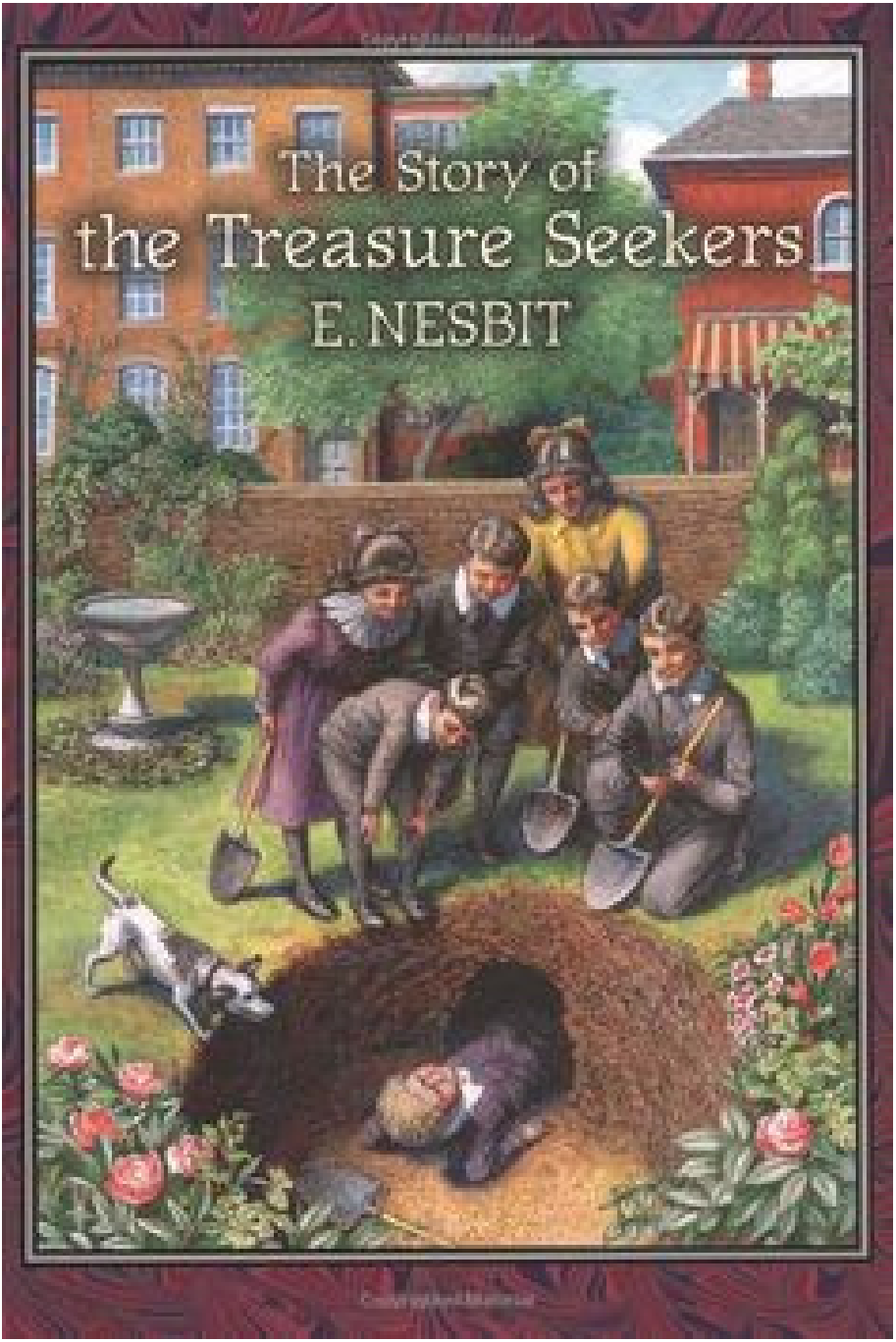
The Story of
the Treasure Seekers
E. NESBIT

The Story of the Treasure Seekers
Part 2

The Story of The Treasure Seekers
Chapter 10

LORD TOTTENHAM

Oswald is a boy of firm and unswerving character, and he had never wavered from his first idea. He felt quite certain that the books were right, and that the best way to restore fallen fortunes was to rescue an old gentleman in distress. Then he brings you up as his own son: but if you preferred to go on being your own father's son I expect the old gentleman would make it up to you some other way. In the books the least thing does it you put up the railway carriage window or you pick up his purse when he drops it or you say a hymn when he suddenly asks you to, and then your fortune is made.

The others, as I said, were very slack about it, and did not seem to care much about trying the rescue. They said there wasn't any deadly peril, and we should have to make one before we could rescue the old gentleman from it, but Oswald didn't see that that mattered. However, he thought he would try some of the easier ways first, by himself.

So he waited about the station, pulling up railway carriage windows for old gentlemen who looked likely but nothing

happened, and at last the porters said he was a nuisance. So that was no go. No one ever asked him to say a hymn, though he had learned a nice short one, beginning 'New every morning' and when an old gentleman did drop a two-shilling piece just by Ellis's the hairdresser's, and Oswald picked it up, and was just thinking what he should say when he returned it, the old gentleman caught him by the collar and called him a young thief.

It would have been very unpleasant for Oswald if he hadn't happened to be a very brave boy, and knew the policeman on that beat very well indeed. So the policeman backed him up, and the old gentleman said he was sorry, and offered Oswald sixpence. Oswald refused it with polite disdain, and nothing more happened at all.

When Oswald had tried by himself and it had not come off, he said to the others, 'We're wasting our time, not trying to rescue the old gentleman in deadly peril. Come buck up! Do let's do something!'

It was dinner-time, and Pincher was going round getting the bits off the plates. There were plenty because it was cold-mutton day. And Alice said 'It's only fair to try Oswald's way he has tried all the things the others

thought of. Why couldn't we rescue Lord Tottenham?'

Lord Tottenham is the old gentleman who walks over the Heath every day in a paper collar at three o'clock and when he gets halfway, if there is no one about, he changes his collar and throws the dirty one into the furze-bushes.

Dicky said, 'Lord Tottenham's all right but where's the deadly peril?'

And we couldn't think of any. There are no highwaymen on Blackheath now, I am sorry to say. And though Oswald said half of us could be highwaymen and the other half rescue party, Dora kept on saying it would be wrong to be a highwayman and so we had to give that up.

Then Alice said, 'What about Pincher?'

And we all saw at once that it could be done.

Pincher is very well bred, and he does know one or two things, though we never could teach him to beg. But if you tell him to hold on he will do it, even if you only say 'Seize him!' in a whisper.

So we arranged it all. Dora said she wouldn't play; she said she thought it was wrong, and she knew it was silly so we left her out,

and she went and sat in the dining-room with a goody-book, so as to be able to say she didn't have anything to do with it, if we got into a row over it.

Alice and H. O. were to hide in the furze-bushes just by where Lord Tottenham changes his collar, and they were to whisper, 'Seize him!' to Pincher; and then when Pincher had seized Lord Tottenham we were to go and rescue him from his deadly peril. And he would say, 'How can I reward you, my noble young preservers?' and it would be all right.

So we went up to the Heath. We were afraid of being late. Oswald told the others what Procrastination was so they got to the furze-bushes a little after two o'clock, and it was rather cold. Alice and H. O. and Pincher hid, but Pincher did not like it any more than they did, and as we three walked up and down we heard him whining. And Alice kept saying, 'I *am* so cold! Isn't he coming yet?' And H. O. wanted to come out and jump about to warm himself. But we told him he must learn to be a Spartan boy, and that he ought to be very thankful he hadn't got a beastly fox eating his inside all the time. H. O. is our little brother, and we are not going to let it be our fault if he grows up a milksop. Besides, it was not really cold. It was his knees he wears socks. So they stayed where they were. And at last, when even the other three who were walking about were beginning to feel rather chilly, we saw Lord Tottenham's big black cloak coming along, flapping in the wind like a great bird. So we said to Alice

'Hist! he approaches. You'll know when to set Pincher on by hearing Lord Tottenham talking to himself he always does while he is taking off his collar.'

Then we three walked slowly away whistling to show we were not thinking of anything. Our lips were rather cold, but we managed to do it.

Lord Tottenham came striding along, talking to himself. People call him the mad Protectionist. I don't know what it means but I don't think people ought to call a Lord such names.

As he passed us he said, 'Ruin of the country, sir! Fatal error, fatal error!' And then we looked back and saw he was getting quite near where Pincher was, and Alice and H. O. We walked on - so that he shouldn't think we were looking and in a minute we heard Pincher's bark, and then nothing for a bit; and then we looked round, and sure enough good old Pincher had got Lord Tottenham by the trouser leg and was holding on like billy-ho, so we started to run.

Lord Tottenham had got his collar half off it was sticking out sideways under his ear and he was shouting, 'Help, help, murder!' exactly as if some one had explained to him beforehand what he was to do. Pincher was growling and snarling and holding on. When we got to him I stopped and said
'Dicky, we must rescue this good old man.'

Lord Tottenham roared in his fury, ‘Good old man be ’ something or othered. ‘Call the dog off.’

So Oswald said, ’It is a dangerous task but who would hesitate to do an act of true bravery?’

And all the while Pincher was worrying and snarling, and Lord Tottenham shouting to us to get the dog away. He was dancing about in the road with Pincher hanging on like grim death; and his collar flapping about, where it was undone.

Then Noel said, ‘Haste, ere yet it be too late.’ So I said to Lord Tottenham
’Stand still, aged sir, and I will endeavour to alleviate your distress.’

He stood still, and I stooped down and caught hold of Pincher and whispered, ‘Drop it, sir; drop it!’

So then Pincher dropped it, and Lord Tottenham fastened his collar again he never does change it if there’s any one looking and he said

'I'm much obliged, I'm sure. Nasty vicious brute! Here's something to drink my health.'

But Dicky explained that we are teetotallers, and do not drink people's healths. So Lord Tottenham said, 'Well, I'm much obliged any way. And now I come to look at you of course, you're not young ruffians, but gentlemen's sons, eh? Still, you won't be above taking a tip from an old boy I wasn't when I was your age,' and he pulled out half a sovereign.

It was very silly; but now we'd done it I felt it would be beastly mean to take the old boy's chink after putting him in such a funk. He didn't say anything about bringing us up as his own sons so I didn't know what to do. I let Pincher go, and was just going to say he was very welcome, and we'd rather not have the money, which seemed the best way out of it, when that beastly dog spoiled the whole show. Directly I let him go he began to jump about at us and bark for joy, and try to lick our faces. He was so proud of what he'd done. Lord Tottenham opened his eyes and he just said, 'The dog seems to know you.'

And then Oswald saw it was all up, and he said, 'Good morning,' and tried to get away. But Lord Tottenham said
'Not so fast!' And he caught Noel by the collar. Noel gave a howl, and Alice ran out from the bushes. Noel is her favourite. I'm sure I don't know why. Lord Tottenham looked at her, and he said 'So there are more of you!' And then H. O. came out.

‘Do you complete the party?’ Lord Tottenham asked him. And H. O. said there were only five of us this time.

Lord Tottenham turned sharp off and began to walk away, holding Noel by the collar. We caught up with him, and asked him where he was going, and he said, ‘To the Police Station.’ So then I said quite politely, ’Well, don’t take Noel; he’s not strong, and he easily gets upset. Besides, it wasn’t his doing. If you want to take any one take me it was my very own idea.’

Dicky behaved very well. He said, ’If you take Oswald I’ll go too, but don’t take Noel; he’s such a delicate little chap.’

Lord Tottenham stopped, and he said, ’You should have thought of that before.’ Noel was howling all the time, and his face was very white, and Alice said
’Oh, do let Noel go, dear, good, kind Lord Tottenham; he’ll faint if you don’t, I know he will, he does sometimes. Oh, I wish we’d never done it! Dora said it was wrong.’

‘Dora displayed considerable common sense,’ said Lord Tottenham, and he let Noel go. And Alice put her arm round Noel and tried to cheer him up, but he was all trembly, and as white as paper.

Then Lord Tottenham said
‘Will you give me your word of honour not to try to escape?’
So we said we would.

‘Then follow me,’ he said, and led the way to a bench. We all followed, and Pincher too, with his tail between his legs he knew something was wrong. Then Lord Tottenham sat down, and he made Oswald and Dicky and H. O. stand in front of him, but he let Alice and Noel sit down. And he said
’You set your dog on me, and you tried to make me believe you were saving me from it. And you would have taken my half-sovereign. Such conduct is most No you shall tell me what it is, sir, and speak the truth.’

So I had to say it was most ungentlemanly, but I said I hadn’t been going to take the half-sovereign.

‘Then what did you do it for?’ he asked. ‘The truth, mind.’

So I said, ’I see now it was very silly, and Dora said it was wrong, but it didn’t seem so till we did it. We wanted to restore the fallen fortunes of our house, and in the books if you rescue an old

gentleman from deadly peril, he brings you up as his own son or if you prefer to be your father's son, he starts you in business, so that you end in wealthy affluence; and there wasn't any deadly peril, so we made Pincher into one and so ' I was so ashamed I couldn't go on, for it did seem an awfully mean thing. Lord Tottenham said
'A very nice way to make your fortune by deceit and trickery. I have a horror of dogs. If I'd been a weak man the shock might have killed me. What do you think of yourselves, eh?'
We were all crying except Oswald, and the others say he was; and Lord Tottenham went on 'Well, well, I see you're sorry. Let this be a lesson to you; and we'll say no more about it. I'm an old man now, but I was young once.'

Then Alice slid along the bench close to him, and put her hand on his arm: her fingers were pink through the holes in her woolly gloves, and said, 'I think you're very good to forgive us, and we are really very, very sorry. But we wanted to be like the children in the books only we never have the chances they have.

