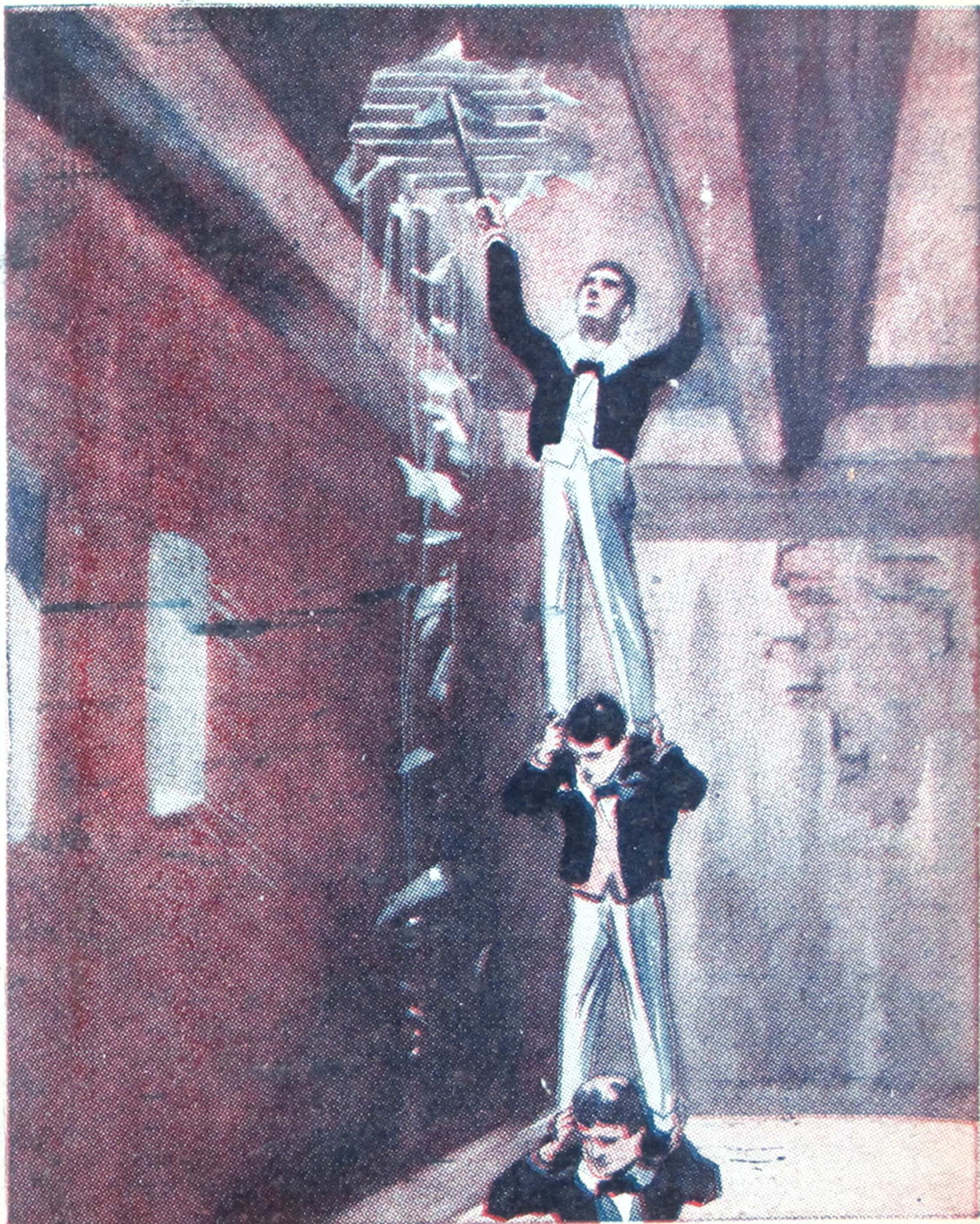


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A Tale of NELSON LEE and NIPPER AT ST. FRANK'S. Specially written by the
Author of "The New Housemaster," "Hunter the Hun," etc., etc.

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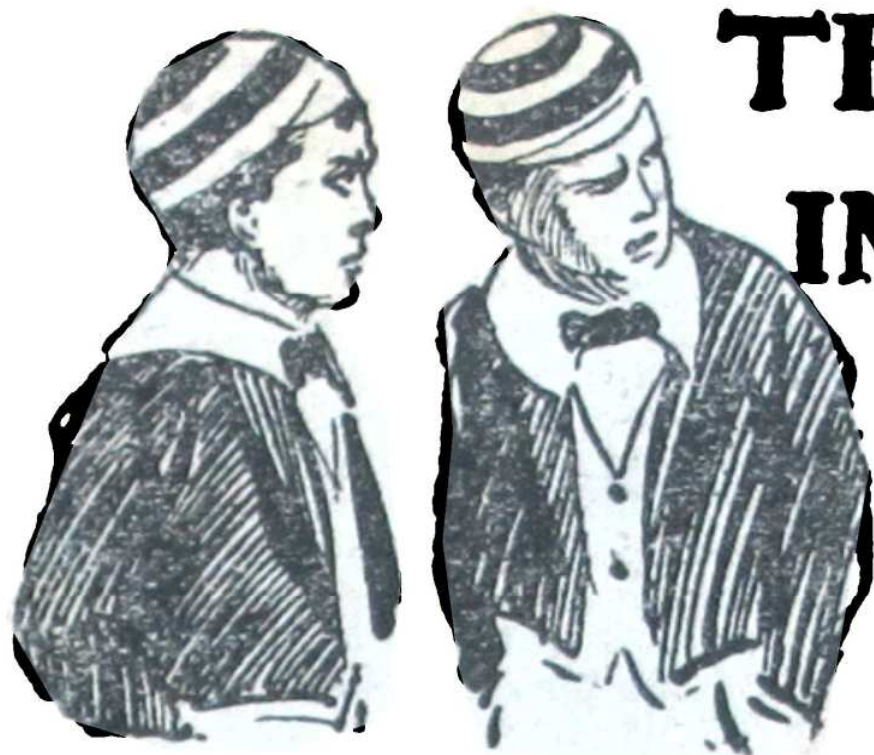
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THE REMOVE IN REVOLT!

A Tale of NELSON LEE
and NIPPER AT ST.
FRANK'S.

Specially written by the Author of
"The New Housemaster," "Hunter
the Hun," etc., etc.



AUTHOR'S NOTE.

Nelson Lee and Nipper are at St. Frank's College, to escape the attentions of the murderous Chinese Secret Society, the Fu Chang Tong, whose hatred they have incurred. Although living in the great school in the characters of master and pupil, Nelson Lee and Nipper nevertheless find many opportunities to utilise their unique detective ability in various mysterious and adventurous cases.

CHAPTER I.

(Told by Nipper.)

IN WHICH THE LIFE OF THE REMOVE IS REDUCED
TO SHEER MISERY.

"IT'S my belief," I said, with conviction, as I helped myself to a biscuit out of the bag, "that the Hunter bird will draw in his horns after what happened this morning."

Sir Montie Tregellis-West raised his eyebrows.

"Begad! That's a rather queer bird, ain't it?" he asked. "I didn't know that birds had horns, Benny boy."

I grinned.

"You're too literal, my son," I replied cheerfully. "But, seriously, I've got an idea that Hunter will lie low for a bit. That scene this morning was a positive disgrace, and it's a jolly good thing it was stopped in time."

It was evening at St. Frank's—tea-time, in fact—and Sir Montie and I and Tommy Watson, of the Remove, were squatting comfortably in the shade of the elms in the Triangle.

The day had been particularly bright and hot, and the sun was still shining with summer-like warmth. At this hour we ought to have been partaking of tea in Study O, but study teas were discontinued. As a kind of substitute we had laid in a stock of biscuits, and were munching at these comfortably.

After tea, under ordinary conditions, we should have adjourned to the playing-fields for cricket practice. But the playing-fields were now out of bounds for the Remove, and cricket was banned.

We had Mr. Kennedy Hunter, M.A., our new Housemaster, to thank for this unfortunate state of affairs. Since his arrival at St. Frank's—only a comparatively short time before—he had apparently concentrated all his efforts upon subjecting the Remove to every punishment and indignity he could devise.

Needless to say, the Remove hotly resented this Hunnish system of tyranny. And on more than one occasion the fellows had been precious near the point of revolt. If Mr. Hunter continued his hateful habits, it was morally certain that an outbreak would occur.

As I had remarked, however, it was my belief that Mr. Hunter would draw in his horns. He had not only banned cricket, and had placed the playing-fields out of bounds, but he had interfered with the liberties of the juniors in every possible way. He had even issued a decree to the effect that no meetings were to be held—believing, rightly, that the juniors would collect together to ventilate their grievances.

Mr. Hunter, thank goodness, was only a temporary evil, so to speak. This, in one way, made matters worse. For a complete stranger to come into the school and to upset everything as he had done, was almost past belief.

You see, Mr. Alvington, our real Housemaster, had left St. Frank's for a short period, and Mr. Hunter was taking his place. As it happened, the Head himself was away, and Mr. Hunter, as senior Housemaster, had virtually appointed himself the Head. So far as the Ancient House was concerned, he held complete sway, and there was nobody above him to appeal to.

Of course, you are quite aware that Mr. Alvington is my gov'nor, aren't you? We are really Nelson Lee and Nipper; but at St. Frank's the gov'nor's name is "Mr. Alvington." and mine is "Dick Bennett."

The business which had taken Nelson Lee away from the school was connected with some Secret Service work. Even I didn't know the ins and outs of it, but it had not taken me long to discover that the gov'nor was still somewhere in the neighbourhood. I was beginning to realise, in fact, that Mr. Hunter himself was directly connected with the mystery.

On more than one occasion my chums and I had noticed queer things. For example, the new Housemaster had left St. Frank's in disguise; he had penetrated underground passages in the neighbourhood of the old quarry on Bannington Moor. Sir Montie and Tommy and I had done the same on one famous occasion. We had met a man with a revolver, and had been rescued by an American gentleman—who was, I firmly believe, Nelson Lee himself.

Well, all this, as it can easily be guessed, was jolly significant. Mr. Hunter was not merely a schoolmaster—there was something behind his sojourn at St. Frank's. He had some sinister motive in these mysterious meetings and expeditions. He knew well enough that Montie and Tommy and I had taken a certain interest in his affairs, and only the previous night he had attempted to force us to speak.

Having failed, he had prepared a flogging on a large scale. During morning lessons the Remove had been called out into the Triangle. And here we found everything in readiness for a most stupendous birching. Mr. Hunter would have had his way but for the intervention of Mr. Stockdale, of the College House, who had put a stop to the whole disgraceful scene.

The Remove had been, even then, ready to take matters into its own hands. And Mr. Hunter probably realised that he had gone a step too far. At all events, nothing more had been heard of the affair, and things were now going smoothly. It was possible that Mr. Hunter would seek revenge—by imposing further hardships upon the Remove—but I didn't think so.

His rule was not merely harsh, but tyrannous. And yet Mr. Hunter himself was an exceedingly meek-looking gentleman, with mild manners, a gentle voice, and with a beaming smile which disarmed anybody.

But we had grown to suspect that smile of his; every fellow in the Remove knew that it was far more dangerous than the blackest frown. There had been a great many whisperings of mutiny, but these had now died away.

In fact it was tacitly agreed by everybody that it would be better to "stick it" until "old Alvy" returned. This, of course, was assuming that Mr. Hunter would let matters rest where they were. As events showed, he didn't!

All this discontent and whispering of re-

billion affected the Ancient House section of the Remove only. Bob Christine and Co., of the College House, were sympathetic, but they were helpless. They could lend us no material aid. It was necessary to fight our own battles alone.

"We didn't get that thrashing, you know," remarked Tommy Watson, as we sat under the elms. "I've got an idea that Hunter will spring something on us suddenly. He may even call us into his study one at a time, and half slaughter us separately."

"Begad! What a cheerin' prospect," said Sir Montie languidly.

"Well, it's better to be prepared," said Watson, shaking his head.

"I don't think Hunter will do that," I remarked. "If he does, we'll be ready for him. If either of us is ordered into his study, we'll have a crowd of fellows hanging about near by—in case of emergencies. By jingo! We ain't going to have any beastly Prussianism at St. Frank's!"

"Rather not!" agreed Watson heartily. "We've had enough, as it is, if it comes to that. Half our liberties have been done away with, and if Hunter interferes with us any more life will be reduced to a sheer misery."

"Hunter's had a bit of an eye-opener," I declared. "He thought he was going to do exactly as he liked, but he finds that we're not going to be trampled upon. And I'll bet anything you like that things will go smoothly from now."

"And what about the cricket?" asked Watson warmly.

"We shall have to think of something," I replied. "There's always a way out of these difficulties, my sons. If we can't have cricket here, we'll go down to the giddy village green and play there!"

"Begad! That's rather a good idea, old fellow," said Tregellis-West, gazing at me mildly through his pince-nez. "I hadn't thought of that, you know. But you always were a fellow for havin' frightfully good ideas, Benny!"

"We ain't going to be done out of our cricket," I said firmly. "Hunter seems to think that he's diddled us by shoving the playing-fields out of bounds. But there are more ways of killing a dog than by choking it with butter!"

Sir Montie gazed at me in horror.

"Dear fellow, what a shockin' waste!" he exclaimed. "Besides, you couldn't get the butter nowadays. Dogs ain't rationed—"

"You fathead!" I grinned. "That's only a saying. It simply means that if you can't do a thing one way, you can try another dodge. And I'm full of dodges just now. I can tell you. We're going to have cricket, one way or another—that's absolutely certain."

"What if Hunter spots us?"

"Well, we sha'n't be defying any of his rotten orders."

"But he'll gate the whole crowd of us, I expect," said Watson, shaking his head.

I looked grim.

"If he tries that kind of dodge," I said, "he'll find that he's bitten off more than he can chew. There's a limit, my dear chaps, and Hunter's come pretty near it already. A few steps further, and there'll be a giddy explosion!"

And so, for the time being, the matter was allowed to rest at that. The other Remove fellows were inclined to share my opinions. I secretly sent the word round that evening that there was a wheeze on about the cricket, and that I meant to hold a Form meeting, on the strict Q.T., before long. The fact was, I hadn't quite decided where the meeting could be held.

