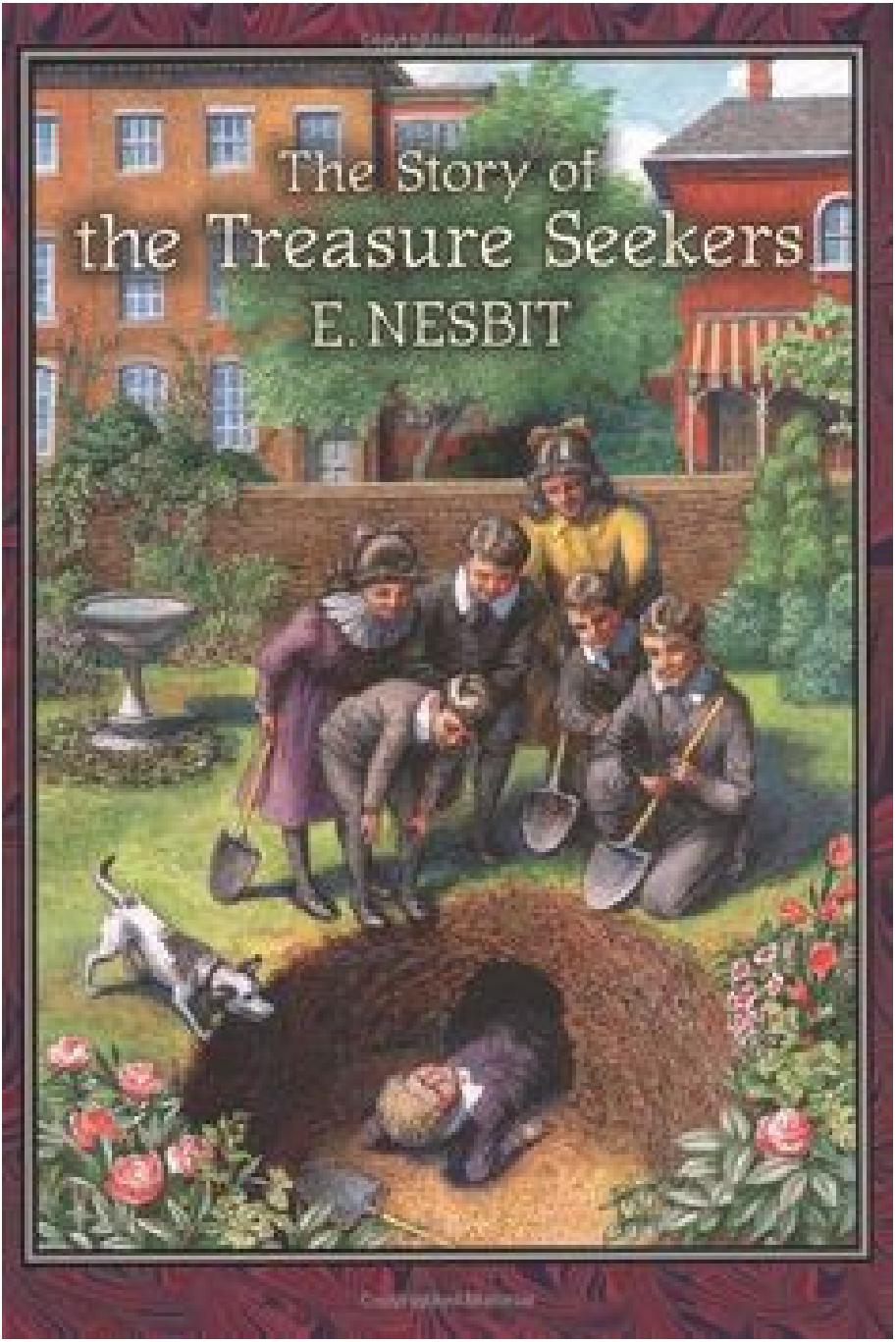
The Story of
the Treasure Seekers
E. NESBIT

The Story of the Treasure Seekers
Part 1

The Story of the Treasure Seekers
Chapter 1 – Part 1

THE COUNCIL OF WAYS AND MEANS

This is the story of the different ways we looked for treasure, and I think when you have read it you will see that we were not lazy about the looking.

There are some things I must tell before I begin to tell about the treasure-seeking, because I have read books myself, and I know how beastly it is when a story begins, "'Alas!" said Hildegarde with a deep sigh, "we must look our last on this ancestral home"' and then some one else says something and you don't know for pages and pages where the home is, or who Hildegarde is, or anything about it. Our ancestral home is in the Lewisham Road. It is semi-detached and has a garden, not a large one. We are the Bastables. There are six of us besides Father. Our Mother is dead, and if you think we don't care because I don't tell you much about her you only show that you do not understand people at all. Dora is the eldest. Then Oswald and then Dicky. Oswald won the Latin prize at his preparatory school and Dicky is good at sums. Alice and Noel are twins: they are ten, and Horace Octavius is my youngest brother. It is one of us that tells this story but I shall not tell you which: only at the very end perhaps I will. While the

story is going on you may be trying to guess, only I bet you don't. It was Oswald who first thought of looking for treasure. Oswald often thinks of very interesting things. And directly he thought of it he did not keep it to himself, as some boys would have done, but he told the others, and said

'I'll tell you what, we must go and seek for treasure: it is always what you do to restore the fallen fortunes of your House.'
Dora said it was all very well. She often says that. She was trying to mend a large hole in one of Noel's stockings. He tore it on a nail when we were playing shipwrecked mariners on top of the chicken-house the day H. O. fell off and cut his chin: he has the scar still. Dora is the only one of us who ever tries to mend anything. Alice tries to make things sometimes. Once she knitted a red scarf for Noel because his chest is delicate, but it was much wider at one end than the other, and he wouldn't wear it. So we used it as a pennon, and it did very well, because most of our things are black or grey since Mother died; and scarlet was a nice change. Father does not like you to ask for new things. That was one way we had of knowing that the fortunes of the ancient House of Bastable were really fallen. Another way was that there was no more pocket-money except a penny now and then to the little ones, and people did not come to dinner any more, like they used to, with pretty dresses, driving up in cabs and the carpets got holes in them and when the legs came off things they were not sent to be mended, and we gave *up*having the gardener except for the front garden, and not that very often. And the silver in the big

oak plate-chest that is lined with green baize all went away to the shop to have the dents and scratches taken out of it, and it never came back. We think Father hadn't enough money to pay the silver man for taking out the dents and scratches. The new spoons and forks were yellowy-white, and not so heavy as the old ones, and they never shone after the first day or two.

Father was very ill after Mother died; and while he was ill his business-partner went to Spain and there was never much money afterwards. I don't know why. Then the servants left and there was only one, a General. A great deal of your comfort and happiness depends on having a good General. The last but one was nice: she used to make jolly good currant puddings for us, and let us have the dish on the floor and pretend it was a wild boar we were killing with our forks. But the General we have now nearly always makes sago puddings, and they are the watery kind, and you cannot pretend anything with them, not even islands, like you do with porridge.

Then we left off going to school, and Father said we should go to a good school as soon as he could manage it. He said a holiday would do us all good. We thought he was right, but we wished he had told us he couldn't afford it. For of course we knew.
Then a great many people used to come to the door with envelopes with no stamps on them, and sometimes they got very angry, and said they were calling for the last time before putting

it in other hands. I asked Eliza what that meant, and she kindly explained to me, and I was so sorry for Father.

And once a long, blue paper came; a policeman brought it, and we were so frightened. But Father said it was all right, only when he went up to kiss the girls after they were in bed they said he had been crying, though I'm sure that's not true. Because only cowards and snivellers cry, and my Father is the bravest man in the world.

The Story of the Treasure Seekers
Chapter 1 Part 2

THE COUNCIL OF WAYS AND MEANS

So you see it was time we looked for treasure and Oswald said so, and Dora said it was all very well. But the others agreed with Oswald. So we held a council. Dora was in the chair the big dining-room chair, that we let the fireworks off from, the Fifth of November when we had the measles and couldn't do it in the garden. The hole has never been mended, so now we have that chair in the nursery, and I think it was cheap at the blowing-up we boys got when the hole was burnt.

'We must do something,' said Alice, 'because the exchequer is empty.' She rattled the money-box as she spoke, and it really did rattle because we always keep the bad sixpence in it for luck. 'Yes but what shall we do?' said Dicky. 'It's so jolly easy to say let's do *something*.' Dicky always wants everything settled exactly. Father calls him the Definite Article.

'Let's read all the books again. We shall get lots of ideas out of them.' It was Noel who suggested this, but we made him shut up, because we knew well enough he only wanted to get back to his

old books. Noel is a poet. He sold some of his poetry once and it was printed, but that does not come in this part of the story. Then Dicky said, 'Look here. We'll be quite quiet for ten minutes by the clock and each think of some way to find treasure. And when we've thought we'll try all the ways one after the other, beginning with the eldest.'

'I shan't be able to think in ten minutes, make it half an hour,' said H. O. His real name is Horace Octavius, but we call him H. O. because of the advertisement, and it's not so very long ago he was afraid to pass the hoarding where it says 'Eat H. O.' in big letters. He says it was when he was a little boy, but I remember last Christmas but one, he woke in the middle of the night crying and howling, and they said it was the pudding. But he told me afterwards he had been dreaming that they really *had* come to eat H. O., and it couldn't have been the pudding, when you come to think of it, because it was so very plain.

Well, we made it half an hour and we all sat quiet, and thought and thought. And I made up my mind before two minutes were over, and I saw the others had, all but Dora, who is always an awful time over everything. I got pins and needles in my leg from sitting still so long, and when it was seven minutes H. O. cried out 'Oh, it must be more than half an hour!'

1. O. is eight years old, but he cannot tell the clock yet. Oswald could tell the clock when he was six.

We all stretched ourselves and began to speak at once, but Dora put up her hands to her ears and said
'One at a time, please. We aren't playing Babel.' (It is a very good game. Did you ever play it?)

So Dora made us all sit in a row on the floor, in ages, and then she pointed at us with the finger that had the brass thimble on. Her silver one got lost when the last General but two went away. We think she must have forgotten it was Dora's and put it in her box by mistake. She was a very forgetful girl. She used to forget what she had spent money on, so that the change was never quite right. Oswald spoke first. 'I think we might stop people on Blackheath - with crape masks and horse-pistols and say "Your money or your life! Resistance is useless, we are armed to the teeth" like Dick Turpin and Claude Duval. It wouldn't matter about not having horses, because coaches have gone out too.'

Dora screwed up her nose the way she always does when she is going to talk like the good elder sister in books, and said, 'That would be very wrong: it's like pickpocketing or taking pennies out of Father's great-coat when it's hanging in the hall.'

I must say I don't think she need have said that, especially before the little ones for it was when I was only four.

But Oswald was not going to let her see he cared, so he said 'Oh, very well. I can think of lots of other ways. We could rescue

an old gentleman from deadly Highwaymen.'

'There aren't any,' said Dora.

'Oh, well, it's all the same from deadly peril, then. There's plenty of that. Then he would turn out to be the Prince of Wales, and he would say, "My noble, my cherished preserver! Here is a million pounds a year. Rise up, Sir Oswald Bastable."'

But the others did not seem to think so, and it was Alice's turn to say.

She said, 'I think we might try the divining-rod. I'm sure I could do it. I've often read about it. You hold a stick in your hands, and when you come to where there is gold underneath the stick kicks about. So you know. And you dig.'

'Oh,' said Dora suddenly, 'I have an idea. But I'll say last. I hope the divining-rod isn't wrong. I believe it's wrong in the Bible.'

'So is eating pork and ducks,' said Dicky. 'You can't go by that.'

'Anyhow, we'll try the other ways first,' said Dora. 'Now, H. O.'
'Let's be Bandits,' said H. O. 'I dare say it's wrong but it would be fun pretending.'

'I'm sure it's wrong,' said Dora.

And Dicky said she thought everything wrong. She said she didn't, and Dicky was very disagreeable. So Oswald had to make peace, and he said
'Dora needn't play if she doesn't want to. Nobody asked her. And, Dicky, don't be an idiot: do dry up and let's hear what Noel's idea is.'

Dora and Dicky did not look pleased, but I kicked Noel under the table to make him hurry up, and then he said he didn't think he wanted to play any more. That's the worst of it. The others are so jolly ready to quarrel. I told Noel to be a man and not a snivelling pig, and at last he said he had not made up his mind whether he would print his poetry in a book and sell it, or find a princess and marry her.

'Whichever it is,' he added, 'none of you shall want for anything, though Oswald did kick me, and say I was a snivelling pig.'

'I didn't,' said Oswald, 'I told you not to be.' And Alice explained to him that that was quite the opposite of what he thought. So he agreed to drop it.

Then Dicky spoke.

'You must all of you have noticed the advertisements in the papers, telling you that ladies and gentlemen can easily earn two pounds a week in their spare time, and to send two shillings for

sample and instructions, carefully packed free from observation. Now that we don't go to school all our time is spare time. So I should think we could easily earn twenty pounds a week each. That would do us very well. We'll try some of the other things first, and directly we have any money we'll send for the sample and instructions. And I have another idea, but I must think about it before I say.'

We all said, 'Out with it what's the other idea?'

But Dicky said, 'No.' That is Dicky all over. He never will show you anything he's making till it's quite finished, and the same with his inmost thoughts. But he is pleased if you seem to want to know, so Oswald said

'Keep your silly old secret, then. Now, Dora, drive ahead. We've all said except you.'

Then Dora jumped up and dropped the stocking and the thimble (it rolled away, and we did not find it for days), and said 'Let's try my way *now*. Besides, I'm the eldest, so it's only fair. Let's dig for treasure. Not any tiresome divining-rod but just plain digging. People who dig for treasure always find it. And then we shall be rich and we needn't try your ways at all. Some of them are rather difficult: and I'm certain some of them are wrong and we must always remember that wrong things '
But we told her to shut up and come on, and she did.

I couldn’t help wondering as we went down to the garden, why Father had never thought of digging there for treasure instead of going to his beastly office every day.