Everything they do turns out all right. But we *are* sorry, very, very. And I know Oswald wasn't going to take the half-sovereign. Directly you said that about a tip from an old boy I began to feel bad inside, and I whispered to H. O. that I wished we hadn't.'

Then Lord Tottenham stood up, and he looked like the Death of

Nelson, for he is clean shaved and it is a good face, and he said 'Always remember never to do a dishonourable thing, for money or for anything else in the world.'

And we promised we would remember. Then he took off his hat, and we took off ours, and he went away, and we went home. I never felt so cheap in all my life! Dora said, 'I told you so,' but we didn't mind even that so much, though it was indeed hard to bear. It was what Lord Tottenham had said about ungentlemanly. We didn't go on to the Heath for a week after that; but at last we all went, and we waited for him by the bench. When he came along Alice said, 'Please, Lord Tottenham, we have not been on the Heath for a week, to be a punishment because you let us off. And we have brought you a present each if you will take them to show you are willing to make it up.'

He sat down on the bench, and we gave him our presents. Oswald gave him a sixpenny compass he bought it with my own money on purpose to give him. Oswald always buys useful presents. The needle would not move after I'd had it a day or two, but Lord Tottenham used to be an admiral, so he will be able to make that go all right. Alice had made him a shaving-case, with a rose worked on it. And H. O. gave him his knife the same one he once cut all the buttons off his best suit with. Dicky gave him his prize, Naval Heroes, because it was the best thing he had, and Noel gave him a piece of poetry he had made himself

When sin and shame bow down the brow
Then people feel just like we do now.
We are so sorry with grief and pain
We never will be so ungentlemanly again.

Lord Tottenham seemed very pleased. He thanked us, and talked to us for a bit, and when he said good-bye he said
'All's fair weather now, mates,' and shook hands.
And whenever we meet him he nods to us, and if the girls are with us he takes off his hat, so he can't really be going on thinking us ungentlemanly now.

The Story of the Treasure Seekers
Chapter 11 – Part 1

CASTILIAN AMOROSO

One day when we suddenly found that we had half a crown we decided that we really ought to try Dicky's way of restoring our fallen fortunes while yet the deed was in our power. Because it might easily have happened to us never to have half a crown again. So we decided to dally no longer with being journalists and bandits and things like them, but to send for sample and instructions how to earn two pounds a week each in our spare time. We had seen the advertisement in the paper, and we had always wanted to do it, but we had never had the money to spare before, somehow. The advertisement says: 'Any lady or gentleman can easily earn two pounds a week in their spare time. Sample and instructions, two shillings. Packed free from observation.' A good deal of the half-crown was Dora's. It came from her godmother; but she said she would not mind letting Dicky have it if he would pay her back before Christmas, and if we were sure it was right to try to make our fortune that way. Of course that was quite easy, because out of two pounds a week in your spare time you can easily pay all your debts, and have almost as much left as you began with; and as to the right we told her to dry up.

Dicky had always thought that this was really the best way to restore our fallen fortunes, and we were glad that now he had a chance of trying because of course we wanted the two pounds a week each, and besides, we were rather tired of Dicky's always saying, when our ways didn't turn out well, 'Why don't you try the sample and instructions about our spare time?'

When we found out about our half-crown we got the paper. Noel was playing admirals in it, but he had made the cocked hat without tearing the paper, and we found the advertisement, and it said just the same as ever. So we got a two-shilling postal order and a stamp, and what was left of the money it was agreed we would spend in ginger-beer to drink success to trade.

We got some nice paper out of Father's study, and Dicky wrote the letter, and we put in the money and put on the stamp, and made H. O. post it. Then we drank the ginger-beer, and then we waited for the sample and instructions. It seemed a long time coming, and the postman got quite tired of us running out and stopping him in the street to ask if it had come.

But on the third morning it came. It was quite a large parcel, and it was packed, as the advertisement said it would be, 'free from observation.' That means it was in a box; and inside the box was some stiff browny cardboard, crinkled like the galvanized iron on the tops of chicken-houses, and inside that was a lot of paper, some of it printed and some scrappy, and in the very middle of it

all a bottle, not very large, and black, and sealed on the top of the cork with yellow sealing-wax.

We looked at it as it lay on the nursery table, and while all the others grabbed at the papers to see what the printing said, Oswald went to look for the corkscrew, so as to see what was inside the bottle. He found the corkscrew in the dresser drawer it always gets there, though it is supposed to be in the sideboard drawer in the dining-room and when he got back the others had read most of the printed papers.

'I don't think it's much good, and I don't think it's quite nice to sell wine,' Dora said 'and besides, it's not easy to suddenly begin to sell things when you aren't used to it.'

'I don't know,' said Alice; 'I believe I could.' They all looked rather down in the mouth, though, and Oswald asked how you were to make your two pounds a week.

'Why, you've got to get people to taste that stuff in the bottle. It's sherry Castilian Amoroso its name is and then you get them to buy it, and then you write to the people and tell them the other people want the wine, and then for every dozen you sell you get two shillings from the wine people, so if you sell twenty dozen a week you get your two pounds. I don't think we shall sell as much as that,' said Dicky.

‘We might not the first week,’ Alice said, ’but when people found out how nice it was, they would want more and more. And if we only got ten shillings a week it would be something to begin with, wouldn’t it?’

Oswald said he should jolly well think it would, and then Dicky took the cork out with the corkscrew. The cork broke a good deal, and some of the bits went into the bottle. Dora got the medicine glass that has the teaspoons and tablespoons marked on it, and we agreed to have a teaspoonful each, to see what it was like. ‘No one must have more than that,’ Dora said, ‘however nice it is.’

Dora behaved rather as if it were her bottle. I suppose it was, because she had lent the money for it.

Then she measured out the teaspoonful, and she had first go, because of being the eldest. We asked at once what it was like, but Dora could not speak just then.

Then she said, ’It’s like the tonic Noel had in the spring; but perhaps sherry ought to be like that.’

Then it was Oswald’s turn. He thought it was very burny; but he said nothing. He wanted to see first what the others would say. Dicky said his was simply beastly, and Alice said Noel could taste next if he liked.

Noel said it was the golden wine of the gods, but he had to put his handkerchief up to his mouth all the same, and I saw the face he made.

Then H. O. had his, and he spat it out in the fire, which was very rude and nasty, and we told him so.

Then it was Alice's turn. She said, 'Only half a teaspoonful for me, Dora. We mustn't use it all up.' And she tasted it and said nothing.

Then Dicky said: 'Look here, I chuck this. I'm not going to hawk round such beastly stuff. Any one who likes can have the bottle. Quis?'

And Alice got out 'Ego' before the rest of us. Then she said, 'I know what's the matter with it. It wants sugar.'

And at once we all saw that that was all there was the matter with the stuff. So we got two lumps of sugar and crushed it on the floor with one of the big wooden bricks till it was powdery, and mixed it with some of the wine up to the tablespoon mark, and it was quite different, and not nearly so nasty.

'You see it's all right when you get used to it,' Dicky said. I think he was sorry he had said 'Quis?' in such a hurry.

‘Of course,’ Alice said, ’it’s rather dusty. We must crush the sugar carefully in clean paper before we put it in the bottle.’

Dora said she was afraid it would be cheating to make one bottle nicer than what people would get when they ordered a dozen bottles, but Alice said Dora always made a fuss about everything, and really it would be quite honest.

‘You see,’ she said, ’I shall just tell them, quite truthfully, what we have done to it, and when their dozens come they can do it for themselves.’

So then we crushed eight more lumps, very cleanly and carefully between newspapers, and shook it up well in the bottle, and corked it up with a screw of paper, brown and not news, for fear of the poisonous printing ink getting wet and dripping down into the wine and killing people. We made Pincher have a taste, and he sneezed for ever so long, and after that he used to go under the sofa whenever we showed him the bottle.

Then we asked Alice who she would try and sell it to. She said: ’I shall ask everybody who comes to the house. And while we are doing that, we can be thinking of outside people to take it to. We must be careful: there’s not much more than half of it left, even counting the sugar.’

We did not wish to tell Eliza I don’t know why. And she opened

the door very quickly that day, so that the Taxes and a man who came to our house by mistake for next door got away before Alice had a chance to try them with the Castilian Amoroso. But about five Eliza slipped out for half an hour to see a friend who was making her a hat for Sunday, and while she was gone there was a knock. Alice went, and we looked over the banisters. When she opened the door, she said at once, 'Will you walk in, please?' The person at the door said, 'I called to see your Pa, miss. Is he at home?'

Alice said again, 'Will you walk in, please?'

Then the person it sounded like a man said, 'He is in, then?'
But Alice only kept on saying, 'Will you walk in, please?' so at last the man did, rubbing his boots very loudly on the mat.

Then Alice shut the front door, and we saw that it was the butcher, with an envelope in his hand. He was not dressed in blue, like when he is cutting up the sheep and things in the shop, and he wore knickerbockers. Alice says he came on a bicycle. She led the way into the dining-room, where the Castilian Amoroso bottle and the medicine glass were standing on the table all ready. The others stayed on the stairs, but Oswald crept down and looked through the door-crack.

'Please sit down,' said Alice quite calmly, though she told me afterwards I had no idea how silly she felt. And the butcher sat

down. Then Alice stood quite still and said nothing, but she fiddled with the medicine glass and put the screw of brown paper straight in the Castilian bottle.

'Will you tell your Pa I'd like a word with him?' the butcher said, when he got tired of saying nothing.

'He'll be in very soon, I think,' Alice said.

And then she stood still again and said nothing. It was beginning to look very idiotic of her, and H. O. laughed. I went back and cuffed him for it quite quietly, and I don't think the butcher heard.

But Alice did, and it roused her from her stupor. She spoke suddenly, very fast indeed so fast that I knew she had made up what she was going to say before. She had got most of it out of the circular.

She said, 'I want to call your attention to a sample of sherry wine I have here. It is called Castilian something or other, and at the price it is unequalled for flavour and bouquet.'

The butcher said, 'Well I never!'

And Alice went on, 'Would you like to taste it?'

‘Thank you very much, I’m sure, miss,’ said the butcher.
Alice poured some out.

The butcher tasted a very little. He licked his lips, and we thought he was going to say how good it was. But he did not. He put down the medicine glass with nearly all the stuff left in it (we put it back in the bottle afterwards to save waste) and said, ’Excuse me, miss, but isn’t it a little sweet? for sherry I mean?’

‘The *Real* isn’t,’ said Alice. ’If you order a dozen it will come quite different to that we like it best with sugar. I wish you *would* order some.’ The butcher asked why.

Alice did not speak for a minute, and then she said
’I don’t mind telling *you*: you are in business yourself, aren’t you? We are trying to get people to buy it, because we shall have two shillings for every dozen we can make any one buy. It’s called a purr something.’

‘A percentage. Yes, I see,’ said the butcher, looking at the hole in the carpet.

‘You see there are reasons,’ Alice went on, ’why we want to make our fortunes as quickly as we can.’

‘Quite so,’ said the butcher, and he looked at the place where the paper is coming off the wall.

‘And this seems a good way,’ Alice went on. ’We paid two shillings for the sample and instructions, and it says you can make two pounds a week easily in your leisure time.’

‘I’m sure I hope you may, miss,’ said the butcher. And Alice said again would he buy some?

‘Sherry is my favourite wine,’ he said. Alice asked him to have some more to drink.

‘No, thank you, miss,’ he said; ’it’s my favourite wine, but it doesn’t agree with me; not the least bit. But I’ve an uncle drinks it. Suppose I ordered him half a dozen for a Christmas present? Well, miss, here’s the shilling commission, anyway,’ and he pulled out a handful of money and gave her the shilling.

‘But I thought the wine people paid that,’ Alice said.

But the butcher said not on half-dozens they didn’t. Then he said he didn’t think he’d wait any longer for Father but would Alice ask Father to write him?

Alice offered him the sherry again, but he said something about ’Not for worlds!’ and then she let him out and came back to us with the shilling, and said, ‘How’s that?’

And we said ‘A1.’

And all the evening we talked of our fortune that we had begun to make.

Nobody came next day, but the day after a lady came to ask for money to build an orphanage for the children of dead sailors. And we saw her. I went in with Alice. And when we had explained to her that we had only a shilling and we wanted it for something else, Alice suddenly said, 'Would you like some wine?'

And the lady said, 'Thank you very much,' but she looked surprised.

She was not a young lady, and she had a mantle with beads, and the beads had come off in places leaving a browny braid showing, and she had printed papers about the dead sailors in a sealskin bag, and the seal had come off in places, leaving the skin bare. We gave her a tablespoonful of the wine in a proper wine-glass out of the sideboard, because she was a lady. And when she had tasted it she got up in a very great hurry, and shook out her dress and snapped her bag shut, and said, 'You naughty, wicked children! What do you mean by playing a trick like this? You ought to be ashamed of yourselves! I shall write to your Mamma about it. You dreadful little girl! you might have poisoned me. But your Mamma...'

Then Alice said, 'I'm very sorry; the butcher liked it, only he said it was sweet. And please don't write to Mother. It makes Father

so unhappy when letters come for her!' and Alice was very near crying.

'What do you mean, you silly child?' said the lady, looking quite bright and interested. 'Why doesn't your Father like your Mother to have letters eh?'

And Alice said, 'OH, you...!' and began to cry, and bolted out of the room.

Then I said, 'Our Mother is dead, and will you please go away now?'

The lady looked at me a minute, and then she looked quite different, and she said, 'I'm very sorry. I didn't know. Never mind about the wine. I daresay your little sister meant it kindly.' And she looked round the room just like the butcher had done. Then she said again, 'I didn't know I'm very sorry...'