We saw no sign of Mr. Kennedy Hunter that evening; he hadn't exposed himself to the public eye, in fact, since his ignominious defeat of the morning. Mr. Hunter considered himself the acting Headmaster, and, in a way, he was within his authority. He had made the mistake in believing that the other masters would stand by and witness Prussianism without interfering.

He couldn't very well sack Mr. Stockdale, for the two masters were of the same standing. He could only creep into his shell and stay there until the affair had blown over. That's what he was doing now. When he came out again he would probably be very subdued.

Not unnaturally, the Remove was inclined to be somewhat triumphant. In the dormitory that night there was a general feeling of cheerfulness. The fellows felt that they had bested the Hun, and that everything would now go smoothly.

Sweet little innocents!

I include myself amongst them, since I was quite as optimistic as anybody. The awakening came in the morning—in a double sense. It is customary for fellows to awaken in the morning, I believe, but we were given a nice little shock, into the bargain.

I was the first to open my eyes. The rising-bell hadn't gone, and, although it was full daylight, there was an "early morning" feel about the dormitory. I instinctively knew that the rising-bell was not due to ring for some little time yet. Some noise had awakened me, and I turned over in bed, yawning.

"Now, boys!" came a sharp voice. "Rouse up!"

I sat up dazedly.

Mr. Hunter stood in the centre of the dormitory. He was fully dressed, even to his gown. And in his hand he held a cane. There was something in his bearing which told me that trouble was brewing.

"Ah, Bennett, you are awake, I see," said Mr. Hunter genially. "Get out of bed at once, and help me to arouse the others."

"Is anything the matter, sir?" I asked, rubbing my eyes.

"Nothing, Bennett."

"But the rising-bell hasn't gone yet, sir—"

"The rising-bell will not ring for another hour, Bennett," said Mr. Hunter, beaming at me. "I have decided that the Remove will

gain much benefit from an extra hour of lessons—before breakfast."

I stared, bewildered.

"Less-lessons!" I gasped. "Be-before brekker!"

"That is what I said, Bennett," smiled Mr. Hunter. "Come now, get out of bed at once, or I shall be obliged to test the flexibility of this cane."

The Housemaster spoke smoothly, but I knew that he hated me like poison. I got out of bed dazedly, but my thoughts were rapidly clearing. So this was Hunter's new method of tyranny!

My ideas had been all wrong. Mr. Hunter was not content to let matters rest. He intended taking his revenge out of the Remove—in the form of extra lessons before breakfast. Certainly, he couldn't have hit the juniors harder.

"Get up, you lazy young rascals!" shouted Mr. Hunter loudly.

Handforth turned over in bed, yawning.

"Shurrup!" he mumbled. "Tain't risin' bell yet, fathead. Who's that makin' all the row? Shurrup!"

"Tumble out, you ass!" I hissed urgently.

Handforth glared at me blinkily.

"Can't you let a fellow sleep?" he growled.

"Never knew such a disturbin' ass in all my life! An' I didn't know you had a voice like a knife-sharpener before! 'Tain't time to get up yet— Oh, my goodness!"

Handforth had suddenly spotted Mr. Hunter, and his dismay was almost comical. Many other fellows were also awake, and there was general consternation in the dormitory. Mr. Hunter waved his hand.

"Now, boys," he said sharply, "dress yourselves as quickly as possible."

He looked at the leader of Study D fixedly.

"Handforth, you will take five hundred lines," he exclaimed.

"Fi-five hundred lines, sir," gasped Handforth. "What for?"

"Perhaps I had better say seven hundred!" said Mr. Hunter smoothly.

Handforth opened his mouth to speak, but so many words crowded together that he couldn't find his voice. It was just as well, for his imposition would certainly have been increased if he had objected. And Church and McClure, his faithful chums, took care to hold him in check.

"Every boy will wash and dress in the shortest time possible," ordered Mr. Hunter. "You will then descend to the class-room for early lessons. I may tell you that this innovation will be permanent."

Mr. Hunter swept out of the dormitory, and as the door closed behind him there was general dismay voiced. Several fellows jumped back into bed at once, and the hubbub was quite alarming.

"I ain't going to stick it!" roared Handforth rebelliously. "My hat! Things have come to a pretty pass when we've got to have lessons before breakfast! I vote we all jib against it."

"That would be mutiny, mesamate," said

Burton—known to the Remove as the Bo'sun. "We'd better not defy the skipper's orders. If we do he'll have us all put in irons and cast below!"

But Handforth had many followers.

"Don't get up!" said Hubbard, who had got back into bed. "I don't see why we should be squashed like this— Oh, lor'!"

The dormitory door had opened again, and Starke, the prefect, strode in. There was an unpleasant grin upon his face, and he wished a cane in his hand. Starke greatly enjoyed exerting his authority, for he was a bully of the first class.

"You lazy young rotters!" he roared. "Hurry yourselves! Get out of bed, Hubbard!"

"Shan't!" shouted Hubbard defiantly.

Starke strode across to the bed.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Ow! Oh, corks!" howled Hubbard desperately, as he tumbled on to the floor in a heap. "Stoppt. Starke! Ow-yow! You—bullying cad—"

Starke grinned.

"Now, hurry yourself!" he said pleasantly.

The other juniors, bearing in mind Hubbard's punishment, tumbled into their clothes in record time. Sir Montie and Tommy and I were already dressing. Indignant as we were, we knew that it would be useless jibbing against this new tyranny of Hunter's. But when we all marched into the Form-room, some little time later, it was generally agreed that we wouldn't stand much nonsense.

It had been hoped that Mr. Crowell would take us for the hour's lesson. But the hateful Mr. Hunter was there in person, and I knew that we should be kept hard at it. Somehow, this extra hour of work, when we should have been in bed, told upon the fellows' tempers amazingly. Everybody was in a grumpy mood, and black looks were general. But nobody showed the slightest sign of rebelling against the new order.

On empty stomachs it wasn't an easy matter for the juniors to organise resistance. They simply had to do as they were ordered. And, under Mr. Hunter's eagle eye, the spirit was taken out of the Remove.

Rebellion was all very well, but it couldn't be done. When a country is ground under the heel of a harsh despot, the population does not reach the point of revolution until untold hardships have been suffered—that's a well-known fact. Rebellion can't be organised in a minute.

It was the same with the Remove.

The juniors talked a lot about "jibbing," and all that sort of thing; but it was only talk. With Mr. Hunter in the very room with us, nobody thought of rebelling against his rule. He was lord of all he surveyed, so to speak. His word was law, and we were forced to obey.

Sooner or later, perhaps, the Removites would reach a pitch of recklessness which would lead to open revolt. But, as I ex-

plained, revolt could not possibly come until matters became deadly serious.

We would stand a certain amount of tyranny, and then—well, Hunter's "mailed fist" rule hadn't gone far enough yet to cause a serious uprising. It is easy enough to talk of jibbing, but jolly hard to do it! The fellows would have to undergo much harsher treatment before they were driven to desperation. And a revolution is always a very desperate measure.

That hour of lessons was simply one long series of impositions and canings. The juniors could not settle themselves to work, and Mr. Hunter made no allowances. His very smile made the chaps writhe. His beaming expression of good-nature caused the Remove to gnash its teeth with irritation and helpless fury.

By the time we were dismissed half the fellows had been caned and the other half had received lines. The thought of bursting out into the sunny Triangle, to air our indignation, was a welcome one.

But even this was denied us!

For Mr. Hunter kept us in the Form-room until the breakfast-gong sounded—and then he marched us straight into the dining-hall! Several fellows—Handforth, in particular—were practically foaming at the mouth with rage.

After breakfast, however, the Remove's feelings were let loose. But, to repeat what I said before, it was all talk—talk—talk. It was impossible for us to adopt open defiance without rebelling altogether.

"Say, it's just hot air," remarked Justin B. Farman, the American junior. "Guess it won't help us any. I'm sure sick of Hunter, an' I'd just hate myself worse than pisen if I said a good word for him. But, say, there ain't no hoss-sense in all this blamed gas. We've just got to stick it—and that's all there is to worry over. We sure can't do a thing."

And Farman wasn't far wrong. Under Mr. Hunter's rule the Remove was subdued. No meetings were allowed, and the prefects had been told off to keep their eyes open for any disobedience of this rule. Fellows like Morrow and Wilson, who hated Hunter as cordially as anybody, winked at a lot of things. But Starke and Kenmore, and one or two others, made our lives a misery.

There was Bates, too. This enterprising youth was the new page-boy in the Ancient House; he had been imported into St. Frank's by Mr. Hunter. And Bates made a special hobby of spying upon the juniors and reporting trifles to the Housemaster. Canings and lines invariably followed, and the Remove was rapidly coming to the conclusion that life was not worth living.

But, even at this stage, things might have gone on with comparative smoothness; the mutinous talk might have remained nothing but talk. Mr. Hunter, however, did not know when to stop.

And, during the evening, matters reached a crisis.

The limit was reached, so to speak—the

limit of endurance. And, to the lasting credit of Mr. Crowell, our respected Form-master, he jibbed at Hunter's treatment himself. Mr. Crowell was quite a decent sort, and just at present his popularity was soaring to heights it had never reached before.

The start of it all came just after tea. This, of course, was being taken in Hall—since study teas were barred. The Remove was there to a man, as it happened; at least, the Ancient House section of the Remove. The College House fellows didn't count in these great troubles.

Mr. Hunter appeared in the dining-hall, and he was accompanied by Starke and Kenmore and three other prefects. I was just on the point of leaving, with Sir Montie and Tommy Watson.

"Keep your places, boys," said Mr. Hunter smoothly.

Everybody waited, and glares were general.

"I have come to the conclusion that the Remove has too much liberty," went on Mr. Hunter, ignoring the gasp which arose. "I have therefore decided that two extra hours of lessons are to be given in the evening—starting from to-day."

"O-oh!" went up a dismayed chorus.

"Every boy belonging to the Remove will leave his place at once," said the House-master. "You are to follow me to your class-room—"

"I haven't finished my tea yet!" roared Handforth violently.

Mr. Hunter turned upon the interrupter.

"Were you addressing me, Handforth?" he asked.

"No, sir," said Handforth, with bitter sarcasm. "I just addressed that remark to the ceiling!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a very subdued chuckle; but Handforth's boldness provided a light touch. It was generally agreed, however, that Edward Oswald was several kinds of an ass. This was simply asking for trouble.

"Quite humorous, Handforth," said Mr. Hunter silkily. "Dear me! I had no idea you were so witty. Perhaps you will oblige me by attending in my study at eight-thirty, Handforth?"

Handforth didn't answer.

"Now, boys," went on Mr. Hunter briskly.

We all trooped out. What else could we do? Handforth was certainly booked for a terrific "whopping," and he knew it. He was quite subdued. Mr. Hunter's calmness was far worse than a violent outburst.

In the Form-room, however, the fellows sat in their places with grim, determined expressions. Two hours of lessons! Why, we shouldn't be released until eight o'clock! We shouldn't have time for prep., even; and as for recreation, the very thought was farcical.

Our last bit of liberty had been taken from us. Lessons before breakfast, lessons in the morning, lessons in the afternoon, and lessons in the evening! Life would simply be a constant round of grinding work.

We shouldn't have a minute of leisure, morning, noon, or night!

"Work is really the finest type of recreation," said Mr. Hunter smoothly, as he surveyed us. "I am glad that you followed me quietly, boys. Candidly, I feared that you would foolishly resist. Starke, kindly fetch Mr. Crowell."

"Yes, sir," said Starke, leaving the Form-room.

Within two minutes he returned. We watched gloomily as Mr. Crowell came into the room, followed by the grinning prefect. Mr. Hunter waved his hand towards the class, and beamed.

"May I ask the meaning of this, sir?" said Mr. Crowell tartly.

"You are to take the Remove for two hours this evening, and every evening in future, Mr. Crowell," replied Hunter.

"Indeed, sir!" said the Form-master. "Possibly you overlook the fact that I have other duties to attend to in the evening—"

"You must do them later on," said Mr. Hunter calmly. "They are my orders, Mr. Crowell, and I expect you to obey them."

"Your—your orders!" exploded Mr. Crowell hotly.

"Certainly."

"It is a pity you did not consult me beforehand, Mr. Hunter," said the Form-master, compressing his lips. "I should have urged upon you the injustice of this order. The boys will have no leisure whatever. Moreover, I protest in the strongest possible terms against this harsh—"

"Really, Mr. Crowell, I have no desire to hear your complaints," interrupted Mr. Hunter. "I suspect that you are thinking more of yourself than of the boys."

"Sir!" shouted Mr. Crowell, flushing angrily.

"You will please take your class," went on the other. "Do not release the boys until eight o'clock, and keep them hard at work. If there is the slightest sign of insubordination, send for me at once. Now, sir, please attend to your duties, and let me hear no more of your grumbles!"

Mr. Hunter swished out of the Form-room. I didn't do anything, but several juniors hissed in a minor key. Mr. Crowell stood perfectly still. His face had turned pale now, and there was a grim look about the set of his lips.

The Remove waited, and the tension was great. Quite suddenly Mr. Crowell faced the class, and I knew that he had come to a decision.

"Boys," he exclaimed, in a steady voice, "you may dismiss!"

"But—but—" I gasped.

"You may dismiss!" repeated Mr. Crowell quietly.

And then a wild, hysterical cheer arose. The Removites stood up in their places and roared themselves hoarse. It was a moment of supreme joy, and Mr. Crowell smiled grimly as he surveyed us. Then he walked quickly out of the room.

The cheers rang in his ears as he walked down the passage.

He had defied Mr. Kennedy Hunter!

CHAPTER II.

MR. CROWELL STANDS FIRM—HUNTER ASKS FOR TROUBLE, AND GETS IT.

MR. CROWELL had never had any occasion to deal with any sudden crisis; his life at St. Frank's had always been level and, indeed, hum-drum. But now that the test had come he had not failed.

The introduction of Mr. Hunter at St. Frank's had made many alterations in the even tenor of Mr. Crowell's life. He had been interfered with continuously by the new Housemaster; he had been subjected to petty annoyances which had made his position decidedly uncomfortable at times.