The Story of the Treasure Seekers
Chapter 2

DIGGING FOR TREASURE

I am afraid the last chapter was rather dull. It is always dull in books when people talk and talk, and don't do anything, but I was obliged to put it in, or else you wouldn't have understood all the rest. The best part of books is when things are happening. That is the best part of real things too. This is why I shall not tell you in this story about all the days when nothing happened. You will not catch me saying, 'thus the sad days passed slowly by' or 'the years rolled on their weary course' or 'time went on' because it is silly; of course time goes on whether you say so or not. So I shall just tell you the nice, interesting parts and in between you will understand that we had our meals and got up and went to bed, and dull things like that. It would be sickening to write all that down, though of course it happens. I said so to Albert-next-door's uncle, who writes books, and he said, 'Quite right, that's what we call selection, a necessity of true art.' And he is very clever indeed. So you see.

I have often thought that if the people who write books for children knew a little more it would be better. I shall not tell you anything about us except what I should like to know about if I was

reading the story and you were writing it. Albert's uncle says I ought to have put this in the preface, but I never read prefaces, and it is not much good writing things just for people to skip. I wonder other authors have never thought of this.

Well, when we had agreed to dig for treasure we all went down into the cellar and lighted the gas. Oswald would have liked to dig there, but it is stone flags. We looked among the old boxes and broken chairs and fenders and empty bottles and things, and at last we found the spades we had to dig in the sand with when we went to the seaside three years ago. They are not silly, babyish, wooden spades, that split if you look at them, but good iron, with a blue mark across the top of the iron part, and yellow wooden handles. We wasted a little time getting them dusted, because the girls wouldn't dig with spades that had cobwebs on them. Girls would never do for African explorers or anything like that, they are too beastly particular.

It was no use doing the thing by halves. We marked out a sort of square in the mouldy part of the garden, about three yards across, and began to dig. But we found nothing except worms and stones and the ground was very hard.

So we thought we'd try another part of the garden, and we found a place in the big round flower bed, where the ground was much softer. We thought we'd make a smaller hole to begin with, and it

was much better. We dug and dug and dug, and it was jolly hard work! We got very hot digging, but we found nothing.

Presently Albert-next-door looked over the wall. We do not like him very much, but we let him play with us sometimes, because his father is dead, and you must not be unkind to orphans, even if their mothers are alive. Albert is always very tidy. He wears frilly collars and velvet knickerbockers. I can't think how he can bear to.

So we said, 'Hallo!'

And he said, 'What are you up to?'

'We're digging for treasure,' said Alice; 'an ancient parchment revealed to us the place of concealment. Come over and help us. When we have dug deep enough we shall find a great pot of red clay, full of gold and precious jewels.'

Albert-next-door only sniggered and said, 'What silly nonsense!' He cannot play properly at all. It is very strange, because he has a very nice uncle. You see, Albert-next-door doesn't care for reading, and he has not read nearly so many books as we have, so he is very foolish and ignorant, but it cannot be helped, and you just have to put up with it when you want him to do anything. Besides, it is wrong to be angry with people for not being so clever as you are yourself. It is not always their faults.

So Oswald said, 'Come and dig! Then you shall share the treasure when we've found it.'
But he said, 'I shan't I don't like digging and I'm just going in to my tea.'

'Come along and dig, there's a good boy,' Alice said. 'You can use my spade. It's much the best '

So he came along and dug, and when once he was over the wall we kept him at it, and we worked as well, of course, and the hole got deep. Pincher worked too he is our dog and he is very good at digging. He digs for rats in the dustbin sometimes, and gets very dirty. But we love our dog, even when his face wants washing.
'I expect we shall have to make a tunnel,' Oswald said, 'to reach the rich treasure.' So he jumped into the hole and began to dig at one side. After that we took it in turns to dig at the tunnel, and Pincher was most useful in scraping the earth out of the tunnel he does it with his back feet when you say 'Rats!' and he digs with his front ones, and burrows with his nose as well.

At last the tunnel was nearly a yard long, and big enough to creep along to find the treasure, if only it had been a bit longer. Now it was Albert's turn to go in and dig, but he funked it.

'Take your turn like a man,' said Oswald nobody can say that Oswald doesn't take his turn like a man. But Albert wouldn't. So

we had to make him, because it was only fair.

'It's quite easy,' Alice said. 'You just crawl in and dig with your hands. Then when you come out we can scrape out what you've done, with the spades. Come be a man. You won't notice it being dark in the tunnel if you shut your eyes tight. We've all been in except Dora and she doesn't like worms.'

'I don't like worms neither.' Albert-next-door said this; but we remembered how he had picked a fat red and black worm up in his fingers and thrown it at Dora only the day before. So we put him in.

But he would not go in head first, the proper way, and dig with his hands as we had done, and though Oswald was angry at the time, for he hates snivellers, yet afterwards he owned that perhaps it was just as well. You should never be afraid to own that perhaps you were mistaken but it is cowardly to do it unless you are quite sure you are in the wrong.

'Let me go in feet first,' said Albert-next-door. 'I'll dig with my boots I will truly, honour bright.'

So we let him get in feet first and he did it very slowly and at last he was in, and only his head sticking out into the hole; and all the rest of him in the tunnel.

‘Now dig with your boots,’ said Oswald; ’and, Alice, do catch hold of Pincher, he’ll be digging again in another minute, and perhaps it would be uncomfortable for Albert if Pincher threw the mould into his eyes.’

You should always try to think of these little things. Thinking of other people’s comfort makes them like you. Alice held Pincher, and we all shouted, ‘Kick! dig with your feet, for all you’re worth!’ So Albert-next-door began to dig with his feet, and we stood on the ground over him, waiting and all in a minute the ground gave way, and we tumbled together in a heap: and when we got up there was a little shallow hollow where we had been standing, and Albert-next-door was underneath, stuck quite fast, because the roof of the tunnel had tumbled in on him. He is a horribly unlucky boy to have anything to do with.

It was dreadful the way he cried and screamed, though he had to own it didn’t hurt, only it was rather heavy and he couldn’t move his legs. We would have dug him out all right enough, in time, but he screamed so we were afraid the police would come, so Dicky climbed over the wall, to tell the cook there to tell Albert-next-door’s uncle he had been buried by mistake, and to come and help dig him out.

Dicky was a long time gone. We wondered what had become of him, and all the while the screaming went on and on, for we had

taken the loose earth off Albert's face so that he could scream quite easily and comfortably.

Presently Dicky came back and Albert-next-door's uncle came with him. He has very long legs, and his hair is light and his face is brown. He has been to sea, but now he writes books. I like him.

He told his nephew to stow it, so Albert did, and then he asked him if he was hurt and Albert had to say he wasn't, for though he is a coward, and very unlucky, he is not a liar like some boys are. 'This promises to be a protracted if agreeable task,' said Albert-next-door's uncle, rubbing his hands and looking at the hole with Albert's head in it. 'I will get another spade,' so he fetched the big spade out of the next-door garden tool-shed, and began to dig his nephew out.

'Mind you keep very still,' he said, 'or I might chunk a bit out of you with the spade.' Then after a while he said
'I confess that I am not absolutely insensible to the dramatic interest of the situation. My curiosity is excited. I own that I should like to know how my nephew happened to be buried. But don't tell me if you'd rather not. I suppose no force was used?'

'Only moral force,' said Alice. They used to talk a lot about moral force at the High School where she went, and in case you don't know what it means I'll tell you that it is making people do what

they don't want to, just by slanging them, or laughing at them, or promising them things if they're good.

'Only moral force, eh?' said Albert-next-door's uncle. 'Well?' 'Well,' Dora said, 'I'm very sorry it happened to Albert I'd rather it had been one of us. It would have been my turn to go into the tunnel, only I don't like worms, so they let me off. You see we were digging for treasure.'

'Yes,' said Alice, 'and I think we were just coming to the underground passage that leads to the secret hoard, when the tunnel fell in on Albert. He *is* so unlucky,' and she sighed. Then Albert-next-door began to scream again, and his uncle wiped his face his own face, not Albert's with his silk handkerchief, and then he put it in his trousers pocket. It seems a strange place to put a handkerchief, but he had his coat and waistcoat off and I suppose he wanted the handkerchief handy. Digging is warm work.

He told Albert-next-door to drop it, or he wouldn't proceed further in the matter, so Albert stopped screaming, and presently his uncle finished digging him out. Albert did look so funny, with his hair all dusty and his velvet suit covered with mould and his face muddy with earth and crying.

We all said how sorry we were, but he wouldn't say a word back to us. He was most awfully sick to think he'd been the one buried,

when it might just as well have been one of us. I felt myself that it was hard lines.

'So you were digging for treasure,' said Albert-next-door's uncle, wiping his face again with his handkerchief. 'Well, I fear that your chances of success are small. I have made a careful study of the whole subject. What I don't know about buried treasure is not worth knowing. And I never knew more than one coin buried in any one garden and that is generally Hullo what's that?'

He pointed to something shining in the hole he had just dragged Albert out of. Oswald picked it up. It was a half-crown. We looked at each other, speechless with surprise and delight, like in books.

'Well, that's lucky, at all events,' said Albert-next-door's uncle. 'Let's see, that's fivepence each for you.'

'It's fourpence something; I can't do fractions,' said Dicky; 'there are seven of us, you see.'

'Oh, you count Albert as one of yourselves on this occasion, eh?'
'Of course,' said Alice; 'and I say, he was buried after all. Why shouldn't we let him have the odd somethings, and we'll have fourpence each.'
We all agreed to do this, and told Albert-next-door we would bring his share as soon as we could get the half-crown changed.

He cheered up a little at that, and his uncle wiped his face again - he did look hot and began to put on his coat and waistcoat. When he had done it he stooped and picked up something. He held it up, and you will hardly believe it, but it is quite true it was another half-crown!

'To think that there should be two!' he said; 'in all my experience of buried treasure I never heard of such a thing!'

I wish Albert-next-door's uncle would come treasure-seeking with us regularly; he must have very sharp eyes: for Dora says she was looking just the minute before at the very place where the second half-crown was picked up from, and *she* never saw it.

The Story of the Treasure Seekers
Chapter 3 – Part 1

BEING DETECTIVES

The next thing that happened to us was very interesting. It was as real as the half-crowns not just pretending. I shall try to write it as like a real book as I can. Of course we have read Mr Sherlock Holmes, as well as the yellow-covered books with pictures outside that are so badly printed; and you get them for fourpence-halfpenny at the bookstall when the corners of them are beginning to curl up and get dirty, with people looking to see how the story ends when they are waiting for trains. I think this is most unfair to the boy at the bookstall. The books are written by a gentleman named Gaboriau, and Albert's uncle says they are the worst translations in the world and written in vile English. Of course they're not like Kipling, but they're jolly good stories. And we had just been reading a book by Dick Diddlington that's not his right name, but I know all about libel actions, so I shall not say what his name is really, because his books are rot. Only they put it into our heads to do what I am going to narrate.

It was in September, and we were not to go to the seaside because it is so expensive, even if you go to Sheerness, where it is all tin cans and old boots and no sand at all. But every one else went,

even the people next door not Albert's side, but the other. Their servant told Eliza they were all going to Scarborough, and next day sure enough all the blinds were down and the shutters up, and the milk was not left any more. There is a big horse-chestnut tree between their garden and ours, very useful for getting conkers out of and for making stuff to rub on your chilblains. This prevented our seeing whether the blinds were down at the back as well, but Dicky climbed to the top of the tree and looked, and they were.

It was jolly hot weather, and very stuffy indoors we used to play a good deal in the garden. We made a tent out of the kitchen clothes-horse and some blankets off our beds, and though it was quite as hot in the tent as in the house it was a very different sort of hotness. Albert's uncle called it the Turkish Bath. It is not nice to be kept from the seaside, but we know that we have much to be thankful for. We might be poor little children living in a crowded alley where even at summer noon hardly a ray of sunlight penetrates; clothed in rags and with bare feet though I do not mind holes in my clothes myself, and bare feet would not be at all bad in this sort of weather. Indeed we do, sometimes, when we are playing at things which require it. It was shipwrecked mariners that day, I remember, and we were all in the blanket tent. We had just finished eating the things we had saved, at the peril of our lives, from the st-sinking vessel. They were rather nice things. Two-pennyworth of coconut candy it was got in Greenwich, where it is four ounces a penny three apples, some

macaroni the straight sort that is so useful to suck things through some raw rice, and a large piece of cold suet pudding that Alice nicked from the larder when she went to get the rice and macaroni. And when we had finished some one said
'I should like to be a detective.'

I wish to be quite fair, but I cannot remember exactly who said it. Oswald thinks he said it, and Dora says it was Dicky, but Oswald is too much of a man to quarrel about a little thing like that.

'I should like to be a detective,' said perhaps it was Dicky, but I think not 'and find out strange and hidden crimes.'

'You have to be much cleverer than you are,' said H. O.

'Not so very,' Alice said, 'because when you've read the books you know what the things mean: the red hair on the handle of the knife, or the grains of white powder on the velvet collar of the villain's overcoat. I believe we could do it.'

'I shouldn't like to have anything to do with murders,' said Dora; 'somehow it doesn't seem safe '

'And it always ends in the poor murderer being hanged,' said Alice.

We explained to her why murderers have to be hanged, but she

only said, 'I don't care. I'm sure no one would ever do murdering *twice*. Think of the blood and things, and what you would see when you woke up in the night! I shouldn't mind being a detective to lie in wait for a gang of coiners, now, and spring upon them unawares, and secure them single-handed, you know, or with only my faithful bloodhound.'

She stroked Pincher's ears, but he had gone to sleep because he knew well enough that all the suet pudding was finished. He is a very sensible dog. 'You always get hold of the wrong end of the stick,' Oswald said. 'You can't choose what crimes you'll be a detective about. You just have to get a suspicious circumstance, and then you look for a clue and follow it up. Whether it turns out a murder or a missing will is just a fluke.'

'That's one way,' Dicky said. 'Another is to get a paper and find two advertisements or bits of news that fit. Like this: "Young Lady Missing," and then it tells about all the clothes she had on, and the gold locket she wore, and the colour of her hair, and all that; and then in another piece of the paper you see, "Gold locket found," and then it all comes out.'

We sent H. O. for the paper at once, but we could not make any of the things fit in. The two best were about how some burglars broke into a place in Holloway where they made preserved tongues and invalid delicacies, and carried off a lot of them. And on another page there was, 'Mysterious deaths in Holloway.'