So I said, 'Don't mention it,' and shook hands with her, and let her out. Of course we couldn't have asked her to buy the wine after what she'd said. But I think she was not a bad sort of person. I do like a person to say they're sorry when they ought to be especially a grown-up. They do it so seldom. I suppose that's why we think so much of it.

But Alice and I didn't feel jolly for ever so long afterwards. And

when I went back into the dining-room I saw how different it was from when Mother was here, and we are different, and Father is different, and nothing is like it was. I am glad I am not made to think about it every day.

I went and found Alice, and told her what the lady had said, and when she had finished crying we put away the bottle and said we would not try to sell any more to people who came. And we did not tell the others we only said the lady did not buy any but we went up on the Heath, and some soldiers went by and there was a Punch-and-judy show, and when we came back we were better.

The Story of the Treasure Seekers
Chapter 11 – Part 2

CASTILIAN AMOROSO

The bottle got quite dusty where we had put it, and perhaps the dust of ages would have laid thick and heavy on it, only a clergyman called when we were all out. He was not our own clergyman Mr Bristow is our own clergyman, and we all love him, and we would not try to sell sherry to people we like, and make two pounds a week out of them in our spare time. It was another clergyman, just a stray one; and he asked Eliza if the dear children would not like to come to his little Sunday school. We always spend Sunday afternoons with Father. But as he had left the name of his vicarage with Eliza, and asked her to tell us to come, we thought we would go and call on him, just to explain about Sunday afternoons, and we thought we might as well take the sherry with us.

'I won't go unless you all go too,' Alice said, 'and I won't do the talking.'

Dora said she thought we had much better not go; but we said 'Rot!' and it ended in her coming with us, and I am glad she did.

Oswald said he would do the talking if the others liked, and he learned up what to say from the printed papers.

We went to the Vicarage early on Saturday afternoon, and rang at the bell. It is a new red house with no trees in the garden, only very yellow mould and gravel. It was all very neat and dry. Just before we rang the bell we heard some one inside call 'Jane! Jane!' and we thought we would not be Jane for anything. It was the sound of the voice that called that made us sorry for her. The door was opened by a very neat servant in black, with a white apron; we saw her tying the strings as she came along the hall, through the different-coloured glass in the door. Her face was red, and I think she was Jane.

We asked if we could see Mr Mallow.

The servant said Mr Mallow was very busy with his sermon just then, but she would see.

But Oswald said, 'It's all right. He asked us to come.'

So she let us all in and shut the front door, and showed us into a very tidy room with a bookcase full of a lot of books covered in black cotton with white labels, and some dull pictures, and a harmonium. And Mr Mallow was writing at a desk with drawers, copying something out of a book. He was stout and short, and wore spectacles.

He covered his writing up when we went in I didn't know why.

He looked rather cross, and we heard Jane or somebody being scolded outside by the voice. I hope it wasn't for letting us in, but I have had doubts.

'Well,' said the clergyman, 'what is all this about?'

'You asked us to call,' Dora said, 'about your little Sunday school. We are the Bastables of Lewisham Road.'

'Oh ah, yes,' he said; 'and shall I expect you all to-morrow?'

He took up his pen and fiddled with it, and he did not ask us to sit down. But some of us did.

'We always spend Sunday afternoon with Father,' said Dora; 'but we wished to thank you for being so kind as to ask us.'

'And we wished to ask you something else!' said Oswald; and he made a sign to Alice to get the sherry ready in the glass. She did - behind Oswald's back while he was speaking.

'My time is limited,' said Mr Mallow, looking at his watch; 'but still ' Then he muttered something about the fold, and went on: 'Tell me what is troubling you, my little man, and I will try to give you any help in my power. What is it you want?'

Then Oswald quickly took the glass from Alice, and held it out to him, and said, 'I want your opinion on that.'

'On *that*,' he said. 'What is it?'

'It is a shipment,' Oswald said; 'but it's quite enough for you to taste.' Alice had filled the glass half-full; I suppose she was too excited to measure properly.

'A shipment?' said the clergyman, taking the glass in his hand. 'Yes,' Oswald went On; 'an eceptional opportunity. Full-bodied and nutty.'

'It really does taste rather like one kind of Brazil-nut.' Alice put her oar in as usual.

The Vicar looked from Alice to Oswald, and back again, and Oswald went on with what he had learned from the printing. The clergyman held the glass at half-arm's-length, stiffly, as if he had caught cold.

'It is of a quality never before offered at the price. Old Delicate Amoro what's its name '

'Amorolio,' said H. O.

'Amoroso,' said Oswald. 'H. O., you just shut up Castilian

Amoroso it's a true after-dinner wine, stimulating and yet...'
'*Wine*?' said Mr Mallow, holding the glass further off. 'Do you *know*,' he went on, making his voice very thick and strong (I expect he does it like that in church), 'have you never been *taught* that it is the drinking of *wine* and *spirits* yes, and *beer*, which makes half the homes in England full of *wretched* little children, and *degraded*, *miserable* parents?'

'Not if you put sugar in it,' said Alice firmly; 'eight lumps and shake the bottle. We have each had more than a teaspoonful of it, and we were not ill at all. It was something else that upset H. O. Most likely all those acorns he got out of the Park.'

The clergyman seemed to be speechless with conflicting emotions, and just then the door opened and a lady came in. She had a white cap with lace, and an ugly violet flower in it, and she was tall, and looked very strong, though thin. And I do believe she had been listening at the door.

'But why,' the Vicar was saying, 'why did you bring this dreadful fluid, this curse of our country, to *me* to taste?'

'Because we thought you might buy some,' said Dora, who never sees when a game is up. 'In books the parson loves his bottle of old port; and new sherry is just as good with sugar for people who like sherry. And if you would order a dozen of the wine, then we should get two shillings.'

The lady said (and it *was* the voice), 'Good gracious! Nasty, sordid little things! Haven't they any one to teach them better?'

And Dora got up and said, 'No, we are not those things you say; but we are sorry we came here to be called names. We want to make our fortune just as much as Mr Mallow does only no one would listen to us if we preached, so it's no use our copying out sermons like him.'

And I think that was smart of Dora, even if it was rather rude. Then I said perhaps we had better go, and the lady said, 'I should think so!'

But when we were going to wrap up the bottle and glass the clergyman said, 'No; you can leave that,' and we were so upset we did, though it wasn't his after all.

We walked home very fast and not saying much, and the girls went up to their rooms. When I went to tell them tea was ready, and there was a teacake, Dora was crying like anything and Alice hugging her. I am afraid there is a great deal of crying in this chapter, but I can't help it. Girls will sometimes; I suppose it is their nature, and we ought to be sorry for their affliction.

'It's no good,' Dora was saying, 'you all hate me, and you think I'm a prig and a busybody, but I do try to do right oh, I do! Oswald, go away; don't come here making fun of me!'

So I said, 'I'm not making fun, Sissy; don't cry, old girl.'

Mother taught me to call her Sissy when we were very little and before the others came, but I don't often somehow, now we are old. I patted her on the back, and she put her head against my sleeve, holding on to Alice all the time, and she went on. She was in that laughy-cryey state when people say things they wouldn't say at other times.

'Oh dear, oh dear I do try, I do. And when Mother died she said, "Dora, take care of the others, and teach them to be good, and keep them out of trouble and make them happy." She said, "Take care of them for me, Dora dear." And I have tried, and all of you hate me for it; and to-day I let you do this, though I knew all the time it was silly.'

I hope you will not think I was a muff but I kissed Dora for some time. Because girls like it. And I will never say again that she comes the good elder sister too much. And I have put all this in though I do hate telling about it, because I own I have been hard on Dora, but I never will be again. She is a good old sort; of course we never knew before about what Mother told her, or we wouldn't have ragged her as we did. We did not tell the little ones, but I got Alice to speak to Dicky, and we three can sit on the others if requisite.

This made us forget all about the sherry; but about eight o'clock

there was a knock, and Eliza went, and we saw it was poor Jane, if her name was Jane, from the Vicarage. She handed in a brown-paper parcel and a letter. And three minutes later Father called us into his study.

On the table was the brown-paper parcel, open, with our bottle and glass on it, and Father had a letter in his hand. He Pointed to the bottle and sighed, and said, 'What have you been doing now?' The letter in his hand was covered with little black writing, all over the four large pages.

So Dicky spoke up, and he told Father the whole thing, as far as he knew it, for Alice and I had not told about the dead sailors' lady.

And when he had done, Alice said, 'Has Mr Mallow written to you to say he will buy a dozen of the sherry after all? It is really not half bad with sugar in it.'

Father said no, he didn't think clergymen could afford such expensive wine; and he said *he* would like to taste it. So we gave him what there was left, for we had decided coming home that we would give up trying for the two pounds a week in our spare time. Father tasted it, and then he acted just as H. O. had done when he had his teaspoonful, but of course we did not say anything. Then he laughed till I thought he would never stop.

I think it was the sherry, because I am sure I have read somewhere about ‘wine that maketh glad the heart of man’. He had only a very little, which shows that it was a good after-dinner wine, stimulating, and yet …I forget the rest.

But when he had done laughing he said, ’It’s all right, kids. Only don’t do it again. The wine trade is overcrowded; and besides, I thought you promised to consult me before going into business?’ ‘Before buying one I thought you meant,’ said Dicky. ’This was only on commission.’ And Father laughed again. I am glad we got the Castilian Amoroso, because it did really cheer Father up, and you cannot always do that, however hard you try, even if you make jokes, or give him a comic paper.

The Story of The Treasure Seekers
Chapter 12 – Part 1

THE NOBLENESS OF OSWALD

The part about his nobleness only comes at the end, but you would not understand it unless you knew how it began. It began, like nearly everything about that time, with treasure-seeking.

Of course as soon as we had promised to consult my Father about business matters we all gave up wanting to go into business. I don't know how it is, but having to consult about a thing with grown-up people, even the bravest and the best, seems to make the thing not worth doing afterwards.

We don't mind Albert's uncle chipping in sometimes when the thing's going on, but we are glad he never asked us to promise to consult him about anything. Yet Oswald saw that my Father was quite right; and I daresay if we had had that hundred pounds we should have spent it on the share in that lucrative business for the sale of useful patent, and then found out afterwards that we should have done better to spend the money in some other way. My Father says so, and he ought to know. We had several ideas about that time, but having so little chink always stood in the way.

This was the case with H. O.'s idea of setting up a coconut-shy on this side of the Heath, where there are none generally. We had no sticks or wooden balls, and the greengrocer said he could not book so many as twelve dozen coconuts without Mr Bastable's written order. And as we did not wish to consult my Father it was decided to drop it. And when Alice dressed up Pincher in some of the dolls' clothes and we made up our minds to take him round with an organ as soon as we had taught him to dance, we were stopped at once by Dicky's remembering how he had once heard that an organ cost seven hundred pounds. Of course this was the big church kind, but even the ones on three legs can't be got for one-and-sevenpence, which was all we had when we first thought of it. So we gave that up too.

It was a wet day, I remember, and mutton hash for dinner very tough with pale gravy with lumps in it. I think the others would have left a good deal on the sides of their plates, although they know better, only Oswald said it was a savoury stew made of the red deer that Edward shot. So then we were the Children of the New Forest, and the mutton tasted much better. No one in the New Forest minds venison being tough and the gravy pale.
Then after dinner we let the girls have a dolls' tea-party, on condition they didn't expect us boys to wash up; and it was when we were drinking the last of the liquorice water out of the little cups that Dicky said
'This reminds me.'

So we said, ‘What of?’

Dicky answered us at once, though his mouth was full of bread with liquorice stuck in it to look like cake. You should not speak with your mouth full, even to your own relations, and you shouldn’t wipe your mouth on the back of your hand, but on your handkerchief, if you have one. Dicky did not do this. He said ’Why, you remember when we first began about treasure-seeking, I said I had thought of something, only I could not tell you because I hadn’t finished thinking about it.’

We said ‘Yes.’

‘Well, this liquorice water ’

‘Tea,’ said Alice softly.

‘Well, tea then made me think.’ He was going on to say what it made him think, but Noel interrupted and cried out, ’I say; let’s finish off this old tea-party and have a council of war.’

So we got out the flags and the wooden sword and the drum, and Oswald beat it while the girls washed up, till Eliza came up to say she had the jumping toothache, and the noise went through her like a knife. So of course Oswald left off at once. When you are polite to Oswald he never refuses to grant your requests.

When we were all dressed up we sat down round the camp fire, and Dicky began again.

'Every one in the world wants money. Some people get it. The people who get it are the ones who see things. I have seen one thing.'

Dicky stopped and smoked the pipe of peace. It is the pipe we did bubbles with in the summer, and somehow it has not got broken yet. We put tea-leaves in it for the pipe of peace, but the girls are not allowed to have any. It is not right to let girls smoke. They get to think too much of themselves if you let them do everything the same as men. Oswald said, 'Out with it.'

'I see that glass bottles only cost a penny. H. O., if you dare to snigger I'll send you round selling old bottles, and you shan't have any sweets except out of the money you get for them. And the same with you, Noel.'

'Noel wasn't sniggering,' said Alice in a hurry; 'it is only his taking so much interest in what you were saying makes him look like that. Be quiet, H. O., and don't you make faces, either. Do go on, Dicky dear.'

So Dicky went on.

'There must be hundreds of millions of bottles of medicines sold

every year. Because all the different medicines say, "Thousands of cures daily," and if you only take that as two thousand, which it must be, at least, it mounts up. And the people who sell them must make a great deal of money by them because they are nearly always two-and-ninepence the bottle, and three-and-six for one nearly double the size. Now the bottles, as I was saying, don't cost anything like that.'