He had always been allowed to deal with his own Form in his own way. It pleased Mr. Hunter, however, to interfere, and the Form-master resented it hotly. Up to a certain point he had borne the indignity without protest.

But now the limit of his endurance had been reached. Actually before his own boys he had been ordered about as though he were a mere servant—as though his sole purpose at St. Frank's was to accept Mr. Hunter's commands and to be at his beck and call. Moreover, he was filled with indignation at the rank injustice of the Housemaster's decree.

The early morning lessons had been bad enough, but for the juniors to be hemmed in the class-room for two hours of an evening was altogether disgraceful. Mr. Crowell took a great interest in the welfare of the boys under his charge, and under no consideration would he submit to Mr. Hunter's nonsense.

The position had been gradually growing more intolerable, but after the scene in the Form-room Mr. Crowell felt that it was time for him to take action. He had done so, promptly and boldly, by dismissing the Remove in open defiance of the Housemaster's order.

It cannot be denied that Mr. Crowell felt a slight thrill of pleasure as he heard the cheers of the boys still ringing in his ears as he strode down the passage. Every school-master likes to be popular with his boys, and Mr. Crowell was no exception to this rule.

And there was a quiet feeling of intense satisfaction within him at the thought of having flouted this impudent newcomer in such a deliberate manner. Mr. Crowell was possessed of dignity. Had he meekly submitted to Mr. Hunter, he would have lost the respect of the entire Remove. By acting as he had done he had proved his strength, and he had won the true affection of the juniors.

Mr. Crowell's mind was made up. He walked straight to the Housemaster's study, and strode in after a preliminary tap. Mr. Kennedy Hunter, M.A., was in the act of lighting a cigar, and there was an expression of keen satisfaction upon his face. Evidently he had not heard the cheers of the Remove. His smile vanished as he saw who his visitor was.

"Well, Mr. Crowell?" He asked softly.

"I wish to inform you, sir, that I must decline to take charge of the Remove during the evening hours," said the Form-master in a steady voice. "I consider that the whole proceeding is un-British."

"Is it quite necessary for you to state your opinions?" asked Mr. Hunter.

"Under the present circumstances—yes."

"Then I am sorry to say, Mr. Crowell, that your opinion carries no weight with me whatever," said the Housemaster smoothly. "Am I to understand that you refuse to carry out my instructions?"

"I have already said so."

"And the Remove? You have, I presume, left a prefect in charge?"

"On the contrary, the boys are dismissed," said Mr. Crowell quietly.

Mr. Hunter dropped his cigar.

"Dismissed?" he snapped, his eyes flashing.

"Exactly!"

"Oh, indeed!" said Mr. Hunter. "Then you have thought fit to flout me in this unwarrantable fashion—"

"Pardon me, sir, my action was not unwarranted—"

"Do not interrupt me, sir!" shouted Mr. Hunter furiously. "You have not only flouted me, but you have set my instructions at defiance. I not only request you, but I order you to collect your boys together immediately!"

Mr. Crowell laughed.

"I positively refuse to do so," he said grimly.

"In other words, you defy me?"

"Most decidedly I do," was Mr. Crowell's reply. "And I may inform you, sir, that I have no intention of taking part in any tyranny. I am not prepared to obey these despotic orders of yours, and I take this opportunity to warn you, Mr. Hunter, that you are conducting the Ancient House in a manner which is entirely foreign to the traditions of this noble old school!"

The two masters eyed one another with rising fury.

"Very well, Mr. Crowell, you will oblige me by handing in your resignation at the earliest possible moment," said Mr. Hunter between his teeth. "After this outbreak on your part I cannot submit to your holding an appointment—"

"Upon my soul, sir, you are trying my temper too severely!" shouted Mr. Crowell, white with wrath. "I have held my present post for fourteen years, and I certainly have no intention of accepting dismissal from you—a comparative stranger in the school."

"You are dismissed!" snarled Mr. Hunter, losing all control of himself. "You are dismissed from this moment, you impudent underling!"

Mr. Crowell breathed hard.

"I do not choose to demean myself by replying to your outrageous insults, Mr. Hunter," he said quietly. "I must inform you, however, that I definitely refuse to accept dismissal at your hands. It must remain for the Board of Governors to decide the question—and, I may add, I have very

little doubt as to their decision. I fully intend to remain at St. Frank's until the Headmaster's return, when I shall take good care to place the whole facts before him."

"You will leave St. Frank's at once—this very night!" roared Mr. Hunter violently.

"You are merely making yourself ridiculous, my dear sir," said Mr. Crowell, with quiet contempt. "I shall not go. On the contrary, I shall remain, and will take my boys in the usual course. That is my final word upon the matter. Any attempts at tyranny on your part will be reported by me to Dr. Stafford."

And Mr. Crowell, with rare dignity, walked softly out of the study and closed the door behind him. He left Mr. Hunter standing with clenched fists and blazing eyes. In strict truth the Housemaster was at a loss.

He had not expected Mr. Crowell to take such a strong stand, and the whole matter infuriated him intensely. For he knew well enough that Mr. Crowell had right upon his side. These harsh methods had failed, and Mr. Hunter was fully aware of the fact that the governors would uphold the Form-master's attitude strongly when they learned all the facts.

Had he considered the matter carefully, Mr. Hunter would have let it rest. But in his present state of mind he acted with reckless haste. He was furious beyond words, and his sense of judgment was completely warped. His common-sense should have told him that a renewal of the tyranny would lead to serious trouble. But, such were his ideas of his own importance, that he did not even consider the prospect of rebellion on the part of the Remove.

Having failed to terrorise Mr. Crowell, he now left his study with the amiable intention of crushing the Remove under his heel. They were boys—they could do nothing but submit. And they should suffer!

All Mr. Hunter's genial serenity had vanished. His eyes gleamed with bitter fury, and his mood was dangerous in the extreme. It was his intention to confine the Remove to the Form-room until bedtime, and to send the boys up to their dormitory without supper. Not only this, but many of the juniors should feel the lash of his cane before the evening was over.

He strode into the common-room, and, as he had expected, he found practically every Removite there. The boys were talking excitedly and joyously. But an abrupt hush fell upon the crowd as Mr. Hunter entered.

"Every boy here will go to his Form-room at once!" snapped Mr. Hunter harshly. "The first word I hear of complaint will mean a severe flogging for the speaker. Go! Not a word—go!"

The juniors were startled. They had not seen Mr. Hunter in such a fury as this before, and not a single boy dared to question the order. Even Nipper was momentarily taken aback.

And the whole body of juniors marched to the Form-room in a state bordering upon violent and open rebellion. Only their fear of

Mr. Hunter kept them from revolting upon the spot. Starke was encountered in the passage, and he was at once sent to collect up the few stragglers who had not been in the common-room. Within five minutes every member of the Ancient House Remove was in his place.

Dismay had settled upon the juniors. They had been filled with triumph and glee a short while before. Having been dismissed by Mr. Crowell, they had fondly believed that the matter was ended. And now their troubles were infinitely worse than they had been before!

But the feeling of dismay soon passed, and its place was taken by a spirit of dangerous recklessness. In his despotic egoism Mr. Hunter did not see the danger signs. But he was sailing perilously near the brink of disaster.

"Every boy will stand in his place for half an hour!" said Mr. Hunter icily. "I will allow no lounging in this class. De Valerie! You are not standing upright! Set your back rigid, you young hound!"

Cecil De Valerie stared.

"By George! This is something new, ain't it, sir?" he asked. "It ain't usual for us to stand in class—"

"Silence, boy!" roared Mr. Hunter.

He glared at the class, and the class glared at him. If they had been reckless before, they were far more reckless now. To be ordered to stand in their places in this fashion was almost beyond endurance.

"I intend to take you in history, as a commencement," said Mr. Hunter, breathing rapidly. "If any boy fails in his answers he will receive five hundred lines and two strokes of the cane. The Remove is a disgrace to St. Frank's, and I intend to quell you once and for all."

"Hun!" came a fierce whisper from somewhere.

The Housemaster snapped his teeth.

"Who was that spoken by?" he demanded fiercely.

Silence.

"De Valerie!" shouted Mr. Hunter. "Stand out here!"

De Valerie quietly left his place.

"I shall cane you with exceptional severity—"

"What for, sir?" asked De Valerie steadily. "I didn't say a word—although I admire the fellow who did. If you are going to cane me for calling you a Hun, it will be a gross injustice."

Mr. Hunter nearly foamed at the mouth.

"You—you impudent young scoundrel!" he raved. "I will thrash you within an inch of your worthless life!"

He seized his cane, and raised it with a hiss. But Handforth jumped forward on the instant.

"I called you a Hun, sir!" he said quickly. "And, by George, I meant it!" he added, letting himself go completely in his excitement. "If ever I saw a beastly Prussian, you're one!"

Mr. Hunter turned deathly pale with un-

controllable fury. He left De Valerie, and charged at Handforth with every vestige of his self-control thrown to the winds. His cane flashed through the air, and descended upon Handforth's shoulder with a whack which sounded like the report of a gun.

"Oh!" gasped Handforth, reeling back.

Whack! Whack!

The cane rose and fell rapidly. But Handforth was hurt now, and his own recklessness had got beyond bounds. He grabbed the cane out of Mr. Hunter's hand, tore it away, and sent it flying.

At the same second Nipper rushed forward. He had seen the evil glint in Mr. Hunter's eye, and was charging to Handforth's assistance. His action was the signal for a general charge.

The Remove, in fact, lost its head.

"Down with the Hun!"

"Charge!"

"Smash him!"

The next second Mr. Hunter, utterly overwhelmed, was simply borne to the floor by sheer weight of numbers. He disappeared beneath the surging wave of maddened, excited juniors.

The Housemaster had asked for trouble—and he was getting it!

CHAPTER III.

THE ROUT OF THE HUN—MR. CROWELL INTERVENES—VERY MYSTERIOUS.

THE storm had broken at last.

And it was such a storm that Mr. Hunter found it beyond his powers to subdue. At the present moment, indeed, the tyrant of St. Frank's was incapable of action of any sort.

The juniors, all sense of reason and authority abandoned, swarmed over Mr. Hunter in a wild flood. The Housemaster was utterly terrified. It was he who had called the tune, and he was now paying the piper!

Screaming and shouting, all to no purpose. Mr. Hunter was seized by dozens of willing hands. The next moment he was being whirled out of the Form-room in the midst of a crowd of infuriated juniors.

All fear of the consequences had vanished. For the moment the Remove scarcely knew what it was doing—except that the loathsome Mr. Hunter was in its hands, and that it had gained the mastery.

The procession shot along the passage in a shouting, uncontrollable mob. Mr. Hunter was grasped by his hands, his feet, his hair, and anything which was capable of being grasped.

The lobby was reached, and a crowd of fags were sent flying by the wildly excited Removites. They scarcely knew what they were doing; they had lost all sense of proportion, and were filled with the keen joy of victory.

"Help!" screamed Mr. Hunter desperately. "Help!"

If he was capable of any collected thought

he must have realised, at that intense moment, that he had only himself to thank for this appalling outbreak. The Remove was in revolt!

Nipper was by far the most level-headed boy among the whole crowd. He was not quite sure as to whether this affair would do harm or good. The juniors had been exasperated beyond measure, and they had broken out. To attempt to bring them to reason would be a hopeless task—at least, for Nipper. And he was not altogether sure that he wanted to bring them to reason. Mr. Hunter was badly in need of a lesson.

"The frog's march!" shouted Handforth wildly. "Come on, you chaps! Let's frog's march the rotter right round the Triangle!"

"Hurrah!"

"Duck him in the fountain!"

"Go it!"

"On the ball!"

"Help!" shrieked the Housemaster frantically.

But his voice was like unto a cry in the wilderness. The terrific din created by the juniors filled the whole Triangle, and Mr. Hunter's desperate cries were unheard by all save those next to him.

"Boys!" he gasped, in a brief breathing-space. "Release me, I implore you! I will inflict no punishment if you will set me down at once——"

"The frog's march!" bawled Handforth.

"Go it!"

Mr. Hunter nearly died with terror.

"You young ruffians!" he panted. "I'll thrash every boy——"

"Death to the tyrant!" roared Tommy Watson dramatically.

"Down with Prussianism!"

"Hurrah!"

Another wave of wild excitement swept through the crowd. Mr. Hunter was whirled into the air and borne round the Triangle in a most undignified position. Face downwards, with his arms and legs held by yelling juniors, he could do nothing. His clothing was in rags already, and the frequent bumps with which he met the ground did not tend to improve the condition of his waistcoat.

He had ceased to protest now, since he required all his breath for other purposes. And the triumphal march round the Triangle proceeded. Never before, in the whole history of St. Frank's, had those old walls witnessed such an amazing scene.

Starke came rushing out of the Ancient House with a cane in his hand, and he arrived just as the procession was passing. Dozens of Fifth-Formers and fags were collected round the steps, and they were cycling the proceedings with blank amazement.

"Out of the way!" shouted Starke furiously.

He charged at the juniors—fondly imagining that this was merely an extra-special rag. As a matter of fact, it was, but Starke had no idea that Mr. Hunter was the victim.

"Stop this!" he roared. "You young rascals, you're making the whole place ring with your infernal noise!"

"You clear off, Starke!" howled Handforth. "We're frog's marching the Hun—"

"Down with Hunter!"

"Three cheers for liberty!"

"Hurrah!"

"What!" roared Starke, aghast. "Do you mean to say that you've got— Release Mr. Hunter at once, you mad young idiots! Release— Oh! Yaroooooh!"

Starke was swept off his feet by a sudden rush of juniors. Having dealt drastically with Mr. Hunter, it wasn't likely that the Removites would pay any attention to the bullying prefect. He was simply hurled over, trampled on, and left gasping on the ground.

"Oh, great Scott!" panted Starke dazedly.

He staggered to his feet, and gazed after the procession with bewildered eyes. Just then Mr. Crowell emerged from the Ancient House, and Starke reeled up to him.

"They—they've got Mr. Hunter, sir!" he said hoarsely.

"Mr. Hunter!" repeated the Form-master, catching in his breath. "Good gracious me! What a truly appalling affair, Starke! But Mr. Hunter has only himself to thank; it is to be hoped that this will be a grim lesson for him!"