Oswald thought there was something in it, and so did Albert's uncle when we asked him, but the others thought not, so Oswald agreed to drop it. Besides, Holloway is a long way off. All the time we were talking about the paper Alice seemed to be thinking about something else, and when we had done she said
'I believe we might be detectives ourselves, but I should not like to get anybody into trouble.'

'Not murderers or robbers?' Dicky asked.

'It wouldn't be murderers,' she said; 'but I *have* noticed something strange. Only I feel a little frightened. Let's ask Albert's uncle first.'

Alice is a jolly sight too fond of asking grown-up people things. And we all said it was tommyrot, and she was to tell us.

'Well, promise you won't do anything without me,' Alice said, and we promised. Then she said
'This is a dark secret, and any one who thinks it is better not to be involved in a career of crime-discovery had better go away ere yet it be too late.'

So Dora said she had had enough of tents, and she was going to look at the shops. H. O. went with her because he had twopence to spend. They thought it was only a game of Alice's but Oswald knew by the way she spoke. He can nearly always tell. And when

people are not telling the truth Oswald generally knows by the way they look with their eyes. Oswald is not proud of being able to do this. He knows it is through no merit of his own that he is much cleverer than some people.

When they had gone, the rest of us got closer together and said 'Now then.'

'Well,' Alice said, 'you know the house next door? The people have gone to Scarborough. And the house is shut up. But last night *I saw a light in the windows*.'

We asked her how and when, because her room is in the front, and she couldn't possibly have seen. And then she said
'I'll tell you if you boys will promise not ever to go fishing again without me.'

So we had to promise.

Then she said
'It was last night. I had forgotten to feed my rabbits and I woke up and remembered it. And I was afraid I should find them dead in the morning, like Oswald did.'

'It wasn't my fault,' Oswald said; 'there was something the matter with the beasts. I fed them right enough.'

Alice said she didn't mean that, and she went on
'I came down into the garden, and I saw a light in the house, and dark figures moving about. I thought perhaps it was burglars, but Father hadn't come home, and Eliza had gone to bed, so I couldn't do anything. Only I thought perhaps I would tell the rest of you.'
'Why didn't you tell us this morning?' Noel asked. And Alice explained that she did not want to get any one into trouble, even burglars. 'But we might watch to-night,' she said, 'and see if we see the light again.'

'They might have been burglars,' Noel said. He was sucking the last bit of his macaroni. 'You know the people next door are very grand. They won't know us and they go out in a real private carriage sometimes. And they have an "At Home" day, and people come in cabs. I daresay they have piles of plate and jewellery and rich brocades, and furs of price and things like that. Let us keep watch to-night.'

'It's no use watching to-night,' Dicky said; 'if it's only burglars they won't come again. But there are other things besides burglars that are discovered in empty houses where lights are seen moving.'

'You mean coiners,' said Oswald at once. 'I wonder what the reward is for setting the police on their track?'

Dicky thought it ought to be something fat, because coiners are

lways a desperate gang; and the machinery they make the coins with is so heavy and handy for knocking down detectives.

Then it was tea-time, and we went in; and Dora and H. O. had clubbed their money together and bought a melon; quite a big one, and only a little bit squashy at one end. It was very good, and then we washed the seeds and made things with them and with pins and cotton. And nobody said any more about watching the house next door.

Only when we went to bed Dicky took off his coat and waistcoat, but he stopped at his braces, and said
'What about the coiners?'

Oswald had taken off his collar and tie, and he was just going to say the same, so he said, 'Of course I meant to watch, only my collar's rather tight, so I thought I'd take it off first.'

Dicky said he did not think the girls ought to be in it, because there might be danger, but Oswald reminded him that they had promised Alice, and that a promise is a sacred thing, even when you'd much rather not. So Oswald got Alice alone under pretence of showing her a caterpillar Dora does not like them, and she screamed and ran away when Oswald offered to show it her. Then Oswald explained, and Alice agreed to come and watch if she could. This made us later than we ought to have been, because Alice had to wait till Dora was quiet and then creep out very

slowly, for fear of the boards creaking. The girls sleep with their room-door open for fear of burglars. Alice had kept on her clothes under her nightgown when Dora wasn't looking, and presently we got down, creeping past Father's study, and out at the glass door that leads on to the veranda and the iron steps into the garden. And we went down very quietly, and got into the chestnut-tree; and then I felt that we had only been playing what Albert's uncle calls our favourite instrument I mean the Fool. For the house next door was as dark as dark. Then suddenly we heard a sound it came from the gate at the end of the garden.

"Presently we got down creeping past father's study."

The Story of the Treasure Seekers
Chapter 3 – Part 2

BEING DETECTIVES

All the gardens have gates; they lead into a kind of lane that runs behind them. It is a sort of back way, very convenient when you don't want to say exactly where you are going. We heard the gate at the end of the next garden click, and Dicky nudged Alice so that she would have fallen out of the tree if it had not been for Oswald's extraordinary presence of mind. Oswald squeezed Alice's arm tight, and we all looked; and the others were rather frightened because really we had not exactly expected anything to happen except perhaps a light. But now a muffled figure, shrouded in a dark cloak, came swiftly up the path of the next-door garden. And we could see that under its cloak the figure carried a mysterious burden. The figure was dressed to look like a woman in a sailor hat.

We held our breath as it passed under the tree where we were, and then it tapped very gently on the back door and was let in, and then a light appeared in the window of the downstairs back breakfast-room. But the shutters were up.

Dicky said, 'My eye!' and wouldn't the others be sick to think they

hadn't been in this! But Alice didn't half like it and as she is a girl I do not blame her. Indeed, I thought myself at first that perhaps it would be better to retire for the present, and return later with a strongly armed force.

'It's not burglars,' Alice whispered; 'the mysterious stranger was bringing things in, not taking them out. They must be coiners – and oh, Oswald! don't let's! The things they coin with must hurt very much. Do let's go to bed!'

But Dicky said he was going to see; if there was a reward for finding out things like this he would like to have the reward. 'They locked the back door,' he whispered, 'I heard it go. And I could look in quite well through the holes in the shutters and be back over the wall long before they'd got the door open, even if they started to do it at once.'

There were holes at the top of the shutters the shape of hearts, and the yellow light came out through them as well as through the chinks of the shutters.

Oswald said if Dicky went he should, because he was the eldest; and Alice said, 'If any one goes it ought to be me, because I thought of it.'

So Oswald said, 'Well, go then'; and she said, 'Not for anything!'

And she begged us not to, and we talked about it in the tree till we were all quite hoarse with whispering.

At last we decided on a plan of action.

Alice was to stay in the tree, and scream ‘Murder!’ if anything happened. Dicky and I were to get down into the next garden and take it in turns to peep.

So we got down as quietly as we could, but the tree made much more noise than it does in the day, and several times we paused, fearing that all was discovered. But nothing happened.

There was a pile of red flower-pots under the window and one very large one was on the window-ledge. It seemed as if it was the hand of Destiny had placed it there, and the geranium in it was dead, and there was nothing to stop your standing on it so Oswald did. He went first because he is the eldest, and though Dicky tried to stop him because he thought of it first it could not be, on account of not being able to say anything.

So Oswald stood on the flower-pot and tried to look through one of the holes. He did not really expect to see the coiners at their fell work, though he had pretended to when we were talking in the tree. But if he had seen them pouring the base molten metal into tin moulds the shape of half-crowns he would not have been half so astonished as he was at the spectacle now revealed.

At first he could see little, because the hole had unfortunately been made a little too high, so that the eye of the detective could only see the Prodigal Son in a shiny frame on the opposite wall. But Oswald held on to the window-frame and stood on tiptoe and then he saw.

There was no furnace, and no base metal, no bearded men in leathern aprons with tongs and things, but just a table with a table-cloth on it for supper, and a tin of salmon and a lettuce and some bottled beer. And there on a chair was the cloak and the hat of the mysterious stranger, and the two people sitting at the table were the two youngest grown-up daughters of the lady next door, and one of them was saying
'So I got the salmon three-halfpence cheaper, and the lettuces are only six a penny in the Broadway, just fancy! We must save as much as ever we can on our housekeeping money if we want to go away decent next year.'

And the other said, 'I wish we could all go every year, or else - Really, I almost wish '

And all the time Oswald was looking Dicky was pulling at his jacket to make him get down and let Dicky have a squint. And just as she said 'I almost,' Dicky pulled too hard and Oswald felt himself toppling on the giddy verge of the big flower-pots. Putting forth all his strength our hero strove to recover his equi- what's-its-name, but it was now lost beyond recall.

‘You’ve done it this time!’ he said, then he fell heavily among the flower-pots piled below. He heard them crash and rattle and crack, and then his head struck against an iron pillar used for holding up the next-door veranda. His eyes closed and he knew no more.

Now you will perhaps expect that at this moment Alice would have cried ‘Murder!’ If you think so you little know what girls are. Directly she was left alone in that tree she made a bolt to tell Albert’s uncle all about it and bring him to our rescue in case the coiner’s gang was a very desperate one. And just when I fell, Albert’s uncle was getting over the wall. Alice never screamed at all when Oswald fell, but Dicky thinks he heard Albert’s uncle say, ‘Confound those kids!’ which would not have been kind or polite, so I hope he did not say it.

The people next door did not come out to see what the row was. Albert’s uncle did not wait for them to come out. He picked up Oswald and carried the insensible body of the gallant young detective to the wall, laid it on the top, and then climbed over and bore his lifeless burden into our house and put it on the sofa in Father’s study. Father was out, so we needn’t have crept so when we were getting into the garden. Then Oswald was restored to consciousness, and his head tied up, and sent to bed, and next day there was a lump on his young brow as big as a turkey’s egg, and very uncomfortable.

Albert's uncle came in next day and talked to each of us separately. To Oswald he said many unpleasant things about ungentlemanly to spy on ladies, and about minding your own business; and when I began to tell him what I had heard he told me to shut up, and altogether he made me more uncomfortable than the bump did.

Oswald did not say anything to any one, but next day, as the shadows of eve were falling, he crept away, and wrote on a piece of paper, 'I want to speak to you,' and shoved it through the hole like a heart in the top of the next-door shutters. And the youngest young lady put an eye to the heart-shaped hole, and then opened the shutter and said 'Well?' very crossly. Then Oswald said
'I am very sorry, and I beg your pardon. We wanted to be detectives, and we thought a gang of coiners infested your house, so we looked through your window last night. I saw the lettuce, and I heard what you said about the salmon being three-halfpence cheaper, and I know it is very dishonourable to pry into other people's secrets, especially ladies', and I never will again if you will forgive me this once.'

Then the lady frowned and then she laughed, and then she said 'So it was you tumbling into the flower-pots last night? We thought it was burglars. It frightened us horribly. Why, what a bump on your poor head!'

And then she talked to me a bit, and presently she said she and her sister had not wished people to know they were at home, because And then she stopped short and grew very red, and I said, 'I thought you were all at Scarborough; your servant told Eliza so. Why didn't you want people to know you were at home?'

The lady got redder still, and then she laughed and said 'Never mind the reason why. I hope your head doesn't hurt much. Thank you for your nice, manly little speech. You've nothing to be ashamed of, at any rate.' Then she kissed me, and I did not mind. And then she said, 'Run away now, dear. I'm going to I'm going to pull up the blinds and open the shutters, and I want to do it at once, before it gets dark, so that every one can see we're at home, and not at Scarborough.'

The Story of the Treasure Seekers
Chapter 4

GOOD HUNTING

When we had got that four shillings by digging for treasure we ought, by rights, to have tried Dicky's idea of answering the advertisement about ladies and gentlemen and spare time and two pounds a week, but there were several things we rather wanted. Dora wanted a new pair of scissors, and she said she was going to get them with her eight-pence. But Alice said
'You ought to get her those, Oswald, because you know you broke the points off hers getting the marble out of the brass thimble.'

It was quite true, though I had almost forgotten it, but then it was H. O. who jammed the marble into the thimble first of all. So I said
'It's H. O.'s fault as much as mine, anyhow. Why shouldn't he pay?'

Oswald didn't so much mind paying for the beastly scissors, but he hates injustice of every kind.

‘He’s such a little kid,’ said Dicky, and of course H. O. said he wasn’t a little kid, and it very nearly came to being a row between them. But Oswald knows when to be generous; so he said ’Look here! I’ll pay sixpence of the scissors, and H. O. shall pay the rest, to teach him to be careful.’

H. O. agreed: he is not at all a mean kid, but I found out afterwards that Alice paid his share out of her own money.

Then we wanted some new paints, and Noel wanted a pencil and a halfpenny account-book to write poetry with, and it does seem hard never to have any apples. So, somehow or other nearly all the money got spent, and we agreed that we must let the advertisement run loose a little longer.

‘I only hope,’ Alice said, ’that they won’t have got all the ladies and gentlemen they want before we have got the money to write for the sample and instructions.’

And I was a little afraid myself, because it seemed such a splendid chance; but we looked in the paper every day, and the advertisement was always there, so we thought it was all right.

Then we had the detective try-on and it proved no go; and then, when all the money was gone, except a halfpenny of mine and twopence of Noel's and three-pence of Dicky's and a few pennies that the girls had left, we held another council.

Dora was sewing the buttons on H. O.'s Sunday things. He got himself a knife with his money, and he cut every single one of his best buttons off. You've no idea how many buttons there are on a suit. Dora counted them. There are twenty-four, counting the little ones on the sleeves that don't undo.

Alice was trying to teach Pincher to beg; but he has too much sense when he knows you've got nothing in your hands, and the rest of us were roasting potatoes under the fire. We had made a fire on purpose, though it was rather warm. They are very good if you cut away the burnt parts but you ought to wash them first, or you are a dirty boy.

'Well, what can we do?' said Dicky. 'You are so fond of saying "Let's do something!" and never saying what.'

'We can't try the advertisement yet. Shall we try rescuing some one?' said Oswald. It was his own idea, but he didn't insist on doing it, though he is next to the eldest, for he knows it is bad manners to make people do what you want, when they would rather not.

‘What was Noel’s plan?’ Alice asked.