'It's the medicine costs the money,' said Dora; 'look how expensive *jujubes* are at the chemist's, and peppermints too.'

'That's only because they're nice,' Dicky explained; 'nasty things are not so dear. Look what a lot of brimstone you get for a penny, and the same with alum. We would not put the nice kinds of chemist's things in our medicine.'

Then he went on to tell us that when we had invented our medicine we would write and tell the editor about it, and he would put it in the paper, and then people would send their two-and-ninepence and three-and-six for the bottle nearly double the size, and then when the medicine had cured them they would write to the paper and their letters would be printed, saying how they had been suffering for years, and never thought to get about again, but thanks to the blessing of our ointment '

Dora interrupted and said, 'Not ointment it's so messy.' And Alice thought so too. And Dicky said he did not mean it, he was

quite decided to let it be in bottles. So now it was all settled, and we did not see at the time that this would be a sort of going into business, but afterwards when Albert's uncle showed us we saw it, and we were sorry. We only had to invent the medicine. You might think that was easy, because of the number of them you see every day in the paper, but it is much harder than you think. First we had to decide what sort of illness we should like to cure, and a 'heated discussion ensued', like in Parliament.

Dora wanted it to be something to make the complexion of dazzling fairness, but we remembered how her face came all red and rough when she used the Rosabella soap that was advertised to make the darkest complexion fair as the lily, and she agreed that perhaps it was better not. Noel wanted to make the medicine first and then find out what it would cure, but Dicky thought not, because there are so many more medicines than there are things the matter with us, so it would be easier to choose the disease first. Oswald would have liked wounds. I still think it was a good idea, but Dicky said, 'Who has wounds, especially now there aren't any wars? We shouldn't sell a bottle a day!' So Oswald gave in because he knows what manners are, and it was Dicky's idea. H. O. wanted a cure for the uncomfortable feeling that they give you powders for, but we explained to him that grown-up people do not have this feeling, however much they eat, and he agreed. Dicky said he did not care a straw what the loathsome disease was, as long as we hurried up and settled on something. Then Alice said

'It ought to be something very common, and only one thing. Not the pains in the back and all the hundreds of things the people have in somebody's syrup. What's the commonest thing of all?' And at once we said, 'Colds.'

So that was settled.

Then we wrote a label to go on the bottle. When it was written it would not go on the vinegar bottle that we had got, but we knew it would go small when it was printed. It was like this:

BASTABLE'S
CERTAIN CURE FOR COLDS
Coughs, Asthma, Shortness of Breath, and all infections of the Chest
One dose gives immediate relief
It will cure your cold in one bottle
Especially the larger size at 3d.
Order at once of the Makers
To prevent disappointment
Makers:
D., O., R., A., N., and H. O. BASTABLE
150, Lewisham Road, S.E.
(A halfpenny for all bottles returned)

Of course the next thing was for one of us to catch a cold and try what cured it; we all wanted to be the one, but it was Dicky's idea,

and he said he was not going to be done out of it, so we let him. It was only fair. He left off his undershirt that very day, and next morning he stood in a draught in his nightgown for quite a long time. And we damped his day-shirt with the nail-brush before he put it on. But all was vain. They always tell you that these things will give you cold, but we found it was not so.

So then we all went over to the Park, and Dicky went right into the water with his boots on, and stood there as long as he could bear it, for it was rather cold, and we stood and cheered him on. He walked home in his wet clothes, which they say is a sure thing, but it was no go, though his boots were quite spoiled. And three days after Noel began to cough and sneeze.

So then Dicky said it was not fair.

'I can't help it,' Noel said. 'You should have caught it yourself, then it wouldn't have come to me.'

And Alice said she had known all along Noel oughtn't to have stood about on the bank cheering in the cold.

Noel had to go to bed, and then we began to make the medicines; we were sorry he was out of it, but he had the fun of taking the things.

We made a great many medicines. Alice made herb tea. She got

sage and thyme and savory and marjoram and boiled them all up together with salt and water, but she *would* put parsley in too. Oswald is sure parsley is not a herb. It is only put on the cold meat and you are not supposed to eat it. It kills parrots to eat parsley, I believe. I expect it was the parsley that disagreed so with Noel. The medicine did not seem to do the cough any good. Oswald got a pennyworth of alum, because it is so cheap, and some turpentine which every one knows is good for colds, and a little sugar and an aniseed ball. These were mixed in a bottle with water, but Eliza threw it away and said it was nasty rubbish, and I hadn't any money to get more things with.

Dora made him some gruel, and he said it did his chest good; but of course that was no use, because you cannot put gruel in bottles and say it is medicine. It would not be honest, and besides nobody would believe you.

Dick mixed up lemon-juice and sugar and a little of the juice of the red flannel that Noel's throat was done up in. It comes out beautifully in hot water. Noel took this and he liked it. Noel's own idea was liquorice-water, and we let him have it, but it is too plain and black to sell in bottles at the proper price.

Noel liked H. O.'s medicine the best, which was silly of him, because it was only peppermints melted in hot water, and a little cobalt to make it look blue. It was all right, because H. O.'s paint-box is the French kind, with *Couleurs non* Veneneuses on it. This

means you may suck your brushes if you want to, or even your paints if you are a very little boy.

It was rather jolly while Noel had that cold. He had a fire in his bedroom which opens out of Dicky's and Oswald's, and the girls used to read aloud to Noel all day; they will not read aloud to you when you are well. Father was away at Liverpool on business, and Albert's uncle was at Hastings. We were rather glad of this, because we wished to give all the medicines a fair trial, and grown-ups are but too fond of interfering. As if we should have given him anything poisonous!

His cold went on it was bad in his head, but it was not one of the kind when he has to have poultices and can't sit up in bed. But when it had been in his head nearly a week, Oswald happened to tumble over Alice on the stairs. When we got up she was crying. 'Don't cry silly!' said Oswald; 'you know I didn't hurt you.' I was very sorry if I had hurt her, but you ought not to sit on the stairs in the dark and let other people tumble over you. You ought to remember how beastly it is for them if they do hurt you.
'Oh, it's not that, Oswald,' Alice said. 'Don't be a pig! I am so miserable. Do be kind to me.'

So Oswald thumped her on the back and told her to shut up.
'It's about Noel,' she said. 'I'm sure he's very ill; and playing about with medicines is all very well, but I know he's ill, and Eliza won't send for the doctor: she says it's only a cold. And I know

the doctor's bills are awful. I heard Father telling Aunt Emily so in the summer. But he *is* ill, and perhaps he'll die or something.' Then she began to cry again. Oswald thumped her again, because he knows how a good brother ought to behave, and said, 'Cheer up.' If we had been in a book Oswald would have embraced his little sister tenderly, and mingled his tears with hers.

The Story of the Treasure Seekers
Chapter 12 – Part 2

THE NOBLENESS OF OSWALD

Then Oswald said, ‘Why not write to Father?’

And she cried more and said, ’I’ve lost the paper with the address. H. O. had it to draw on the back of, and I can’t find it now; I’ve looked everywhere. I’ll tell you what I’m going to do. No I won’t. But I’m going out. Don’t tell the others. And I say, Oswald, do pretend I’m in if Eliza asks. Promise.’

‘Tell me what you’re going to do,’ I said. But she said ‘No’; and there was a good reason why not. So I said I wouldn’t promise if it came to that. Of course I meant to all right. But it did seem mean of her not to tell me.

So Alice went out by the side door while Eliza was setting tea, and she was a long time gone; she was not in to tea. When Eliza asked Oswald where she was he said he did not know, but perhaps she was tidying her corner drawer. Girls often do this, and it takes a long time. Noel coughed a good bit after tea, and asked for Alice. Oswald told him she was doing something and it was a secret. Oswald did not tell any lies even to save his sister. When Alice

came back she was very quiet, but she whispered to Oswald that it was all right. When it was rather late Eliza said she was going out to post a letter. This always takes her an hour, because she *will* go to the post-office across the Heath instead of the pillar-box, because once a boy dropped fusees in our pillar-box and burnt the letters. It was not any of us; Eliza told us about it. And when there was a knock at the door a long time after we thought it was Eliza come back, and that she had forgotten the back-door key. We made H. O. go down to open the door, because it is his place to run about: his legs are younger than ours. And we heard boots on the stairs besides H. O.'s, and we listened spellbound till the door opened, and it was Albert's uncle. He looked very tired.

'I am glad you've come,' Oswald said. 'Alice began to think Noel ' Alice stopped me, and her face was very red, her nose was shiny too, with having cried so much before tea.

She said, 'I only said I thought Noel ought to have the doctor. Don't you think he ought?' She got hold of Albert's uncle and held on to him.

'Let's have a look at you, young man,' said Albert's uncle, and he sat down on the edge of the bed. It is a rather shaky bed, the bar that keeps it steady underneath got broken when we were playing burglars last winter. It was our crowbar. He began to feel Noel's pulse, and went on talking.

'It was revealed to the Arab physician as he made merry in his tents on the wild plains of Hastings that the Presence had a cold in its head. So he immediately seated himself on the magic carpet, and bade it bear him hither, only pausing in the flight to purchase a few sweetmeats in the bazaar.'

He pulled out a jolly lot of chocolate and some butterscotch, and grapes for Noel. When we had all said thank you, he went on. 'The physician's are the words of wisdom: it's high time this kid was asleep. I have spoken. Ye have my leave to depart.'

So we bunked, and Dora and Albert's uncle made Noel comfortable for the night.

Then they came to the nursery which we had gone down to, and he sat down in the Guy Fawkes chair and said, 'Now then.' Alice said, 'You may tell them what I did. I daresay they'll all be in a wax, but I don't care.'

'I think you were very wise,' said Albert's uncle, pulling her close to him to sit on his knee. 'I am very glad you telegraphed.'

So then Oswald understood what Alice's secret was. She had gone out and sent a telegram to Albert's uncle at Hastings. But Oswald thought she might have told him. Afterwards she told me what she had put in the telegram. It was, 'Come home. We have given

Noel a cold, and I think we are killing him.' With the address it came to tenpence-halfpenny.

Then Albert's uncle began to ask questions, and it all came out, how Dicky had tried to catch the cold, but the cold had gone to Noel instead, and about the medicines and all. Albert's uncle looked very serious.

'Look here,' he said, 'You're old enough not to play the fool like this. Health is the best thing you've got; you ought to know better than to risk it. You might have killed your little brother with your precious medicines. You've had a lucky escape, certainly. But poor Noel!'

'Oh, do you think he's going to die?' Alice asked that, and she was crying again.

'No, no,' said Albert's uncle; 'but look here. Do you see how silly you've been? And I thought you promised your Father ' And then he gave us a long talking-to. He can make you feel most awfully small. At last he stopped, and we said we were very sorry, and he said, 'You know I promised to take you all to the pantomime?'

So we said, 'Yes,' and knew but too well that now he wasn't going to. Then he went on
'Well, I will take you if you like, or I will take Noel to the sea for a week to cure his cold. Which is it to be?'

Of course he knew we should say, ‘Take Noel’ and we did; but Dicky told me afterwards he thought it was hard on H. O. Albert’s uncle stayed till Eliza came in, and then he said good night in a way that showed us that all was forgiven and forgotten. And we went to bed. It must have been the middle of the night when Oswald woke up suddenly, and there was Alice with her teeth chattering, shaking him to wake him.

‘Oh, Oswald!’ she said, ’I am so unhappy. Suppose I should die in the night!’

Oswald told her to go to bed and not gas. But she said, ’I must tell you; I wish I’d told Albert’s uncle. I’m a thief, and if I die to-night I know where thieves go to.’ So Oswald saw it was no good and he sat up in bed and said ’Go ahead.’ So Alice stood shivering and said ’I hadn’t enough money for the telegram, so I took the bad sixpence out of the exchequer. And I paid for it with that and the fivepence I had. And I wouldn’t tell you, because if you’d stopped me doing it I couldn’t have borne it; and if you’d helped me you’d have been a thief too. Oh, what shall I do?’

Oswald thought a minute, and then he said
’You’d better have told me. But I think it will be all right if we pay it back. Go to bed. Cross with you? No, stupid! Only another time you’d better not keep secrets.’

So she kissed Oswald, and he let her, and she went back to bed.

The next day Albert's uncle took Noel away, before Oswald had time to persuade Alice that we ought to tell him about the sixpence. Alice was very unhappy, but not so much as in the night: you can be very miserable in the night if you have done anything wrong and you happen to be awake. I know this for a fact.

None of us had any money except Eliza, and she wouldn't give us any unless we said what for; and of course we could not do that because of the honour of the family. And Oswald was anxious to get the sixpence to give to the telegraph people because he feared that the badness of that sixpence might have been found out, and that the police might come for Alice at any moment. I don't think I ever had such an unhappy day. Of course we could have written to Albert's uncle, but it would have taken a long time, and every moment of delay added to Alice's danger. We thought and thought, but we couldn't think of any way to get that sixpence. It seems a small sum, but you see Alice's liberty depended on it. It was quite late in the afternoon when I met Mrs Leslie on the Parade. She had a brown fur coat and a lot of yellow flowers in her hands. She stopped to speak to me, and asked me how the Poet was. I told her he had a cold, and I wondered whether she would lend me sixpence if I asked her, but I could not make up my mind how to begin to say it. It is a hard thing to say much harder than you would think. She talked to me for a bit, and then she suddenly got into a cab, and said

‘I’d no idea it was so late,’ and told the man where to go. And just as she started she shoved the yellow flowers through the window and said, ‘For the sick poet, with my love,’ and was driven off.