Mr. Crowell raced across the Triangle in a manner which was scarcely dignified. But the circumstances were altogether exceptional. The Form-master, although angry and alarmed, could not find it in his heart to blame the boys for what had occurred. It was wrong, of course—appallingly wrong—but Mr. Crowell secretly admired the Remove's spirit in taking matters into their own hands. Not for worlds would Mr. Crowell have admitted this, but he thought it all the same.

"Boys—boys!" he cried appealingly, as he hurried up. "I beg of you to cease this outrage at once!"

Mr. Crowell did not speak harshly; his words were not a command. And the Remove came to a standstill on the instant. Mr. Crowell's presence restored them to a level state again. And they stood, frightened by their own actions.

Mr. Kennedy Hunter, M.A., found himself released like a hot brick. He fell face downwards upon the hard gravel with a thud, but he was by no means exhausted. In a second Mr. Hunter was upon his feet, and he fled ignominiously. He streaked across the Triangle in the gloom, followed by a wild howl of contempt and disgust.

"I am surprised at you, my lads," went on Mr. Crowell sternly. "I am, indeed, inexpressibly shocked that you should have so far forgotten yourselves as to lay hands upon your Housemaster."

"He acted like a brute, sir!" exclaimed Nipper sharply. "He slashed at Handforth with a cane—slashed him across the shoulders, and would have half killed him if we hadn't interfered."

"Am I to understand, Bennett, that you started this outbreak?"

"We're all in it, sir!" came a roar.

"Begad! Rather!"

"Every one of us, sir!"

The Remove was intensely eager to have the blame distributed evenly.

"Since you all admit guilt, I must punish the whole Form," exclaimed Mr. Crowell sternly. "Every boy here will write five hundred lines. If Mr. Hunter chooses to administer punishment on his own account, you need not do the imposition which I now impose. But I fancy the matter will be allowed to rest."

"Five hundred lines!" chortled Handforth gleefully. "My only hat! It was worth it! It was worth a thousand, by George!"

"Rather!"

"Three cheers for Mr. Crowell!"

The Triangle rang with the shouts of the juniors. Somebody called for groans for Hunter, and they were given with a will. Mr. Crowell made no attempt to stop them. Not only did he secretly approve, but he was quite sure that the juniors were too excited to cease their cries.

Five minutes later, however, all the boys marched into the Ancient House in an orderly fashion. The revolt was at an end. It had been short and exciting, and the Remove felt proud of itself.

Strictly speaking, it was quite a minor affair, but it served to show that the juniors were not prepared to stand any nonsense. It was just the first puff of the gathering storm, and it had swept by, leaving a dead calm in its wake. Calms of this variety, however, are the most dangerous of all.

The really serious outbreak was yet to come. Somehow, everybody knew it; the majority of the fellows were certain, in their own minds, that further grave troubles were to occur in the Ancient House. But this initial success had left the Remove confident and triumphant.

A good many fellows were uneasy, it is true. Would Mr. Hunter let the affair drop? It was a vital question, and it was one which was discussed in practically every junior study that evening.

In Study C Nipper and Co. were inclined to be cheerful.

"My dear kids," remarked Nipper complacently. "Hunter won't show his face again until-to-morrow—and then he'll be as quiet as a lamb. You mark my words. He's had a giddy lesson this evening"

"Begad! It was excitin'," said Tregellis-West, examining his pince-nez closely. "Somebody trod on my glasses, you know, an' they're frightfully bent."

"The glasses?" asked Tommy Watson facetiously.

"Dear fellow, you display a shockin' lack of common-sense," said Sir Montie. "It is a well-known fact that glass cannot bend—except in a triflin' degree. I was referrin' to the frame, old boy."

"Rats to your glasses!" said Nipper cheerfully. "You've got about a dozen spare

pairs, ain't you? I'm rather glad this has happened, to tell the truth."

"But, my dear Bunny, they cost two guineas."

"I wasn't talking about your silly glasses," snapped Nipper. "And what's a matter of two guineas to you—a giddy millionaire? I'm rather glad that Hunter has been squashed. It'll show him that the Remove isn't prepared to stand any nonsense."

"And it only cost us five hundred lines," said Tommy Watson, with a chuckle. "Jolly cheap, I call it! Old Crowell's a stunner!"

"He knew jolly well that we had been provoked," remarked Nipper. "In fact he wouldn't have given us any lines at all if he had followed the dictates of his own conscience."

"Begad! That's rather a good way of puttin' it, you know!"

"Oh, don't rot, Montie," said Nipper. "Crowell had to give us lines, just for the sake of appearances."

"But what if Hunter comes down heavy?"

"He won't," was Nipper's firm reply.

"My dear, nervous Tommy—"

"I ain't nervous!" roared Watson.

"Well, you seem to be, and it's not surprising, either," went on Nipper. "Just consider the whole affair, my cheerful assca. What is Hunter's position, exactly? He acted like a Prussian, and the Remove wiped him up. He knows jolly well that if he tries any more of the same games, he'll be wiped up a second time. And another revolt would be a serious business. Hunter will draw in his horns, you can take the tip from me."

And this was the general opinion throughout the Remove. The juniors had certainly scored a win. They were firmly determined to stand up for their rights, and if Mr. Hunter attempted any more of his Hun tricks, there would be an outbreak of far greater proportions than the previous one.

The Remove had found, rather to its surprise, that it could take the law into its own hands with comparative ease. And, having gained that somewhat dangerous knowledge, the fellows were firmly resolved to use their power if the necessity arose.

A few reckless spirits were in favour of a continuance of the revolt. But Nipper, as Form captain, was strongly against this. It was now up to the Remove to behave themselves in their best manner and to await events.

Nipper was most anxious to show that the Remove was not jibbing against the ordinary authority. If Mr. Hunter conducted his House in the right way, he would find the juniors reasonable and even meek. It was only his tyranny which aroused the fellows to open rebellion.

In brief, it was now "up to" Mr. Hunter.

Nipper went round to all the Remove studies personally and warned the fellows to be on their best behaviour. Handforth was a trifle truculent, but he was convinced at last. And Mr. Crowell, when he accompanied his boys up to the dormitory—

for this occasion only—was agreeably surprised to find that everything was calm and peaceful.

Later on, Morrow reported to Mr. Crowell that the Remove had gone to bed without any demonstration, and that they were even better behaved than usual. Mr. Crowell shrewdly guessed that "Bennett" was responsible for this state of affairs, and he appreciated Nipper's thoughtfulness.

On the morrow the rising-bell rang as usual—and the Remove still lay in their beds. Mr. Hunter had not arrived to rout them out for the early morning lesson. That imposition, in fact, was abandoned.

Very naturally, the juniors gloated over their victory. There was a certain amount of anxiety in the Form-room that morning, a visit from Mr. Hunter being momentarily expected.

Morning lessons concluded, however, without the Housemaster putting in an appearance. Mr. Crowell had been quite delighted to find that his boys were exceedingly calm and on their best behaviour. He saw the obvious truth that the Remove was showing him that it had no desire to question his own authority.

Mr. Hunter's inactivity caused general comment. And it soon became quite clear that the whole affair had blown over. At dinner time the Housemaster took his place in the dining-hall, and he was smiling genially, as usual. It seemed as though he had quite forgotten the incident of the previous evening.

Nipper was not deceived. As he explained to his chums, Mr. Hunter knew that he had overreached himself. His one anxiety, now, was to allow the storm to quieten down. He had aroused a hornet's nest, and had been stung; he had no wish to be killed outright. Further violence on his part would certainly have killed him, so far as his position at St. Frank's was concerned.

During afternoon lessons Mr. Crowell had a piece of news.

"I have interviewed Mr. Hunter, my boys," he said quietly. "Naturally, your Housemaster is very angry with you, but he has acknowledged that he lost his head last night, and is satisfied that the punishment I imposed is sufficient to meet the requirements of the case."

"Begad! That's rippin', sir," murmured Sir Montie.

The last vestige of uneasiness vanished, and the juniors settled themselves to work with the comfortable feeling that they had won the day.

Nipper suspected that Mr. Hunter had not spoken quite so nicely as Mr. Crowell had implied. It was rather hard to believe that the Housemaster had admitted himself in the wrong. The truth was, Mr. Hunter was in a funk. He had been very severely handled once, and he did not wish to take a second dose.

But the Remove was still suffering from the injustices which had already been imposed. Study teas had been the order of the day at St. Frank's for many years. The institution was almost regarded as a sacred

one, and for Mr. Hunter to abolish it was too "rotten" for words.

There was nothing cosy or comfortable in having tea in hall. There were no dainties, and the amateur cooks of the Remove were hard hit. And then, again, there was the cricket, and the ban upon the playing-fields in general.

These questions had to be settled.

The abolition of cricket in the Remove had been shelved for a day or two, but now it became the sole topic of conversation once more. The juniors were feeling the effect keenly.

On this particular day the sun was shining gloriously, and the playing-fields were extremely inviting. Christine and Co., of the College House, marched off to Little Side, attired in flannels, with bats tucked under their arms. The spectacle aroused their unfortunate rivals to desperation.

Even the tiniest fags of the Ancient House could wander about the playing-fields just as they chose—and the Remove had to stand in the Triangle and look on! It was, as Nipper warmly declared, past bearing.

Something certainly had to be done—but what?

Having gained one victory over Mr. Hunter, it was generally felt that by bringing pressure to bear upon the Housemaster it would be possible to force him to give way in other matters.

As a preliminary, a Form-meeting was absolutely essential.

But here another difficulty at once presented itself. Meetings, in any shape or form, were forbidden in the Remove. Mr. Hunter was wily; he had foreseen that the juniors would collect together for the purpose of ventilating their wrongs.

But, if Mr. Hunter was wily, Nipper beat him easily. After tea Nipper strolled with his chums in the Triangle. He had been thinking deeply, and his mind was now made up.

"Look here, my sons," he said grimly. "I'm going to have a gathering of the clans to-night. In other words, a Form-meeting to discuss cricket."

"My dear chap, it ain't possible," said Tommy Watson. "Where can we hold a meeting without being dropped on by Hunter or some rotten prefect? Not in the Form-room or the lecture hall or the common-room. And our study ain't big enough to hold the whole crowd——"

"I'm not suggesting anything of that sort," interrupted Nipper. "What's the matter with the old vault, underneath the monastery ruins?"

"Begad! Has somethin' happened to it?" asked Montie languidly.

"Not that I know of," replied Nipper staring.

"But, dear old boy, you said something was the matter——"

"I didn't!" retorted Nipper. "I asked what was the matter with the vault as a meeting place? My dear kids, it'll do splendidly. We can hold our pow-wow there without a soul knowing about it."

"By jupiter!" said Watson. "That's a ripping idea."

"As soon as it's dark," went on Nipper, "we'll pop down first—just we three—and take a couple of pounds of candles with us. We can set 'em all alight, and have the place ready for the meeting in less than a couple of minutes."

"Why not go over there now——"

"Too risky," said Nipper. "Hunter might spot us nosing about the ruins, and he'd jump to our little game in a tick. We'd better wait until it's dark."

Accordingly Nipper and Co. adjourned to Study C, where they whiled away the time by writing out the five hundred lines for Mr. Crowell. By the time this task was accomplished the dusk had lengthened into night. And the three leaders of the Remove sallied forth upon their expedition.

The ruins of the old monastery were situated at the far side of the Triangle, within easy distance of the College House. They were ivy-grown and picturesque, and one portion—which had originally formed the corner of the old chapel—still towered high above the rest. Within this comparatively intact part of the ruin a flight of steps led downwards into the old vaults. The stairs were circular, but in a fair state of preservation.

Nipper and Co., with their candles, reached the crypt and looked round them. The place was large and perfectly dry. Over in one corner a low entrance led into a narrow tunnel, which ultimately opened into the deserted quarry on Bannington Moor. Nipper and his chums had good reason to know this tunnel, for they had had two or three exciting adventures in its confines in the past.

They passed from a big vault into a smaller one, but decided that this was not so suitable as the other. Nipper was using his electric torch for illuminating purposes.

"Better get back into the other place," he remarked softly. "What's the matter with you, Montie?"

"Nothin', dear fellow," replied Tregellis-West, "but there's somethin' the matter with my bootlace, begad! It's a frightful bore, stoopin'."

Sir Montie wasted some little time in fastening his shoelace, and Nipper switched his light down while he and Watson waited. The three stood quite silent while this operation was in progress.

And just as Tregellis-West had finished a sudden sound came from the direction of the circular staircase, echoing curiously through the old crypts. The trio stood stock still, rather startled.

"My hat!" breathed Watson. "Did old Hunter spot us, after all?"

"Couldn't have done," murmured Nipper. "It must be one of the Remove chaps. It's queer, though; I didn't mention our plans to a soul. We'd better lie low until we see who the chap is."

"It'll be rather mean to give the dear boy a fright——"

"Shurup, ass!" murmured Nipper.

He had already switched his light off, and the three waited in dead silence. Gazing in the direction of the arched doorway, they saw a subdued glow gradually strengthen into a bright beam of light.

And then a footfall sounded and a figure appeared. It was walking right across the big vault in the direction of the old tunnel. The boys, within the smaller crypt, were completely concealed.

The new-comer had not the slightest idea of their proximity. He carried an electric torch, and his features were only faintly visible in the subdued light which was reflected backwards.

He appeared to be a smallish, slim man, attired in a dark tweed suit and a cloth cap. His face was bearded, and he wore gold-rimmed glasses. Nipper and Co. only caught a glimpse of him, and then he disappeared into the tunnel.

"Of all the sauce!" breathed Tommy Watson warmly. "What's that chap doing down here? He doesn't belong to St. Frank's——"

"You ass!" hissed Nipper excitedly. "Didn't you see?"

"See what?"

"Didn't you recognise him, I mean?"

"Begad! How could we, dear fellow?" muttered Sir Montie. "We've never set eyes on the gentleman before——"

"Well, I'm jiggered!" exclaimed Nipper, in a low, tense voice. "I thought you had seen through the fake in a minute. That chap was our highly-respected Housemaster, Mr. Kennedy Hunter—in disguise!"

CHAPTER IV.

(Nipper resumes.)

FACE TO FACE WITH THE GUV'NOR—WE ARE GENTLY BUT FIRMLY "TOLD OFF"—AND MEET WITH A MOST UNCOMFORTABLE SURPRISE.