‘A Princess or a poetry book,’ said Noel sleepily. He was lying on his back on the sofa, kicking his legs. ’Only I shall look for the Princess all by myself. But I’ll let you see her when we’re married.’

‘Have you got enough poetry to make a book?’ Dicky asked that, and it was rather sensible of him, because when Noel came to look there were only seven of his poems that any of us could understand. There was the ‘Wreck of the Malabar’, and the poem he wrote when Eliza took us to hear the Reviving Preacher, and everybody cried, and Father said it must have been the Preacher’s Eloquence. So Noel wrote:

O Eloquence and what art thou?
Ay what art thou? because we cried
And everybody cried inside
When they came out their eyes were red
And it was your doing Father said.

But Noel told Alice he got the first line and a half from a book a boy at school was going to write when he had time. Besides this there were the 'Lines on a Dead Black Beetle that was poisoned'

O Beetle how I weep to see
Thee lying on thy poor back!
It is so very sad indeed.
You were so shiny and black.
I wish you were alive again
But Eliza says wishing it is nonsense and a shame.

It was very good beetle poison, and there were hundreds of them lying dead but Noel only wrote a piece of poetry for one of them. He said he hadn't time to do them all, and the worst of it was he didn't know which one he'd written it to so Alice couldn't bury the beetle and put the lines on its grave, though she wanted to very much.

Well, it was quite plain that there wasn't enough poetry for a book.

'We might wait a year or two,' said Noel. 'I shall be sure to make some more some time. I thought of a piece about a fly this morning that knew condensed milk was sticky.'

'But we want the money now,' said Dicky, 'and you can go on writing just the same. It will come in some time or other.'

‘There’s poetry in newspapers,’ said Alice. ’Down, Pincher! you’ll never be a clever dog, so it’s no good trying.’

‘Do they pay for it?’ Dicky thought of that; he often thinks of things that are really important, even if they are a little dull.
’I don’t know. But I shouldn’t think any one would let them print their poetry without. I wouldn’t I know.’ That was Dora; but Noel said he wouldn’t mind if he didn’t get paid, so long as he saw his poetry printed and his name at the end.

‘We might try, anyway,’ said Oswald. He is always willing to give other people’s ideas a fair trial.

So we copied out ‘The Wreck of the Malabar’ and the other six poems on drawing-paper Dora did it, she writes best and Oswald drew a picture of the Malabar going down with all hands. It was a full-rigged schooner, and all the ropes and sails were correct; because my cousin is in the Navy, and he showed me.

We thought a long time whether we’d write a letter and send it by post with the poetry and Dora thought it would be best. But Noel said he couldn’t bear not to know at once if the paper would print the poetry, So we decided to take it.

I went with Noel, because I am the eldest, and he is not old enough to go to London by himself. Dicky said poetry was rot and he was glad he hadn’t got to make a fool of himself. That was

because there was not enough money for him to go with us. H. O. couldn't come either, but he came to the station to see us off, and waved his cap and called out 'Good hunting!' as the train started. There was a lady in spectacles in the corner. She was writing with a pencil on the edges of long strips of paper that had print all down them. When the train started she asked
'What was that he said?'

So Oswald answered
'It was "Good hunting" it's out of the Jungle Book!' 'That's very pleasant to hear,' the lady said; 'I am very pleased to meet people who know their Jungle Book. And where are you off to the Zoological Gardens to look for Bagheera?'

We were pleased, too, to meet some one who knew the Jungle Book.

So Oswald said
'We are going to restore the fallen fortunes of the House of Bastable and we have all thought of different ways and we're going to try them all. Noel's way is poetry. I suppose great poets get paid?'

The lady laughed she was awfully jolly and said she was a sort of poet, too, and the long strips of paper were the proofs of her new book of stories. Because before a book is made into a real book with pages and a cover, they sometimes print it all on strips of

paper, and the writer make marks on it with a pencil to show the printers what idiots they are not to understand what a writer means to have printed.

We told her all about digging for treasure, and what we meant to do. Then she asked to see Noel's poetry and he said he didn't like so she said, 'Look here if you'll show me yours I'll show you some of mine.' So he agreed.

The jolly lady read Noel's poetry, and she said she liked it very much. And she thought a great deal of the picture of the Malabar. And then she said, 'I write serious poetry like yours myself; too, but I have a piece here that I think you will like because it's about a boy.' She gave it to us and so I can copy it down, and I will, for it shows that some grown-up ladies are not so silly as others. I like it better than Noel's poetry, though I told him I did not, because he looked as if he was going to cry. This was very wrong, for you should always speak the truth, however unhappy it makes people. And I generally do. But I did not want him crying in the railway carriage. The lady's piece of poetry:

Oh when I wake up in my bed
And see the sun all fat and red,
I'm glad to have another day
For all my different kinds of play.
There are so many things to do
The things that make a man of you,

If grown-ups did not get so vexed
And wonder what you will do next.
I often wonder whether they
Ever made up our kinds of play
If they were always good as gold
And only did what they were told.
They like you best to play with tops
And toys in boxes, bought in shops;
They do not even know the names
Of really interesting games.
They will not let you play with fire
Or trip your sister up with wire,
They grudge the tea-tray for a drum,
Or booby-traps when callers come.
They don't like fishing, and it's true
You sometimes soak a suit or two:
They look on fireworks, though they're dry,
With quite a disapproving eye.
They do not understand the way
To get the most out of your day:
They do not know how hunger feels
Nor what you need between your meals.

And when you're sent to bed at night, They're happy, but they're not polite. For through the door you hear them say: 'He's done his mischief for the day!'

She told us a lot of other pieces but I cannot remember them, and she talked to us all the way up, and when we got nearly to Cannon Street she said
'I've got two new shillings here! Do you think they would help to smooth the path to Fame?'

Noel said, 'Thank you,' and was going to take the shilling. But Oswald, who always remembers what he is told, said
'Thank you very much, but Father told us we ought never to take anything from strangers.'

'That's a nasty one,' said the lady she didn't talk a bit like a real lady, but more like a jolly sort of grown-up boy in a dress and hat 'a very nasty one! But don't you think as Noel and I are both poets I might be considered a sort of relation? You've heard of brother poets, haven't you? Don't you think Noel and I are aunt and nephew poets, or some relationship of that kind?'

I didn't know what to say, and she went on
'It's awfully straight of you to stick to what your Father tells you, but look here, you take the shillings, and here's my card. When you get home tell your Father all about it, and if he says No, you can just bring the shillings back to me.'

So we took the shillings, and she shook hands with us and said, 'Good-bye, and good hunting!'

We did tell Father about it, and he said it was all right, and when he looked at the card he told us we were highly honoured, for the lady wrote better poetry than any other lady alive now. We had never heard of her, and she seemed much too jolly for a poet. Good old Kipling! We owe him those two shillings, as well as the Jungle books!

The Story of the Treasure Seekers
Chapter 5

THE POET AND THE EDITOR

It was not bad sport being in London entirely on our own hook. We asked the way to Fleet Street, where Father says all the newspaper offices are. They said straight on down Ludgate Hill - but it turned out to be quite another way. At least we didn't go straight on.

We got to St Paul's. Noel would go in, and we saw where Gordon was buried at least the monument. It is very flat, considering what a man he was.

When we came out we walked a long way, and when we asked a policeman he said we'd better go back through Smithfield. So we did. They don't burn people any more there now, so it was rather dull, besides being a long way, and Noel got very tired. He's a peaky little chap; it comes of being a poet, I think. We had a bun or two at different shops out of the shillings and it was quite late in the afternoon when we got to Fleet Street. The gas was lighted and the electric lights. There is a jolly Bovril sign that comes off and on in different coloured lamps. We went to the Daily Recorder office, and asked to see the Editor. It is a big office, very bright,

with brass and mahogany and electric lights.

They told us the Editor wasn't there, but at another office. So we went down a dirty street, to a very dull-looking place. There was a man there inside, in a glass case, as if he was a museum, and he told us to write down our names and our business. So Oswald wrote

OSWALD BASTABLE
NOEL BASTABLE
BUSINESS VERY PRIVATE INDEED

Then we waited on the stone stairs; it was very draughty. And the man in the glass case looked at us as if we were the museum instead of him. We waited a long time, and then a boy came down and said
'The Editor can't see you. Will you please write your business?'
And he laughed. I wanted to punch his head.

But Noel said, 'Yes, I'll write it if you'll give me a pen and ink, and a sheet of paper and an envelope.'

The boy said he'd better write by post. But Noel is a bit pig-headed; it's his worst fault. So he said 'No, I'll write it now.' So I backed him up by saying
'Look at the price penny stamps are since the coal strike!'

So the boy grinned, and the man in the glass case gave us pen and paper, and Noel wrote. Oswald writes better than he does; but Noel would do it; and it took a very long time, and then it was inky.

DEAR MR EDITOR, I want you to print my poetry and pay for it, and I am a friend of Mrs Leslie's; she is a poet too.
Your affectionate friend,
NOEL BASTABLE.

He licked the envelope a good deal, so that that boy shouldn't read it going upstairs; and he wrote 'Very private' outside, and gave the letter to the boy. I thought it wasn't any good; but in a minute the grinning boy came back, and he was quite respectful, and said 'The Editor says, please will you step up?'

We stepped up. There were a lot of stairs and passages, and a queer sort of humming, hammering sound and a very funny smell. The boy was now very polite, and said it was the ink we smelt, and the noise was the printing machines.

After going through a lot of cold passages we came to a door; the boy opened it, and let us go in. There was a large room, with a big, soft, blue-and-red carpet, and a roaring fire, though it was only October; and a large table with drawers, and littered with papers, just like the one in Father's study. A gentleman was sitting at one side of the table; he had a light moustache and light

eyes, and he looked very young to be an editor not nearly so old as Father. He looked very tired and sleepy, as if he had got up very early in the morning; but he was kind, and we liked him. Oswald thought he looked clever. Oswald is considered a judge of faces.
'Well,' said he, 'so you are Mrs Leslie's friends?'

'I think so,' said Noel; 'at least she gave us each a shilling, and she wished us "good hunting!"'

'Good hunting, eh? Well, what about this poetry of yours? Which is the poet?'

I can't think how he could have asked! Oswald is said to be a very manly-looking boy for his age. However, I thought it would look duffing to be offended, so I said
'This is my brother Noel. He is the poet.' Noel had turned quite pale. He is disgustingly like a girl in some ways. The Editor told us to sit down, and he took the poems from Noel, and began to read them. Noel got paler and paler; I really thought he was going to faint, like he did when I held his hand under the cold-water tap, after I had accidentally cut him with my chisel. When the Editor had read the first poem it was the one about the beetle he got up and stood with his back to us. It was not manners; but Noel thinks he did it 'to conceal his emotion,' as they do in books. He read all the poems, and then he said

'I like your poetry very much, young man. I'll give you let me see;

how much shall I give you for it?'

'As much as ever you can,' said Noel. 'You see I want a good deal of money to restore the fallen fortunes of the house of Bastable.' The gentleman put on some eye-glasses and looked hard at us. Then he sat down.

'That's a good idea,' said he. 'Tell me how you came to think of it. And, I say, have you had any tea? They've just sent out for mine.' He rang a tingly bell, and the boy brought in a tray with a teapot and a thick cup and saucer and things, and he had to fetch another tray for us, when he was told to; and we had tea with the Editor of the Daily Recorder. I suppose it was a very proud moment for Noel, though I did not think of that till afterwards. The Editor asked us a lot of questions, and we told him a good deal, though of course I did not tell a stranger all our reasons for thinking that the family fortunes wanted restoring. We stayed about half an hour, and when we were going away he said again 'I shall print all your poems, my poet; and now what do you think they're worth?'

'I don't know,' Noel said. 'You see I didn't write them to sell.'

'Why did you write them then?' he asked.

Noel said he didn't know; he supposed because he wanted to.

‘Art for Art’s sake, eh?’ said the Editor, and he seemed quite delighted, as though Noel had said something clever.

‘Well, would a guinea meet your views?’ he asked.

I have read of people being at a loss for words, and dumb with emotion, and I’ve read of people being turned to stone with astonishment, or joy, or something, but I never knew how silly it looked till I saw Noel standing staring at the Editor with his mouth open. He went red and he went white, and then he got crimson, as if you were rubbing more and more crimson lake on a palette. But he didn’t say a word, so Oswald had to say
‘I should jolly well think so.’

So the Editor gave Noel a sovereign and a shilling, and he shook

hands with us both, but he thumped Noel on the back and said 'Buck up, old man! It's your first guinea, but it won't be your last. Now go along home, and in about ten years you can bring me some more poetry. Not before see? I'm just taking this poetry of yours because I like it very much; but we don't put poetry in this paper at all. I shall have to put it in another paper I know of.' 'What do you put in your paper?' I asked, for Father always takes the Daily Chronicle, and I didn't know what the Recorder was like. We chose it because it has such a glorious office, and a clock outside lighted up.

'Oh, news,' said he, 'and dull articles, and things about Celebrities. If you know any Celebrities, now?'

Noel asked him what Celebrities were.

'Oh, the Queen and the Princes, and people with titles, and people who write, or sing, or act or do something clever or wicked.'

'I don't know anybody wicked,' said Oswald, wishing he had known Dick Turpin, or Claude Duval, so as to be able to tell the Editor things about them. 'But I know some one with a title Lord Tottenham.'

'The mad old Protectionist, eh? How did you come to know him?' 'We don't know him to speak to. But he goes over the Heath every day at three, and he strides along like a giant with a black cloak

like Lord Tennyson's flying behind him, and he talks to himself like one o'clock.'

'What does he say?' The Editor had sat down again, and he was fiddling with a blue pencil.

'We only heard him once, close enough to understand, and then he said, "The curse of the country, sir ruin and desolation!" And then he went striding along again, hitting at the furze-bushes as if they were the heads of his enemies.'

'Excellent descriptive touch,' said the Editor. 'Well, go on.'

'That's all I know about him, except that he stops in the middle of the Heath every day, and he looks all round to see if there's any one about, and if there isn't, he takes his collar off.'

The Editor interrupted which is considered rude and said
'You're not romancing?'

'I beg your pardon?' said Oswald. 'Drawing the long bow, I mean,' said the Editor.

Oswald drew himself up, and said he wasn't a liar.

