxford Court-house.

"I had not even a hand on the butt of a weapon! Yet how plausibly the fellow lied!"

He sat down on the wooden bench and stared moodily at the wall.

"He must have followed me at Grafton's command, and overheard me ask the landlord of the inn if my friend on the black mare had arrived. That gave him the clue wherewith to decoy me away. I wonder if he guesses my friend was Turpin? Well, 'tis good to know that he, at least, is safe. I think he will be a little sorry when he knows what has befallen his old comrade.

"'Twas my own fault. If I only had— Pah! What is the use of thinking of it now? I have foiled a score of schemes ten times more subtle and dangerous. To be taken by this simple trick, without the chance of striking a blow—I, who swore I would die weapon in hand and never let any man take me to the gallows! Well, the game is played, and the gibbet is my portion. There is no Sir Henry Stanhope to win a pardon for me this time. Nothing on earth can help me now!"

With a heavy heart, he lay down on the hard truckle-bed, for the night was advanced, and composed himself to sleep. This peril did not keep him awake, and not till the gaoler brought him his meagre fare in the morning did he rise. The cooped-up cell drained Dick's spirits more than a bleeding wound would have done, but he bore it with a stiff lip.

"I have one thing to console me," he said, "and that is that I have fallen into the hands of the law of England, and not into the clutches of Hector's pitiful rascals. Had that happened, I should have killed myself for very shame."

The door opened after a dreary hour had passed, and the head bailiff appeared.

"You are called upon for the court," he announced.

Dick was brought into the old oak-framed court-room and placed in the prisoners' dock. The usual crowd was there—the country attorneys, the tipstiffs, the witnesses for the cases, and on the bench, alone in his glory, sat the red-faced Squire Grafton, of Claverhouse, whose face turned yet a deeper tinge and whose deep-sunk eyes gleamed with savage satisfaction as his gaze fell on Dick.

"Ha! We have him here at last! The daylight robber! The assassin! The knave with three score crimes upon his head, who is posted in every town in Britain for rogue, rascal, and terror of the King's subjects! Knave, you are in a parlous state. I see the gallows close upon you!"

The worthy magistrate of Claverhouse was noted the county over for his bullying tirades from the bench. To-day he fairly surpassed himself.

"Of all the scoundrels who have plundered and terrorised unwary travellers on the highway, the one you see before you is the

most scoundrelly and his misdeeds the worst! Look upon him, all who are in the court! See him tremble and cower! See his cheeks blanch and grow white!"

Dick laughed aloud, so coolly and clearly that everyone in the court stared the harder.

"I had not thought it till you gave me the hint," he said, "but I have seen others cower and grow white no longer than yesterday!"

The magistrate became purple with rage.

"Ha! But no, I will not return him to the cells again for this insolence! Nay, it is better to send him more quickly to the gallows! Master Bailiff, into the witness-box with you, sirrah, and let us have your evidence!"

The bailiff was sworn, and gave his testimony as to the capture of Dick.

"And I think, your worship," he concluded, "that the prisoner has a companion of much the same character as himself, and whom I hope soon to place before your worship. When at the inn he spoke of a comrade upon a black mare, who I doubt not is another highwayman. I may say I am on the man's track, and he will not long elude me!"

"See that you trap him quickly!" said the magistrate. "Never one of the rogues comes into my district but I have him by the heels! Is it not so, Wright?" he cried fiercely, turning to his clerk.

"Aye, your worship never loses one," returned the clerk hastily, dropping his pen.

"My name is a terror to them. Are there any more witnesses? There is no need to call them. The prisoner is an outlaw and forfeit on twenty counts. Answer fellow! Are you or are you not Richard Forrester, known for your crimes as Galloping Dick?"

"None should know it better than you," replied Dick.

"We shall curb that tongue of yours shortly! The assizes commence in two days, and I shall commit you to them for immediate trial, which will occupy no more time than it takes to hang a dog, for your crimes are known! Listen now to your doom! I commit— 'Od's death!"

The magistrate broke off, his face changing colour, and stared as if dumb-struck at the back of the court. The pause made everybody look round, and as Dick followed his worship's gaze he stared in amazement and dismay.

Among the spectators, looking straight at the magistrate with a cold smile, was Turpin himself!