SIR MONTIE TREGELLIS-WEST and Tommy Watson gazed at me as I made the amazing statement regarding Mr. Hunter. They gazed in wonder. I'm not saying that there was anything particularly amazing in the thing to me; but they were flummoxed for the moment.

"Hunter!" repeated Watson. "You're dotty!"

"It's certainly frightfully puzzlin', Benny boy——"

"Don't talk rot!" I interrupted. "Hunter was simply wearing a false beard—just as I saw him once before. Not much of a disguise, anyhow. But what's he doing down here—that's the question? I vote we follow him!"

"What about the cricket meeting?" gasped Watson.

"That can wait," I said crisply.

Cricket, for the moment, had no interest

for me. There was a mystery here, and I was keenly anxious to probe it. Mr. Hunter was acting in a most extraordinary manner, and I wanted to investigate.

I had already seen quite enough to convince me that the Housemaster was not exactly what he professed to be. He had dealings with mysterious characters who only appeared at night, and whom he met, as a rule, in these underground workings of the disused quarry.

These goings on didn't fit in with Mr. Hunter's character as a schoolmaster. I was pretty sure that something criminal was afoot. Mr. Hunter had provided us with plenty of evidence that he was unscrupulous and wicked.

"Come on!" I exclaimed, in crisp tones.

I led the way down the passage cautiously. It was not necessary to show my light, for Mr. Hunter was quite visible in the distance, the glow from his torch leaving his figure sharply outlined.

He was walking fairly rapidly, and I felt thankful that the flooring of the old tunnel was mainly composed of soft sand. Our feet, therefore, made scarcely any noise as we progressed.

If the Housemaster turned abruptly, we should be betrayed, but there was very little prospect of this happening, for nothing had occurred to arouse his suspicions. The tunnel was only of sufficient width to allow us to go in single file, and so we crept along in this way.

I had already decided what I should do in the event of discovery. It would be quite easy to hiss out a word of warning to my chums, and we could then turn our backs and flee towards the vault at a much faster speed than Hunter could attain, for we were smaller and more agile. He couldn't possibly recognise us, and, at the worst, he could only suspect our identities. It's always as well to be prepared for emergencies.

The tunnel bore slightly to the left, and Mr. Hunter and the light vanished. I broke into a trot, knowing that all was clear ahead. But when I turned the bend everything was black—utterly black.

"Confound it!" I muttered, under my breath.

Mr. Hunter had vanished!

He couldn't have become aware of our presence, and it wasn't likely that he was waiting for us. The probable explanation, indeed, was quite simple. Mr. Hunter must have turned into one of the many side tunnels with which the place was honey-combed. Owing to the bend, I had been unable to spot the exact locality of this branch passage.

I warned my chums to be cautious, briefly explaining the situation. And then we progressed onwards again. After three or four minutes had passed I called a halt. Everything was as silent as the grave. Not the slightest sound, except our own breathing, came to our ears.



The next second Mr. Hunter, utterly overwhelmed, was simply borne to the floor by sheer weight of numbers.—(See page 8.)

"He's gone, Benny boy," murmured Sir Montie. "We're done, you know."

"Not yet," I said grimly. "I'm going to flash my light out, so be on the alert for squalls."

As I spoke I pressed the button of my torch. We were quite dazzled for a moment, but our eyes soon grew accustomed to the light. And we found that we were quite alone, and that a black opening was visible just ahead.

"The rotter must have passed down that way," I whispered. "Anyhow, we'll try it. What a rotten piece of luck, losing him like that!"

"It was frightfully hard lines—it was really," breathed Montie.

I just flashed my light up the passage for a second, revealing a narrow burrow, with a curve quite close by. But I realised that the light would betray us if I kept it switched on for long, and we walked on in the darkness again.

I felt my way round the curve, and then received a fifty horse-power shock. For a brilliant light suddenly blazed in my eyes, and I gasped. Sir Montie uttered a similar sound, but Tommy literally yelped with surprise.

All my plans for escape were useless, for we were revealed completely. I waited for Mr. Hunter's harsh voice to assail my ears. It was quite impossible to see anything beyond the steadily held light.

"You young rascals!" came a soft, even voice.

I nearly jumped out of my skin, and uttered a little cry of sheer joy. The voice! It wasn't Mr. Hunter's at all—it belonged to Nelson Lee!

"Guv'nor!" I gasped huskily.

"What's the meaning of this, Nipper?" exclaimed Nelson Lee sternly. "Didn't I expressly warn you not to interfere in this matter?"

"Oh, guv'nor, I'm terrifically glad to see you," I panted.

"Begad, we ain't seen him yet!" said Sir Montie mildly. "It's old Alvy—I—I mean Mr. Alvington. We're frightfully pleased to—to hear you, sir! I— Oh, by gad!"

Sir Montie broke off in utter dismay, for the light had been suddenly switched round, and it revealed the face of a complete stranger.

"I—I—I thought—" stammered Sir Montie. "I—I—I—"

"Really Tregellis-West, your remarks are somewhat incoherent," exclaimed the stranger, in an amused tone. "You must not imagine that I am somebody else merely because my appearance is altered. I am certainly 'old Alvy,' as you mentioned a moment or two ago—"

"Begad! I beg your pardon, sir!" gasped Tregellis-West.

"I did not ask you to do that, Montie," said the guv'nor softly. "I can assure you that I am quite complimented by being re-

ferred to as 'old Alvy.' But, seriously, boys, you are very foolish. I suppose you are responsible for this expedition, Nipper, you disobedient young ruffian!"

"Steady on, guv'nor," I exclaimed, hugely delighted to see him once more. "I thought you were old Hunter for a moment or two, until you spoke."

"Indeed," said Nelson Lee. "Why?"

I briefly explained the circumstances, and the guv'nor listened carefully. He nodded when I had finished.

"I can only presume, Nipper, that Mr. Hunter turned up another passage," he murmured. "The gentleman certainly did not come this way—which is rather fortunate under the circumstances."

"But what are you doing here, sir?" I asked eagerly.

"Investigating."

"Investigating what, sir?"

"Certain mysterious happenings," replied Nelson Lee aggravatingly. "My dear lad, you needn't press your questions, for, I assure you, I shall give you no direct answers. The other day I found you in a tunnel similar to this one, and I deemed it wise to remain a stranger to you."

"I know all about that, guv'nor," I said. "I guessed afterwards that it was you. But what does it all mean? I know jolly well that Mr. Hunter's up to some crooked game. The other day—yesterday morning, in fact—he dropped a piece of paper with some German words upon it."

"Ah! Have you got it with you?" asked Nelson Lee sharply.

"Yes, sir."

"Show it to me!"

I handed it over, and the guv'nor scanned it closely. Then he stowed it in his waistcoat pocket and nodded.

"I don't propose to enlighten you at present, my boys," he said. "But I shall be telling you no secret when I say that I am working in this district, and that the object of my enterprise is Mr. Kennedy Hunter. He is, indeed, up to some crooked game, Nipper. But I cannot tell you the facts."

"Oh, guv'nor, that's too bad!" I protested.

"Before so very long everything will come all right," proceeded Lee. "You will soon see me back at St. Frank's, my lads."

"Hurrah!" breathed Tommy Walson joyously.

"Therefore I want you to carry on just a little longer," said the guv'nor. "I appreciate your motives, Nipper, in following Mr. Hunter. You cannot resist the temptation to do a little investigating on your own account. But, seriously, young 'un, these escapades of yours are endangering the success of my own plans, and you really must not interfere."

"I'm sorry, sir," I said grimly, "but I don't see why I shouldn't take a hand now and again! It's simply rotten being left out of everything—"

"That cannot be helped, Nipper," interrupted Nelson Lee. "It is imperative that you should not interfere, and I want you to go straight back to the vault without delay. You need have no fears regarding my safety. This business may appear very mysterious from your point of view, but there is comparatively little danger."

"That's all you say, gov'nor!" I growled. "And it certainly is all I mean to say," replied Nelson Lee firmly. "Now, boys, get back as fast as you possibly can. And remember my instructions—don't interfere!"

Nelson Lee walked off down the tunnel a moment or two later, and we could do nothing but obey his command. At the same time I felt jolly wild. I hated being left out in the cold.

We talked in low tones as we neared the vault, and raised our voices slightly upon nearing it. There was no fear of detection now, but I realised that the vault would not do as a meeting place to discuss cricket.

And then we received a second shock.

I had the beam of my torch turned towards the ground, but directed it upwards as we stepped into the spacious crypt. And there, standing in the very centre of the cellar-like apartment, was Mr. Kennedy Hunter!

He regarded us calmly, but there was a glint in his eyes which warned me of trouble to come.

Sir Montie and Tommy and I were completely taken aback, and we could only stare.

CHAPTER V.

(Nipper continues.)

MR. HUNTER IS IN A DILEMMA—BUT IT IS TRIVIAL COMPARED WITH OURS.

MR. HUNTER looked at us with an expression of complete composure for a moment or two. But I could see that he was breathing hard, and that he was keeping himself controlled only by the greatest effort. And he found it impossible to continue the farce.

For, all in a moment, he cast pretence aside.

"You infernal young hounds!" he hissed, his fury bursting out in a manner which fairly startled Sir Montie and Tommy and half dismayed me. "What have you been doing in that tunnel? How dare you follow me? You young spies—you wretched brats!"

"Steady on, sir!" I broke in sharply.

"Hold your tongue, Bennett!" thundered Mr. Hunter, striding forward and aiming a slap at my face which would have knocked me down had it been delivered. "You have been spying—you have been interfering with my affairs. By Heaven, you shall pay for this, you young brutes!"

"Ain't you rather severe, sir?" asked Sir Montie calmly. "We didn't know that this old place was out of bounds, begad!"

"Silence!" snarled the man, completely

transformed. "Another word, Tregellis-West, and I will thrash you within an inch of your life! I will listen to no excuses! You have been spying upon my movements——"

I regarded Mr. Hunter steadily.

"Are your movements of such a nature, sir, that you don't like to have them known?" I asked. "We came down here to prepare the place for a Form meeting, as you have forbidden them in the House. And we just went along the tunnel——"

Mr. Hunter gave a sudden gasp, and he pulled himself together sharply. He realised in that moment that he had been too hasty. There was no evidence that we had been following him, but by his own statements he had made it clear that he was mortally afraid of detection.

The position was intense.

And then Mr. Hunter attempted to brazen the matter out. He realised his mistake, and knew that his position was rocky.

"I was under the impression that you had been spying upon my actions," he said, in a calmer voice. "I—I came to this place because I suspected that you would be making use of it, and I wished to satisfy myself upon the point."

Perhaps he saw by our expressions that we disbelieved the lying statement. Or perhaps he knew that it sounded altogether too hollow to be credible. At all events, his fury returned.

"Come with me!" he snapped harshly.

"Are you going to punish us, sir?" I asked.

"Hold your tongue, Bennett!" he thundered for the second time. "You will follow me to my study at once!"

"The three of us, sir?" asked Watson.

"Yes!" roared Mr. Hunter—"the three of you!"

The Housemaster was a mass of nerves, and I could guess that they were very raw. He didn't know what we had seen or what we suspected. But he was fairly sure that we had tumbled to his secret. We hadn't, of course—we only knew that he was up to some shady villainy.

Under the circumstances we could not defy him. We were three to one, certainly, but three Removites could not tackle a Housemaster alone. And, if it comes to that, we didn't want to. If Mr. Hunter had a hold on us, we had a hold on him. He wouldn't dare to give us any punishment.

We followed him up the rough old steps until we arrived in the clear night air. And then we were marched across the Triangle towards the Head's private door. Within three minutes we were in Mr. Hunter's study—really the Head's study, which had been appropriated by the tyrant.

"Close the door, Bennett!" said Mr. Hunter coldly.

I did so, and we all stood before him, waiting. The Housemaster regarded us steadily for some moments.

"I have no desire to be harsh with you, my boys," he said at last. "I want you to tell me why you went down that tunnel, what you saw there, and, in fact, all about

It. If you speak up truthfully, I will allow you to leave this study unpunished."

"We went to the vault to prepare it for a form meeting, sir," I replied.

Mr. Hunter snapped his fingers.

"I asked why you went down the tunnel," he snapped.

"Because we jolly well saw you!" roared Watson, with a snort. "We saw— Oh, corks!"

Tommy Watson was a splendid chap, but he was liable to sudden outbursts of excitement. Mr. Hunter hadn't known that we had seen him pass along the tunnel. But he knew it now! Not that it made much difference, in any case. *

"Well, Watson?" exclaimed the Housemaster grimly. "Proceed!"

"That—that's all, sir!" gasped Watson.

"I command you to speak——"

"That's not fair, sir," I struck in sharply. "I've told you why we went down into the vault, and that's all I mean to say. We certainly went into the tunnel, but you haven't any right to command us to speak."

Mr. Hunter nearly choked.

"You—you impudent young rogue!" he shouted, raising his fist threateningly. "Unless you speak at once, I will cane you until you cannot stand!"

"You said that we shouldn't be punished at all a minute ago," I replied quietly. "I'm sorry, sir, but we can't say any more."

As a matter of fact, our tongues were tied. It was impossible for us to enlighten Mr. Hunter regarding our meeting with Nelson Lee. And it was equally impossible for us to resort to deliberate falsehood. The only remaining course, therefore, was to say nothing whatever. It was the only safe way.

Half the truth would be worse than anything, for we should soon be tied into knots, and Mr. Hunter would be as unsatisfied as ever. Of course our silence seemed significant to him—that was natural.

"I will give you one more chance," he said firmly. "Speak up now, and tell me everything, and you shall not suffer. Now, boys!"

We remained silent.

"I am waiting!" snapped the Housemaster.

"Begad! It's a frightfully borin' task—waitin'," remarked Tregellis-West. "I'm afraid you'll have to wait an appallin' time, sir. As a matter of fact, there's nothin' for us to say."

Again Mr. Hunter lost his temper.

"You confounded young dogs!" he raved. "I will have the truth from you if I have to resort to a severe flogging. Unless you speak up within one minute, I will thrash you until you are unable to stand!"

We stood quite still, and I thought it as well to speak.

"If you thrash us, sir," I said quietly, "I know that you'll act like a Prussian—and we're not going to stand that. We'll yell the place down as soon as you start. I give you fair warning, sir."