Gentle reader, I will not conceal from you what Oswald did. He knew all about not disgracing the family, and he did not like doing what I am going to say: and they were really Noel’s flowers, only he could not have sent them to Hastings, and Oswald knew he would say ‘Yes’ if Oswald asked him. Oswald sacrificed his family pride because of his little sister’s danger. I do not say he was a noble boy I just tell you what he did, and you can decide for yourself about the nobleness.

He put on his oldest clothes they’re much older than any you would think he had if you saw him when he was tidy and he took those yellow chrysanthemums and he walked with them to Greenwich Station and waited for the trains bringing people from London. He sold those flowers in penny bunches and got tenpence. Then he went to the telegraph office at Lewisham, and said to the lady there:
’A little girl gave you a bad sixpence yesterday. Here are six good pennies.’

The lady said she had not noticed it, and never mind, but Oswald knew that ‘Honesty is the best Policy’, and he refused to take back the pennies. So at last she said she should put them in the plate

on Sunday. She is a very nice lady. I like the way she does her hair.

Then Oswald went home to Alice and told her, and she hugged him, and said he was a dear, good, kind boy, and he said ‘Oh, it’s all right.’

We bought peppermint bullseyes with the fourpence I had over, and the others wanted to know where we got the money, but we would not tell.

Only afterwards when Noel came home we told him, because they were his flowers, and he said it was quite right. He made some poetry about it. I only remember one bit of it.

The noble youth of high degree
Consents to play a menial part,
All for his sister Alice’s sake,
Who was so dear to his faithful heart.

But Oswald himself has never bragged about it. We got no treasure out of this, unless you count the peppermint bullseyes.

The Story of the Treasure Seekers
Chapter 13 – Part 1

THE ROBBER AND THE BURGLAR

A day or two after Noel came back from Hastings there was snow; it was jolly. And we cleared it off the path. A man to do it is sixpence at least, and you should always save when you can. A penny saved is a penny earned. And then we thought it would be nice to clear it off the top of the portico, where it lies so thick, and the edges as if they had been cut with a knife. And just as we had got out of the landing-window on to the portico, the Water Rates came up the path with his book that he tears the thing out of that says how much you have got to pay, and the little ink-bottle hung on to his buttonhole in case you should pay him. Father says the Water Rates is a sensible man, and knows it is always well to be prepared for whatever happens, however unlikely. Alice said afterwards that she rather liked the Water Rates, really, and Noel said he had a face like a good vizier, or the man who rewards the honest boy for restoring the purse, but we did not think about these things at the time, and as the Water Rates came up the steps, we shovelled down a great square slab of snow like an avalanche and it fell right on his head. Two of us thought of it at the same moment, so it was quite a large avalanche. And when the Water Rates had shaken himself he rang the bell. It was

Saturday, and Father was at home. We know now that it is very wrong and ungentlemanly to shovel snow off porticoes on to the Water Rates, or any other person, and we hope he did not catch a cold, and we are very sorry. We apologized to the Water Rates when Father told us to. We were all sent to bed for it.

We all deserved the punishment, because the others would have shovelled down snow just as we did if they'd thought of it only they are not so quick at thinking of things as we are. And even quite wrong things sometimes lead to adventures; as every one knows who has ever read about pirates or highwaymen.

Eliza hates us to be sent to bed early, because it means her having to bring meals up, and it means lighting the fire in Noel's room ever so much earlier than usual. He had to have a fire because he still had a bit of a cold. But this particular day we got Eliza into a good temper by giving her a horrid brooch with pretending amethysts in it, that an aunt once gave to Alice, so Eliza brought up an extra scuttle of coals, and when the greengrocer came with the potatoes (he is always late on Saturdays) she got some chestnuts from him. So that when we heard Father go out after his dinner, there was a jolly fire in Noel's room, and we were able to go in and be Red Indians in blankets most comfortably. Eliza had gone out; she says she gets things cheaper on Saturday nights. She has a great friend, who sells fish at a shop, and he is very generous, and lets her have herrings for less than half the natural price.

So we were all alone in the house; Pincher was out with Eliza, and we talked about robbers. And Dora thought it would be a dreadful trade, but Dicky said
'I think it would be very interesting. And you would only rob rich people, and be very generous to the poor and needy, like Claude Duval.' Dora said, 'It is wrong to be a robber.'

'Yes,' said Alice, 'you would never know a happy hour. Think of trying to sleep with the stolen jewels under your bed, and remembering all the quantities of policemen and detectives that there are in the world!'

'There are ways of being robbers that are not wrong,' said Noel; 'if you can rob a robber it is a right act.'

'But you can't,' said Dora; 'he is too clever, and besides, it's wrong anyway.'

'Yes you can, and it isn't; and murdering him with boiling oil is a right act, too, so there!' said Noel. 'What about Ali Baba? Now then!' And we felt it was a score for Noel.

'What would you do if there *was* a robber?' said Alice.

H. O. said he would kill him with boiling oil; but Alice explained that she meant a real robber now this minute in the house.

Oswald and Dicky did not say; but Noel said he thought it would only be fair to ask the robber quite politely and quietly to go away, and then if he didn't you could deal with him.

Now what I am going to tell you is a very strange and wonderful thing, and I hope you will be able to believe it. I should not, if a boy told me, unless I knew him to be a man of honour, and perhaps not then unless he gave his sacred word. But it is true, all the same, and it only shows that the days of romance and daring deeds are not yet at an end.

Alice was just asking Noel *how* he would deal with the robber who wouldn't go if he was asked politely and quietly, when we heard a noise downstairs quite a plain noise, not the kind of noise you fancy you hear. It was like somebody moving a chair. We held our breath and listened and then came another noise, like some one poking a fire. Now, you remember there was no one *to* poke a fire or move a chair downstairs, because Eliza and Father were both out. They could not have come in without our hearing them, because the front door is as hard to shut as the back one, and whichever you go in by you have to give a slam that you can hear all down the street.

H. O. and Alice and Dora caught hold of each other's blankets and looked at Dicky and Oswald, and every one was quite pale. And Noel whispered

'It's ghosts, I know it is' and then we listened again, but there was no more noise. Presently Dora said in a whisper

'Whatever shall we do? Oh, whatever shall we do what *shall* we do?' And she kept on saying it till we had to tell her to shut up. O reader, have you ever been playing Red Indians in blankets round a bedroom fire in a house where you thought there was no one but you and then suddenly heard a noise like a chair, and a fire being poked, downstairs? Unless you have you will not be able to imagine at all what it feels like. It was not like in books; our hair did not stand on end at all, and we never said 'Hist!' once, but our feet got very cold, though we were in blankets by the fire, and the insides of Oswald's hands got warm and wet, and his nose was cold like a dog's, and his ears were burning hot. The girls said afterwards that they shivered with terror, and their teeth chattered, but we did not see or hear this at the time. 'Shall we open the window and call police?' said Dora; and then Oswald suddenly thought of something, and he breathed more freely and he said

'I *know* it's not ghosts, and I don't believe it's robbers. I expect it's a stray cat got in when the coals came this morning, and she's been hiding in the cellar, and now she's moving about. Let's go down and see.'

The girls wouldn't, of course; but I could see that they breathed more freely too. But Dicky said, 'All right; I will if you will.'

H. O. said, 'Do you think it's *really* a cat?' So we said he had better stay with the girls. And of course after that we had to let him and Alice both come. Dora said if we took Noel down with his cold, she would scream 'Fire!' and 'Murder!' and she didn't mind if the whole street heard.

So Noel agreed to be getting his clothes on, and the rest of us said we would go down and look for the cat.

Now Oswald *said* that about the cat, and it made it easier to go down, but in his inside he did not feel at all sure that it might not be robbers after all. Of course, we had often talked about robbers before, but it is very different when you sit in a room and listen and listen and listen; and Oswald felt somehow that it would be easier to go down and see what it was, than to wait, and listen, and wait, and wait, and listen, and wait, and then perhaps to hear *it*, whatever it was, come creeping slowly up the stairs as softly as *it* could with *its* boots off, and the stairs creaking, towards the room where we were with the door open in case of Eliza coming back suddenly, and all dark on the landings. And then it would have been just as bad, and it would have lasted longer, and you would have known you were a coward besides. Dicky says he felt all these same things. Many people would say we were young heroes to go down as we did; so I have tried to explain, because no young hero wishes to have more credit than he deserves.

The landing gas was turned down low just a blue bead and we

four went out very softly, wrapped in our blankets, and we stood on the top of the stairs a good long time before we began to go down. And we listened and listened till our ears buzzed.

And Oswald whispered to Dicky, and Dicky went into our room and fetched the large toy pistol that is a foot long, and that has the trigger broken, and I took it because I am the eldest; and I don't think either of us thought it was the cat now. But Alice and H. O. did. Dicky got the poker out of Noel's room, and told Dora it was to settle the cat with when we caught her.

Then Oswald whispered, 'Let's play at burglars; Dicky and I are armed to the teeth, we will go first. You keep a flight behind us, and be a reinforcement if we are attacked. Or you can retreat and defend the women and children in the fortress, if you'd rather.' But they said they would be a reinforcement.

Oswald's teeth chattered a little when he spoke. It was not with anything else except cold.

So Dicky and Oswald crept down, and when we got to the bottom of the stairs, we saw Father's study door just ajar, and the crack of light. And Oswald was so pleased to see the light, knowing that burglars prefer the dark, or at any rate the dark lantern, that he felt really sure it *was* the cat after all, and then he thought it would be fun to make the others upstairs think it was really a robber. So he cocked the pistol you can cock it, but it doesn't go

off and he said, 'Come on, Dick!' and he rushed at the study door and burst into the room, crying, 'Surrender! you are discovered! Surrender, or I fire! Throw up your hands!'

And, as he finished saying it, he saw before him, standing on the study hearthrug, a Real Robber. There was no mistake about it. Oswald was sure it was a robber, because it had a screwdriver in its hands, and was standing near the cupboard door that H. O. broke the lock off; and there were gimlets and screws and things on the floor. There is nothing in that cupboard but old ledgers and magazines and the tool chest, but of course, a robber could not know that beforehand.

When Oswald saw that there really was a robber, and that he was so heavily armed with the screwdriver, he did not feel comfortable. But he kept the pistol pointed at the robber, and you will hardly believe it, but it is true the robber threw down the screwdriver clattering on the other tools, and he *did* throw up his hands, and said
'I surrender; don't shoot me! How many of you are there?'

So Dicky said, 'You are outnumbered. Are you armed?'

And the robber said, 'No, not in the least.'

And Oswald said, still pointing the pistol, and feeling very strong and brave and as if he was in a book, 'Turn out your pockets.'

The robber did: and while he turned them out, we looked at him. He was of the middle height, and clad in a black frock-coat and grey trousers. His boots were a little gone at the sides, and his shirt-cuffs were a bit frayed, but otherwise he was of gentlemanly demeanour. He had a thin, wrinkled face, with big, light eyes that sparkled, and then looked soft very queerly, and a short beard. In his youth it must have been of a fair golden colour, but now it was tinged with grey. Oswald was sorry for him, especially when he saw that one of his pockets had a large hole in it, and that he had nothing in his pockets but letters and string and three boxes of matches, and a pipe and a handkerchief and a thin tobacco pouch and two pennies. We made him put all the things on the table, and then he said
'Well, you've caught me; what are you going to do with me? Police?'

Alice and H. O. had come down to be reinforcements, when they heard a shout, and when Alice saw that it was a Real Robber, and that he had surrendered, she clapped her hands and said, 'Bravo, boys!' and so did H. O. And now she said, 'If he gives his word of honour not to escape, I shouldn't call the police: it seems a pity. Wait till Father comes home.'

The robber agreed to this, and gave his word of honour, and asked if he might put on a pipe, and we said 'Yes,' and he sat in Father's armchair and warmed his boots, which steamed, and I sent H. O. and Alice to put on some clothes and tell the others, and bring

down Dicky's and my knickerbockers, and the rest of the chestnuts.

And they all came, and we sat round the fire, and it was jolly. The robber was very friendly, and talked to us a great deal.

'I wasn't always in this low way of business,' he said, when Noel said something about the things he had turned out of his pockets. 'It's a great come-down to a man like me. But, if I must be caught, it's something to be caught by brave young heroes like you. My stars! How you did bolt into the room, "Surrender, and up with your hands!" You might have been born and bred to the thief-catching.'

Oswald is sorry if it was mean, but he could not own up just then that he did not think there was any one in the study when he did that brave if rash act. He has told since.

'And what made you think there was any one in the house?' the robber asked, when he had thrown his head back, and laughed for quite half a minute. So we told him. And he applauded our valour, and Alice and H. O. explained that they would have said 'Surrender,' too, only they were reinforcements. The robber ate some of the chestnuts and we sat and wondered when Father would come home, and what he would say to us for our intrepid conduct. And the robber told us of all the things he had done

before he began to break into houses. Dicky picked up the tools from the floor, and suddenly he said
'Why, this is Father's screwdriver and his gimlets, and all! Well, I do call it jolly cheek to pick a man's locks with his own tools!'

'True, true,' said the robber. 'It is cheek, of the jolliest! But you see I've come down in the world. I was a highway robber once, but horses are so expensive to hire five shillings an hour, you know and I couldn't afford to keep them. The highwayman business isn't what it was.'

'What about a bike?' said H. O.

But the robber thought cycles were low and besides you couldn't go across country with them when occasion arose, as you could with a trusty steed. And he talked of highwaymen as if he knew just how we liked hearing it.

Then he told us how he had been a pirate captain and how he had sailed over waves mountains high, and gained rich prizes and how he *did* begin to think that here he had found a profession to his mind.

'I don't say there are no ups and downs in it,' he said, 'especially in stormy weather. But what a trade! And a sword at your side, and the Jolly Roger flying at the peak, and a prize in sight. And all the black mouths of your guns pointed at the laden trader and the

wind in your favour, and your trusty crew ready to live and die for you! Oh but it's a grand life!'