The Editor only laughed, and said romancing and lying were not at all the same; only it was important to know what you were playing at. So Oswald accepted his apology, and went on.

'We were hiding among the furze-bushes one day, and we saw him do it. He took off his collar, and he put on a clean one, and he threw the other among the furze-bushes. We picked it up afterwards, and it was a beastly paper one!'

'Thank you,' said the Editor, and he got up and put his hand in his pocket. 'That's well worth five shillings, and there they are. Would you like to see round the printing offices before you go home?'

I pocketed my five bob, and thanked him, and I said we should like it very much. He called another gentleman and said something we couldn't hear. Then he said good-bye again; and all this time Noel hadn't said a word. But now he said, 'I've made a poem about you. It is called "Lines to a Noble Editor." Shall I write it down?'

The Editor gave him the blue pencil, and he sat down at the Editor's table and wrote. It was this, he told me afterwards as well as he could remember
May Life's choicest blessings be your lot
I think you ought to be very blest

For you are going to print my poems
And you may have this one as well as the rest.

‘Thank you,’ said the Editor. ’I don’t think I ever had a poem addressed to me before. I shall treasure it, I assure you.’
Then the other gentleman said something about Maecenas, and we went off to see the printing office with at least one pound seven in our pockets.

It was good hunting, and no mistake!

But he never put Noel’s poetry in the Daily Recorder. It was quite a long time afterwards we saw a sort of story thing in a magazine, on the station bookstall, and that kind, sleepy-looking Editor had written it, I suppose. It was not at all amusing. It said a lot about Noel and me, describing us all wrong, and saying how we had tea with the Editor; and all Noel’s poems were in the story thing. I think myself the Editor seemed to make game of them, but Noel was quite pleased to see them printed so that’s all right. It wasn’t my poetry anyhow, I am glad to say.

The Story of the Treasure Seekers
Chapter 6

NOEL'S PRINCESS

She happened quite accidentally. We were not looking for a Princess at all just then; but Noel had said he was going to find a Princess all by himself; and marry her and he really did. Which was rather odd, because when people say things are going to befall, very often they don't. It was different, of course, with the prophets of old.

We did not get any treasure by it, except twelve chocolate drops; but we might have done, and it was an adventure, anyhow. Greenwich Park is a jolly good place to play in, especially the parts that aren't near Greenwich. The parts near the Heath are first-rate. I often wish the Park was nearer our house; but I suppose a Park is a difficult thing to move.

Sometimes we get Eliza to put lunch in a basket, and we go up to the Park. She likes that it saves cooking dinner for us; and sometimes she says of her own accord, 'I've made some pasties for you, and you might as well go into the Park as not. It's a lovely day.'

She always tells us to rinse out the cup at the drinking-fountain, and the girls do; but I always put my head under the tap and drink. Then you are an intrepid hunter at a mountain stream and besides, you're sure it's clean. Dicky does the same, and so does H. O. But Noel always drinks out of the cup. He says it is a golden goblet wrought by enchanted gnomes.

The day the Princess happened was a fine, hot day, last October, and we were quite tired with the walk up to the Park.

We always go in by the little gate at the top of Croom's Hill. It is the postern gate that things always happen at in stories. It was dusty walking, but when we got in the Park it was ripping, so we rested a bit, and lay on our backs, and looked up at the trees, and wished we could play monkeys. I have done it before now, but the Park-keeper makes a row if he catches you.

When we'd rested a little, Alice said
'It was a long way to the enchanted wood, but it is very nice now we are there. I wonder what we shall find in it?'

'We shall find deer,' said Dicky, 'if we go to look; but they go on the other side of the Park because of the people with buns.' Saying buns made us think of lunch, so we had it; and when we had done we scratched a hole under a tree and buried the papers, because we know it spoils pretty places to leave beastly, greasy papers lying about. I remember Mother teaching me and Dora

that, when we were quite little. I wish everybody's parents would teach them this useful lesson, and the same about orange peel.

When we'd eaten everything there was, Alice whispered
'I see the white witch bear yonder among the trees! Let's track it and slay it in its lair.'

'I am the bear,' said Noel; so he crept away, and we followed him among the trees. Often the witch bear was out of sight, and then you didn't know where it would jump out from; but sometimes we saw it, and just followed.

'When we catch it there'll be a great fight,' said Oswald; 'and I shall be Count Folko of Mont Faucon.'

'I'll be Gabrielle,' said Dora. She is the only one of us who likes doing girl's parts.

'I'll be Sintram,' said Alice; 'and H. O. can be the Little Master.'
'What about Dicky?'

'Oh, I can be the Pilgrim with the bones.'

'Hist!' whispered Alice. 'See his white fairy fur gleaming amid yonder covert!'

And I saw a bit of white too. It was Noel's collar, and it had come

undone at the back.

We hunted the bear in and out of the trees, and then we lost him altogether; and suddenly we found the wall of the Park in a place where I'm sure there wasn't a wall before. Noel wasn't anywhere about, and there was a door in the wall. And it was open; so we went through.

'The bear has hidden himself in these mountain fastnesses,' Oswald said. 'I will draw my good sword and after him.'
So I drew the umbrella, which Dora always will bring in case it rains, because Noel gets a cold on the chest at the least thing and we went on.

The other side of the wall it was a stable yard, all cobble-stones. There was nobody about but we could hear a man rubbing down a horse and hissing in the stable; so we crept very quietly past, and Alice whispered

''Tis the lair of the Monster Serpent; I hear his deadly hiss! Beware! Courage and despatch!'

We went over the stones on tiptoe, and we found another wall with another door in it on the other side. We went through that too, on tiptoe. It really was an adventure. And there we were in a shrubbery, and we saw something white through the trees. Dora said it was the white bear. That is so like Dora. She always begins

to take part in a play just when the rest of us are getting tired of it. I don't mean this unkindly, because I am very fond of Dora. I cannot forget how kind she was when I had bronchitis; and ingratitude is a dreadful vice. But it is quite true.

'It is not a bear,' said Oswald; and we all went on, still on tiptoe, round a twisty path and on to a lawn, and there was Noel. His collar had come undone, as I said, and he had an inky mark on his face that he made just before we left the house, and he wouldn't let Dora wash it off, and one of his bootlaces was coming down. He was standing looking at a little girl; she was the funniest little girl you ever saw.

She was like a china doll the sixpenny kind; she had a white face, and long yellow hair, done up very tight in two pigtails; her forehead was very big and lumpy, and her cheeks came high up, like little shelves under her eyes. Her eyes were small and blue. She had on a funny black frock, with curly braid on it, and button boots that went almost up to her knees. Her legs were very thin. She was sitting in a hammock chair nursing a blue kitten not a sky-blue one, of course, but the colour of a new slate pencil. As we came up we heard her say to Noel 'Who are you?'

Noel had forgotten about the bear, and he was taking his favourite part, so he said 'I'm Prince Camaralzaman.'

The funny little girl looked pleased

‘I thought at first you were a common boy,’ she said. Then she saw the rest of us and said
‘Are you all Princesses and Princes too?’

Of course we said ‘Yes,’ and she said
‘I am a Princess also.’ She said it very well too, exactly as if it were true. We were very glad, because it is so seldom you meet any children who can begin to play right off without having everything explained to them. And even then they will say they are going to ‘pretend to be’ a lion, or a witch, or a king. Now this little girl just said ’I am a Princess.’ Then she looked at Oswald and said, ’I fancy I’ve seen you at Baden.’

Of course Oswald said, ‘Very likely.’

The little girl had a funny voice, and all her words were quite plain, each word by itself; she didn't talk at all like we do.

H. O. asked her what the cat's name was, and she said 'Katinka.'

Then Dicky said
'Let's get away from the windows; if you play near windows some one inside generally knocks at them and says "Don't".'
The Princess put down the cat very carefully and said
'I am forbidden to walk off the grass.'

'That's a pity,' said Dora.

'But I will if you like,' said the Princess.

'You mustn't do things you are forbidden to do,' Dora said; but Dicky showed us that there was some more grass beyond the shrubs with only a gravel path between. So I lifted the Princess over the gravel, so that she should be able to say she hadn't walked off the grass. When we got to the other grass we all sat down, and the Princess asked us if we liked 'dragées' (I know that's how you spell it, for I asked Albert-next-door's uncle). We said we thought not, but she pulled a real silver box out of her pocket and showed us; they were just flat, round chocolates. We had two each. Then we asked her her name, and she began, and when she began she went on, and on, and on, till I thought she was never going to stop. H. O. said she had fifty names, but Dicky

is very good at figures, and he says there were only eighteen. The first were Pauline, Alexandra, Alice, and Mary was one, and Victoria, for we all heard that, and it ended up with Hildegarde Cunigonde something or other, Princess of something else.

When she'd done, H. O. said, 'That's jolly good! Say it again!' and she did, but even then we couldn't remember it. We told her our names, but she thought they were too short, so when it was Noel's turn he said he was Prince Noel Camaralzaman Ivan Constantine Charlemagne James John Edward Biggs Maximilian Bastable Prince of Lewisham, but when she asked him to say it again of course he could only get the first two names right, because he'd made it up as he went on.

So the Princess said, 'You are quite old enough to know your own name.' She was very grave and serious.

She told us that she was the fifth cousin of Queen Victoria. We asked who the other cousins were, but she did not seem to understand. She went on and said she was seven times removed. She couldn't tell us what that meant either, but Oswald thinks it means that the Queen's cousins are so fond of her that they will keep coming bothering, so the Queen's servants have orders to remove them. This little girl must have been very fond of the Queen to try so often to see her, and to have been seven times removed. We could see that it is considered something to be proud of; but we thought it was hard on the Queen that her cousins wouldn't let her alone.

Presently the little girl asked us where our maids and governesses were.

We told her we hadn't any just now. And she said
'How pleasant! And did you come here alone?'

'Yes,' said Dora; 'we came across the Heath.'

'You are very fortunate,' said the little girl. She sat very upright on the grass, with her fat little hands in her lap. 'I should like to go on the Heath. There are donkeys there, with white saddle covers. I should like to ride them, but my governess will not permit.'

'I'm glad we haven't a governess,' H. O. said. 'We ride the

donkeys whenever we have any pennies, and once I gave the man another penny to make it gallop.'

'You are indeed fortunate!' said the Princess again, and when she looked sad the shelves on her cheeks showed more than ever. You could have laid a sixpence on them quite safely if you had had one.

'Never mind,' said Noel; 'I've got a lot of money. Come out and have a ride now.' But the little girl shook her head and said she was afraid it would not be correct.

Dora said she was quite right; then all of a sudden came one of those uncomfortable times when nobody can think of anything to say, so we sat and looked at each other. But at last Alice said we ought to be going.

'Do not go yet,' the little girl said. 'At what time did they order your carriage?'

'Our carriage is a fairy one, drawn by griffins, and it comes when we wish for it,' said Noel.

The little girl looked at him very queerly, and said, 'That is out of a picture-book.'

Then Noel said he thought it was about time he was married if we

were to be home in time for tea. The little girl was rather stupid over it, but she did what we told her, and we married them with Dora's pocket-handkerchief for a veil, and the ring off the back of one of the buttons on H. O.'s blouse just went on her little finger. Then we showed her how to play cross-touch, and puss in the corner, and tag. It was funny, she didn't know any games but battledore and shuttlecock and les graces. But she really began to laugh at last and not to look quite so like a doll.

She was Puss and was running after Dicky when suddenly she stopped short and looked as if she was going to cry. And we looked too, and there were two prim ladies with little mouths and tight hair. One of them said in quite an awful voice, 'Pauline, who are these children?' and her voice was gruff; with very curly R's. The little girl said we were Princes and Princesses which was silly, to a grown-up person that is not a great friend of yours.

The gruff lady gave a short, horrid laugh, like a husky bark, and said
'Princes, indeed! They're only common children!'

Dora turned very red and began to speak, but the little girl cried out 'Common children! Oh, I am so glad! When I am grown up I'll always play with common children.'

And she ran at us, and began to kiss us one by one, beginning with Alice; she had got to H. O. when the horrid lady said 'Your

Highness go indoors at once!'

The little girl answered, 'I won't!'

Then the prim lady said 'Wilson, carry her Highness indoors.'

And the little girl was carried away screaming, and kicking with her little thin legs and her buttoned boots, and between her screams she shrieked:
'Common children! I am glad, glad, glad! Common children! Common children!'

The nasty lady then remarked 'Go at once, or I will send for the police!'

So we went. H. O. made a face at her and so did Alice, but Oswald took off his cap and said he was sorry if she was annoyed about anything; for Oswald has always been taught to be polite to ladies, however nasty. Dicky took his off, too, when he saw me do it; he says he did it first, but that is a mistake. If I were really a common boy I should say it was a lie. Then we all came away, and when we got outside Dora said, 'So she was really a

Princess. Fancy a Princess living there!'

'Even Princesses have to live somewhere,' said Dicky.

'And I thought it was play. And it was real. I wish I'd known! I should have liked to ask her lots of things,' said Alice.

H. O. said he would have liked to ask her what she had for dinner and whether she had a crown.

I felt, myself, we had lost a chance of finding out a great deal about kings and queens. I might have known such a stupid-looking little girl would never have been able to pretend, as well as that.

So we all went home across the Heath, and made dripping toast for tea.

When we were eating it Noel said, 'I wish I could give her some! It is very good.'

He sighed as he said it, and his mouth was very full, so we knew he was thinking of his Princess. He says now that she was as beautiful as the day, but we remember her quite well, and she was nothing of the kind.

The Story of the Treasure Seekers
Chapter 7

BEING BANDITS

Noel was quite tiresome for ever so long after we found the Princess. He would keep on wanting to go to the Park when the rest of us didn't, and though we went several times to please him, we never found that door open again, and all of us except him knew from the first that it would be no go.