"You—you dare to threaten me?" gasped Mr. Hunter.

"We mean to look after ourselves, sir—that's all," I replied.

I don't make any excuse for myself for addressing my Housemaster so bluntly. He had given me cause to suspect him of utter brutality, and his threat to flog us was a grim one. We were alone in his study, and he had us at his mercy. We couldn't spring upon him as the whole Remove had done. And it was just as well to make him understand that we should resist.

"You insolent cub!" he snarled fiercely.

"I don't mean to be insolent, sir," I said. "And, if it comes to that, you have used several terms which any decent schoolmaster would be ashamed of!"

"Hear, hear!" murmured Sir Montie approvingly.

Mr. Hunter fairly danced with fury.

"Very well—very well!" he shouted violently. "You shall be punished in another way, you insubordinate young villains. I intend to force the truth from you, and I will succeed!"

"I think not, sir," I said quietly.

"You shall be kept apart from your schoolfellows!" went on the Housemaster with savage fierceness. "There will be nothing but dry bread and cold water for you until you obey my orders! Do you understand, you rascals? Bread and water, and solitary confinement!"

We were momentarily dismayed.

"You can't mean that, sir," I burst out. "You can't——"

"I do mean it!" raved Mr. Hunter. "Now will you speak?"

"No!" I replied hotly.

"This place ain't a prison, sir!" put in Tregellis-West. "We don't have solitary confinement at St. Frank's, or bread-and-water diet——"

Mr. Hunter laughed coarsely.

"You shall have it under my rule!" he shouted. "By heaven, you shall not defy me! Until you speak, you will be kept prisoners—close prisoners. I mean to break this rebellious spirit, you infernal young hounds!"

Mr. Hunter rang the bell savagely. His eyes were gleaming, and there was an ugly twist about his mouth which I didn't care for. Tommy Watson was looking very uneasy, but Sir Montie remained as urbane as ever.

Personally, I knew that Mr. Hunter was aroused to his old state of brutal tyranny. We had defied him—and we should suffer. The truth of the matter was he knew that we had found out something about him, and he was afraid of us. He was afraid of our tongues. He believed that we should jaw amongst the other fellows.

How Mr. Hunter had got back into the old vault puzzled me. I concluded that he must have returned while we were talking with Nelson Lee. He had probably heard our voices—for we had been rather careless—and had waited.

And now the fat was in the fire.

Mr. Hunter meant to wring the truth from us, or keep us away from the rest of the

Remove. He had chosen the latter course, since he couldn't do anything else. Well, we shouldn't give in.

A tap sounded on the door, and Bates, the page-boy, entered.

"Bring Starke and Kenmore here at once, Bates," said Mr. Hunter sharply.

"Yessir!" said Bates, looking rather startled.

He grinned, however, as he caught sight of us, and we felt as though we could have suffered any punishment willingly if we could have been allowed the pleasure of punching the hateful page-boy's face into next week.

"I do not make idle threats!" said Mr. Hunter, pacing up and down, and speaking between his teeth. "You will find that I am a man of determination. Until you speak you shall be confined in the punishment room, and your only food will consist of dry bread, washed down with plain water."

"It ain't very cheerin', sir," said Sir Montie, "but I dare say we shall survive. Begad! Perhaps you'll have to undergo somethin' of the same sort yourself later on."

"Only it'll be skilly instead of bread," I said grimly.

"You—you impudent——" Mr. Hunter pulled himself up, nearly choking. "But no matter! There is time, even now, for you to redeem your characters in my eyes. Tell me exactly what you saw in that tunnel, boys—tell me precisely what you did—and I will not punish you in the slightest degree."

We laughed. We couldn't help it!

"Sorry, sir," I said, "but I'm afraid we can't trust you."

"It's expecting too much, sir," said Watson defiantly.

"Rather, begad!"

"In other words, you refuse to obey my will?"

"Yea, sir," I replied boldly.

"Then you shall suffer as you have never suffered before!" raved the Housemaster, glaring. "By Heaven, I have had enough of this mutiny!"

I was settled in mind now. I knew quite well that Hunter had merely made an excuse; whatever I and my chums said, we should have been placed in confinement. Mr. Hunter was afraid to allow us to join our school-fellows. The situation was not only acute, but positively desperate.

"Let's make a break for it!" I breathed hurriedly.

Both my chums nodded at once.

"What did you say, Bennett?" snapped Mr. Hunter. "I will have no whispering! Good gracious! How—how dare you——"

We had suddenly made a dash to the door. I tore it open, and Sir Montie and I succeeded in reaching the passage. But a wild yell from behind told us that Tommy Watson had not been so fortunate.

"Come on, dear boy!" gasped Tregellis-West.

"Ow!" roared Watson. "Leggo, you brute! Help! Rescue! He's half killing me, you chaps——"

Sir Montie and I spun round to the rescue.

Watson had exaggerated greatly, for he seemed very much alive as he struggled with Mr. Hunter. But the latter was hitting the unfortunate Tommy with savage brutality.

"By Jupiter!" I panted furiously.

In a second Sir Montie and I were grabbing Mr. Hunter with all our strength. If we had been left to ourselves we should have done the trick easily. But just when we were on the eve of success—just when we had dragged Tommy free—a shout sounded along the passage.

Starke and Kenmore came rushing round the corner, followed by Bates.

"Hold these young rascals!" gasped Mr. Hunter madly.

It was all over then, of course. The two Sixth-Formers were hefty fellows. Starke grabbed hold of me, and Kenmore seized Sir Montie. Tommy Watson was again at the mercy of Mr. Hunter.

"Rescue. Remove!" shrieked Watson shrilly.

But his voice was half cracked with excitement and pain, and before we could raise any loud outcry we were again bundled into Mr. Hunter's study. Our effort had been unsuccessful, and our plight was now infinitely worse than before. Mr. Hunter would wreak his revenge upon us out of sheer spite for what we had done—quite separate from all other matters.

"Of all the cheeky young bounders!" panted Starke, holding me fiercely. "What have they been up to, sir?"

"It is no business of yours, Starke, to ask questions!" snapped Mr. Hunter.

"No—nunno, sir!" stuttered Starke, taken aback.

"I sent for you because I half feared that these wretched juniors would attempt to break away," went on Mr. Hunter. "They have acted in the most rebellious manner, and I intend to teach them a lesson which they will not forget for many a long day. Upon my soul, they shall suffer!"

"What—what do you mean to do, sir?" asked Kenmore uneasily.

"The boys are to be kept in confinement," said Mr. Hunter. "They will be fed on bread and water alone until I choose to release them. I rely upon you, Starke and Kenmore, to keep this matter to yourselves. No good will come of idle chatter. And you may be sure that I shall remember your good services."

"Yes, sir," said Starke and Kenmore together.

I would have given quids if I could have punched their noses, one after the other. The two prefects were looking extremely pleased—they understood Mr. Hunter perfectly. To hear that we were to be confined on a bread-and-water diet was sheer joy to Starke and Kenmore. In acknowledgment of their services, Mr. Hunter would make their lives easy at St. Frank's.

The two Sixth-Formers, of course, had no idea of the true state of affairs. They merely thought that we were being punished for leading the revolt in the Remove. And they

entered heartily into the spirit of this tiffanny.

"Bates," said Mr. Hunter sharply, "you will come with me at once! I have work for you. Starke, keep these boys here, and on no account allow them to shout or make any attempt to break away. I hold you responsible for their safe keeping."

"Trust me, sir," said Starke pleasantly.

Mr. Hunter and Bates left the room. It may be thought, possibly, that Sir Montie and Tommy and I now had a fair chance of escape. But we hadn't. Both Starke and Kenmore were hulking great fellows; and, to make assurance doubly sure, Starke took the precaution of tying handkerchiefs round our ankles. It was a simple device, but we couldn't move without falling over. And the prefects watched us closely, so any attempt to free ourselves would have met with failure.

I guessed, of course, that Mr. Hunter was busily preparing the punishment room for our reception. He did not return until forty minutes had passed. And a great change had come over him. His fury had gone, and once again the beaming smile illuminated his features.

"Ah, the young rascals are still here, then?" he exclaimed softly. "An excellent idea, Starke," he added, as he caught sight of our ankles. "Quite a splendid notion."

"Is the punishment room ready, sir?" asked Starke, who was feeling rather fed up—at least, he looked it.

"Yes, Starke," smiled Hunter. "Bring the boys along."

Our ankles were untied, and we were marshalled along the passage towards the private staircase. This quarter of the House was perfectly quiet, for no boys were allowed to venture here.

I knew that the punishment room was really a small bedroom. It was quite a cosy little place, but it was well out of the way of the main corridors, and overlooked the Head's private garden. The prospect of spending a few days there was not alluring, but at the same time we were not at all dismayed.

But, to my surprise, we did not turn into the tiny passage which led to the punishment room. Arriving upon the landing, Mr. Hunter proceeded up the long corridor which led to the attic staircase.

"I have prepared a special punishment room," explained Mr. Hunter, seeing that Starke and Kenmore were somewhat at a loss.

Somewhat, I felt dismayed. I had not expected this, but I might have done, knowing all that I did about Mr. Hunter. It was morally certain that the special punishment room would be infinitely less desirable than the one which was generally used in the Ancient House.

We were led up the attic stairs. But even when we reached the topmost floor of all we did not cease our ascent. That sounds rather queer, doesn't it? I don't mean to imply that we ascended to the roof itself, but it almost amounted to the same thing.

Mr. Hunter led the way up a steep ladder-

like staircase—and then I knew the truth! We were to be confined in the old tower! We should be prisoners at the topmost point in the Ancient House, far out of reach and beyond all hope of rescue. It was little wonder that we were appalled.

A wild indignation filled me. I was reminded of the stories I had heard of schoolmasters in the dark ages of the past, and of fortresses in Germany. For, in very truth, this tower was something of a fortress in its way.

There were two of them at St. Frank's, and, from outside, they looked extremely picturesque, for one surmounted the Ancient House and the other the College House. They had no windows, except tiny slits two or three inches wide. The walls were nothing less than two feet thick, and each tower was shut off from the rest of the building by a solid oaken door like that of a prison.

In the Ancient House tower there were two apartments, one above the other. I had explored the old place one rainy afternoon with Tregellis-West and Watson. The tower had not been used for any purpose for over half a century, and during the average year scarcely half a dozen people visited it.

If there had been a window in the outer wall it would have looked straight out upon the Triangle. Far below was the Remove dormitory, and, below that again, one of the class-rooms. But the tower was high, and, as I said before, contained no windows which could be honoured by the name.

The brutal nature of this treatment nearly drove me frantic. But, after all, it was only to be expected from a Hun like the new Housemaster. I was considerably surprised to find that mattresses and bedding had been provided for us in the upper apartment—it had not been possible to carry bedsteads up there.

In the lower prison were several chairs and a table, but precious little else. We were allowed no light, but were ordered to go to bed at once. Mr. Hunter stood over us while we undressed and obeyed his order.

And then the tyrant left us to our fate. We had no supper, and we were hungry. But in the morning we should receive nothing but bread-and-water! Shouting for help would be useless. The window-slits were high in the walls, and no sound could possibly carry down to the Triangle, far below.

As we heard the great oaken door slam to we sat up in our hard beds and breathed with fury and indignation and utter dismay. Such a thing as this had never occurred at St. Frank's before.

And Sir Montie summed up our position in his usual languid yet pointed manner.

"Dear old boys," he murmured, in the darkness. "This is simply appallin'!"

And that word was exactly fitted to the case. Our position was appalling in the extreme!

Mr. Hunter had done his worst!

CHAPTER VI.

DE VALERIE WANTS TO KNOW—ON THE TRACK—
THE STORM BREAKS.

CECIL DE VALERIE sat up in bed as the rising-bell rang.

He gazed down the long Remove dormitory, and noticed that three beds, which were placed side by side, were empty. Indeed, they had not been slept in. Many other juniors were following De Valerie's example.

"By George!" said Handforth. "What the dickens has happened?"

The previous night the Remove had gone to bed in a state of uneasy wonderment. Nipper and Tregellis-West and Watson had mysteriously vanished early in the evening. Nobody had seen them go, and not a soul could explain what had become of them.

Supper-time had arrived, and still they were missing. When the Remove went to the dormitory they had come to the conclusion that Nipper and Co. had broken bounds, out of sheer bravado—just to show their contempt for Mr. Hunter.

But Starke, who had been looking singularly pleased with himself, had seen lights out in the dormitory, and he had made one or two veiled remarks which led the juniors to conclude that their missing comrades were not very far off; that they were being looked after by Mr. Hunter personally.

It was only a suspicion, however, and nobody knew the actual truth. And now, this morning, the Remove was more puzzled than ever. De Valerie, the erstwhile "Rotter," was really concerned. He had a very real respect for Nipper, and during the last few weeks he had grown to like the three chums of Study C immensely. And they, in their turn, had learned that De Valerie was quite a good fellow in many ways, in spite of his former misdoings.

"Something's happened," said De Valerie thoughtfully.

"Go hon!" sneered Handforth.

"Something serious, I mean," went on De Valerie. "I've got an idea that Benny and the others have been gettin' it in the neck—what? I mean to find out the truth this morning, too."

"How?" asked Hubbard.

"By asking Hunter outright."

"Shiver my bowsprit!" said the Bo'sun. "You wouldn't have the nerve, shipmate!"

"You wait until breakfast-time," said De Valerie coolly. "I don't believe in bein' kept in the dark. There's somethin' queer goin' on, my sons—somethin' rotten."

Yakama, the Japanese boy, nodded his head.

"It is with extreme sadness that I am compelled to associate my ideas with your own, De Valerie," he said. "The belief is in my mind that the preposterous Mr. Hunter has performed some drastically outrageous act which he is unwilling to make public knowledge. The disgusting and respected Housemaster is of the great cunning,

and it is in my mind to believe that he has seized our unfortunate chums, and has placed them beyond our esteemed reach."

"Finished, yet?" asked Handforth sarcastically.

"I have, indeed, reached the conclusion of my honourable remarks——"

"Oh, for goodness' sake, don't start again," roared Handforth. "Never knew such a chap as you, Jappy! Once you start jawing, there's no knowing when you're going to turn off the gas."

"I speak the beautiful English to the full," smiled Yakama gently.