I did feel so sorry for him. He used such nice words, and he had a gentleman's voice.

'I'm sure you weren't brought up to be a pirate,' said Dora. She had dressed even to her collar and made Noel do it too but the rest of us were in blankets with just a few odd things put on anyhow underneath.

The robber frowned and sighed.

'No,' he said, 'I was brought up to the law. I was at Balliol, bless your hearts, and that's true anyway.' He sighed again, and looked hard at the fire.

'That was my Father's college,' H. O. was beginning, but Dicky said 'Why did you leave off being a pirate?'

'A pirate?' he said, as if he had not been thinking of such things. 'Oh, yes; why I gave it up because because I could not get over the dreadful sea-sickness.'

'Nelson was sea-sick,' said Oswald.

‘Ah,’ said the robber; ’but I hadn’t his luck or his pluck, or something. He stuck to it and won Trafalgar, didn’t he? “Kiss me, Hardy” and all that, eh? *I* couldn’t stick to it I had to resign. And nobody kissed *me*.’

I saw by his understanding about Nelson that he was really a man who had been to a good school as well as to Balliol.
Then we asked him, ‘And what did you do then?’

And Alice asked if he was ever a coiner, and we told him how we had thought we’d caught the desperate gang next door, and he was very much interested and said he was glad he had never taken to coining.

‘Besides, the coins are so ugly nowadays,’ he said, ’no one could really find any pleasure in making them. And it’s a hole-and-corner business at the best, isn’t it? and it must be a very thirsty one with the hot metal and furnaces and things.’

And again he looked at the fire.

Oswald forgot for a minute that the interesting stranger was a robber, and asked him if he wouldn’t have a drink. Oswald has heard Father do this to his friends, so he knows it is the right thing. The robber said he didn’t mind if he did. And that is right, too.

And Dora went and got a bottle of Father's ale the Light Sparkling Family and a glass, and we gave it to the robber. Dora said she would be responsible.

Then when he had had a drink he told us about bandits, but he said it was so bad in wet weather. Bandits' caves were hardly ever properly weathertight. And bush-ranging was the same.

'As a matter of fact,' he said, 'I was bush-ranging this afternoon, among the furze-bushes on the Heath, but I had no luck. I stopped the Lord Mayor in his gilt coach, with all his footmen in plush and gold lace, smart as cockatoos. But it was no go. The Lord Mayor hadn't a stiver in his pockets.

The Story of the Treasure Seekers
Chapter 13 – Part 2

THE ROBBER AND THE BURGLAR

One of the footmen had six new pennies: the Lord Mayor always pays his servants' wages in new pennies. I spent fourpence of that in bread and cheese, that on the table's the tuppence. Ah, it's a poor trade!' And then he filled his pipe again.

We had turned out the gas, so that Father should have a jolly good surprise when he did come home, and we sat and talked as pleasant as could be. I never liked a new man better than I liked that robber. And I felt so sorry for him. He told us he had been a war-correspondent and an editor, in happier days, as well as a horse-stealer and a colonel of dragoons.

And quite suddenly, just as we were telling him about Lord Tottenham and our being highwaymen ourselves, he put up his hand and said 'Shish!' and we were quiet and listened.
There was a scrape, scrape, scraping noise; it came from downstairs.

'They're filing something,' whispered the robber, 'here shut up, give me that pistol, and the poker. There is a burglar now, and no

mistake.'

'It's only a toy one and it won't go off,' I said, 'but you can cock it.'

Then we heard a snap. 'There goes the window bar,' said the robber softly. 'Jove! what an adventure! You kids stay here, I'll tackle it.'

But Dicky and I said we should come. So he let us go as far as the bottom of the kitchen stairs, and we took the tongs and shovel with us. There was a light in the kitchen; a very little light. It is curious we never thought, any of us, that this might be a plant of our robber's to get away. We never thought of doubting his word of honour. And we were right.

That noble robber dashed the kitchen door open, and rushed in with the big toy pistol in one hand and the poker in the other, shouting out just like Oswald had done
'Surrender! You are discovered! Surrender, or I'll fire! Throw up your hands!' And Dicky and I rattled the tongs and shovel so that he might know there were more of us, all bristling with weapons.

And we heard a husky voice in the kitchen saying
'All right, governor! Stow that scent sprinkler. I'll give in. Blowed if I ain't pretty well sick of the job, anyway.'

Then we went in. Our robber was standing in the grandest manner with his legs very wide apart, and the pistol pointing at the cowering burglar. The burglar was a large man who did not mean to have a beard, I think, but he had got some of one, and a red comforter, and a fur cap, and his face was red and his voice was thick. How different from our own robber! The burglar had a dark lantern, and he was standing by the plate-basket. When we had lit the gas we all thought he was very like what a burglar ought to be.

He did not look as if he could ever have been a pirate or a highwayman, or anything really dashing or noble, and he scowled and shuffled his feet and said: 'Well, go on: why don't yer fetch the pleece?'

'Upon my word, I don't know,' said our robber, rubbing his chin. 'Oswald, why don't we fetch the police?'

It is not every robber that I would stand Christian names from, I can tell you but just then I didn't think of that. I just said 'Do you mean I'm to fetch one?'

Our robber looked at the burglar and said nothing.

Then the burglar began to speak very fast, and to look different ways with his hard, shiny little eyes.

’Lookee ‘ere, governor,’ he said, ’I was stony broke, so help me, I was. And blessed if I’ve nicked a haporth of your little lot. You know yourself there ain’t much to tempt a bloke,’ he shook the plate-basket as if he was angry with it, and the yellowy spoons and forks rattled. ’I was just a-looking through this ’ere Bank-ollerday show, when you come. Let me off, sir. Come now, I’ve got kids of my own at home, strike me if I ain’t same as yours I’ve got a nipper just about ’is size, and what’ll come of them if I’m lagged? I ain’t been in it long, sir, and I ain’t ‘andy at it.’

‘No,’ said our robber; ‘you certainly are not.’ Alice and the others had come down by now to see what was happening. Alice told me afterwards they thought it really was the cat this time.

’No, I ain’t ’andy, as you say, sir, and if you let me off this once I’ll chuck the whole blooming bizz; rake my civvy, I will. Don’t be hard on a cove, mister; think of the missis and the kids. I’ve got one just the cut of little missy there bless ’er pretty ‘eart.’
‘Your family certainly fits your circumstances very nicely,’ said our robber. Then Alice said
’Oh, do let him go! If he’s got a little girl like me, whatever will she do? Suppose it was Father!’

‘I don’t think he’s got a little girl like you, my dear,’ said our robber, ‘and I think he’ll be safer under lock and key.’

‘You ask yer Father to let me go, miss,’ said the burglar; ’’e won’t

'*ave* the 'art to refuse you.'

'If I do,' said Alice, 'will you promise never to come back?'

'Not me, miss,' the burglar said very earnestly, and he looked at the plate-basket again, as if that alone would be enough to keep him away, our robber said afterwards.

'And will you be good and not rob any more?' said Alice.

'I'll turn over a noo leaf, miss, so help me.'

Then Alice said 'Oh, do let him go! I'm sure he'll be good.'

But our robber said no, it wouldn't be right; we must wait till Father came home. Then H. O. said, very suddenly and plainly: 'I don't think it's at all fair, when you're a robber yourself.'

The minute he'd said it the burglar said, 'Kidded, by gum!' and then our robber made a step towards him to catch hold of him, and before you had time to think 'Hullo!' the burglar knocked the pistol up with one hand and knocked our robber down with the other, and was off out of the window like a shot, though Oswald and Dicky did try to stop him by holding on to his legs.

And that burglar had the cheek to put his head in at the window and say, 'I'll give yer love to the kids and the missis' and he was

off like winking, and there were Alice and Dora trying to pick up our robber, and asking him whether he was hurt, and where. He wasn't hurt at all, except a lump at the back of his head. And he got up, and we dusted the kitchen floor off him. Eliza is a dirty girl.

Then he said, 'Let's put up the shutters. It never rains but it pours. Now you've had two burglars I daresay you'll have twenty.' So we put up the shutters, which Eliza has strict orders to do before she goes out, only she never does, and we went back to Father's study, and the robber said, 'What a night we are having!' and put his boots back in the fender to go on steaming, and then we all talked at once. It was the most wonderful adventure we ever had, though it wasn't treasure-seeking at least not ours. I suppose it was the burglar's treasure-seeking, but he didn't get much and our robber said he didn't believe a word about those kids that were so like Alice and me.

And then there was the click of the gate, and we said, 'Here's Father,' and the robber said, 'And now for the police.'

Then we all jumped up. We did like him so much, and it seemed so unfair that he should be sent to prison, and the horrid, lumping big burglar not.

And Alice said, 'Oh, *no* run! Dicky will let you out at the back door. Oh, do go, go *now*.'

And we all said, ‘Yes, *go*,’ and pulled him towards the door, and gave him his hat and stick and the things out of his pockets. But Father’s latchkey was in the door, and it was too late.

Father came in quickly, purring with the cold, and began to say, ’It’s all right, Foulkes, I’ve got ’ And then he stopped short and stared at us. Then he said, in the voice we all hate, ’Children, what is the meaning of all this?’ And for a minute nobody spoke. Then my Father said, ’Foulkes, I must really apologize for these very naughty ’ And then our robber rubbed his hands and laughed, and cried out:
’You’re mistaken, my dear sir, I’m not Foulkes; I’m a robber, captured by these young people in the most gallant manner.

“Hands up, surrender, or I fire,” and all the rest of it. My word, Bastable, but you’ve got some kids worth having! I wish my Denny had their pluck.’

Then we began to understand, and it was like being knocked down, it was so sudden. And our robber told us he wasn’t a robber after all. He was only an old college friend of my Father’s, and he had come after dinner, when Father was just trying to mend the lock H. O. had broken, to ask Father to get him a letter to a doctor about his little boy Denny, who was ill. And Father had gone over the Heath to Vanbrugh Park to see some rich people he knows and get the letter. And he had left Mr Foulkes to wait till he came back, because it was important to know at once

whether Father could get the letter, and if he couldn't Mr Foulkes would have had to try some one else directly.
We were dumb with amazement.

Our robber told my Father about the other burglar, and said he was sorry he'd let him escape, but my Father said, 'Oh, it's all right: poor beggar; if he really had kids at home: you never can tell forgive us our debts, don't you know; but tell me about the first business. It must have been moderately entertaining.'

Then our robber told my Father how I had rushed into the room with a pistol, crying out... but you know all about that. And he laid it on so thick and fat about plucky young-*uns*, and chips of old blocks, and things like that, that I felt I was purple with shame, even under the blanket. So I swallowed that thing that tries to prevent you speaking when you ought to, and I said, 'Look here, Father, I didn't really think there was any one in the study. We thought it was a cat at first, and then I thought there was no one there, and I was just larking. And when I said surrender and all that, it was just the game, don't you know?'

Then our robber said, 'Yes, old chap; but when you found there really *was* someone there, you dropped the pistol and bunked, didn't you, eh?'

And I said, 'No; I thought, "Hullo! here's a robber! Well, it's all up, I suppose, but I may as well hold on and see what happens."'

And I was glad I'd owned up, for Father slapped me on the back, and said I was a young brick, and our robber said I was no funk anyway, and though I got very hot under the blanket I liked it, and I explained that the others would have done the same if they had thought of it.

Then Father got up some more beer, and laughed about Dora's responsibility, and he got out a box of figs he had bought for us, only he hadn't given it to us because of the Water Rates, and Eliza came in and brought up the bread and cheese, and what there was left of the neck of mutton cold wreck of mutton, Father called it - and we had a feast like a picnic all sitting anywhere, and eating with our fingers. It was prime. We sat up till past twelve o'clock, and I never felt so pleased to think I was not born a girl. It was hard on the others; they would have done just the same if they'd thought of it. But it does make you feel jolly when your pater says you're a young brick!

When Mr Foulkes was going, he said to Alice, 'Good-bye, Hardy.' And Alice understood, of course, and kissed him as hard as she could.

And she said, 'I wanted to, when you said no one kissed you when you left off being a pirate.' And he said, 'I know you did, my dear.' And Dora kissed him too, and said, 'I suppose none of these tales were true?'

And our robber just said, ‘I tried to play the part properly, my dear.’

And he jolly well did play it, and no mistake. We have often seen him since, and his boy Denny, and his girl Daisy, but that comes in another story.

And if any of you kids who read this ever had two such adventures in one night you can just write and tell me. That’s all.

The Story of The Treasure Seekers
Chapter 15

‘LO, THE POOR INDIAN!’

It was all very well for Father to ask us not to make a row because the Indian Uncle was coming to talk business, but my young brother’s boots are not the only things that make a noise. We took his boots away and made him wear Dora’s bath slippers, which are soft and woolly, and hardly any soles to them; and of course we wanted to see the Uncle, so we looked over the banisters when he came, and we were as quiet as mice but when Eliza had let him in she went straight down to the kitchen and made the most awful row you ever heard, it sounded like the Day of judgement, or all the saucepans and crockery in the house being kicked about the floor, but she told me afterwards it was only the tea-tray and one or two cups and saucers, that she had knocked over in her flurry. We heard the Uncle say, ‘God bless my soul!’ and then he went into Father’s study and the door was shut we didn’t see him properly at all that time.

I don't believe the dinner was very nice. Something got burned I'm sure for we smelt it. It was an extra smell, besides the mutton.