So now we thought it was time to do something to rouse him from the stupor of despair, which is always done to heroes when anything baffling has occurred. Besides, we were getting very short of money again the fortunes of your house cannot be restored (not so that they will last, that is), even by the one pound eight we got when we had the 'good hunting.' We spent a good deal of that on presents for Father's birthday. We got him a paper-weight, like a glass bun, with a picture of Lewisham Church at the bottom; and a blotting-pad, and a box of preserved fruits, and an ivory penholder with a view of Greenwich Park in the little hole where you look through at the top. He was most awfully pleased and surprised, and when he heard how Noel and Oswald had earned the money to buy the things he was more surprised still. Nearly all the rest of our money went to get

fireworks for the Fifth of November. We got six Catherine wheels and four rockets; two hand-lights, one red and one green; a sixpenny maroon; two Roman-candles they cost a shilling; some Italian streamers, a fairy fountain, and a tourbillon that cost eighteen-pence and was very nearly worth it.

But I think crackers and squibs are a mistake. It's true you get a lot of them for the money, and they are not bad fun for the first two or three dozen, but you get jolly sick of them before you've let off your sixpenn'orth. And the only amusing way is not allowed: it is putting them in the fire.

It always seems a long time till the evening when you have got fireworks in the house, and I think as it was a rather foggy day we should have decided to let them off directly after breakfast, only Father had said he would help us to let them off at eight o'clock after he had had his dinner, and you ought never to disappoint your father if you can help it.

You see we had three good reasons for trying H. O.'s idea of restoring the fallen fortunes of our house by becoming bandits on the Fifth of November. We had a fourth reason as well, and that was the best reason of the lot. You remember Dora thought it would be wrong to be bandits. And the Fifth of November came while Dora was away at Stroud staying with her godmother. Stroud is in Gloucestershire. We were determined to do it while

she was out of the way, because we did not think it wrong, and besides we meant to do it anyhow.

We held a Council, of course, and laid our plans very carefully. We let H. O. be Captain, because it was his idea. Oswald was Lieutenant. Oswald was quite fair, because he let H. O. call himself Captain; but Oswald is the eldest next to Dora, after all. Our plan was this. We were all to go up on to the Heath. Our house is in the Lewisham Road, but it's quite close to the Heath if you cut up the short way opposite the confectioner's, past the nursery gardens and the cottage hospital, and turn to the left again and afterwards to the right. You come out then at the top of the hill, where the big guns are with the iron fence round them, and where the bands play on Thursday evenings in the summer.

We were to lurk in ambush there, and waylay an unwary traveller. We were to call upon him to surrender his arms, and then bring him home and put him in the deepest dungeon below the castle moat; then we were to load him with chains and send to his friends for ransom.

You may think we had no chains, but you are wrong, because we used to keep two other dogs once, besides Pincher, before the fall of the fortunes of the ancient House of Bastable. And they were quite big dogs.

It was latish in the afternoon before we started. We thought we

could lurk better if it was nearly dark. It was rather foggy, and we waited a good while beside the railings, but all the belated travellers were either grown up or else they were Board School children. We weren't going to get into a row with grown-up people especially strangers and no true bandit would ever stoop to ask a ransom from the relations of the poor and needy. So we thought it better to wait.

As I said, it was Guy Fawkes Day, and if it had not been we should never have been able to be bandits at all, for the unwary traveller we did catch had been forbidden to go out because he had a cold in his head. But he would run out to follow a guy, without even putting on a coat or a comforter, and it was a very damp, foggy afternoon and nearly dark, so you see it was his own fault entirely, and served him jolly well right.

We saw him coming over the Heath just as we were deciding to go home to tea. He had followed that guy right across to the village (we call Blackheath the village; I don't know why), and he was coming back dragging his feet and sniffing.

'Hist, an unwary traveller approaches!' whispered Oswald. 'Muffle your horses' heads and see to the priming of your pistols,' muttered Alice. She always will play boys' parts, and she makes Ellis cut her hair short on purpose. Ellis is a very obliging hairdresser.

‘Steal softly upon him,’ said Noel; ’for lo! ’tis dusk, and no human eyes can mark our deeds.’

So we ran out and surrounded the unwary traveller. It turned out to be Albert-next-door, and he was very frightened indeed until he saw who we were.

‘Surrender!’ hissed Oswald, in a desperate-sounding voice, as he caught the arm of the Unwary. And Albert-next-door said, ’All right! I’m surrendering as hard as I can. You needn’t pull my arm off.’

We explained to him that resistance was useless, and I think he saw that from the first. We held him tight by both arms, and we marched him home down the hill in a hollow square of five.
He wanted to tell us about the guy, but we made him see that it was not proper for prisoners to talk to the guard, especially about guys that the prisoner had been told not to go after because of his cold.

When we got to where we live he said, ’All right, I don’t want to tell you. You’ll wish I had afterwards. You never saw such a guy.’
‘I can see *you*!’ said H. O. It was very rude, and Oswald told him so at once, because it is his duty as an elder brother. But H. O. is very young and does not know better yet, and besides it wasn’t bad for H. O.

Albert-next-door said, 'You haven't any manners, and I want to go in to my tea. Let go of me!'

But Alice told him, quite kindly, that he was not going in to his tea, but coming with us.

'I'm not,' said Albert-next-door; 'I'm going home. Leave go! I've got a bad cold. You're making it worse.' Then he tried to cough, which was very silly, because we'd seen him in the morning, and he'd told us where the cold was that he wasn't to go out with. When he had tried to cough, he said, 'Leave go of me! You see my cold's getting worse.'

'You should have thought of that before,' said Dicky; 'you're coming in with us.'

'Don't be a silly,' said Noel; 'you know we told you at the very beginning that resistance was useless. There is no disgrace in yielding. We are five to your one.'

By this time Eliza had opened the door, and we thought it best to take him in without any more parlaying. To parley with a prisoner is not done by bandits.

Directly we got him safe into the nursery, H. O. began to jump about and say, 'Now you're a prisoner really and truly!'

And Albert-next-door began to cry. He always does. I wonder he didn't begin long before but Alice fetched him one of the dried fruits we gave Father for his birthday. It was a green walnut. I have noticed the walnuts and the plums always get left till the last in the box; the apricots go first, and then the figs and pears; and the cherries, if there are any.

So he ate it and shut up. Then we explained his position to him, so that there should be no mistake, and he couldn't say afterwards that he had not understood.

'There will be no violence,' said Oswald he was now Captain of the Bandits, because we all know H. O. likes to be Chaplain when we play prisoners 'no violence. But you will be confined in a dark, subterranean dungeon where toads and snakes crawl, and but little of the light of day filters through the heavily mullioned windows. You will be loaded with chains. Now don't begin again, Baby, there's nothing to cry about; straw will be your pallet; beside you the gaoler will set a ewer a ewer is only a jug, stupid; it won't eat you a ewer with water; and a mouldering crust will be your food.'

But Albert-next-door never enters into the spirit of a thing. He mumbled something about tea-time.

Now Oswald, though stern, is always just, and besides we were all rather hungry, and tea was ready. So we had it at once, Albert-

next-door and all and we gave him what was left of the four-pound jar of apricot jam we got with the money Noel got for his poetry. And we saved our crusts for the prisoner.

Albert-next-door was very tiresome. Nobody could have had a nicer prison than he had. We fenced him into a corner with the old wire nursery fender and all the chairs, instead of putting him in the coal-cellar as we had first intended. And when he said the dog-chains were cold the girls were kind enough to warm his fetters thoroughly at the fire before we put them on him.

We got the straw cases of some bottles of wine someone sent Father one Christmas it is some years ago, but the cases are quite good. We unpacked them very carefully and pulled them to pieces and scattered the straw about. It made a lovely straw pallet, and took ever so long to make but Albert-next-door has yet to learn what gratitude really is. We got the bread trencher for the wooden platter where the prisoner's crusts were put they were not mouldy, but we could not wait till they got so, and for the ewer we got the toilet jug out of the spare-room where nobody ever sleeps. And even then Albert-next-door couldn't be happy like the rest of us. He howled and cried and tried to get out, and he knocked the ewer over and stamped on the mouldering crusts. Luckily there was no water in the ewer because we had forgotten it, only dust and spiders. So we tied him up with the clothes-line from the back kitchen, and we had to hurry up, which was a pity for him. We might have had him rescued by a devoted page if he

hadn't been so tiresome. In fact Noel was actually dressing up for the page when Albert-next-door kicked over the prison ewer.

We got a sheet of paper out of an old exercise-book, and we made H. O. prick his own thumb, because he is our little brother and it is our duty to teach him to be brave. We none of us mind pricking ourselves; we've done it heaps of times. H. O. didn't like it, but he agreed to do it, and I helped him a little because he was so slow, and when he saw the red bead of blood getting fatter and bigger as I squeezed his thumb he was very pleased, just as I had told him he would be.

This is what we wrote with H. O.'s blood, only the blood gave out when we got to 'Restored', and we had to write the rest with crimson lake, which is not the same colour, though I always use it, myself, for painting wounds.

While Oswald was writing it he heard Alice whispering to the prisoner that it would soon be over, and it was only play. The prisoner left off howling, so I pretended not to hear what she said. A Bandit Captain has to overlook things sometimes. This was the letter
'Albert Morrison is held a prisoner by Bandits. On payment of three thousand pounds he will be restored to his sorrowing relatives, and all will be forgotten and forgiven.'

I was not sure about the last part, but Dicky was certain he had

seen it in the paper, so I suppose it must have been all right.

We let H. O. take the letter; it was only fair, as it was his blood it was written with, and told him to leave it next door for Mrs Morrison.

H. O. came back quite quickly, and Albert-next-door's uncle came with him.

'What is all this, Albert?' he cried. 'Alas, alas, my nephew! Do I find you the prisoner of a desperate band of brigands?'

'Bandits,' said H. O; 'you know it says bandits.'

'I beg your pardon, gentlemen,' said Albert-next-door's uncle, 'bandits it is, of course. This, Albert, is the direct result of the pursuit of the guy on an occasion when your doting mother had expressly warned you to forgo the pleasures of the chase.'

Albert said it wasn't his fault, and he hadn't wanted to play.

'So ho!' said his uncle, 'impenitent too! Where's the dungeon?' We explained the dungeon, and showed him the straw pallet and the ewer and the mouldering crusts and other things.

'Very pretty and complete,' he said. 'Albert, you are more highly privileged than ever I was. No one ever made me a nice dungeon

when I was your age. I think I had better leave you where you are.'

Albert began to cry again and said he was sorry, and he would be a good boy.

'And on this old familiar basis you expect me to ransom you, do you? Honestly, my nephew, I doubt whether you are worth it. Besides, the sum mentioned in this document strikes me as excessive: Albert really is *not* worth three thousand pounds. Also by a strange and unfortunate chance I haven't the money about me. Couldn't you take less?'

We said perhaps we could.

'Say eightpence,' suggested Albert-next-door's uncle, 'which is all the small change I happen to have on my person.'

'Thank you very much,' said Alice as he held it out; 'but are you sure you can spare it? Because really it was only play.'
'Quite sure. Now, Albert, the game is over. You had better run home to your mother and tell her how much you've enjoyed yourself.'

When Albert-next-door had gone his uncle sat in the Guy Fawkes armchair and took Alice on his knee, and we sat round the fire waiting till it would be time to let off our fireworks. We roasted

the chestnuts he sent Dicky out for, and he told us stories till it was nearly seven. His stories are first-rate he does all the parts in different voices. At last he said
'Look here, young-*uns*. I like to see you play and enjoy yourselves, and I don't think it hurts Albert to enjoy himself too.'

'I don't think he did much,' said H. O. But I knew what Albert-next-door's uncle meant because I am much older than H. O. He went on
'But what about Albert's mother? Didn't you think how anxious she would be at his not coming home? As it happens I saw him come in with you, so we knew it was all right. But if I hadn't, eh?' He only talks like that when he is very serious, or even angry. Other times he talks like people in books to us, I mean.

We none of us said anything. But I was thinking. Then Alice spoke.

Girls seem not to mind saying things that we don't say. She put her arms round Albert-next-door's uncle's neck and said
'We're very, very sorry. We didn't think about his mother. You see we try very hard not to think about other people's mothers because '

Just then we heard Father's key in the door and Albert-next-door's uncle kissed Alice and put her down, and we all went down to meet Father. As we went I thought I heard Albert-next-door's

uncle say something that sounded like ‘Poor little beggars!’
He couldn’t have meant us, when we’d been having such a jolly time, and chestnuts, and fireworks to look forward to after dinner and everything!

The Story of the Treasure Seekers
Chapter 8 – Part 1

BEING EDITORS

It was Albert's uncle who thought of our trying a newspaper. He said he thought we should not find the bandit business a paying industry, as a permanency, and that journalism might be.

We had sold Noel's poetry and that piece of information about Lord Tottenham to the good editor, so we thought it would not be a bad idea to have a newspaper of our own. We saw plainly that editors must be very rich and powerful, because of the grand office and the man in the glass case, like a museum, and the soft carpets and big writing-table. Besides our having seen a whole handful of money that the editor pulled out quite carelessly from his trousers pocket when he gave me my five bob.

Dora wanted to be editor and so did Oswald, but he gave way to her because she is a girl, and afterwards he knew that it is true what it says in the copy-books about Virtue being its own Reward. Because you've no idea what a bother it is. Everybody wanted to put in everything just as they liked, no matter how much room there was on the page. It was simply awful! Dora put up with it as long as she could and then she said if she wasn't let

alone she wouldn't go on being editor; they could be the paper's editors themselves, so there.

Then Oswald said, like a good brother: 'I will help you if you like, Dora,' and she said, 'You're more trouble than all the rest of them! Come and be editor and see how you like it. I give it up to you.' But she didn't, and we did it together. We let Albert-next-door be sub-editor, because he had hurt his foot with a nail in his boot that gathered.

When it was done Albert-next-door's uncle had it copied for us in typewriting, and we sent copies to all our friends, and then of course there was no one left that we could ask to buy it. We did not think of that until too late. We called the paper the Lewisham Recorder; Lewisham because we live there, and Recorder in memory of the good editor. I could write a better paper on my head, but an editor is not allowed to write all the paper. It is very hard, but he is not. You just have to fill up with what you can get from other writers. If I ever have time I will write a paper all by myself. It won't be patchy. We had no time to make it an illustrated paper, but I drew the ship going down with all hands for the first copy. But the typewriter can't draw ships, so it was left out in the other copies. The time the first paper took to write out no one would believe! This was the Newspaper:

THE LEWISHAM RECORDER

EDITORS: DORA AND OSWALD BASTABLE

Every paper is written for some reason. Ours is because we want to sell it and get money. If what we have written brings happiness to any sad heart we shall not have laboured in vain. But we want the money too. Many papers are content with the sad heart and the happiness, but we are not like that, and it is best not to be deceitful. EDITORS.