The shrewd little Jap, however, was very near the mark in his surmise. He had practically hit the nail upon the head. De Valerie, too, was thinking the same thing. Having had some experience of Mr. Hunter and his ways, it was only natural that they should suspect him of dark doings now.

But not a single boy in the Remove so much as dreamed the literal truth. At the worst, they concluded that Mr. Hunter had locked the missing juniors in the ordinary punishment-room.

There was some little excitement among the fellows. Inquiries were made all over the place for Nipper and Co., but nobody had seen them. Bob Christine and Co., meeting one of the searching-parties, sarcastically inquired if Nipper and his chums were not capable of looking after themselves, or whether they required nurses.

These little pleasantries led to several minor House rows before breakfast, but all this talk made Mr. Hunter realise that it would be necessary for him to make a brief statement. As it happened, he was provided with an opportunity by De Valerie, who kept his word.

Soon after breakfast had commenced in the dining-hall the Rotter stood up in his place, and the rest of the Remove waited expectantly and with great curiosity.

"Well, De Valerie?" asked Mr. Crowell, from the head of the table.

"I wish to speak to Mr. Hunter, sir," said De Valerie calmly.

"Sit down, you ass!" hissed somebody.

But Mr. Hunter, at the far end of the hall, was already looking along the tables. He nodded smilingly.

"Proceed, De Valerie," he called, amid a dead silence.

"May I ask where Bennett and Tregellis-West and Watson are, sir?" asked De Valerie easily. "They haven't been seen in the House since last night, an' I was wonderin' if anything had happened."

Mr. Hunter coughed.

"The three boys you mention, De Valerie, are, I regret to say, now undergoing punishment for rank insubordination," he exclaimed. "I was, indeed, about to make this statement quite apart from your inquiry."

"Are they in the punishment-room, sir?"

"I have said sufficient, De Valerie. You may sit down."

De Valerie re-seated himself, and a few

buzz of conversation at once passed round the Remove table. Mr. Crowell, at the head, was biting his lip with vexation, and he made no attempt to stop the whisperings.

Mr. Hunter's news was unexpected, even by Mr. Crowell. He had not been consulted at all. He did not know that Nipper and Co. had been insubordinate, and he certainly didn't believe it. But he did believe, with the whole Remove, that Mr. Hunter had victimised the three juniors in order to satisfy his own harsh desire for revenge. And Mr. Crowell was inwardly furious.

The Remove was not satisfied.

Practically everybody had a fear that something was gravely amiss. The secret manner in which the Study C trio had disappeared caused general uneasiness. And where were they? What had become of Nipper and Tregellis-West and Watson?

Before lessons quite a number of juniors scurried up to the punishment-room, in defiance of all the rules. They found that famous apartment empty and deserted. And a search of the entire House yielded no result.

Nipper and Co. were nowhere to be found.

"Hunter's been up to some rotten game!" declared De Valerie, to a crowd of excited Removites. "I shouldn't be surprised if he's got the poor chaps cooped up in one of the cellars, or somethin' of that kind."

"The Hun!"

"I vote we refuse to do any work until Benny and the others are released," said Handforth firmly. "It's up to us to take a strong stand."

"Couldn't be done," said McClure. "My dear chap, it would be disrespectful to Mr. Crowell, and he's too much of a brick to defy."

"Well, something's got to be done," declared Handforth.

All the juniors were quite agreed upon that point. But the great question was—what could be done? Nobody seemed able to answer it. And the Remove went in to morning lessons with nothing accomplished.

None of the fellows settled down to work. It wasn't so much the fact that Nipper and Co. were being punished that worried them; it was the uncertainty of their fate. Everybody believed that Mr. Hunter had meted out some harsh punishment—that he had seized the three Remove leaders on the quiet, and was now making them suffer for the imaginary sins of the whole Form.

There was a tension in the air—a feeling of impending trouble.

Right in the middle of morning lessons Handforth felt that he could not contain himself any longer. So he stood up, and gave a preliminary cough. When Mr. Crowell looked up, he saw that Handforth had a very determined expression upon his rugged, good-natured face.

"Well, Handforth?"

"May I ask you a question, sir?" asked Handforth firmly.

"What is it, my boy?"

"I want to know—every fellow wants to know, in fact—what's happened to Bennett and Tregellis-West and Watson?" said Handforth. "De Valerie asked that rotter—ahem!—Mr. Hunter, this morning, but——"

"You need not proceed, Handforth," interrupted Mr. Crowell.

"Why not, sir?" roared Handforth, with great vehemence.

"Because I am not in a position to satisfy your very natural curiosity," replied the Form-master. "I regret to say that even I have been kept in ignorance of Mr. Hunter's plans. But I sincerely trust that your Form-fellows will join you this afternoon—or, at latest, this evening."

"Don't you know where they are, sir?" asked the Bo'sun.

"No, Burton. We will now proceed with our work."

The Remove could see that Mr. Crowell was pained, and the fellows did not worry him with any more questions. But the whole situation was amazing. Even the Form-master himself had been kept in the dark.

What could it mean?

At dinner-time there was no sign of Nipper and Co., and when afternoon lessons commenced the situation was precisely the same. A gloom was settling over the Remove by this time. But with it a dangerous spirit of rebellion was spreading.

All sorts of theories were voiced regarding the fate of the missing juniors. Some of them were extremely blood-curdling. Handforth even going so far as to suggest that Mr. Hunter might have fitted up a modern torture-chamber, on the lines of the Spanish Inquisition. Possibly this theory could be traced to a very natural source—the Remove having been instructed in history that afternoon, and certain dark pages from Spain's past had cropped up.

But the idea had been started, and it found quite a lot of credence in the Remove. This was due, no doubt, to the mysterious, secret nature of Mr. Hunter's action. Nipper and Co. had been simply spirited away—silently, almost uncannily.

And it was argued that Mr. Hunter wouldn't have acted in such a manner without having a sinister cause. Besides, he was a Prussian at heart, and would simply delight in administering torture.

The truth of the matter was, the Remove thought such a lot about it that the fellows lost all sense of proportion. The result was rather disastrous, and Mr. Hunter had certainly not bargained for it.

By evening the Remove was in a state bordering upon open revolt for the second time. Handforth suggested that the whole Form, to a man, should march into Mr. Hunter's study and demand the release of the three juniors.

But De Valerie pointed out that such a course was impossible. For one thing, the study wouldn't hold such a crowd; and, for another thing, Mr. Hunter would deal with the ringleaders without compunction.

As an alternative, De Valerie propounded a much more sensible idea. This was quite simple, and it met with instant approval. The Remove divided itself into search-parties—each party consisting of three fellows.

These expeditions were to take a given portion of the Ancient House to explore. In this way it was believed that Nipper and Co. would be located. And, once located, a rescue would be organised without delay.

Certainly De Valerie's scheme was an excellent one, and he proved himself to be an able general in an emergency. It was a feasible, workable plan, and totally different to the wild suggestions which had been circulated by other juniors.

De Valerie did not lose sight of the fact that some of the search parties would probably meet with trouble, particularly those who were told off to explore the private portions of the Ancient House.

For the thing was to be done thoroughly. Even Mr. Hunter's own bedroom was to be searched. De Valerie's party consisted of himself, the Bo'sun, and Sessue Yakama. And they elected to search the most dangerous quarter.

There was no suggestion of a "lark" about this business. The Removites were in deadly earnest, and they did not mean to give in until their lost leaders had been brought to light.

Mr. Hunter had aroused the fellows to a dangerous state, but, even after the lesson he had received, he did not fully appreciate the determination which stirred the juniors. Mr. Hunter was destined to receive a second awakening before long.

De Valerie and his two followers led the search. The others branched off in different directions and within ten minutes the Ancient House was being scoured from end to end and from top to bottom.

The other inmates scarcely had any idea of what was happening, for the Remove set about its task very quietly. But although the scheme came very near to success, it ended in complete failure.

De Valerie and Co. ascended to the top floor with the object of searching the attics. Shrewd as he was, the Rotter did not even suspect the old tower. But this jaunt took him right to the steep staircase which led to the temporary prison of Nipper and his chums.

And as the searchers turned the bend in the corridor they became aware of a light, and the next second Starke, the prefect, came into view. Just for a moment he stared at the juniors and they stared at him.

The expression of consternation on Starke's face was unmistakable, and De Valerie's suspicions were aroused.

"Souise me!" murmured the Bo'sun. "Our shipmates are up in the crow's nest!"

There was really nothing to lead to this supposition, and it was only a random guess. Starke uttered a bellow of rage as he strode

forward. As a matter of fact he had just been up to the prisoners, and to be caught like this was the reverse of pleasant. Starke felt like a gaoler, and a certain twinge of conscience even troubled his harsh mind.

"What are you doing up here?" he shouted furiously.

"We're lookin' for Bennett and the other two chaps," replied De Valerie, in a steady voice. "We've come pretty near the mark—what?"

"Get downstairs!" roared Starke.

The three searchers did not hesitate long. They charged Starke at the same moment. But the prefect gained the advantage by a sheer trick of chance. Yakama, alone, could have tripped Starke up in a second. But as he nimbly dashed in Starke's fist caught him a stunning blow upon the forehead.

And Yakama staggered back, dazed and helpless.

De Valerie and the Bo'sun did their utmost, but they were not equal to the giant Sixth-Former. They delivered several fierce blows, but received far worse punishment in return.

And Starke, boiling with rage, grabbed the two of them by their coat-collars and forced them along the passage by sheer brute strength. He sent them tumbling down the stairs in a heap, and then literally kicked Yakama after them.

Luck was certainly against the Removites. For, in the lower passage, two other Sixth-Formers made their appearance, attracted by the noise. They weren't prefects, and they weren't bullies; but as members of the lordly Sixth they were shocked to find mere Removites in this forbidden part of the building.

De Valerie and Co. were hustled off ignominiously. And then Kenmore was encountered, and he brought the news that many other search parties were scouring the House. Starke gritted his teeth with anger.

"By George! I'll make the young bounders sit up!" he exclaimed fiercely.

And without more ado he rushed down to Mr. Hunter's study. He burst in without ceremony in his excitement, and did not notice a certain suspicious movement on the Housemaster's part. Mr. Hunter had been writing, and he frantically swept several papers into the drawer of his desk.

"How dare you enter without knocking?" he thundered.

"Sorry, sir!" gasped Starke. "But I've come to report that the Remove fellows are searching the whole House——"

"What!" bellowed Mr. Hunter, quivering with rage.

"I just found three of them within a yard of the tower, sir!" panted Starke, rather alarmed by Mr. Hunter's attitude. "I—I say, sir, there's no need to punish 'em very severely——"

"Hold your tongue, Starke!" raved Mr. Hunter, grabbing a cane. "You tell me that the boys have dared to search the House? By Heaven! They shall be sent to bed at once—at once!"

Starke gasped.

"But—but it's only just half-past seven——"

"Do not dare to question my decision, Starke!" roared Mr. Hunter. "Come with me at once and bring several other prefects."

Although a bully, Starke was rather frightened at Mr. Hunter's fury. The situation did not seem to warrant such violence. After all, it wouldn't matter much even if Nipper and Co. were rescued.

There was wild excitement in the Ancient House ten minutes later. Half the Sixth had been unwillingly called into the work, and the Remove fellows were collected together from every quarter of the building.

In twos and threes they were cast into the dormitory, until at last not a fellow was missing. The indignation was nearly beyond description. But with so many enemies, so to speak, nothing could be done.

Mr. Hunter surveyed the half-cowed Remove furiously. In his presence the fellows felt strangely helpless. Possibly the absence of their leader—Nipper—accounted for this. There was no doubt that Nipper's influence was absolutely vital to the success of an organised revolt.

"Every boy will get into bed at once!" said Mr. Hunter grimly. "If I hear the slightest sound from this dormitory I will cane the whole miserable crowd of you! Remember what I have said!"

He passed out, slamming the door, and the Removites heard the key turned in the lock. And then the storm burst in earnest—a storm of whispers.

The boys were absolutely maddened by this treatment; but even now they feared Mr. Hunter enormously. Handforth and many others felt that they would burst unless they shouted out their feelings. But shouting would have been fatal—Mr. Hunter would have returned within a minute.

The Remove was locked in its dormitory, sent to bed like a crowd of infants at seven-thirty. Escape was impossible, and this knowledge drove the boys to a state of frantic fury which would certainly make an outlet for itself before long.

Mr. Hunter had gone a step too far. He foolishly believed that the Remove was cowed. But it wasn't.

The Remove was on the point of grave rebellion!

CHAPTER VII.

(Nipper concludes.)

HUNGRY AND DESPERATE—WE FIND A WAY OF ESCAPE—THE REMOVE DECIDES TO STAND NO FURTHER NONSENSE.

I GAZED at Tregellis-West and Watson steadily.

"It can be done, my sons!" I declared. "We've got to strike while the iron's hot, and it's hot now. If we lose

this opportunity we sha'n't be provided with another."

"Dear boy, it's a go!" said Sir Montie firmly.

"But what's the good of it?" asked Tommy Watson. "Supposing we do get on to the roof—what then? My dear chap, we can't fly to the ground, I suppose?"

I shook my head.

"But we can do something else," I replied. "I'm fed-up with this Hunnish treatment. I'm hungry and I'm desperate! Why, if we don't do something now, Hunter might keep us here for weeks!"

Five minutes before we had heard the school clock boom out the hour of eight. Sir Montie and Tommy and I had been confined in the old tower for exactly twenty-four hours, and we had received nothing but bread and water to eat during our imprisonment.

For breakfast we had received a ration which wouldn't have satisfied a toy terrier. Dinner had proved to be of the same size and quality. Tea hadn't turned up at all, and there was little prospect of supper either.

Bluntly, we had eaten about two slices of bread each since tea-time the previous day. Mr. Hunter's bread-and-water diet was worse than that doled out to British prisoners of war in Germany.

We had expected to receive all we could eat, and we had received a starvation ration. And the acute hunger which resulted had made us desperate. Our fury had disappeared, for the situation was too grave.

Having imprisoned us in this way it was morally certain that Mr. Hunter would not release us. The scandal would be too acute for his safety if he allowed us to rejoin the Remove.

Our only chance was to release ourselves.