I know that got burned. Eliza wouldn't have any of us in the kitchen except Dora till dinner was over. Then we got what was left of the dessert, and had it on the stairs just round the corner where they can't see you from the hall, unless the first landing gas is lighted. Suddenly the study door opened and the Uncle came out and went and felt in his greatcoat pocket. It was his cigar-case he wanted. We saw that afterwards. We got a much better view of him then. He didn't look like an Indian but just like a kind of brown, big Englishman, and of course he didn't see us, but we heard him mutter to himself
'Shocking bad dinner! Eh! what?'

When he went back to the study he didn't shut the door properly. That door has always been a little tiresome since the day we took the lock off to get out the pencil sharpener H. O. had shoved into the keyhole. We didn't listen really and truly but the Indian Uncle has a very big voice, and Father was not going to be beaten by a poor Indian in talking or anything else so he spoke up too, like a man, and I heard him say it was a very good business, and only wanted a little capital and he said it as if it was an imposition he had learned, and he hated having to say it. The Uncle said, 'Pooh, pooh!' to that, and then he said he was afraid that what that same business wanted was not capital but management. Then I heard

my Father say, 'It is not a pleasant subject: I am sorry I introduced it. Suppose we change it, sir. Let me fill your glass.' Then the poor Indian said something about vintage and that a poor, broken-down man like he was couldn't be too careful. And then Father said, 'Well, whisky then,' and afterwards they talked about Native Races and Imperial something or other and it got very dull.

So then Oswald remembered that you must not hear what people do not intend you to hear even if you are not listening and he said, 'We ought not to stay here any longer. Perhaps they would not like us to hear '

Alice said, 'Oh, do you think it could possibly matter?' and went and shut the study door softly but quite tight. So it was no use staying there any longer, and we went to the nursery.

Then Noel said, 'Now I understand. Of course my Father is making a banquet for the Indian, because he is a poor, broken-down man. We might have known that from "Lo, the poor Indian!" you know.'

We all agreed with him, and we were glad to have the thing explained, because we had not understood before what Father wanted to have people to dinner for and not let us come in.

'Poor people are very proud,' said Alice, 'and I expect Father

thought the Indian would be ashamed, if all of us children knew how poor he was.'

Then Dora said, 'Poverty is no disgrace. We should honour honest Poverty.'

And we all agreed that that was so.

'I wish his dinner had not been so nasty,' Dora said, while Oswald put lumps of coal on the fire with his fingers, so as not to make a noise. He is a very thoughtful boy, and he did not wipe his fingers on his trouser leg as perhaps Noel or H. O. would have done, but he just rubbed them on Dora's handkerchief while she was talking.

'I am afraid the dinner was horrid.' Dora went on. 'The table looked very nice with the flowers we got. I set it myself, and Eliza made me borrow the silver spoons and forks from Albert-next-door's Mother.'

'I hope the poor Indian is honest,' said Dicky gloomily, 'when you are a poor, broken-down man silver spoons must be a great temptation.'

Oswald told him not to talk such tommy-rot because the Indian was a relation, so of course he couldn't do anything dishonourable. And Dora said it was all right any way, because

she had washed up the spoons and forks herself and counted them, and they were all there, and she had put them into their wash-leather bag, and taken them back to Albert-next-door's Mother.

'And the brussels sprouts were all wet and swimmy,' she went on, 'and the potatoes looked grey and there were bits of black in the gravy and the mutton was bluey-red and soft in the middle. I saw it when it came out. The apple-pie looked very nice but it wasn't quite done in the apply part. The other thing that was burnt you must have smelt it, was the soup.'

'It is a pity,' said Oswald; 'I don't suppose he gets a good dinner every day.'

'No more do we,' said H. O., 'but we shall to-morrow.'

I thought of all the things we had bought with our half-sovereign the rabbit and the sweets and the almonds and raisins and figs and the coconut: and I thought of the nasty mutton and things, and while I was thinking about it all Alice said

'Let's ask the poor Indian to come to

dinner with *us* to-morrow.' I should have said it myself if she had given me time.

We got the little ones to go to bed by promising to put a note on their dressing-table saying what had happened, so that they might know the first thing in the morning, or in the middle of the night if they happened to wake up, and then we elders arranged everything.

I waited by the back door, and when the Uncle was beginning to go Dicky was to drop a marble down between the banisters for a signal, so that I could run round and meet the Uncle as he came out.

This seems like deceit, but if you are a thoughtful and considerate boy you will understand that we could not go down and say to the Uncle in the hall under Father's eye, 'Father has given you a beastly, nasty dinner, but if you will come to dinner with us tomorrow, we will show you our idea of good things to eat.' You will see, if you think it over, that this would not have been at all polite to Father.

So when the Uncle left, Father saw him to the door and let him out, and then went back to the study, looking very sad, Dora says. As the poor Indian came down our steps he saw me there at the gate.

I did not mind his being poor, and I said, ‘Good evening, Uncle,’ just as politely as though he had been about to ascend into one of the gilded chariots of the rich and affluent, instead of having to walk to the station a quarter of a mile in the mud, unless he had the money for a tram fare.

‘Good evening, Uncle.’ I said it again, for he stood staring at me. I don’t suppose he was used to politeness from boys some boys are anything but especially to the Aged Poor.

So I said, ‘Good evening, Uncle,’ yet once again. Then he said ‘Time you were in bed, young man. Eh! what?’

Then I saw I must speak plainly with him, man to man. So I did. I said
’You’ve been dining with my Father, and we couldn’t help hearing you say the dinner was shocking. So we thought as you’re an Indian, perhaps you’re very poor’ I didn’t like to tell him we had heard the dreadful truth from his own lips, so I went on, ’because of “Lo, the poor Indian” you know and you can’t get a good dinner every day. And we are very sorry if you’re poor; and won’t you come and have dinner with us to-morrow with us children, I mean? It’s a very, very good dinner rabbit, and hardbake, and coconut and you needn’t mind us knowing you’re poor, because we know honourable poverty is no disgrace, and ’ I could have gone on much longer, but he interrupted me to say ’Upon my word! And what’s your name, eh?’

‘Oswald Bastable,’ I said; and I do hope you people who are reading this story have not guessed before that I was Oswald all the time.

‘Oswald Bastable, eh? Bless my soul!’ said the poor Indian. ’Yes, I’ll dine with you, Mr Oswald Bastable, with all the pleasure in life. Very kind and cordial invitation, I’m sure. Good night, sir. At one o’clock, I presume?’

‘Yes, at one,’ I said. ‘Good night, sir.’

Then I went in and told the others, and we wrote a paper and put it on the boy’s dressing-table, and it said

’The poor Indian is coming at one. He seemed very grateful to me for my kindness.’

We did not tell Father that the Uncle was coming to dinner with us, for the polite reason that I have explained before. But we had to tell Eliza; so we said a friend was coming to dinner and we wanted everything very nice. I think she thought it was Albert-next-door, but she was in a good temper that day, and she agreed to cook the rabbit and to make a pudding with currants in it. And when one o’clock came the Indian Uncle came too. I let him in and helped him off with his greatcoat, which was all furry inside, and took him straight to the nursery. We were to have dinner there as usual, for we had decided from the first that he would

enjoy himself more if he was not made a stranger of. We agreed to treat him as one of ourselves, because if we were too polite, he might think it was our pride because he was poor.

He shook hands with us all and asked our ages, and what schools we went to, and shook his head when we said we were having a holiday just now. I felt rather uncomfortable I always do when they talk about schools and I couldn't think of anything to say to show him we meant to treat him as one of ourselves. I did ask if he played cricket. He said he had not played lately. And then no one said anything till dinner came in. We had all washed our faces and hands and brushed our hair before he came in, and we all looked very nice, especially Oswald, who had had his hair cut that very morning. When Eliza had brought in the rabbit and gone out again, we looked at each other in silent despair, like in books. It seemed as if it were going to be just a dull dinner like the one the poor Indian had had the night before; only, of course, the things to eat would be nicer. Dicky kicked Oswald under the table to make him say something and he had his new boots on, too! but Oswald did not kick back; then the Uncle asked
'Do you carve, sir, or shall I?'

Suddenly Alice said
'Would you like grown-up dinner, Uncle, or play-dinner?'

He did not hesitate a moment, but said, 'Play-dinner, by all means. Eh! what?' and then we knew it was all right.

So we at once showed the Uncle how to be a dauntless hunter. The rabbit was the deer we had slain in the green forest with our trusty yew bows, and we toasted the joints of it, when the Uncle had carved it, on bits of firewood sharpened to a point. The Uncle's piece got a little burnt, but he said it was delicious, and he said game was always nicer when you had killed it yourself.

When Eliza had taken away the rabbit bones and brought in the pudding, we waited till she had gone out and shut the door, and then we put the dish down on the floor and slew the pudding in the dish in the good old-fashioned way. It was a wild boar at bay, and very hard indeed to kill, even with forks. The Uncle was very fierce indeed with the pudding, and jumped and howled when he speared it, but when it came to his turn to be helped, he said, 'No, thank you; think of my liver. Eh! what?'

"The Uncle was very fierce with the pudding."

But he had some almonds and raisins when we had climbed to the

top of the chest of drawers to pluck them from the boughs of the great trees; and he had a fig from the cargo that the rich merchants brought in their ship the long drawer was the ship and the rest of us had the sweets and the coconut. It was a very glorious and beautiful feast, and when it was over we said we hoped it was better than the dinner last night. And he said: 'I never enjoyed a dinner more.' He was too polite to say what he really thought about Father's dinner. And we saw that though he might be poor, he was a true gentleman.

He smoked a cigar while we finished up what there was left to eat, and told us about tiger shooting and about elephants. We asked him about*wigwams*, and wampum, and *mocassins*, and beavers, but he did not seem to know, or else he was shy about talking of the wonders of his native land.

We liked him very much indeed, and when he was going at last, Alice nudged me, and I said 'There's one and threepence farthing left out of our half-sovereign. Will you take it, please, because we do like you very much indeed, and we don't want it, really; and we would rather you had it.' And I put the money into his hand. 'I'll take the threepenny-bit,' he said, turning the money over and looking at it, 'but I couldn't rob you of the rest. By the way, where did you get the money for this most royal spread half a sovereign you said eh, what?'

We told him all about the different ways we had looked for

treasure, and when we had been telling some time he sat down, to listen better and at last we told him how Alice had played at divining-rod, and how it really had found a half-sovereign.

Then he said he would like to see her do it again. But we explained that the rod would only show gold and silver, and that we were quite sure there was no more gold in the house, because we happened to have looked very carefully.

'Well, silver, then,' said he; 'let's hide the plate-basket, and little Alice shall make the divining-rod find it. Eh! what?'

'There isn't any silver in the plate-basket now,' Dora said. 'Eliza asked me to borrow the silver spoons and forks for your dinner last night from Albert-next-door's Mother. Father never notices, but she thought it would be nicer for you. Our own silver went to have the dents taken out; and I don't think Father could afford to pay the man for doing it, for the silver hasn't come back.'

'Bless my soul!' said the Uncle again, looking at the hole in the big chair that we burnt when we had Guy Fawkes' Day indoors. 'And how much pocket-money do you get? Eh! what?'

'We don't have any now,' said Alice; 'but indeed we don't want the other shilling. We'd much rather you had it, wouldn't we?'

And the rest of us said, 'Yes.' The Uncle wouldn't take it, but he

asked a lot of questions, and at last he went away. And when he went he said
'Well, youngsters, I've enjoyed myself very much. I shan't forget your kind hospitality. Perhaps the poor Indian may be in a position to ask you all to dinner some day.'

Oswald said if he ever could we should like to come very much, but he was not to trouble to get such a nice dinner as ours, because we could do very well with cold mutton and rice pudding. We do not like these things, but Oswald knows how to behave. Then the poor Indian went away.

We had not got any treasure by this party, but we had had a very good time, and I am sure the Uncle enjoyed himself.

We were so sorry he was gone that we could none of us eat much tea; but we did not mind, because we had pleased the poor Indian and enjoyed ourselves too. Besides, as Dora said, 'A contented mind is a continual feast,' so it did not matter about not wanting tea.

Only H. O. did not seem to think a continual feast was a contented mind, and Eliza gave him a powder in what was left of the red-currant jelly Father had for the nasty dinner.

But the rest of us were quite well, and I think it must have been the coconut with H. O. We hoped nothing had disagreed with the

Uncle, but we never knew.

The Story of the Treasure Seekers
Chapter 16

THE END OF THE TREASURE-SEEKING

Now it is coming near the end of our treasure-seeking, and the end was so wonderful that now nothing is like it used to be. It is like as if our fortunes had been in an earthquake, and after those, you know, everything comes out wrong-way up.

The day after the Uncle speared the pudding with us opened in gloom and sadness. But you never know. It was destined to be a day when things happened. Yet no sign of this appeared in the early morning. Then all was misery and upsetness. None of us felt quite well; I don't know why: and Father had one of his awful colds, so Dora persuaded him not to go to London, but to stay cosy and warm in the study, and she made him some gruel. She makes it better than Eliza does; Eliza's gruel is all little lumps, and when you suck them it is dry oatmeal inside.

We kept as quiet as we could, and I made H. O. do some lessons, like the G. B. had advised us to. But it was very dull. There are some days when you seem to have got to the end of all the things that could ever possibly happen to you, and you feel you will spend all the rest of your life doing dull things just the same way.

Days like this are generally wet days. But, as I said, you never know.

Then Dicky said if things went on like this he should run away to sea, and Alice said she thought it would be rather nice to go into a convent. H. O. was a little disagreeable because of the powder Eliza had given him, so he tried to read two books at once, one with each eye, just because Noel wanted one of the books, which was very selfish of him, so it only made his headache worse. H. O. is getting old enough to learn by experience that it is wrong to be selfish, and when he complained about his head Oswald told him whose fault it was, because I am older than he is, and it is my duty to show him where he is wrong. But he began to cry, and then Oswald had to cheer him up because of Father wanting to be quiet. So Oswald said
'They'll eat H. O. if you don't look out!' And Dora said Oswald was too bad.