There will be two serial stories; One by Dicky and one by all of us. In a serial story you only put in one chapter at a time. But we shall put all our serial story at once, if Dora has time to copy it. Dicky's will come later on.

SERIAL STORY
BY US ALL
CHAPTER I by Dora

The sun was setting behind a romantic-looking tower when two strangers might have been observed descending the crest of the hill. The eldest, a man in the prime of life; the other a handsome youth who reminded everybody of Quentin Durward. They approached the Castle, in which the fair Lady Alicia awaited her deliverers. She leaned from the castellated window and waved her lily hand as they approached. They returned her signal, and retired to seek rest and refreshment at a neighbouring hostelry.

The Princess was very uncomfortable in the tower, because her fairy godmother had told her all sorts of horrid things would

happen if she didn't catch a mouse every day, and she had caught so many mice that now there were hardly any left to catch. So she sent her carrier pigeon to ask the noble Strangers if they could send her a few mice because she would be of age in a few days and then it wouldn't matter. So the fairy godmother – (I'm very sorry, but there's no room to make the chapters any longer.-ED.) (I can't I'd much rather not I don't know how.)

I must now retrace my steps and tell you something about our hero. You must know he had been to an awfully jolly school, where they had turkey and goose every day for dinner, and never any mutton, and as many helps of pudding as a fellow cared to send up his plate for so of course they had all grown up very strong, and before he left school he challenged the Head to have it out man to man, and he gave it him, I tell you. That was the education that made him able to fight Red Indians, and to be the stranger who might have been observed in the first chapter.
I think it's time something happened in this story. So then the dragon he came out, blowing fire out of his nose, and he said 'Come on, you valiant man and true, I'd like to have a set-to along of you!'

(That's bad English. ED. I don't care; it's what the dragon said. Who told you dragons didn't talk bad English? Noel.)

So the hero, whose name was Noeloninuris, replied

'My blade is sharp, my axe is keen,
You're not nearly as big
As a good many dragons I've seen.'

(Don't put in so much poetry, Noel. It's not fair, because none of the others can do it. ED.)

And then they went at it, and he beat the dragon, just as he did the Head in Dicky's part of the Story, and so he married the Princess, and they lived – (No they didn't not till the last chapter. ED.)

I think it's a very nice Story but what about the mice? I don't want to say any more. Dora can have what's left of my chapter. And so when the dragon was dead there were lots of mice, because he used to kill them for his tea but now they rapidly multiplied and ravaged the country, so the fair lady Alicia, sometimes called the Princess, had to say she would not marry any one unless they could rid the country of this plague of mice. Then the Prince, whose real name didn't begin with N, but was Osrawalddo, waved his magic sword, and the dragon stood before them, bowing gracefully. They made him promise to be good, and then they forgave him; and when the wedding breakfast came, all the bones were saved for him. And so they were married and lived happy ever after.

(What became of the other stranger? NOEL. The dragon ate him

because he asked too many questions. EDITORS.)

This is the end of the story.

INSTRUCTIVE

It only takes four hours and a quarter now to get from London to Manchester; but I should not think any one would if they could help it.

A DREADFUL WARNING

A wicked boy told me a very instructive thing about ginger. They had opened one of the large jars, and he happened to take out quite a lot, and he made it all right by dropping marbles in, till there was as much ginger as before. But he told me that on the Sunday, when it was coming near the part where there is only juice generally, I had no idea what his feelings were. I don't see what he could have said when they asked him. I should be sorry to act like it.

Experiments should always be made out of doors. And don't use benzoline. DICKY. (That was when he burnt his eyebrows off. ED.) The earth is 2,400 miles round, and 800 through at least I think so, but perhaps it's the other way. DICKY. (You ought to have been sure before you began. ED.)

In this so-called Nineteenth Century Science is but too little

considered in the nurseries of the rich and proud. But we are not like that.

It is not generally known that if you put bits of camphor in luke-warm water it will move about. If you drop sweet oil in, the camphor will dart away and then stop moving. But don't drop any till you are tired of it, because the camphor won't any more afterwards. Much amusement and instruction is lost by not knowing things like this.

If you put a sixpence under a shilling in a wine-glass, and blow hard down the side of the glass, the sixpence will jump up and sit on the top of the shilling. At least I can't do it myself, but my cousin can. He is in the Navy.

Noel. You are very poetical, but I am sorry to say it will not do.
Alice. Nothing will ever make your hair curl, so it's no use. Some people say it's more important to tidy up as you go along. I don't mean you in particular, but every one.

H. O. We never said you were tubby, but the Editor does not know any cure.

Noel. If there is any of the paper over when this newspaper is finished, I will exchange it for your shut-up inkstand, or the knife that has the useful thing in it for taking stones out of horses' feet, but you can't have it without.

H. O. There are many ways how your steam engine might stop working. You might ask Dicky. He knows one of them. I think it is the way yours stopped.

Noel. If you think that by filling the garden with sand you can make crabs build their nests there you are not at all sensible.
You have altered your poem about the battle of Waterloo so often, that we cannot read it except where the Duke waves his sword and says some thing we can't read either. Why did you write it on blotting-paper with purple chalk? ED. (Because YOU KNOW WHO sneaked my pencil. NOEL.)

The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold,
And the way he came down was awful, I'm told;
But it's nothing to the way one of the Editors comes down on me,
If I crumble my bread-and-butter or spill my tea.
NOEL.

CURIOUS FACTS

If you hold a guinea-pig up by his tail his eyes drop out.
You can't do half the things yourself that children in books do, making models or soon. I wonder why? ALICE.

If you take a date's stone out and put in an almond and eat them together, it is prime. I found this out. SUB-EDITOR.
If you put your wet hand into boiling lead it will not hurt you if you draw it out quickly enough. I have never tried this. DORA.

(Instructive Article)

If I ever keep a school everything shall be quite different. Nobody shall learn anything they don't want to. And sometimes instead of having masters and mistresses we will have cats, and we will dress up in cat skins and learn purring. 'Now, my dears,' the old cat will say, 'one, two, three all purr together,' and we shall purr like anything.

She won't teach us to mew, but we shall know how without teaching. Children do know some things without being taught. - ALICE.

The Story of The Treasure Seekers
Chapter 8 – Part 2

BEING EDITORS

Quand j'etais *jeune et* j'etais fou
J'achetai *un violon pour dix–huit sous*
Et tous les airs que je jouai
Etait over the hills and far away.
Another piece of it
Mercie *jolie vache qui* fait
Bon *lait pour mon dejeuner*
Tous les matins tous les soirs
Mon pain je mange, *ton lait je boire*.

It is a mistake to think that cats are playful. I often try to get a cat to play with me, and she never seems to care about the game, no matter how little it hurts. H. O.

Making pots and pans with clay is fun, but do not tell the grown-ups. It is better to surprise them; and then you must say at once how easily it washes off much easier than ink. DICKY.
By Dicky

'Well, Annie, I have bad news for you,' said Mr Ridgway, as he

entered the comfortable dining-room of his cabin in the Bush. 'Sam Redfern the Bushranger is about this part of the Bush just now. I hope he will not attack us with his gang.'

'I hope not,' responded Annie, a gentle maiden of some sixteen summers.

Just then came a knock at the door of the hut, and a gruff voice asked them to open the door.

'It is Sam Redfern the Bushranger, father,' said the girl.

'The same,' responded the voice, and the next moment the hall door was smashed in, and Sam Redfern sprang in, followed by his gang.

Annie's Father was at once overpowered, and Annie herself lay bound with cords on the drawing-room sofa. Sam Redfern set a guard round the lonely hut, and all human aid was despaired of. But you never know. Far away in the Bush a different scene was being enacted.

'Must be Injuns,' said a tall man to himself as he pushed his way through the brushwood. It was Jim Carlton, the celebrated detective. 'I know them,' he added; 'they are Apaches.' just then ten Indians in full war-paint appeared. Carlton raised his rifle and fired, and slinging their scalps on his arm he hastened

towards the humble log hut where resided his affianced bride, Annie Ridgway, sometimes known as the Flower of the Bush. The moon was low on the horizon, and Sam Redfern was seated at a drinking bout with some of his boon companions.

They had rifled the cellars of the hut, and the rich wines flowed like water in the golden goblets of Mr Ridgway.

But Annie had made friends with one of the gang, a noble, good-hearted man who had joined Sam Redfern by mistake, and she had told him to go and get the police as quickly as possible. 'Ha! ha!' cried Redfern, 'now I am enjoying myself!' He little knew that his doom was near upon him.

Just then Annie gave a piercing scream, and Sam Redfern got up, seizing his revolver. 'Who are you?' he cried, as a man entered. 'I am Jim Carlton, the celebrated detective,' said the new arrival. Sam Redfern's revolver dropped from his nerveless fingers, but the next moment he had sprung upon the detective with the well-known activity of the mountain sheep, and Annie shrieked, for she had grown to love the rough Bushranger.

(To be continued at the end of the paper if there is room.)
A new slate is horrid till it is washed in milk. I like the green spots on them to draw patterns round. I know a good way to make a slate-pencil squeak, but I won't put it in because I don't want to make it common. SUB-EDITOR.

Peppermint is a great help with arithmetic. The boy who was second in the Oxford Local always did it. He gave me two. The examiner said to him, 'Are you eating peppermints?' And he said, 'No, Sir.'

He told me afterwards it was quite true, because he was only sucking one. I'm glad I wasn't asked. I should never have thought of that, and I could have had to say 'Yes.' OSWALD.

By Noel
(Author of 'A Dream of Ancient Ancestors.') He isn't really but he put it in to make it seem more real.

Hark! what is that noise of rolling
Waves and thunder in the air?
'Tis the death-knell of the sailors
And officers and passengers of the good ship Malabar.
It was a fair and lovely noon
When the good ship put out of port
And people said 'ah little we think
How soon she will be the elements' sport.'
She was indeed a lovely sight
Upon the billows with sails spread.
But the captain folded his gloomy arms,
Ah if she had been a life-boat instead!
See the captain stern yet gloomy
Flings his son upon a rock,

Hoping that there his darling boy
May escape the wreck.
Alas in vain the loud winds roared
And nobody was saved.
That was the wreck of the Malabar,
Then let us toll for the brave.
NOEL.

It is useless to plant cherry-stones in the hope of eating the fruit, because they don't!

Alice won't lend her gardening tools again, because the last time Noel left them out in the rain, and I don't like it. He said he didn't.

These are useful to play at shop with, until you are ready. Not at dinner-parties, for they will not grow unless uncooked. Potatoes are not grown with seed, but with chopped-up potatoes. Apple trees are grown from twigs, which is less wasteful.

Oak trees come from acorns. Every one knows this. When Noel says he could grow one from a peach stone wrapped up in oak leaves, he shows that he knows nothing about gardening but marigolds, and when I passed by his garden I thought they seemed just like weeds now the flowers have been picked.
A boy once dared me to eat a bulb.

Dogs are very industrious and fond of gardening. Pincher is always planting bones, but they never grow up. There couldn't be a bone tree. I think this is what makes him bark so unhappily at night. He has never tried planting dog-biscuit, but he is fonder of bones, and perhaps he wants to be quite sure about them first.

By Dicky

This would have been a jolly good story if they had let me finish it at the beginning of the paper as I wanted to. But now I have forgotten how I meant it to end, and I have lost my book about Red Indians, and all my Boys of England have been sneaked. The girls say 'Good riddance!' so I expect they did it. They want me just to put in which Annie married, but I shan't, so they will never know.

We have now put everything we can think of into the paper. It takes a lot of thinking about. I don't know how grown-ups manage to write all they do. It must make their heads ache, especially lesson books.

Albert-next-door only wrote one chapter of the serial story, but he could have done some more if he had wanted to. He could not write out any of the things because he cannot spell. He says he can, but it takes him such a long time he might just as well not be able. There are one or two things more. I am sick of it, but Dora says she will write them in.

LEGAL ANSWER WANTED. A quantity of excellent string is offered if you know whether there really is a law passed about not buying gunpowder under thirteen. DICKY.

The price of this paper is one shilling each, and sixpence extra for the picture of the Malabar going down with all hands. If we sell one hundred copies we will write another paper.

And so we would have done, but we never did. Albert-next-door's uncle gave us two shillings, that was all. You can't restore fallen fortunes with two shillings!

The Story of The Treasure Seekers
Chapter 9 – Part 1

THE G. B.

Being editors is not the best way to wealth. We all feel this now, and highwaymen are not respected any more like they used to be. I am sure we had tried our best to restore our fallen fortunes. We felt their fall very much, because we knew the Bastables had been rich once. Dora and Oswald can remember when Father was always bringing nice things home from London, and there used to be turkeys and geese and wine and cigars come by the carrier at Christmas-time, and boxes of candied fruit and French plums in ornamental boxes with silk and velvet and gilding on them. They were called prunes, but the prunes you buy at the grocer's are quite different. But now there is seldom anything nice brought from London, and the turkey and the prune people have forgotten Father's address.

'How *can* we restore those beastly fallen fortunes?' said Oswald. 'We've tried digging and writing and princesses and being editors.'

'And being bandits,' said H. O.

‘When did you try that?’ asked Dora quickly. ’You know I told you it was wrong.’

‘It wasn’t wrong the way we did it,’ said Alice, quicker still, before Oswald could say, ‘Who asked you to tell us anything about it?’ which would have been rude, and he is glad he didn’t. ’We only caught Albert-next-door.’

‘Oh, Albert-next-door!’ said Dora contemptuously, and I felt more comfortable; for even after I didn’t say, ‘Who asked you, and cetera,’ I was afraid Dora was going to come the good elder sister over us. She does that a jolly sight too often.

Dicky looked up from the paper he was reading and said, ’This sounds likely,’ and he read out

’L100 secures partnership in lucrative business for sale of useful patent. L10 weekly. No personal attendance necessary. Jobbins, 300, Old Street Road.’

‘I wish we could secure that partnership,’ said Oswald. He is twelve, and a very thoughtful boy for his age.