The walls of our prison were two feet thick, there were no windows, and the door leading to freedom was of solid oak. What chance was there of escape? Apparently none.

But I had not been idle during the day. On many an occasion when working with the guv'nor he and I had found ourselves in predicaments far more serious than this. And we had managed to slip out of them. Why? Simply because we had used our wits and had taken advantage of opportunities promptly.

After awakening that morning my first thought had been to examine the prison. Daylight was streaming in through the slits, and it was quite possible to see clearly. Now and again the faint shouts of juniors would come up to us, but they seemed to arise from another world. We were alone—isolated from everybody.

Only one method of escape was possible, and that was by the roof. It had not taken me long to discover that the ceiling of the upper apartment was cracked. Above this

were the rafters, of course, and then the roof itself. I didn't trouble myself as to how we could reach the ground.

The main point was to get into the open air.

For hours that day my chums and I had practised balancing ourselves upon one another's shoulders. Watson, who was as strong as a horse, was able to bear the weight of Sir Montie and ⁽¹⁾ Montie stood upon Tommy's back, and I rested my feet on Montie's shoulders. It was a tricky business, and we suffered several minor casualties before we succeeded.

But by performing this manoeuvre I found that I could reach the ceiling easily. And we had waited until darkness before commencing operations. It was dark now, and I was eager to get to work.

"Supposing Starke comes up?" asked Watson bluntly.

"You old growler!" I exclaimed. "Didn't Starke come up half an hour ago? It isn't likely that a soul will come near us until half-past nine, and by that time we can do the trick. I tell you plainly, I'm not going to stand this treatment without kicking."

"Benny boy, let's get busy," said Sir Montie briskly.

We had been provided with no light, of course, but my electric torch came in handy. The battery was rather out of sorts, but I judged that it would last out. And one of the chair legs from the lower prison would serve as a tool.

Having decided finally, we lost no time in getting to work. The prospect of foiling the brutal Hunter was splendid, but I believe we thought of our tummies more than anything. Hunger is rather apt to make a fellow reckless.

Our first attempt at the "stunt" was a failure, Sir Montie slipping, and throwing us all down in a heap. But the next try was a complete success, and I found that I could work easily.

There was a big beam running across the ceiling, and by grasping this I steadied myself for the work in hand.

"Look out for showers!" I said warningly.

I hammered the cracked portion of the plaster as violently as I dared. At first there was no result, but repeated applications of the chair leg soon sent a shower of plaster tumbling down.

And within ten minutes a great gap had been exposed. The laths stared at me nakedly, and I forced the chair leg between two of them. They were old and rotten, and cracked as I exerted my strength. Five minutes later the hole was large enough for me to pass through.

I reached up my hand, grabbed one of the rafters, and hauled myself up into the confined roof-space. To my joy I discovered that several tiles were loose. Water had probably trickled in, accounting for the cracked plaster.

"By jingo!" breathed Watson from below. "What now, Benny?"

"You chaps have got to get up," I replied, peering through the jagged hole. "Twist some of those blankets into a rope and chuck them up to me. I'll have you both up here within a couple of ticks."

The move was not accomplished so swiftly as all that, but seven minutes later Sir Montie and Tommy were beside me. And we had brought not only two or three of the blankets, but every atom of bedding in the place—sheets and all.

The roof was conquered easily, the tiles slipping out of their place in a moment or two. The roof was not dangerous, for the slope was a gradual one, and a high stone parapet jutted beyond the edges. Even if we slipped we should still be perfectly safe. Leaning over this parapet, we gazed down upon the Triangle.

"Well, we've done the trick," I breathed exultantly.

"But we can't get down, Benny," said Watson, shaking his head.

I had already made up my mind.

"Those sheets and blankets bore your weight when I hauled you up through the ceiling, didn't they?" I asked. "Well, it'll be safe to make a long rope of them and swarm down to—"

"Begad!" murmured Sir Montie, catching in his breath.

"It—it won't be safe!" whispered Watson. "Supposing one of the knots slipped?"

"One of the knots won't," I replied. "I happen to know how to tie knots, my son. And I'll shin down first, anyhow. If I fall all of a sudden you'll know that something's happened."

"Pray don't be so frightfully shockin', Benny boy!" breathed Montie. "An' there's another thing, begad! The ground's a fearful way down, you know—it is, really. The blankets an' things won't reach."

"Perhaps not," I replied; "but they'll reach to a lower window!"

"By George! So they will!" muttered Watson, quivering with excitement.

There was no sense in wasting time, so I carefully roped the blankets and sheets together, making a long line. I tied the end of it to one of the rafters, and everything was ready.

"I'll go down first, old boy," said Montie carelessly.

"No you won't!" I declared. "This is my wheeze, and I'm going to take the risk. As soon as I get into a lower window I'll wobble the rope as a signal. And when you come down, for goodness' sake be careful!"

The whole proceeding was risky, of course. But we were reckless and didn't care. And, as it happened, there was no particular danger. The improvised rope acted splendidly, and it bore my weight without a sign of "giving."

I descended, foot by foot, and I had already decided that the dormitory window

would be the best for my purpose, for it had a wide ledge upon which I could rest my feet. It was immediately beneath me, I knew. But would the rope reach?

It did—just! When at last I felt the ledge with my feet I saw that only three or four feet more of "line" remained. And I was astonished to see the dormitory window illuminated. It wasn't half-past eight yet. And I could swear I heard many voices proceeding from the dormitory.

Bending down, I quickly seized the lower sash and raised it with a jerk. The next moment I jumped into the dormitory, thrusting the heavy blind aside as I did so. I was filled with wild excitement and triumph. But this changed to sheer amazement when I saw the whole Remove, in various stages of undress, staring at me!

"Bennett!" yelled a score of voices at once.

"As large as life, and as hungry as half a dozen hunters!" I said cheerfully.

Well, the excitement was intense, and for some few minutes I was as astounded as anybody. But the facts were soon made clear to me, and I realised that the Remove was past all holding.

Tregellis-West and Watson successfully negotiated the descent, and our triumph was complete. The fury of the Remove was enormous when they heard how we had been treated, and it was unanimously de-

cided, amid wild enthusiasm, that Mr. Hunter should be defied.

I knew well enough that grave trouble was to come. Once Mr. Hunter learned of our escape he would take instant measures to recapture us. And, having seized us a second time, we should not be allowed to slip free again.

The die was cast now.

Not only Sir Montie and Tommy and I were ready for revolt, but the whole Remove backed us up. It was impossible to stand Hunter's tyranny any longer. It remained for the Remove to exert its power.

There was only one method by which we could hope to gain the day, and that was by a barring-out. The very mention of it sent a quiver of excitement through the whole dormitory. A barring-out! Many years before there had been one in the College House at St. Frank's, and it had failed miserably.

But that was no reason why ours should fail. We were out to win—we were out to defeat the tyrant!

With regard to all the exciting facts of that barring-out, I can't describe them here. This particular episode is closed, so to speak. But from the very moment I stepped into the dormitory the greatest barring-out in the history of St. Frank's commenced.

And it was to be a fight to the finish!

THE END.

"THE BARRING-OUT AT ST. FRANK'S"

IS THE TITLE OF

Next Week's Magnificent Story.

Things have come to such a pitch at the famous School, that a revolution is the only course open to the Remove. Nipper makes things hum next week.

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BEGIN THIS THRILLING SERIAL TO-DAY!

In the Grip of the Huns.

A Magnificent Tale of Thrilling Experiences in Germany.

By CLEMENT HALE.

NOTE.—As the title "In the Hands of the Huns" has already been used, we have altered the name of our Serial to the above.

The Chief Characters in this Story are :

GEORGE GRAY and his brother JACK, who are the English Staff of the Berlin Rovers, a football club in Germany. When war breaks out they are sent to an outdoor prisoners' camp at Oberhemmel. Von der Klutz is the Governor's name. He is a just but arrogant man, and he refuses to build shelters for the prisoners. George notices one evening that the sky is becoming overcast. He throws himself down for the night, but is unable to get any sleep. Suddenly a drop of rain falls on his forehead. It is followed by another and then still more. Then the rain commences in earnest, and the prisoners become frantic. The guards take no notice. Then suddenly the doctor appears, accompanied by the governor and various officials.

(Now read on.)

THOUGHTS OF ESCAPE.

IN a moment the prisoners had surrounded the party yelling and denouncing, without a thought of the danger they were incurring.

The governor waved them back.

"Stand aside, there, you English pig-dogs," said he, and he strode on, taking in the situation at a glance.

George saw him pull at his chin and talk to the doctor, who was protesting loudly.

At last the party made as if to depart. It was then that George, who had been taking counsel with Wilson, Jack, Ablott, Cowdray, and some of the others, barred the way.

"One moment commandant, if you please," he said.

"Stand away," roared the governor.

"Not yet. I want to know by what right you have submitted us to this shameful exposure. Look at those poor fellows lying there in the mud. They can't move. Some of them are seriously ill. A few are dying. They will die, and their deaths will lie at your door."

The German shrugged, so that the Iron Cross on his breast moved.

"I did not bargain on the rain," he answered, scowling at George. "The glass was high. I should have had proper arrangements completed for the housing of you swine before the week was out."

"But you didn't. And we are men like you. None but a Hun could do such a thing. You blackguard, for two pins I'd kill you. It's what you deserve."

The governor replied with a contemptuous epithet, and George, who could hold himself in check no longer, hurled himself at the brute.

But his upraised fist did not strike home, for some of the officers seized and dragged him back.

He struggled fiercely, but being weakened by exposure and the starvation diet he'd been subjected to since his arrest, he had no chance against them. He was firmly held.

"What shall we do, Herr Commandant?" asked one of the officers. "He ought to be shot."

Von der Klutz sneered scornfully. To do him justice, he was brave enough.

"Bah," he cried. "Let him go." And George was released.

Then Von der Klutz grinned at him, his eyes twinkling.

"You British fool," he hissed. "If I wanted to, I'd have you shot. But you can have your life, such as it is. This"—and he looked around him—"is the result of a—er—miscalculation. The rain"—and he glanced skywards—"will keep on. Men shall be sent down, and shelters will be erected with all possible speed. You dogs can help, if you've a mind to. Your food shall be distributed regularly."

And so, with a grunt, hands behind his back and scowling around him as he went, he repassed the wires, jumped into the doctor's car, and sped away, passing, as he went, a company of armed guards, who came swinging along the road to add strength to the guards who kept watch over the camp.

All that day the rain continued without ceasing. But before night fell rough shelters had been set up, even as the commandant had promised.

Under these the prisoners crouched.

(Continued overleaf.)

shivering sin; for they could not dry themselves or don fresh clothes.

Holes were dug in the ground to carry some of the flood water away, and channels made to run it off beyond the wires. The draining was crudely effective.

Some of the ground was levelled and wood planks were thrown down, and some rough flooring was nailed upon them.

In all this work the prisoners, at least those among them who were in a fit state, helped, and ere night came the task was done.

Food was served out—consisting principally of hot broth—at dusk, and all feeling better for it, they crept beneath the shelters and lay down, thankful for the better conditions, though the wind swept through the roughly constructed sheds, and rain dripped in from cracks in the wooden roof.

The next day the work was continued, and the German doctor himself personally supervised the putting up of a weatherproof shed, which was to serve as a kind of hospital or sick house, in which some rough beds were set down.

By that time some of the poor wretches who had been unable to endure the frightful hardships they'd been called upon to face—and these the doctor tended with a solicitation, a gentleness, and a broad humanity that won for him the respect, if not the love of the victims of the Fatherland cooped up there—were somewhat recovered. They were carried in and put to bed in the hospital shed.

During the whole of the second day the rain poured down, and it was not until the third morning that the leaden clouds passed onward and the sun shone in a blaze of glory, enabling the hapless wretches to remove their damp clothes, revel in a sun bath, and dry out.

The flood-water had now all disappeared, but the surface of the confined ground was one sticky, clayey mass, into which their boots plunged deeply.

Whether it was the doctor's work, or whether the governor was ashamed of his handiwork, the food sent down for them now was much improved in quality as well as quantity. It gave the prisoners new strength. Jack, whom his brother had watched anxiously, began to smile and talk as of old. George's anxiety regarding him vanished.

No serious consequences had followed his exposure to the weather.

George was glad, for, he had but one thought in his mind now—to escape.

To this end he devoted all his energies, all his cleverness.

He felt that it was dangerous to let many of the prisoners into the secret, for their

only chance lay in a few of them getting away at a time. George decided that Wilson, Jack, and himself should be those to try their luck.

And so, one evening, when the weather was warm and they were able to sleep out of doors again, he, Jack, and Wilson wandered away to a distant part of the camp, and began to discuss their final plans there.

They could all speak German, George best of all. They knew enough of the manners and customs of the country not to appear too raw to any passing stranger. Their best plan seemed to be, if they could only pass the wires, to sleep by day in some wood, forest, or barn, and travel by night. Money they had none. Passports, none.

There was a big risk, but they determined to take it.

"When shall we make the attempt?" asked Wilson moodily.

"One day is almost as good as another," growled George. "Better not choose full moon time, though. Even to-night wouldn't be bad, but there's the cursed wire."

Jack started and looked hard at George. "I expect one of us will die before we get through," he murmured moodily.

"I see no reason why we should, old man," answered George. "At the worst they can but recapture us."

"But it wouldn't be a bad thing if one of us, by giving his life, could save the other two," persisted Jack.

George put his arm affectionately round the frail lad.

"Don't talk about death, old sport," he murmured fondly. "We'll all get through."

Jack smiled. It had been agreed that they should attempt to dig under the wire.

The boy now did an extraordinary thing. He leapt from his brother's arms, and with a sobbing cry sprang to the wires, seized them with both hands, and began to try and clamber through.

George uttered a cry of horror, expecting to see Jack fall back writhing and dying.

Not so. Jack still struggled on, and being small and deft, managed somehow to get through the defence without having torn his clothes at all badly by the barbs.

Then George and Wilson faced each other amazed.

"There's no current on. It must have failed for the moment. Wilson. Good heavens, man, it's the chance of a lifetime! Come."

So saying George, too, touched the wires, began to force them apart, and Wilson, uniting his strength to that of his comrade, helped to drag them down. And so they passed the first of the wire defences, with three more barriers to be surmounted ere they could call themselves free.

(To be continued.)