For a moment his worship seemed at a loss what to do. His face was deathly white; his jaw gaped.

"Turpin, by the black rood!" cried the magistrate fiercely. "Seize him! Arrest him, men! We've got the brace of them!"

"Nay," said Turpin coolly. "We are three—not two. Galloping Dick, myself—and Six-String Jake!"

*(Here's a surprise, chums! Does Turpin mean that the magistrate is "Six-string Jake"? See next week's rousing instalment.)*



## The Return of Professor Zingrave!

(Continued from page 38.)

can be released. We can deal with them easily, and in such a way that they will not be connected with Crag House. Come. Let us put these gentlemen into their new home."

A part of the concrete wall swung back at a touch from Jim the Penman, and the captives were placed in the lift and taken down. It stopped, another secret door was opened, and they were in the lower cellars, those secret cellars which were so closely guarded.

Many electric lights were gleaming here, and work was proceeding. The unfortunate "human machines" were hard at it, carrying great blocks of granite, mixing mortar and concrete. One of the walls of the miniature prison was being completed.

"Better clear these people out," said Zingrave in a low voice.

"No reason for that," smiled Jim the Penman. "They won't take the slightest notice; they won't remember anything, no matter what they see or hear. The G.S. Fluid is most effective, Sir Rodney."

"I had almost forgotten," said Zingrave, looking strangely at the prisoners.

Lee and Lennard were carried to the completed end of the "prison." They were thrust into two separate cells—tiny, granite cells which were far more hideous than any real prison cells. They were barren, they were black and unlighted. There was scarcely room enough for a tall man to stand upright, and they were so narrow that it was impossible to stretch one's arms out the full.

"At last!" gloated Professor Zingrave triumphantly. "Things are working out well, my friends. Already I have secured two of the prisoners I had marked down. Nelson Lee and Inspector Lennard. They are here—here for ever. Here until they die. Others will follow. Oh; yes, I have some big plans to work out."

Amongst those "human machines" was one who was not quite so helpless as the others. Stanley Waldo, of the Remove.

He had nearly given himself away as he had recognised Nelson Lee and the chief inspector. They had been captured. It was a tremendous shock to Waldo, but it was a shock which steeled him, and which made him all the more determined to carry on with his own important work.

Thus had two more people mysteriously disappeared from St. Frank's, and a tremendous sensation was certain.

But there were two factors of which Professor Cyrus Zingrave knew nothing—firstly, there were four boys in the school who knew many secrets, secondly, Waldo, working with the other "human machines," was in full possession of his wits—and he had seen all.

It was a situation fraught with drama, and the forthcoming events promised to be more thrilling than any that had yet happened.

THE END.

(Zingrave has triumphed so far—but there is a different tale to tell when he comes up against Nipper & Co. Look out for next Wednesday's smashing long complete story entitled: "The Captives of Crag House!" Order your copy to-day, chums.)

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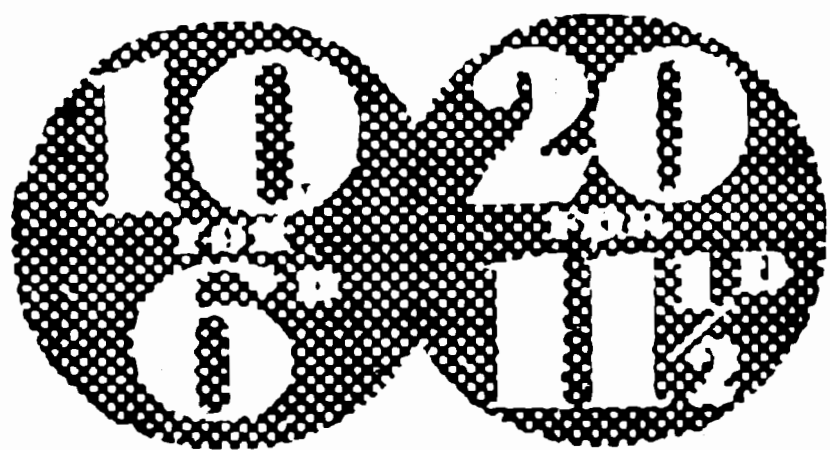
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