Alice looked up from her painting. She was trying to paint a fairy queen’s frock with green bice, and it wouldn’t rub. There is something funny about green bice. It never will rub off; no matter how expensive your paintbox is and even boiling water is very little use.

She said, 'Bother the bice! And, Oswald, it's no use thinking about that. Where are we to get a hundred pounds?'

'Ten pounds a week is five pounds to us,' Oswald went on he had done the sum in his head while Alice was talking 'because partnership means halves. It would be A1.'

Noel sat sucking his pencil he had been writing poetry as usual. I saw the first two lines

I wonder why Green Bice
Is never very nice.

Suddenly he said, 'I wish a fairy would come down the chimney and drop a jewel on the table a jewel worth just a hundred pounds.'

'She might as well give you the hundred pounds while she was about it,' said Dora.

'Or while she was about it she might as well give us five pounds a week,' said Alice.

'Or fifty,' said I.

'Or five hundred,' said Dicky.

I saw H. O. open his mouth, and I knew he was going to say, 'Or five thousand,' so I said

'Well, she won't give us fivepence, but if you'd only do as I am always saying, and rescue a wealthy old gentleman from deadly peril he would give us a pot of money, and we could have the partnership and five pounds a week. Five pounds a week would buy a great many things.'

Then Dicky said, 'Why shouldn't we borrow it?' So we said, 'Who from?' and then he read this out of the paper

MONEY PRIVATELY WITHOUT FEES
THE BOND STREET BANK
Manager, Z. Rosenbaum.

Advances cash from L20 to L10,000 on ladies' or gentlemen's note of hand alone, without security. No fees. No inquiries. Absolute privacy guaranteed.

'What does it all mean?' asked H. O.

'It means that there is a kind gentleman who has a lot of money, and he doesn't know enough poor people to help, so he puts it in the paper that he will help them, by lending them his money - that's it, isn't it, Dicky?'

Dora explained this and Dicky said, 'Yes.' And H. O. said he was a Generous Benefactor, like in Miss Edgeworth. Then Noel wanted to know what a note of hand was, and Dicky knew that, because he had read it in a book, and it was just a letter saying you will pay the money when you can, and signed with your name.
'No inquiries!' said Alice. 'Oh Dicky do you think he would?'
'Yes, I think so,' said Dicky. 'I wonder Father doesn't go to this kind gentleman. I've seen his name before on a circular in Father's study.'

'Perhaps he has.' said Dora.

But the rest of us were sure he hadn't, because, of course, if he had, there would have been more money to buy nice things. Just then Pincher jumped up and knocked over the painting-water. He is a very careless dog. I wonder why painting-water is always such an ugly colour? Dora ran for a duster to wipe it up, and H. O. dropped drops of the water on his hands and said he had got the plague. So we played at the plague for a bit, and I was an Arab physician with a bath-towel turban, and cured the plague with magic acid-drops. After that it was time for dinner, and after dinner we talked it all over and settled that we would go and see the Generous Benefactor the very next day. But we thought perhaps the G. B. it is short for Generous Benefactor would not like it if there were so many of us. I have often noticed that it is the worst of our being six people think six a great many, when it's children. That sentence looks wrong somehow. I mean they

don't mind six pairs of boots, or six pounds of apples, or six oranges, especially in equations, but they seem to think you ought not to have five brothers and sisters. Of course Dicky was to go, because it was his idea. Dora had to go to Blackheath to see an old lady, a friend of Father's, so she couldn't go. Alice said *she* ought to go, because it said, 'Ladies *and* gentlemen,' and perhaps the G. B. wouldn't let us have the money unless there were both kinds of us.

H. O. said Alice wasn't a lady; and she said *he* wasn't going, anyway. Then he called her a disagreeable cat, and she began to cry.

But Oswald always tries to make up quarrels, so he said 'You're little sillies, both of you!'

And Dora said, 'Don't cry, Alice; he only meant you weren't a grown-up lady.'

Then H. O. said, 'What else did you think I meant, Disagreeable?' So Dicky said, 'Don't be disagreeable yourself, H. O. Let her alone and say you're sorry, or I'll jolly well make you!'

So H. O. said he was sorry. Then Alice kissed him and said she was sorry too; and after that H. O. gave her a hug, and said, 'Now I'm *really and truly* sorry,' So it was all right.

Noel went the last time any of us went to London, so he was out of it, and Dora said she would take him to Blackheath if we'd take H. O. So as there'd been a little disagreeableness we thought it was better to take him, and we did. At first we thought we'd tear our oldest things a bit more, and put some patches of different colours on them, to show the G. B. how much we wanted money. But Dora said that would be a sort of cheating, pretending we were poorer than we are. And Dora is right sometimes, though she is our elder sister. Then we thought we'd better wear our best things, so that the G. B. might see we weren't so very poor that he couldn't trust us to pay his money back when we had it. But Dora said that would be wrong too. So it came to our being quite honest, as Dora said, and going just as we were, without even washing our faces and hands; but when I looked at H. O. in the train I wished we had not been quite so particularly honest.

Every one who reads this knows what it is like to go in the train, so I shall not tell about it though it was rather fun, especially the part where the guard came for the tickets at Waterloo, and H. O. was under the seat and pretended to be a dog without a ticket. We went to Charing Cross, and we just went round to Whitehall to see the soldiers and then by St James's for the same reason and when we'd looked in the shops a bit we got to Brook Street, Bond Street. It was a brass plate on a door next to a shop a very grand place, where they sold bonnets and hats all very bright and smart, and no tickets on them to tell you the price. We rang a bell and a boy opened the door and we asked for Mr Rosenbaum. The boy

was not polite; he did not ask us in. So then Dicky gave him his visiting card; it was one of Father's really, but the name is the same, Mr Richard Bastable, and we others wrote our names underneath. I happened to have a piece of pink chalk in my pocket and we wrote them with that.

The Story of The Treasure Seekers
Chapter 9 – Part 2

The G.B.

Then the boy shut the door in our faces and we waited on the step. But presently he came down and asked our business. So Dicky said
'Money advanced, young shaver! and don't be all day about it!'

And then he made us wait again, till I was quite stiff in my legs, but Alice liked it because of looking at the hats and bonnets, and at last the door opened, and the boy said
'Mr Rosenbaum will see you,' so we wiped our feet on the mat, which said so, and we went up stairs with soft carpets and into a room. It was a beautiful room. I wished then we had put on our best things, or at least washed a little. But it was too late now.

The room had velvet curtains and a soft, soft carpet, and it was full of the most splendid things. Black and gold cabinets, and china, and statues, and pictures. There was a picture of a cabbage and a pheasant and a dead hare that was just like life, and I would have given worlds to have it for my own. The fur was so natural I should never have been tired of looking at it; but Alice liked the one of the girl with the broken jug best. Then besides the pictures

there were clocks and candlesticks and vases, and gilt looking-glasses, and boxes of cigars and scent and things littered all over the chairs and tables. It was a wonderful place, and in the middle of all the splendour was a little old gentleman with a very long black coat and a very long white beard and a hookey nose like a falcon. And he put on a pair of gold spectacles and looked at us as if he knew exactly how much our clothes were worth.

And then, while we elder ones were thinking how to begin, for we had all said 'Good morning' as we came in, of course, H. O. began before we could stop him. He said:
'Are you the G. B.?'

'The *what*?' said the little old gentleman.

'The G. B.,' said H. O., and I winked at him to shut up, but he didn't see me, and the G. B. did. He waved his hand at *me* to shut up, so I had to, and H. O. went on 'It stands for Generous Benefactor.'

The old gentleman frowned. Then he said, 'Your Father sent you here, I suppose?'

'No he didn't,' said Dicky. 'Why did you think so?'

The old gentleman held out the card, and I explained that we took that because Father's name happens to be the same as Dicky's.

‘Doesn’t he know you’ve come?’

‘No,’ said Alice, ’we shan’t tell him till we’ve got the partnership, because his own business worries him a good deal and we don’t want to bother him with ours till it’s settled, and then we shall give him half our share.’

The old gentleman took off his spectacles and rumpled his hair with his hands, then he said, ‘Then what *did* you come for?’

‘We saw your advertisement,’ Dicky said, ’and we want a hundred pounds on our note of hand, and my sister came so that there should be both kinds of us; and we want it to buy a partnership with in the lucrative business for sale of useful patent. No personal attendance necessary.’

‘I don’t think I quite follow you,’ said the G. B. ’But one thing I should like settled before entering more fully into the matter: why did you call me Generous Benefactor?’

‘Well, you see,’ said Alice, smiling at him to show she wasn’t frightened, though I know really she was, awfully, ’we thought it was so *very* kind of you to try to find out the poor people who want money and to help them and lend them your money.’
‘Hum!’ said the G. B. ‘Sit down.’

He cleared the clocks and vases and candlesticks off some of the

chairs, and we sat down. The chairs were velvety, with gilt legs. It was like a king's palace.

'Now,' he said, 'you ought to be at school, instead of thinking about money. Why aren't you?'

We told him that we should go to school again when Father could manage it, but meantime we wanted to do something to restore the fallen fortunes of the House of Bastable. And we said we thought the lucrative patent would be a very good thing. He asked a lot of questions, and we told him everything we didn't think Father would mind our telling, and at last he said
'You wish to borrow money. When will you repay it?'

'As soon as we've got it, of course,' Dicky said.

Then the G. B. said to Oswald, 'You seem the eldest,' but I explained to him that it was Dicky's idea, so my being eldest didn't matter. Then he said to Dicky 'You are a minor, I presume?'

Dicky said he wasn't yet, but he had thought of being a mining engineer some day, and going to Klondike.

'Minor, not miner,' said the G. B. 'I mean you're not of age?'

'I shall be in ten years, though,' said Dicky. 'Then you might

repudiate the loan,' said the G. B., and Dicky said 'What?'

Of course he ought to have said 'I beg your pardon. I didn't quite catch what you said' that is what Oswald would have said. It is more polite than 'What.'

'Repudiate the loan,' the G. B repeated. 'I mean you might say you would not pay me back the money, and the law could not compel you to do so.'

'Oh, well, if you think we're such sneaks,' said Dicky, and he got up off his chair. But the G. B. said, 'Sit down, sit down; I was only joking.'

Then he talked some more, and at last he said 'I don't advise you to enter into that partnership. It's a swindle. Many advertisements are. And I have not a hundred pounds by me to-day to lend you. But I will lend you a pound, and you can spend it as you like. And when you are twenty-one you shall pay me back.'

'I shall pay you back long before that,' said Dicky. 'Thanks, awfully! And what about the note of hand?'

'Oh,' said the G. B., 'I'll trust to your honour. Between gentlemen, you know and ladies' he made a beautiful bow to Alice 'a word is as good as a bond.'

Then he took out a sovereign, and held it in his hand while he talked to us. He gave us a lot of good advice about not going into business too young, and about doing our lessons just swatting a bit, on our own hook, so as not to be put in a low form when we went back to school. And all the time he was stroking the sovereign and looking at it as if he thought it very beautiful. And so it was, for it was a new one. Then at last he held it out to Dicky, and when Dicky put out his hand for it the G. B. suddenly put the sovereign back in his pocket.

'No,' he said, 'I won't give you the sovereign. I'll give you fifteen shillings, and this nice bottle of scent. It's worth far more than the five shillings I'm charging you for it. And, when you can, you shall pay me back the pound, and sixty per cent interest sixty per cent, sixty per cent.'

'What's that?' said H. O.

The G. B. said he'd tell us that when we paid back the sovereign, but sixty per cent was nothing to be afraid of. He gave Dicky the money. And the boy was made to call a cab, and the G. B. put us in and shook hands with us all, and asked Alice to give him a kiss, so she did, and H. O. would do it too, though his face was dirtier than ever. The G. B. paid the cabman and told him what station to go to, and so we went home.

That evening Father had a letter by the seven-o'clock post. And

when he had read it he came up into the nursery. He did not look quite so unhappy as usual, but he looked grave.

'You've been to Mr Rosenbaum's,' he said.

So we told him all about it. It took a long time, and Father sat in the armchair. It was jolly. He doesn't often come and talk to us now. He has to spend all his time thinking about his business. And when we'd told him all about it he said
'You haven't done any harm this time, children; rather good than harm, indeed. Mr Rosenbaum has written me a very kind letter.'

'Is he a friend of yours, Father?' Oswald asked. 'He is an acquaintance,' said my father, frowning a little, 'we have done some business together. And this letter ' he stopped and then said: 'No; you didn't do any harm to-day; but I want you for the future not to do anything so serious as to try to buy a partnership without consulting me, that's all. I don't want to interfere with your plays and pleasures; but you will consult me about business matters, won't you?'

Of course we said we should be delighted, but then Alice, who was sitting on his knee, said, 'We didn't like to bother you.'

Father said, 'I haven't much time to be with you, for my business takes most of my time. It is an anxious business but I can't bear to think of your being left all alone like this.'

He looked so sad we all said we liked being alone. And then he looked sadder than ever.

Then Alice said, 'We don't mean that exactly, Father. It is rather lonely sometimes, since Mother died.'

Then we were all quiet a little while. Father stayed with us till we went to bed, and when he said good night he looked quite cheerful. So we told him so, and he said
'Well, the fact is, that letter took a weight off my mind.' I can't think what he meant but I am sure the G. B. would be pleased if he could know he had taken a weight off somebody's mind. He is that sort of man, I think.

We gave the scent to Dora. It is not quite such good scent as we thought it would be, but we had fifteen shillings and they were all good, so is the G. B.

And until those fifteen shillings were spent we felt almost as jolly as though our fortunes had been properly restored. You do not notice your general fortune so much, as long as you have money in your pocket. This is why so many children with regular pocket-money have never felt it their duty to seek for treasure. So, perhaps, our not having pocket-money was a blessing in disguise. But the disguise was quite impenetrable, like the villains' in the books; and it seemed still more so when the fifteen shillings were all spent. Then at last the others agreed to let

Oswald try his way of seeking for treasure, but they were not at all keen about it, and many a boy less firm than Oswald would have chucked the whole thing. But Oswald knew that a hero must rely on himself alone. So he stuck to it, and presently the others saw their duty, and backed him up.