Of course Oswald was not going to interfere again, so he went to look out of the window and see the trams go by, and by and by H. O. came and looked out too, and Oswald, who knows when to be generous and forgiving, gave him a piece of blue pencil and two nibs, as good as new, to keep.

As they were looking out at the rain splashing on the stones in the street they saw a four-wheeled cab come lumbering up from the way the station is. Oswald called out

'Here comes the coach of the Fairy Godmother. It'll stop here, you see if it doesn't!'

So they all came to the window to look. Oswald had only said that about stopping and he was stricken with wonder and amaze when the cab really did stop. It had boxes on the top and knobby parcels sticking out of the window, and it was something like going away to the seaside and something like the gentleman who takes things about in a carriage with the wooden shutters up, to sell to the drapers' shops. The cabman got down, and some one inside handed out ever so many parcels of different shapes and sizes, and the cabman stood holding them in his arms and grinning over them.

Dora said, 'It is a pity some one doesn't tell him this isn't the house.' And then from inside the cab some one put out a foot feeling for the step, like a tortoise's foot coming out from under his shell when you are holding him off the ground, and then a leg came and more parcels, and then Noel cried
'It's the poor Indian!'

And it was.

Eliza opened the door, and we were all leaning over the banisters. Father heard the noise of parcels and boxes in the hall, and he came out without remembering how bad his cold was. If you do

that yourself when you have a cold they call you careless and naughty. Then we heard the poor Indian say to Father
'I say, Dick, I dined with your kids yesterday as I daresay they've told you. Jolliest little cubs I ever saw! Why didn't you let me see them the other night? The eldest is the image of poor Janey and as to young Oswald, he's a man! If he's not a man, I'm a nigger! Eh! what? And Dick, I say, I shouldn't wonder if I could find a friend to put a bit into that business of yours eh?'

Then he and Father went into the study and the door was shut - and we went down and looked at the parcels. Some were done up in old, dirty newspapers, and tied with bits of rag, and some were in brown paper and string from the shops, and there were boxes.

We wondered if the Uncle had come to stay and this was his luggage, or whether it was to sell. Some of it smelt of spices, like merchandise and one bundle Alice felt certain was a bale. We heard a hand on the knob of the study door after a bit, and Alice said
'Fly!' and we all got away but H. O., and the Uncle caught him by the leg as he was trying to get upstairs after us.

'Peeping at the baggage, eh?' said the Uncle, and the rest of us came down because it would have been dishonourable to leave H. O. alone in a scrape, and we wanted to see what was in the parcels.

'I didn't touch,' said H. O. 'Are you coming to stay? I hope you are.'

'No harm done if you did touch,' said the good, kind, Indian man to all of us. 'For all these parcels are *for you*.'

I have several times told you about our being dumb with amazement and terror and joy, and things like that, but I never remember us being dumber than we were when he said this. The Indian Uncle went on: 'I told an old friend of mine what a pleasant dinner I had with you, and about the threepenny-bit, and the divining-rod, and all that, and he sent all these odds and ends as presents for you. Some of the things came from India.'

'Have you come from India, Uncle?' Noel asked; and when he said 'Yes' we were all very much surprised, for we never thought of his being that sort of Indian. We thought he was the Red kind, and of course his not being accounted for his ignorance of beavers and things.

He got Eliza to help, and we took all the parcels into the nursery and he undid them and undid them and undid them, till the papers lay thick on the floor. Father came too and sat in the Guy Fawkes chair. I cannot begin to tell you all the things that kind friend of Uncle's had sent us. He must be a very agreeable person. There were toys for the kids and model engines for Dick and me, and a lot of books, and Japanese china tea-sets for the girls, red

and white and gold there were sweets by the pound and by the box and long yards and yards of soft silk from India, to make frocks for the girls and a real Indian sword for Oswald and a book of Japanese pictures for Noel, and some ivory chess men for Dicky: the castles of the chessmen are elephant-and-castles.

There is a railway station called that; I never knew what it meant before. The brown paper and string parcels had boxes of games in them and big cases of preserved fruits and things. And the shabby old newspaper parcels and the boxes had the Indian things in. I never saw so many beautiful things before. There were carved fans and silver bangles and strings of amber beads, and necklaces of uncut gems *turquoises* and garnets, the Uncle said they were and shawls and scarves of silk, and cabinets of brown and gold, and ivory boxes and silver trays, and brass things. The Uncle kept saying, 'This is for you, young man,' or 'Little Alice will like this fan,'or 'Miss Dora would look well in this green silk, I think. Eh! what?'

And Father looked on as if it was a dream, till the Uncle suddenly gave him an ivory paper-knife and a box of cigars, and said, 'My old friend sent you these, Dick; he's an old friend of yours too, he says.' And he winked at my Father, for H. O. and I saw him. And my Father winked back, though he has always told us not to. That was a wonderful day. It was a treasure, and no mistake! I never saw such heaps and heaps of presents, like things out of a fairy-tale and even Eliza had a shawl. Perhaps she deserved it,

for she did cook the rabbit and the pudding; and Oswald says it is not her fault if her nose turns up and she does not brush her hair. I do not think Eliza likes brushing things. It is the same with the carpets. But Oswald tries to make allowances even for people who do not wash their ears.

The Indian Uncle came to see us often after that, and his friend always sent us something. Once he tipped us a sovereign each the Uncle brought it; and once he sent us money to go to the Crystal Palace, and the Uncle took us; and another time to a circus; and when Christmas was near the Uncle said
'You remember when I dined with you, some time ago, you promised to dine with me some day, if I could ever afford to give a dinner-party. Well, I'm going to have one a Christmas party. Not on Christmas Day, because every one goes home then but on the day after. Cold mutton and rice pudding. You'll come? Eh! - what?'

We said we should be delighted, if Father had no objection, because that is the proper thing to say, and the poor Indian, I mean the Uncle, said, 'No, your Father won't object he's coming too, bless your soul!'

We all got Christmas presents for the Uncle. The girls made him a handkerchief case and a comb bag, out of some of the pieces of silk he had given them. I got him a knife with three blades; H. O. got a siren whistle, a very strong one, and Dicky joined with me in

the knife, and Noel would give the Indian ivory box that Uncle's friend had sent on the wonderful Fairy Cab day. He said it was the very nicest thing he had, and he was sure Uncle wouldn't mind his not having bought it with his own money.

I think Father's business must have got better perhaps Uncle's friend put money in it and that did it good, like feeding the starving. Anyway we all had new suits, and the girls had the green silk from India made into frocks, and on Boxing Day we went in two cabs Father and the girls in one, and us boys in the other.

We wondered very much where the Indian Uncle lived, because we had not been told. And we thought when the cab began to go up the hill towards the Heath that perhaps the Uncle lived in one of the poky little houses up at the top of Greenwich. But the cab went right over the Heath and in at some big gates, and through a shrubbery all white with frost like a fairy forest, because it was Christmas time. And at last we stopped before one of those jolly, big, ugly red houses with a lot of windows, that are so comfortable inside, and on the steps was the Indian Uncle, looking very big and grand, in a blue cloth coat and yellow sealskin waistcoat, with a bunch of seals hanging from it.

'I wonder whether he has taken a place as butler here?' said Dicky.

‘A poor, broken-down man ’

Noel thought it was very likely, because he knew that in these big houses there were always thousands of stately butlers.

The Uncle came down the steps and opened the cab door himself, which I don’t think butlers would expect to have to do. And he took us in. It was a lovely hall, with bear and tiger skins on the floor, and a big clock with the faces of the sun and moon dodging out when it was day or night, and Father Time with a scythe coming out at the hours, and the name on it was ‘Flint. Ashfor’; and there was a fox eating a stuffed duck in a glass case, and horns of stags and other animals over the doors.

‘We’ll just come into my study first,’ said the Uncle, ’and wish each other a Merry Christmas.’ So then we knew he wasn’t the butler, but it must be his own house, for only the master of the house has a study.

His study was not much like Father’s. It had hardly any books, but swords and guns and newspapers and a great many boots, and boxes half unpacked, with more Indian things bulging out of them.

We gave him our presents and he was awfully pleased. Then he gave us his Christmas presents. You must be tired of hearing about presents, but I must remark that all the Uncle’s presents

were watches; there was a watch for each of us, with our names engraved inside, all silver except H. O.'s, and that was a Waterbury, 'To match his boots,' the Uncle said. I don't know what he meant.

Then the Uncle looked at Father, and Father said, 'You tell them, sir.'

So the Uncle coughed and stood up and made a speech. He said 'Ladies and gentlemen, we are met together to discuss an important subject which has for some weeks engrossed the attention of the honourable member opposite and myself.'

I said, 'Hear, hear,' and Alice whispered, 'What happened to the guinea-pig?' Of course you know the answer to that.

The Uncle went on
'I am going to live in this house, and as it's rather big for me, your Father has agreed that he and you shall come and live with me. And so, if you're agreeable, we're all going to live here together, and, please God, it'll be a happy home for us all. Eh! - what?'

He blew his nose and kissed us all round. As it was Christmas I did not mind, though I am much too old for it on other dates. Then he said, 'Thank you all very much for your presents; but I've got a present here I value more than anything else I have.'

I thought it was not quite polite of him to say so, till I saw that what he valued so much was a threepenny-bit on his watch-chain, and, of course, I saw it must be the one we had given him. He said, 'You children gave me that when you thought I was the poor Indian, and I'll keep it as long as I live. And I've asked some friends to help us to be jolly, for this is our house-warming. Eh! - what?'

Then he shook Father by the hand, and they blew their noses; and then Father said, 'Your Uncle has been most kind most '

But Uncle interrupted by saying, 'Now, Dick, no nonsense!' Then H. O. said, 'Then you're not poor at all?' as if he were very disappointed. The Uncle replied, 'I have enough for my simple wants, thank you, H. O.; and your Father's business will provide him with enough for yours. Eh! what?'

Then we all went down and looked at the fox thoroughly, and made the Uncle take the glass off so that we could see it all round and then the Uncle took us all over the house, which is the most comfortable one I have ever been in. There is a beautiful portrait of Mother in Father's sitting-room. The Uncle must be very rich indeed. This ending is like what happens in Dickens's books; but I think it was much jollier to happen like a book, and it shows what a nice man the Uncle is, the way he did it all.

Think how flat it would have been if the Uncle had said, when we

first offered him the one and threepence farthing, 'Oh, I don't want your dirty one and three-pence! I'm very rich indeed.'

Instead of which he saved up the news of his wealth till Christmas, and then told us all in one glorious burst. Besides, I can't help it if it is like Dickens, because it happens this way. Real life is often something like books.

Presently, when we had seen the house, we were taken into the drawing-room, and there was Mrs Leslie, who gave us the shillings and wished us good hunting, and Lord Tottenham, and Albert-next-door's Uncle and Albert-next-door, and his Mother (I'm not very fond of her), and best of all our own Robber and his two kids, and our Robber had a new suit on. The Uncle told us he had asked the people who had been kind to us, and Noel said, 'Where is my noble editor that I wrote the poetry to?'

The Uncle said he had not had the courage to ask a strange editor to dinner; but Lord Tottenham was an old friend of Uncle's, and he had introduced Uncle to Mrs Leslie, and that was how he had the pride and pleasure of welcoming her to our house-warming. And he made her a bow like you see on a Christmas card.

Then Alice asked, 'What about Mr Rosenbaum? He was kind; it would have been a pleasant surprise for him.'

But everybody laughed, and Uncle said

'Your father has paid him the sovereign he lent you. I don't think he could have borne another pleasant surprise.'

And I said there was the butcher, and he was really kind; but they only laughed, and Father said you could not ask all your business friends to a private dinner.

Then it was dinner-time, and we thought of Uncle's talk about cold mutton and rice. But it was a beautiful dinner, and I never saw such a dessert! We had ours on plates to take away into another sitting-room, which was much jollier than sitting round the table with the grown-ups. But the Robber's kids stayed with their Father. They were very shy and frightened, and said hardly anything, but looked all about with very bright eyes. H. O. thought they were like white mice; but afterwards we got to know them very well, and in the end they were not so mousy. And there is a good deal of interesting stuff to tell about them; but I shall put all that in another book, for there is no room for it in this one. We played desert islands all the afternoon and drank Uncle's health in ginger wine. It was H. O. that upset his over Alice's green silk dress, and she never even rowed him. Brothers ought not to have favourites, and Oswald would never be so mean as to have a favourite sister, or, if he had, wild horses should not make him tell who it was.

And now we are to go on living in the big house on the Heath, and it is very jolly.

Mrs Leslie often comes to see us, and our own Robber and Albert-next-door's uncle. The Indian Uncle likes him because he has been in India too and is brown; but our Uncle does not like Albert-next-door. He says he is a muff. And I am to go to Rugby, and so are Noel and H. O., and perhaps to Balliol afterwards. Balliol is my Father's college. It has two separate coats of arms, which many other colleges are not allowed. Noel is going to be a poet and Dicky wants to go into Father's business.

The Uncle is a real good old sort; and just think, we should never have found him if we hadn't made up our minds to be Treasure Seekers! Noel made a poem about it

Lo! the poor Indian from lands afar,
Comes where the treasure seekers are;
We looked for treasure, but we find
The best treasure of all is the Uncle good and kind.

I thought it was rather rot, but Alice would show it to the Uncle, and he liked it very much. He kissed Alice and he smacked Noel on the back, and he said, 'I don't think I've done so badly either, if you come to that, though I was never a regular professional treasure seeker. Eh! what?'

The End!